

Summary of Bureau Meetings held at IWC68

1. Thursday 13 October 2022
2. Wednesday 19 October 2022
3. Thursday 20 October 2022

All Bureau Members were present for all three meetings, with the SC and CC Chairs and Vice-Chairs, and the ASW and BSC Chairs attending the first meeting only. The third meeting on 20 October was attended by Commissioner Bureau members and an additional Commissioner and no Committee or Sub-Committee Chairs were present at that time.

Attendance:

Bureau Members:

Andrej Bibic	Chair, Slovenia
Amadou Televiel Diallo	Vice-Chair, Republic of Guinea
Miguel Iñiguez	Argentina
Lucia Scheinkman	Argentina
Francis Nunoo	Ghana
Horace Walters	St. Lucia
Branka Tavzes	Slovenia
James Smith	Commissioner, UK
Cat Bell	(CC & WGOE Vice-Chair, UK)
Mi Ae Kim	United States
Madison Harris	United States
Lisa Phelps	WGOE Co-Chair, United States
Ryan Wulff	F&A Chair, United States

Invited Participants:

Lorenzo Rojas-Bracho	CC Chair, Mexico
Lindsay Porter	SC Vice-Chair, UK
Adam Clark	BSC Chair, Australia
Alex Zerbini	SC Chair, Brazil
Daven Joseph	Commissioner, Antigua and Barbuda

Secretariat:

Rebecca Lent	Executive Secretary
Nikki Bartmeier	Head of Finance and Administration
Elizabeth Campbell	Programme Officer
Iain Staniland	Head of Science, Conservation, & Mgt
Mark Tandy	Head of External Affairs

1. Welcome and introduction

On Thursday 13 October, the Chair welcomed all and underscored this opportunity for the Bureau to finally meet again in person. He noted that there would be multiple meetings during the week of IWC68 as he would be seeking guidance from the Bureau.

The Chair reminded participants that the Bureau meeting was convened in line with Rule of Procedure B.4. In addition, the Chair noted that Chairs and Vice-Chairs from the Scientific and Conservation Committees, and the Budgetary Sub-Committee were also invited to join the Thursday 13 October Bureau meeting, as allowed under the Rule of Procedure M.9. The Bureau meeting on Thursday 20 October was only attended by Commissioner Bureau members and the Commissioner from Antigua and Barbuda, invited by the Chair under the same RoP.

2. Review and adoption of the Bureau agenda and minutes of the previous bureau meeting

The agenda, which was circulated to the Bureau on 21 September 2022 for their input had no additions and was therefore adopted.

The minutes of the previous Bureau meeting held on 5 July 2022 had already been adopted by correspondence and can be found [here](#).

3. Appointment of rapporteur

It was agreed that, as usual, the Secretariat would serve as rapporteur. The draft minutes will be sent to the Bureau for their review prior to finalization, translation and posting.

4. Voting rights at IWC68

The Chair reminded the Bureau that at the September 2021 VSM, the Commission acknowledged the fiscal challenges of the pandemic on Contracting Governments, especially developing countries. The Commission instructed the co-Chairs of the WG-OE to develop options for a possible change to the existing Rules of Procedure on the link between financial status and voting rights. The Commission had requested the WG-OE to develop a document that considers alternative rules for voting rights in emergency situations, one example being the COVID-19 pandemic, in relation to payment of contributions used by other multilateral agreements.

It was noted that the WG-OE met just prior to the first Bureau meeting at IWC68 and discussed these issues. The three options they put forward are:

- 1) Reinstate voting rights just for IWC68 for governments in arrears for 3 years
- 2) Change the deadline for payment to the time of the biennial meeting
- 3) Entering into a repayment plan with the Secretariat – a long-term permanent change.

The Bureau then exchanged views of the various members and their regions on these options. Overall, the Bureau was in agreement with Option 1 in the immediate term for this meeting. For longer term options the Bureau members generally suggested a further discussion on arrangements.

The process suggested in the WG-OE document was agreed as one way forward although other processes might be possible depending on the discussions.

5. Review and discussion on proposed Schedule Amendment and Resolutions at IWC68

The Chair noted the four proposals:

- 1) Schedule Amendment on South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary (SAWS)
- 2) Resolution on Marine Plastics
- 3) Resolution on Food Security
- 4) Resolution on the Implementation of a Conservation and Management Program for Whale Stocks aimed towards the lifting of the moratorium and the orderly development of the whaling industry

The Chair shared the draft timeline and noted his goal which was to have all proposals presented by Tuesday afternoon (18 October) so that there could be an opportunity to engage in some discussion in the side-lines. Proponents were to be allocated 45 minutes for presenting each proposal. This is based on the history in past years of length of time of interventions on these and similar resolutions. To encourage less repetition, and more bilateral and multilateral discussions, there was to be a second round of discussions on Thursday.

The Bureau agreed with the draft timeline and to have it published and distributed by the Secretariat. The timeline was subsequently updated throughout the week according to progress in implementing the agenda.

At a Bureau meeting mid-week on Wednesday 19 October, there was discussion of the progress in small *ad hoc* group discussions around the proposed Resolutions and Schedule Amendment.

In regard to the proposed Schedule Amendment, on Thursday 20 October the Chair convened the Bureau to discuss how to proceed with the IWC68 meeting given the situation generated by the absence of some delegations in the meeting, with attendance falling below 45 (a simple majority of the members of IWC). A number of countries who had attended the Private Commissioners' meeting did not attend the Plenary meeting that was held immediately following PComms, when the Amendment was to be discussed. The Bureau members' interpretations of quorum varied, however the Chair was advised that the Plenary could be held, however no decisions could be taken, in line with what had happened at previous IWC meetings. To clarify, no decisions could be taken on the adoption of any proposed Resolutions or Schedule Amendments or any other decisions that could impact the Commission's work or process (e.g. changes to Rules of Procedure) if the non-attendance of a number of countries continued during future sessions at IWC68. The Bureau agreed to this approach with an understanding that the WG-OE would undertake a review of the RoP for quorum in the intersessional period and this would be considered as the first item of business at IWC69, before any other decisions are adopted.

6. Specific Agenda Topics

The Chair noted several other topics on the agenda

1. Scientific Committee
2. Conservation Committee

3. WG-OE
4. F&A and BSC
5. ASW
6. WKM&WI
7. Infractions

The Bureau discussed the challenge faced by the SC and the CC to present four and two years of reports, respectively. The plan was for one hour of presentation only, and then delegates would be encouraged to contact the SC and CC with any questions during the week. The issues raised in this process would be the focus of the 2nd presentation by the SC and CC later in the week.

The Chair noted that Wednesday (19 October) would be focused on reports from the Committees – one hour or less each for ASW, WKM&WI, and INF. Other items to complete would be addressed on Thursday and Friday 20 and 21 October, respectively.

At the Wednesday 19 October meeting, the Bureau discussed the ongoing negotiations regarding the options for a biennial budget for 2023-24. Whilst there had been an initial consensus for Option 2, the BSC worked with the Secretariat to develop a hybrid option 1.5 that would allow a delay in increase in contributions for certain member countries.

7. Election of Officers for Chair and Vice-Chair, Bureau membership and other positions

The Bureau discussed the process for the election of officers for Chair and Vice-Chair, which would be raised in PComms and then in Plenary. There would also be a need to secure nominees for membership in the Bureau. Other changes would also be made to a few of the Committees, sub-Committees, Standing and Working Groups.

During the IWC68 week, there was one candidate proposed for Chair, notably the current Vice-Chair, Commissioner Amadou Telivel Diallo (Republic of Guinea). There was one candidate proposed for Vice-Chair, notably Commissioner Nick Gales (Australia).

The new Bureau comprises Guinea (Chair of the Commission), Australia (Vice-chair of the Commission), USA (Chair of F&A), Argentina (serving 2 yrs), Belgium (serving 6 years), Ghana (serving 4 years) and St Lucia (serving 4 years).

Several other leadership positions were modified.

8. Other business

Bureau members noted that it would be important to remind people to arrive early each morning as it would take time to get the Covid tests ready. The Chair agreed to raise this point at the Private Commissioners meeting on the evening of Sunday 16 October.

The Chair noted that there would be two Ministerial presences with statements: Australia on day 1 and the Rep of Guinea. As the Minister of Guinea could not arrive until later in the week, it was suggested that she could address the Plenary at the time that the Vice-Chair is elected to Chair.

The Secretariat noted that Peru had expressed an interest in offering to host IWC69 in 2024 and Antigua and Barbuda to host the Scientific Committee meeting in 2024.

The Bureau was reminded that the Executive Secretary recruitment would be launched early in 2023, with short-listed candidates to be interviewed by the Bureau on the sidelines of the Scientific Committee meeting in Bled (April/May 2023).