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**Mid-term Review of the Conservation Committee  
Strategic Plan 2016-2026**

**IWC Secretariat, CC Chair, CC Vice-Chair and Topic Leads**

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# Mid-term Review of the Conservation Committee Strategic Plan 2016-2026

## Introduction

The Conservation Committee Strategic Plan (IWC/66/CC08) was endorsed by the Committee in 2016 and subsequently endorsed by the Commission at IWC66. The Plan outlines the objectives and priority actions and threats to be the focus of the conservation Committee work between 2016 and 2026. At the Conservation Committee (CC) virtual meeting in 2020, the CC agreed to a mid-term review of the Strategic Plan 2016-2026.

Mid-term Reviews (MTRs) are primarily a monitoring tool to identify challenges and outline corrective actions to ensure that the committee is on track to achieve maximum results by the completion of the current Strategic Plan. The MTR process provides an informative report to guide the CC in its ongoing work.

This MTR is an opportunity to identify and re-focus priorities, improve processes, and increase the visibility of CC achievements.

## Process

The MTR followed a collaborative and participatory approach ensuring close engagement with key participants. Rojas-Bracho (Mexico) as Chair of the Conservation Committee, led the mid-term review which was endorsed by the Conservation Committee at its virtual meeting in September 2020.

The mid-term review considered:

- Assessment of progress towards objectives
- Monitoring of implementation and adaptive management to improve outcomes
- Identification of risks to sustainability
- Emphasis on supportive recommendations
- The roles and responsibilities of the Conservation Committee and its Standing Working Groups and priority topic intersessional groups and other relevant Commission bodies
- The achievements and challenges for priority actions addressing identified priority threats, particularly in light of the global pandemic
- Relevance of the Priority work areas for the remaining five years of the work plan
- Funding for CC activities, including the process for receiving and approving funding requests. As funding is limited, prioritisation exercises like this one are critical. The Secretariat is developing a Strategic Plan for Fund Raising, which will be guided by the CC's priorities.

The Chairs of the Standing Working Groups (SWG), topic leads and Secretariat were asked to complete two spreadsheets. The first spreadsheet addressed the objectives, priority threats and actions, and measures of success outlined in the Strategic Plan and the second contained an extract of all CC meeting recommendations from 2016 through 2020 indicating their progress. An additional tab on this spreadsheet asked specific questions concerning the overall progress of the CC over the last five years.

This initial table sought first-hand experience and feedback on the achievements and progress of each work area regarding the near and long-term measures of success. For the second Table, topic leads were asked to consider the CC recommendations and mark which ones they thought were achieved and therefore complete, ongoing or which had not been done or stalled due to challenges.

Spreadsheet 1 was circulated to SWG Chairs and topic leads in April 2021 and Spreadsheet 2 in August 2021.

Feedback was received in relation to all current and developing work areas. The review also drew on experiences and their observations from Chairing the committee for the last five years. The CC Chair and Vice Chair, in collaboration with the Secretariat, then reviewed all comments in order to assess the overall progress of the CC in meeting its objectives outlined in the Strategic Plan.

An initial draft of the main findings was developed, and this document was circulated to Contracting Government CC focal points (CG), observers and stakeholders for comments and feedback.

Finally, the feedback was summarised, and the Strategic plan reviewed to see whether any changes need to be made for the last 4 years of this plan.

This final draft will be presented to the Conservation Committee Planning Group with the aim to:

1. Reflect on feedback received from all participants
2. Review progress against the programme outcomes and indicators and make any necessary changes and adjustments as necessary
3. Review the management arrangements for the programme and make recommendations for changes if required

## Findings

### Overview

As of the mid-term review, steps taken to address the priority threats and actions of the strategic plan have been mixed in their progress and ambition. Positive progress has been made though there is thus-far a lack of evidence that measures are resulting in populations/species recovery, which for most species is a long-term process. There is evidence however that population decline has been slowed in some cases as a result of ship strike mitigation measures.

Given the progress made, yet need for improvement, the priorities of the strategic plan can be considered to still be relevant and necessary. The main challenges continue to be gaining buy-in and support from stakeholders and governments. Where government participation has been active there have been effective results (e.g., Country profiles and case studies contributed to the WW Handbook; Peru's engagement for developing a pilot project for the Bycatch Mitigation Initiative (BMI), the development of an MoU between Chile and Peru for protection of the eastern South Pacific southern right whale (CMP action) Colombia and other range states driving development of a Conservation Management Plan for the Amazon River dolphin). The most effective actions contributing the most to addressing priority threats are considered to be: whale watching and the IWC Whale Watching Handbook; Conservation Management Plans (CMPs); the database of recommendations and advances made in the bycatch initiative.

Below, the Priority Threats and Actions of the CC Strategic Plan are categorised as "good", "medium", and "limited" progress areas depending on how well the actions have progressed towards addressing their respective issues, and therefore the objectives of the strategic plan.

## Priority Threats & Actions

### Good progress areas

#### *Sustainable management of whale and dolphin watching*

The whale watching handbook has been completed and endorsed by the IWC. It features key information for whale watching tourists with species identification, and whale watching information. Uptake in use of the handbook is continually increasing and has proved to be useful for Commission and in-country discussions on marine protected areas (MPAs). Joint work has continued with CMS on the IWC Whale Watching Handbook including translating the pages into French and Spanish. The Whale Watching Standing Working Group (SWG-WW) is currently looking to update its membership with representatives from the Scientific Committee and industry. During the past SC meeting (68C and 68D) it was agreed to reconstitute a standing intersessional correspondence group on communication between the Conservation Committee's Standing Working Group on Whale Watching and the Scientific Committee's Sub-Committee on Whale Watching.

#### *Conservation management planning*

Progress has continued on four long-term Conservation Management Plans (CMPs), and a new CMP for Amazon River dolphins was agreed by the Commission in 2021. There are now two CMPs in place for small cetaceans. Recognising the need for swift conservation action for vulnerable populations, the Standing Working Group on CMPs (SWG-CMP) developed a process to fast-track the development of CMPs where the SC has deemed a population to be high priority based on available evidence. This process was agreed at IWC67 and the SC has since recommended that CMPs be developed for several high priority populations, including the central American humpback whale. This allows IWC member range states to skip the CMP nomination stage and progress straight to CMP development.

The SWG-CMP is working on replacing the current CMP workplan with a strategic plan (as recommended by the CC) and a handbook to help CMP members and stakeholders to navigate the CMP process. The strategic plan will set out objectives for financial self-sufficiency of CMPs, strengthening CMP partnerships, and improvements to the monitoring and evaluation of the CMP program. These documents will be considered at IWC68. The SWG-CMP has produced one newsletter to raise awareness of the CMP program, with hopes to produce these regularly and develop other communications products to assist with fundraising.

#### *Effective financing*

In 2010 the Intersessional Correspondence Group on Strengthening IWC Finance (ICGSF) was established to consider conservation financing. In addition, the Steering Group for the Voluntary Conservation Fund was established in 2017 to evaluate and assess eligibility of proposals. A project template has been developed to record costed projects and workplans of all Standing Working Groups (SWGs) of the Conservation Committee and is being used as a template for project submission to the Voluntary Conservation Fund (VCF). The 2016 progress report established a need for an in-house fundraiser, this recruitment has been finalised and the Projects Coordinator is now in place (Feb 2022). A living list of potential funds and grant opportunities has been developed, as well as guidance for Acceptance of Funds and the Code of Ethical Fundraising. Additionally, several Secretariat staff members completed a Fundraising for Non-Profits course.

#### *Ship strikes*

A new Ship Strikes Work Plan for 2020-2024 was developed by the Ship Strikes Working Group (WG-SS) and is proposed for endorsement by the CC as a living document, subject to further refinement prior to IWC68. The SC considered high-risk areas and reviewed shipping in Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) in 2020. In April 2019, the IWC-IUCN-ACCOBAMS ship strike and IMMA workshop were

held jointly. Its report was discussed and approved at the IWC SC 68A meeting in Nairobi. It prompted a WWF-funded analysis of all IMMAs identified, as well as AIS data. This analysis was welcomed and reviewed at the SC, and it revealed some previously unknown potential high-risk areas. The joint workshop also resulted in recommendations in favour of rerouting shipping around the Hellenic Trench and a PSSA in the Pelagos Sanctuary (France, Monaco, and Italy). The IWC has drafted a MoU with Marine Traffic to provide shipping data for analyses by the SC; the MoU is on hold for now, however it is hoped that Marine Traffic will continue to supply data critical to IWC scientific research. There are ongoing discussions regarding high-risk areas identified in the Ship Strikes Strategic Plan, and continued collaboration with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Secretariat and Sri Lankan officials on the high-risk area off the south coast of Sri Lanka. The SC continues to advise on ship strike risks in other identified high-risk areas including the Canary Islands, Pelagos Sanctuary and Hellenic Trench. Recently, discussions between eNGOs (IWC Observers) and individual shipping companies have resulted in re-routing commitments following IWC advice (voluntary) from the shipping and cruise companies that use the Hellenic Trench in Greece. A strong positive case for the implementation of ship strike mitigation measures can be made as research has shown a significant reduction of strikes off the east coast of the US and the Hauraki Gulf of New Zealand. The Ship Strikes Strategic Plan expired in 2020 though was retained and extended due to the delayed Commission meeting. A new [Plan](#) has been drafted for 2022-2032 and has been endorsed by SC68D.

#### *Marine debris*

Results from a 2019 workshop and its recommendations ([Report of the 2019 workshop on marine debris](#)) were endorsed by the SC and CC, the results of which can be accessed on the IWC website and the DoR. The intersessional group is working in collaboration with the Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI) on marine debris; endorsement by the Commission will be requested at IWC68, through the signing of a Statement of Support with this group. A recent review paper documenting what is known about the impacts of marine debris on all cetaceans, particularly pandemic generated plastic wastes, references the work of the IWC, including the last IWC workshop. Whilst this is not a direct product of the intersessional group, discussions by the IWC clearly helped to inspire and inform the [paper](#). The Global Partnership on Marine Litter (2020) has been an active group for the last few years and the Secretariat has been involved with several virtual conferences on its development. In March this year (2022) Heads of State, Ministers of environment and other representatives from UN Member States endorsed a historic resolution “End Plastic Pollution: Towards an international legally binding instrument” at the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-5). The [resolution](#) is aimed at addressing plastic pollution and forging an international legally binding agreement by 2024. It addresses the full lifecycle of plastic, including its production, design and disposal. There should be future opportunities for the IWC to engage in the process as it goes forward. Noting this context and potentially other processes, the Secretariat now has a list of experts drawn from the correspondence group (CG) who might be called upon to represent the IWC at relevant meetings. The IWC secretariat also facilitated communication between stakeholders in the USA Arctic and Bering Sea, about the possible high risk of bowhead whale entanglement in ghost crab gear.

The intersessional group is continuing to review this threat and will report back to the SC and CC.

#### *Bycatch*

The Bycatch Mitigation Initiative (BMI) was established in 2016, followed by the development and implementation of a 10-year strategic plan from 2018-2028, with costed work plans in 2018 and 2020. Meetings held include the 2019 Regional Indian Ocean Bycatch workshop, and there has also been collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and Regional Fisheries Management

Organisations (RFMOs) at Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) meetings, FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI), and participation in the development of FAO Technical Guidelines. The BMI capacity building programme was established, with pilot projects identified which are now under development, with those in Peru and The Republic of Congo being the most advanced. VCF funding raised £279,279 between 2016-2021.

Working in collaboration with RFMOs, SPREP and other partners, the IWC Secretariat participated in the development team preparing of the GEF/FAO Common Oceans ABNJ Tuna Phase 2 project. The IWC's sub-project aims to collaboratively advance efforts to assess and mitigate cetacean bycatch in tuna fisheries across two ocean basins - the Indian Ocean (with possible collaboration with IOTC and other partners) and the Pacific Ocean (with possible collaboration with SPREP, WCPFC, and other partners). The project would also lay the foundation to scale up to other regions and fisheries. At regional level, the proposed activities fall across three themes: 1) Assessing cetacean bycatch, and data gaps across an ocean basin to inform RFMOs on the scale and scope of issues in relevant fisheries and provide a baseline; 2) Building regional capacity and awareness on cetacean bycatch and available solutions; working with key countries to train fishers, fisheries managers and observers in cetacean bycatch mitigation, monitoring, safe handling and release and the review and dissemination of relevant information on best practices to address bycatch. 3) Collaboratively developing recommendations to address cetacean bycatch across multi-lateral environmental and fisheries agreements. The IWC will focus on developing recommendations for cetacean conservation through its own Committees and Commission processes and build a coordinated and collaborative approach with national governments participating in both IWC and the relevant RFMOs. The project is due to begin July 2022.

In addition, the BMI has been awarded a FAO contract to develop a series of factsheets illustrating the Technical Guidelines to reduce and prevent marine mammal bycatch in capture fisheries. These are due to be complete September 2022.

#### *Effective data collection and reporting*

The IWC Database of Recommendations (DoR) was endorsed in September 2018 and is now being regularly updated and used for SC and CC meetings and workshops to track progress of existing recommendations but also develop more focused new recommendations. The Secretariat is using the DoR on an almost daily basis to monitor work. Guidance on Drafting Recommendations for the Conservation Committee was adopted as a living document, to be further refined as use of the DoR continues. The DoR has been used for this review of CC work by looking at all CC recommendations since 2016.

There has been low uptake in countries contributing to the Voluntary Conservation Reports with only eight received in 2018. Reports were not requested in 2020 due to Covid-19 and the virtual meeting. As such the information is not currently used to inform the IWC on threats. Data relevant to priority threats is also collected via the SC progress reports and the ship strikes database, but reporting rates are also low for these. The Commission endorsed the idea of a conservation database in 2018; this was discussed at the CC in 2020 and is now a matter of high priority. A prototype database is currently in development and due to be ready for IWC68.

In 2020 the Conservation Committee supported the proposal for an IWC Data Manager as part of the Ship Strikes workplan. This post was filled in 2021 and is working with ship strikes, strandings and the development of the Conservation database. Further work is needed to identify how IWC reporting can be of more value and used by contracting governments and stakeholders. This should ensure synergies in use between the SC progress reports and conservation database.

### *Engagement with Other Organisations*

The Commission and the Scientific and Conservation Committees have adopted numerous recommendations over the years for strengthening engagement with other organisations. The IWC Secretariat, in collaboration with members of the SC, CC and SWGs have been working to carry out these mandates, in addition to exploring newly emerging opportunities. Participation in meetings, virtual or otherwise, continues to be limited by time and budget constraints and has underscored the need to establish priorities for engagement and representation by other means, such as through engaging members of the IWC community. The Secretariat regularly updates Contracting Governments and observers on the relevant activities in other IGOs and these include requests for assistance in preparation for IWC engagement, whether by the Secretariat or member country representatives.

Despite the limitations, IWC continues to maintain communication and participation at numerous meetings and workshops. Recent examples include input to the CMS Guidelines on in-water interactions with wildlife, representatives on the IMO correspondence group reviewing the 2014 Underwater noise guidelines, IWC representatives will participate in the FAO Regional Fisheries Management workshop in June 2022 to improve implementation of mitigation measures for bycatch, ongoing engagement with CBD in the development of the post 2020 biodiversity framework. Specifics can be found under each topic in this report (Annexe 1) and/or the most recent report to SC of Secretariat engagement ([link](#)).

### Medium progress areas

#### *Anthropogenic underwater noise*

Since 2018, the ICG has been established, with Resolution 2018-4 being adopted at IWC67. New members were added to the AUN ICG and a meeting was held in Dec 2020 to identify threats and next steps. This includes

- a) a review of work by IWC and other fora to progress and increase collaboration
- b) a questionnaire to compile global information on marine seismic surveys for hydrocarbon exploration, including currently ongoing activities and planned activities for the next 5 years [2022-2027], has been developed. The questionnaire will be submitted at the Scientific Committee (SC68D) and if approved could be circulated through a notification from the IWC Secretariat to all member States, as well as other relevant international organisations, such as the CBD, the CMS/ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS Joint Noise Working Group, the EU MSFD TG Noise Group, among others.
- c) participation in the IMO Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) 76 meeting with other organisations and Countries. MEPC76 successfully proposed to have a review of the 2014 guidelines on underwater noise from shipping. The review is now underway by a Correspondence Group and both CC and SC will be involved in making comments towards this. Progress will be reported at the January 2023 MEPC meeting.

#### *Cetaceans and ecosystem functioning*

The CC established a working group, and the commission endorsed a proposal for a workshop to assess the socio-economic values of the contribution of cetaceans to ecosystem functioning, with a view to reporting the advances to IWC68. The workshop was delayed by the pandemic but was successfully held virtually at the beginning of April 2022. It is envisioned that the resulting report and proposed workplan will be presented to IWC68.



### Climate change

The Steering Committee met in March 2021 and there was a pre-meeting seminar April 2021. A combined CC/SC workshop was held in November/December 2021 and the report is available [here](#). Recommendations from this workshop and subsequent SC discussion will help develop this area for the CC.

### Limited progress areas

#### *Whale sanctuaries and protected areas*

Proposals have been put forward for a new South Atlantic Sanctuary (SAS), and a large-scale cetacean survey in the Indian Ocean. The IMMAs process is assisting in the protection and awareness in the Indian Ocean however, the Indian Ocean Sanctuary (IOS) does not have a management plan in place and was last reviewed in 2002. IWC has endorsed a review of the Southern Ocean Sanctuary SOS and revised management plan and the SC has been preparing for the review process.

#### *Chemical pollution*

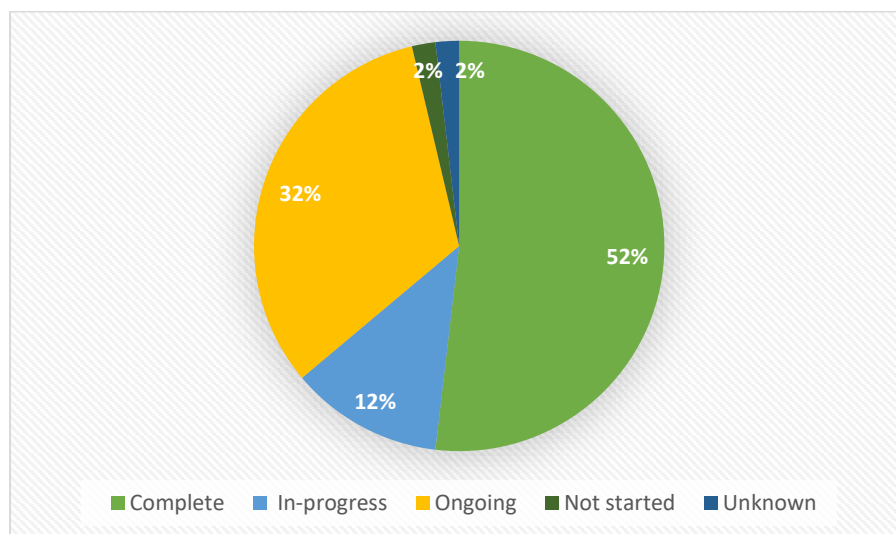
A small group formed at the 2020 CC meeting to develop this priority area and will work with the SC Sub-committee on Environmental concerns to identify appropriate actions to take. The recent SC Pollution 2025 workshop ([link to report](#)) and recommendations will assist in developing how the CC can engage with this topic.

### Review of Progress on Conservation Committee recommendations

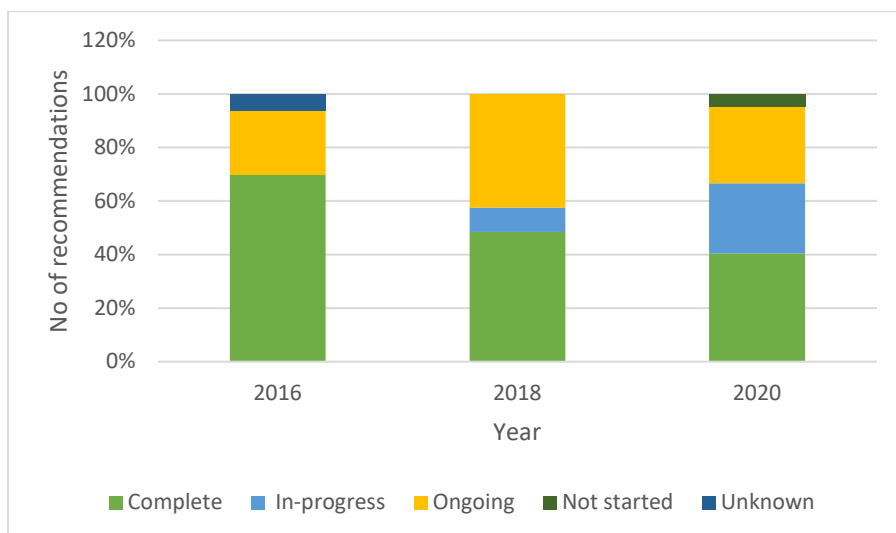
The Conservation Committee has made a total of 108 recommendations between 2016 and 2020. The breakdown of progress on these is shown in Figure 1 and 2.

Definitions: *Ongoing* as used in the DoR are those with no defined end point. This includes those such as Cooperation with other organisations and encouraging Contracting Governments Observers to assist with funds.

*In progress* are those with a date to be completed or reported on such as IWC68. They may also include those with multiple steps to be completed.



**Fig 1:** Breakdown of the progress on all 108 recommendations.



**Fig 2:** Progress of recommendations as a percentage of those made by year.

It should be noted that some of the ongoing recommendations are essentially repeats of previous recommendations and can therefore be ‘superseded’ and closed.

### Suggested alterations to the Strategic Plan

Overall, it was agreed that the Strategic Plan is still appropriate to address threats to cetacean populations, with all priorities actions and threats remaining highly relevant.

Regarding the Measures of Success, it is suggested that rewording is needed to make the following measure more realistic and achievable.

*Decline of the most at-risk cetacean populations has been halted*

**Suggested rewording:** Decline of the most at-risk populations is identified, and management measures have been taken to reverse the decline

Continued use of the DoR is encouraged to draft focused recommendations, follow progress, and identify topic areas that need to be advanced.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The mid-term review has shown that generally good progress has been made towards meeting the Strategic Plan’s objectives and priority actions to address threats to cetaceans. The main challenges continue to be gaining buy-in and support from stakeholders and governments. Where government participation has been active there have been effective results. In considering the above, we call on member countries to support and actively participate to develop the *limited progress areas* (e.g., chemical pollution). The priorities of the existing plan remain relevant to the conservation of cetaceans, therefore there is no proposal to change the Strategic Plan at this point except for a minor change to wording in the measures of success.

## Annexe 1

Table 1. A summary of IWC's collaboration with other organisations from 2016-present.

Organization	Activities
IMO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2016, IWC presented a document on information regarding ship strikes to cetaceans at the 69<sup>th</sup> meeting of the IMO Marine Environmental Protection Committee (MEPC60/10/3). This was positively accepted, and future steps were agreed that the IWC would continue to attend IMO meetings, and the IWC would update the IMO on any information regarding extent and impacts of underwater noise from shipping.</li> <li>• The IMO received IWC recommendations on shipping noise in 2018, and the Secretariat attended an IMO workshop on Quieting Ships in 2019 that discussed ship-based noise limits and technical noise reduction methods.</li> <li>• Underwater Noise was discussed at MEPC76 in June 2021, and the IWC Secretariat submitted a short paper outlining recent IWC work on underwater noise and emphasising the IWC's desire to collaborate with the IMO on this issue.</li> <li>• In January 2022, the Ship Design and Construction Sub-Committee (SDC 8) addressed underwater noise, and IWC contributed a short paper (SDC 8/14/5) on this. This meeting resulted in the formation of a correspondence group (CG) to work on updating the IMO noise guidelines and determining next steps. The Convenor of HIM, Chair of the CC Anthropogenic Underwater Noise ICG, and the Secretariat are on the CG, and have begun reaching out to SC and CC Noise group members for input on the areas we can most effectively contribute to.</li> </ul>
IUCN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The IWC has maintained its observer arrangement and its participation in a number of particular areas, such as Conservation Management Plans (CMP), the IUCN Western Gray Whale Advisory Panel (WGWAP) and the IUCN Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force (MMPATF).</li> <li>• Both the SC and the Ship Strikes Working Group have encouraged cooperation between the MMPATF and the IWC on the topic of IMMAs and, at its meeting in May 2018, the SC endorsed a proposal for a workshop to assess Important Marine Mammal Areas and the applicability of this approach for identifying high risk areas for ship strikes.</li> <li>• The Secretariat Head of Science, Conservation and Management and the Executive Secretary joined the on-line meetings of the WGWAP in November 2021 which marked the final year of the programme. The panel were presented with recommendations from the IWC SC and a report from the Russia Gray Whale Project part funded by the IWC.</li> <li>• The IUCN Global Species Programme has contacted the Secretariat to offer an opportunity to review the 'GSAP Action Table' which contains the CBD Post-2020 Targets (1-20). Each target has an indicative set of draft actions, and the goal is to support and complement the implementation of the post-2020 framework. As staff time allows, the Secretariat will continue to strive to provide comments on this document and is requesting SC members to express their interest in joining in this effort.</li> </ul>
CITES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Secretariat continues to engage with CITES on several issues including the development of a procedure for transboundary transport of diagnostic specimens for cetacean disease investigations in emergency situations.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In addition, following recommendations made by the SC in 2021 (SC21193-194) the Secretariat is working with CITES to investigate several cases of capture and trade of live animals.</li> </ul>
CMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The IWC has an MoU with the CMS and collaborates with the daughter agreements ASCOBANS and ACCOBAMS.</li> <li>• Joint work has continued with CMS on the IWC Whale Watching Handbook (particularly translations).</li> <li>• Both the CC and SC WW groups have provided input to the CMS Guidelines for in-water interactions with wildlife in February 2022. The Secretariat is waiting to see the revised document.</li> </ul>
CBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The IWC has undertaken a number of efforts to establish and strengthen engagement with the CBD. This has included exchange of letters, and meetings between the Secretariat of the IWC and the CBD.</li> <li>• Since 2018, the IWC has been invited to participate in several talks of the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions (BLG) as part of developing the post 2020 framework for biodiversity and associated targets and indicators.</li> <li>• Several IWC Circulars (IWC.CCG.1353, IWC.CCG.1361 and IWC.CCG.1338) summarize results from these activities and opportunities for the IWC to be engaged either through the Secretariat or through national efforts. The latest Zero draft of the post-2020 framework can be found here.</li> <li>• In May 2022, the IWC Chair and Executive Secretary met at the UN facilities in Geneva. In addition to in-person sessions, the CBD COP is anticipated to be held in China in the fall of 2022. When the timeline is clear, IWC Contracting Governments will be notified.</li> <li>• When engaging in this process, the Secretariat will continue to highlight issues most directly relevant to healthy cetacean populations. These include key threats to cetaceans and any opportunities for these to be addressed or strengthened in the framework and by promoting opportunities to address these threats including through increased cooperation, capacity building, engagement of key sectors (e.g. shipping and fisheries) and data management and reporting.</li> <li>• IWC68 would bring an opportunity for the Commission to welcome the Post 2020 Framework for Biodiversity and to make any observations on the role of the IWC in delivering relevant objectives in the framework. The Secretariat will draw this opportunity to the attention of the Contracting Governments nearer the time but proposes that the development of any proposals to the Commission should be led by Contracting Governments.</li> </ul>
FAO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The IWC continues to strengthen collaboration with the regional and global bodies that address fishery management and in particular, the challenge of cetacean bycatch.</li> <li>• In 2018, the Secretariat attended the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) meeting to raise awareness of the IWC's Bycatch Mitigation Initiative and work on entanglement and highlight further opportunities for collaboration with FAO. Several governments spoke in support of IWC/FAO collaboration at this meeting and the need for collaboration with the IWC on cetacean bycatch (including on the future development of technical guidelines on mitigation) was reflected in the final COFI report.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2019, IWC’s Bycatch Coordinator participated in an expert workshop to develop draft FAO Technical Guidelines for reducing bycatch of marine mammals in fisheries. The draft guidelines were published as annex to the 2019 workshop report.</li> <li>• The IWC Executive Secretary and BMI Coordinator attended the virtual meeting of the 34th session of the COFI in February 2021. IWC interventions were provided in relation to the need to address cetacean bycatch, in particular to welcome the approved technical Guidelines to Reduce and Prevent Marine Mammal Bycatch in Capture Fisheries (SC/68C/ForInfo 107), and to promote collaborative opportunities between the FAO, fisheries management organisations and the IWC.</li> <li>• The IWC Secretariat is also collaborating with the FAO, providing annual statistics on anthropogenic cetacean mortality for their annual publication of fishery data, using information from the IWC Progress Reports or submitted directly to the IWC.</li> <li>• FAO hosts the Regional Secretariat’s Network (RSN) which is an organisation of Executive Secretaries/Directors of Regional Fishery Management Organisations and other Regional Bodies, including IWC. The IWC Secretariat’s Executive Secretary joined the RSN’s virtual meeting in February 2021. COFI is planning to meet 5-9 September of 2022. The RSN will meet one day prior and one day following the COFI meetings.</li> <li>• The IWC Secretariat has contracted with the FAO to prepare Fact Sheets that support the implementation of the marine mammal bycatch guidelines. These will be prepared in 2022, including a review by the Bycatch Expert Panel.</li> </ul>
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