



**Minutes of the Bureau Meeting  
Tuesday 6 June 2023  
Virtual Meeting**

**10h00 to 12h15 UK time**

**Attendance:**

***Bureau Members:***

Amadou Télivel Diallo	(Chair, Republic of Guinea)
Nick Gales	(Vice-Chair, Australia)
Belinda Jago	(Australia)
Francis Nunoo	(Ghana)
Lucia Scheinkman	(Argentina)
Horace Walters	(Saint Lucia)
Ryan Wulff	(F&A Chair, United States)
Stephanie Langerock	(Belgium)

***Invited Participants:***

Alex Zerbini	(SC Chair, Brazil)
Lindsay Porter	(SC Vice-chair, UK)

***Interpreters:***

Schéhérazade Matallah-Salah  
Warda Tazi

***Secretariat:***

Rebecca Lent	(Executive Secretary)
Nikki Bartmeier	(Head of Finance and Administration)
Moussa Ki Sow	(Database Manager)
Iain Staniland	(Head of Science, Conservation, & Mgt)
Mark Tandy	(Head of External Affairs)

**Apologies:**

Cat Bell	(CC Chair, UK)
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## **1. Welcome from the Chair**

The Chair welcomed all to this 2<sup>nd</sup> Bureau meeting of the year, reminding the participants that given the decisions on the biennial budget taken at IWC68, all Bureau meetings other than the one(s) held at the Commission meetings are to be held virtually. He noted that the Bureau meeting was convened in line with Rule of Procedure B.4 and that the Chairs and Vice-Chairs from the Scientific and Conservation Committees, and the Budgetary Sub-Committee were also invited to join this Bureau meeting, as allowed under the Rule of Procedure 9. The Chair underscored that the Commissioner from Peru was also invited to join the Bureau meeting, as is the rule for the host country of the next Commission meeting.

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

The agenda, which was circulated to the Bureau on 11 May 2023, was adopted with no changes. Both background papers were also circulated to the Bureau on 24 May 2023. Given the recommendations of the Working Group on Operational Effectiveness (WG-OE) that were adopted at IWC68, the Chair reminded the Bureau that the agenda and all documents would be shared with the Commission along with the report of the meeting.

The minutes of the previous Bureau meeting held on 28 February 2023, had already been adopted by correspondence and can be accessed [here](#).

## **3. Appointment of rapporteur**

It was agreed that, as usual, the Secretariat would serve as rapporteur for the Bureau meeting.

## **4. Updates from the Scientific Committee**

Upon opening this agenda item, the Chair relayed his deepest condolences to the Japanese delegation and the entire IWC family on the passing of Dr Yoshida. The SC Chair (Zerbini, Brazil) expressed the condolences from the Scientific Committee and the Secretariat issued a Circular honouring Dr Yoshida.

### **4.1 Report from SC69A**

The SC Chair (Zerbini, Brazil) reported on a successful meeting, with 238 scientists from 31 countries. This included 63 virtual participants who actively engaged in discussions. The IWC Voluntary Assistance fund enabled participation from 4 countries (Peru (2 persons), St Lucia, Benin, Morocco), and COMHAFAT funded an additional three scientists.

Some key outputs of SC69A include:

- SC endorsement of twenty new population estimates;
- Completed reviews for North Atlantic fin whales (relevant to hunts in West Greenland and Iceland) ;
- Significant progress on assessments of North Pacific humpback and NP common minke whales;
- The Committee agreed it will be in a position, by May 2024, to provide advice on all ASW hunts;

- Intersessional work is planned to ensure the SLA for North Pacific gray whales is robust to recent Unusual Mortality Events (UMEs).
- Completed review of franciscana and updated the CMP action;
- Agreed to a new decadal review of the Southern Ocean Sanctuary at SC69B

The SC Chair noted that the Extinction Initiative, now renamed 'Extinction Alert', was discussed at SC69A. The goal is to raise the SC's concerns prior to an impending extinction and record its dismay should an extinction occur. The mechanism for raising SC concern is a public statement. At IWC68 the Commission endorsed a template for these statements and agreed that some form of Commission endorsement should be sought prior to publication of individual statements, and that the endorsement process would be dictated by the point in the IWC meeting cycle and urgency of the situation. The SC has drafted and endorsed an Extinction Alert Statement of Concern dealing with the plight of the vaquita and sought the Bureau's agreement that this follows the process agreed by the Commission. The contents of the statement is drawn from reports of the SC and CC that have been previously endorsed by Commission. This statement of concern is also part of the SC69A report that is currently undergoing a silence procedure for endorsement by the Commission. The Bureau agreed that the Extinction Alert was consistent with the process agreed by the Commission at IWC68 and could be shared if it was endorsed by Commission as part of the SC69A report.

The Bureau members congratulated the SC Chair and Vice-chair on a successful meeting and were particularly pleased to hear that the Commission will have the scientific information necessary to support the discussions of the ASW quotas at IWC69 in 2024.

#### 4.1.1 Chair's report on the meeting of the Scientific Committee (SC69A)

The report was published on 30 May 2023, one month following the last day of Plenary at SC69A, as per the SC Handbook.

#### 4.1.2 Adoption by silence procedure

In line with the new RoP adopted at IWC68, the SC69A report has been circulated by the Secretariat to be adopted by the Commission using a silence procedure 30 days after publication (i.e. 29<sup>th</sup> June).

#### 4.1.3 Joint meeting CC-SC

The 7th CC-SC Working Group meeting took place immediately after SC69A, on 7 May 2023. The working group was established by the Commission (resolution 2014-4) to facilitate the implementation and follow-up of conservation recommendations.

Key discussion points discussed at this meeting were:

- A process for determining priorities for conservation issues (small group led by Staniland)
- Matters arising from IWC68, in particular the timing of the joint CC/SC working group meeting when the SC moves to a biennial schedule.
- Matters arising from SC69A including: Species of urgent and emerging concerns, Anthropogenic underwater noise (including: potential effects of deep sea mining), Chemical pollution, Ecosystem function/modelling, Climate change, Marine debris and plastic resolution, Whale sanctuaries, The Bycatch Mitigation Initiative, Ship Strikes, Whale watching, Conservation Management Plans and use of the database of recommendation by the CC and by the Joint CC/SC Working Group.

## 4.2 Plans for SC69B

No host country was forthcoming so the 2024 meeting will return to Bled, Slovenia as this is the most cost-effective option for such unhosted meetings. The dates would be April 22<sup>nd</sup> 2024 onwards.

The “limited hybrid” option used for SC69A will be used again at SC69B, with active virtual participants allowed to join specific sessions/discussions. This approach raised issues in terms of confidentiality requirements for an SC meeting, although it was noted that the fully virtual meetings over the past three years had not resulted in any breaches of confidentiality. Hybrid meetings provide cost savings by reducing IP costs, however there are costs associated with technical support (additional AV equipment and personnel).

#### 4.3 Budget issues

The budget cut agreed at IWC68, coupled with larger than expected costs of SC69A (flights and greater AV needs given unexpected levels of virtual participation), and a lack of a host country, resulted in insufficient funds available to support a full SC meeting in 2024. Forecasts based on SC68A suggest a £43,000 shortfall made up of £32,000 in the meeting budget and £11,000 for IPs. The Secretariat noted that another £15,000 would be needed to cover the costs of virtual participation for SC69B.

At SC69A extensive discussions were held about how to deal with this issue with the following options put forward:

- 1) Seeking voluntary donations to increase the budget available for the meetings and IPs;
- 2) Addressing the Bureau for advice;
- 3) Cutting plenary/sub-committee days to cover a reduced agenda.

An SC-Budgetary Advisory Group was formed last year with representatives from a range of SC experience, regions and viewpoints. This group is tasked with helping the SC plan its work under the new budgetary constraints both in the short and long term. It is envisaged that over the next intersessional period this group will develop options for changes to the Scientific Committee meeting structure to be discussed at SC69B.

The Bureau recognized the funding challenges facing the SC, and advised a few options to address the budget constraints, including requesting Commissioners to fund the IPs from their countries, and voluntary contributions from member countries, which are a possibility in the coming months. There was also agreement that the Secretariat send out a Circular informing the IWC community of these funding challenges, seeking voluntary funding and encouraging countries to be hosts for the SC and/or to include IPs on their national delegations. The Bureau noted the importance of the Commissioners being aware that unless voluntary contributions are forthcoming, there will be impacts on the ability of the SC to provide the necessary science for Commission decisions. The Bureau also noted that this is not necessarily a sustainable approach for the longer term.

## 5. Financial contributions

### 5.1 Current status

The Secretariat provided an overview of the status of contributions for the Commission financial years of 2022 and 2023. The Commission is currently quorate, given that for 2022, 58 countries are in good standing and 30 countries have arrears. The total amount of arrears for 2017-2022 is £533k, which is approximately 31% of the IWC annual contributions budget.

Contributions for the Commission financial year of 2023 are due 30 June 2023 and currently some 34 countries are in good standing (39%). The deadline for paying 2023 contributions is 30 June 2023, although under the Rules of Procedure and Financial Regulations, voting rights are not suspended until the earliest of the following events:

- 1) Commission or Bureau meeting
- 2) Postal vote
- 3) 30 September.

Bureau members expressed their ongoing concern about the lack of payment of contributions and its impact on the ability of the Commission to conduct its work. This was also reflected in the challenging discussions around budget at IWC68.

## 5.2 Update on Web-based tool

The Secretariat indicated that the [webpage](#) providing regular updates on the status of contributions of member countries has been implemented. There has been no adverse feedback on this website tool. The reporting process is similar to what is currently provided by the UN Secretariat of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS). This will be updated each month.

## 5.3 Voluntary funds

The Commissioner from Australia (IWC Vice-chair) announced that the government of Australia would be contributing AUD \$800k (about £430k) for several IWC funding needs as follows:

- £160K for the General Fund, to underpin the financial security of the IWC as an organisation.
- £265K for the Voluntary Funds, across a range of funds to underpin a lot of the important work across different parts of the Commission, including SORP, VCF (specifically BMI, CMPs), Small Cetaceans, ASW and in particular supporting a project to mitigate the effects of ghost gear on whale populations that are subject to the Alaskan hunters, and VAF.

The Vice-chair noted that an IWC Circular would be forthcoming to announce and elaborate on this voluntary contribution. Bureau members expressed their gratitude to the Government of Australia for its generous contribution.

## 6. Primary post-IWC68 tasks based on Outcomes document

### 6.1 Budget

The Secretariat had already provided detail on the implementation of the IWC68-agreed biennial budget, under previous agenda items, including cuts to the Scientific Committee (meeting budget and Research budget) and updates on contributions.

It was noted that the leadership of the Budgetary Sub-committee (Australia) will be changing as the staff involved are unfortunately moving on to new positions. The Bureau expressed its appreciation for the work of these staff members.

### 6.2 WG-OE and other intersessional groups

The Co-chairs of the WG-OE were not available for this Bureau meeting however they are planning to reach out to the WG members in the coming weeks. The Bureau welcomes progress with the

important work of the WG-OE and urged the Co-chairs to continue with their plans for a meeting in the coming weeks.

### 6.3 Revised RoP and Financial Procedures Post-IWC68

The Secretariat reported that modifications to the IWC's Rules of Procedure and Financial Regulations (RoP) are agreed by the Commission and are reflected after each Commission in revised RoP. The somewhat 'patchwork' approach to updating the documents has resulted in some inconsistencies in the text of the RoP, as was discovered during the discussions at IWC68 regarding voting rights under delayed payments.

In addition, edits may be required given decisions by the Commission to implement elements of the Governance Review, as proposed by the Working Group on Operational Effectiveness – WG-OE. The changes agreed at IWC68 are in the RoP, however the WG-OE work continues, and additional proposals will be presented at IWC69.

Finally, the RoP could benefit from a comparative analysis with those of other IGOs as a means of suggesting modifications that could be relevant and useful for guiding IWC's work.

The NOAA Grant has provided funding for an external review of the IWC's RoP. The Secretariat would like to issue a call for tenders for this work, to begin in the fall of 2023 and be ready for consideration at IWC69. This work would be conducted in consultation with the WG-OE, in addition to regular updates to the Bureau. The Bureau was in agreement with the potential benefits of this external review in collaboration with the WG-OE and looked forward to updates for the Bureau during the intersessional period.

## 7. Secretariat updates

### 7.1 Moving Secretariat office

The Red House has been sold for £1.305 million, representing a return on investment of around 11%. The Red House will be used for a pre-school age children's nursery. The Secretariat has found a smaller, more economical and fit-for-purpose open-space office less than 1 km from the current location, about half the size of the Red House. Negotiations are underway for rental terms. The move will likely be mid-August, so the Secretariat is focused on sorting out the many files, publications and other items in the Red House. Some of these materials have already been digitized, and additional digitization will be conducted, with the support of the National Archives Office of the UK as well as a summer intern funded by NOAA. Original documentation will still be part of the items to be moved.

### 7.2 IW69

Peru will be the host country. A site visit in July will allow a review and decision on the ideal site. A budget review is also underway looking at various options for the structure and length of the meeting, which can be addressed at the next Bureau meeting. The meeting would be held late September/early October 2024.

The Bureau thanked the Government of Peru for hosting the meeting and asked that the dates be set early to avoid conflicts with other meetings. The Secretariat is consulting with the calendar of international meetings and asks Bureau members to provide dates of meetings or holidays that may

need to be taken into account. The Bureau also noted the need for sufficient time to discuss the ASW quotas.

**8. Date of next Bureau meeting – 2 October 2023.**

This virtual meeting will focus on preparations for IW69 including the format and length of the meeting. The Bureau suggested 2 October 2023 for the next Bureau meeting.

**9. AOB**

There was nothing to report.

Meeting was adjourned at 12h20 UK time.