



**Minutes of the Bureau Meeting
Monday 2 October 2023
Virtual Meeting**

20h00 to 22h00 UK time

Attendance:

Bureau Members:

Amadou Télivel Diallo	(Chair, Republic of Guinea)
Nick Gales	(Vice-Chair, Australia)
Suzi Heaton	(Australia)
Miguel Iniguez	(CC Vice-Chair, Argentina)
Juan Pablo Paniago	(Argentina)
Francis Nunoo	(Ghana)
Horace Walters	(Saint Lucia)
Tom Gleason	(United States)
Mi Ae Kim	(For Ryan Wulff, F&A Chair, United States)
Madison Harris	(United States)
Alisha Falberg	(United States)
Lisa Phelps	(WGOE Co-Chair, United States)
Stephanie Langerock	(Belgium)

Invited Participants:

Alex Zerbini	(SC Chair, Brazil)
Lindsay Porter	(SC Vice-Chair, UK)
Margie Eddington	(Australia)
Carlos Briceño	(Peru)
Alejandra Paz Ramos	(Peru)
Cat Bell	(CC Chair, IFAW)

Interpreters:

Mohammed Bennis
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:

Ryan Wulff	(F&A Chair, United States)
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1. Welcome and introduction

The Chair welcomed all to this third and last meeting of the Bureau for 2023. The Chair noted 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 reminded participants 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 Commissioner from Peru, host country for IWC69, was also invited to attend as is permitted under the Rule of Procedure M(9).

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 August 2023, was adopted with two changes requested by the Chair: an additional Agenda item 4.3 to discuss communication regarding delays in contributions, and an addition to Agenda Item 8 (AOB) to discuss a letter received from Sea Shepherd Conservation requesting accreditation to the IWC.

All background papers were also circulated to the Bureau on 20, 29 and 30 September 2023. The Chair noted that given the recommendations of the Working Group on Operational Effectiveness (WG-OE) that were adopted at IWC68, the Bureau agenda and documents were shared with the Commission prior to the meeting.

The minutes of the previous Bureau meeting held on 6 June 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. Financial contributions

4.1 Current Status

The Secretariat provided an overview of the status of contributions for the Commission financial years of 2022 and 2023. Annex A in the Secretariat's updates paper to the Bureau shows countries with and without voting rights as at 09:00 11 September 2023. The arrears balance totals nearly £989k, which is approximately 58% of the IWC annual contributions budget. The Secretariat noted that one country had paid a prior year contribution just prior to the Bureau meeting. The Bureau was reminded that not receiving contributions on time is detrimental to the Commission operating and paying its obligations as they fall due.

For 2023 financial contributions, the Commission has received 41 payments, 47% of the members. The due date for 2023 invoices was 30 June 2023. This means that the Commission is NOT currently quorate and therefore cannot hold a vote if this becomes necessary.

It was also noted that the deadline for payment for 2023 had just passed and that the number of countries in arrears was roughly equivalent to the average over past years, particularly for a non-Commission year.

In its deliberations, the Secretariat was urged by the Bureau to reach out again to the countries in arrears with a reminder to pay their contributions. The Secretariat noted that it will remind these countries of the existing options in the Rules of Procedure for establishing a payment plan.

4.2 Voluntary funds

The Secretariat noted that voluntary contribution funds have been updated to 31 August 2023 and a summary paper is available to view on the IWC website under Finance & Funding: (<https://iwc.int/commission/iwcfinancing>).

4.3 Secretariat correspondence regarding status of contributions

The Bureau discussed recent email communications between the Secretariat and the Commissioner for Antigua and Barbuda. The Commissioner requested that the Chair of IWC call a special intersessional meeting of the Commission to address the issue of arrears in contributions and the ensuing loss of voting rights which he underscored is more frequent for developing countries.

In its deliberations, the Bureau members noted that intersessional work underway in the Working Group on Operational Effectiveness (WG-OE) and the Budgetary Sub-Committee (BSC) is addressing the very same issues raised in the Commissioner's correspondence. Bureau members recalled that at IWC68, the WG-OE was assigned a list of tasks which included defining criteria for 'exceptional circumstances' as were applied at IWC68, considering aligning voting rights suspension with the Biennial meeting schedule, and further consideration of payment plans for member countries in arrears (see Outcomes Document from IWC68, notably IWC/68/GEN/03).

Therefore, whilst Bureau members shared the concerns of the Commissioner from Antigua and Barbuda, they advised the Secretariat to write a response encouraging the Commissioner's active engagement in these efforts already underway which directly address these issues.

The Bureau opined that holding a special intersessional meeting would place additional burdens on the IWC budget and detract from work already in play through existing mechanisms.

5. Updates from the Scientific Committee

The Chair of SC (Zerbini) presented an update on the preparations for SC69B.

5.1 Work underway for SC69B

An Invited Participants (IP) list has been established and travel arrangements will be made soon, as part of an effort to ensure the lowest possible fares for travel. The SC agenda is also under preparation which will facilitate planning of participation. A review of the Southern Ocean Sanctuary is planned along with a pre-meeting for the Abundance Steering Group and a possible meeting on Southern Right Whale catches. The SC is collaborating with Exeter University to advance work on the IWC Resolution 2022-1 on Marine Plastic Pollution.

5.2 Budget issues

The SC leadership is working closely with the Secretariat to determine the amount of funding available for SC69B. With the final figures for SC69A showing a lower overspend than previously estimated, and with generous voluntary contributions from France and the Netherlands, the SC69B budget should be

comparable to that for SC69A. The SC Chair noted several saving measures in place, including smaller meeting rooms, reduced SC/sub-group agendas (hence reduced meeting length) and requesting countries to include IPs in their national delegations and thereby covering their travel costs.

The Chair of the Conservation Committee (Bell) then provided a brief update, noting that the Conservation Committee Planning Group (CCPG) was scheduled to meet later in the same week. This planning for the CC meeting in 2024 will take into account that the CC will need to meet virtually at least two weeks prior to IWC69. The Chair also noted that she would be stepping down following the CCPG meeting and a new Chair, Jack Collier (UK), will be stepping into this role.

6. Preparations for IWC69

6.1 Venue

Peru have offered to host the IWC69 meeting for the week of 23 September 2024. The Chair and members of the Bureau thanked the Commissioner of Peru for hosting IWC69. The Secretariat discussed the timeline and steps for developing the draft IWC agenda and ASW-relevant documents as presented in Table 1 in the Annex to the Secretariat's updates paper to the Bureau.

6.2 Format – numbering of days and sequencing

The Bureau discussed the current anticipated agenda items for IWC69, including aboriginal subsistence whaling (ASW), the Biennial budget for 2025-26, WG-OE proposals, and a possible review of previous Resolutions.

In considering options for organizing the meeting, the Secretariat noted the decisions adopted at IWC68 by the Working Group on Operational Effectiveness (WG-OE) and the Budgetary Sub-Committee (BSC), as described below.

6.3 Budget

BSC Option 1.5 called for virtual pre-meetings (including BSC, F&A, CC, ASW, WKM&WI, Infractions and possibly Private Commissioners' Meeting) and a 4-day Commission meeting unless the financial conditions allowed for more days. The total budget available is £212,700; additional funding is not available to cover any core meeting cost overspend. The current estimate of meeting costs in Peru would allow a total of 5 days of meetings. Interpreters and Rapporteurs would work remotely for the pre-meetings and the reports of the pre-meetings could be made available a week prior to the Commission meeting. Secretariat staff participation in the Commission meeting would be reduced.

6.4 WG-OE

The WG-OE recommendations adopted at IWC68 suggested a revised Commission meeting structure as follows: Commission meeting starts with a Plenary session in the morning and Private Commissioners' Meeting in the afternoon as needed. All proposed Schedule Amendments or Resolutions must be tabled in the first session. Day 2 could be used to hold additional pre-meetings of committees and/or adoption of pre-meeting reports. The last three days of the week would be for Plenary.

In its deliberations, the Bureau noted that the Commission should hold its pre-meetings virtually and sufficiently in advance to ensure that participants have sufficient time to travel to the venue and that

the reports were completed and translated at least one week prior to the start of the plenary of IWC69. There was strong support to ensure that, notwithstanding the budget agreements reached at IWC68, the ASW Sub-committee be able to meet in person. Bureau members also recalled the urgent need to ensure that the host government would be able to expedite the issuance of visas to attend the Commission meeting and work with the Secretariat to ensure visa information was provided in good time.

7. Other Secretariat updates

7.1 Sale of the Red House

The Secretariat noted that there had been numerous delays in the sale of the Red House, however more recent developments point to a sale completion by the end of November. Arrangements are underway to rent new office space and the Secretariat will be in the new space by the end of the calendar year.

7.2 Incoming Executive Secretary

The Secretariat announced that the starting date for the incoming Executive Secretary Martha Rojas Urrego will be 30 October 2023. The Secretariat was pleased to host the incoming Executive Secretary for a three-day visit in late September, which allowed meetings with the staff and briefings on Secretariat work.

8. AOB

8.1 Letter from the Minister of Climate and Environment of Poland

The Bureau discussed the letter from the Minister of Climate and Environment of Poland requesting expulsion of the Russian Federation from IWC, or suspension of its voting rights. The Secretariat reported that other international organisations have received similar correspondence and that they are limited to actions possible under their Conventions and other such documents. The Bureau noted that the IWC Convention and Rules of Procedure have no such provisions. The Secretariat was requested to prepare a response to Poland, on behalf of the Chair, reflecting this finding and noting that Commissioners may raise such concerns in a statement to the Commission.

8.2 Letter from the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society (SSCS)

The Bureau discussed the letter from the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. Bureau members recalled that the SSCS had caused disruptions and raised safety concerns at prior meetings of the IWC, thereby leading the Commissioners to previously decide to deny observer status. The Bureau advised the Secretariat to prepare a response on behalf of the Chair to relay that the Commissioners will be advised of this request and will be asked to consider a decision on Sea Shepherd Conservation Society's observer status at IWC69 for its attendance to IWC70 and future meetings of the Commission.

8.3 Dates of next Bureau Meeting

The Chair suggested a date of 4 March 2024

Closure of the Meeting

In closing the meeting, the Chair thanked the outgoing Executive Secretary for her service over the past six years.

Meeting was adjourned at 21h45 UK time.