

**Minutes of the IWC Bureau Meeting**  
**Monday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2024**  
**Virtual Meeting**  
**10:00 to 12:00 (London)**

**Attendance:**

***Bureau Members:***

Nick Gales	(Vice-Chair, Australia)
Margie Eddington	(Budgetary Chair, Australia)
Rosa Delia Gomez Durán	(Argentina)
Miguel Iniguez	(CC Vice-Chair, Argentina)
Stephanie Langerock	(Belgium)
Francis Nunoo	(Ghana)
Horace Walters	(Saint Lucia)
Ryan Wulff	(F&A Chair, USA)
Mi Ae Kim	(USA)
Mahvish Madad	(USA)
Lisa Phelps	(WGOE Co-Chair, United States)

***Invited Participants:***

Alex Zerbini	(SC Chair, Brazil)
Lindsay Porter	(SC Vice-Chair, UK)
Carlos Briceño	(Peru)
Jack Collier	(CC Chair, WGOE Co-Chair, UK)

***Secretariat:***

Martha Rojas Urrego	(Executive Secretary)
Nikki Bartmeier	(Head of Finance and Administration)
Iain Staniland	(Head of Science, Conservation, & Mgt)
Mark Tandy	(Head of External Affairs & Communications)
Kate Wilson	(Communications Officer)
Moussa Ki Sow	(Database & IT Manager)

**Apologies:**

Amadou Télivel Diallo	(Chair, Republic of Guinea)
Juan Pablo Paniego	(Argentina)
Alejandra Paz Ramos	(Peru)

## **1. Opening of the meeting by the Chair**

### **1.1. Welcome from the Chair**

The meeting was chaired by the IWC Vice-Chair, Dr. Nick Gales, at the request of the Chair Mr. Amadou Telivel Diallo who was unable to attend given the situation of the Republic of Guinea. Dr. Gales has stepped into the role as Chair on a temporary basis in line with Rule of Procedure (RoP) G.1 and following IWC precedent. The Bureau sent best wishes to Mr. Diallo and expressed the hope that he will soon be able to resume his duties as Chair.

The Chair welcomed participants and noted that chairs and vice-chairs of the following committees had been invited in accordance with the RoPs: finance and administration, scientific committee, conservation committee, and the budget subcommittee. The Commissioner of Peru, Mr. Carlos Briceño, was also invited as host of the next meeting of the IWC, IWC69.

The Bureau welcomed the Ms. Rosa-Delia Gomez Duran who was nominated by the government of Argentina to participate in the meeting.

The Bureau also welcomed the IWC's recently appointed Executive Secretary, Martha Rojas Urrego to her first meeting of the Bureau.

## **2. Review and Adoption of the Agenda** and adoption of minutes from previous meeting [[DOCUMENTS](#) – Bureau Agenda [BUR/2403/02/01](#) Bureau Minutes Oct 2023 [BUR/2403/02/02](#)]

The agenda was adopted with no amendments, noting comments from the Government of Austria which are handled under Item 6.1. The agenda and documents were circulated to the Bureau and Commission before the meeting.

The minutes of the previous meeting had been adopted by the Bureau and circulated to the Commission on 25 October 2023.

## **3. Appointment of Rapporteur**

The Secretariat was appointed as rapporteur.

## **4. Status of Financial contributions** [[DOCUMENT](#) – Update on Contributions [BUR/2403/04/01](#)] also see [IWC website](#)

The Secretariat summarised the current state of financial contributions highlighting:

- the Commission is currently quorate with 57% of 2023 contributions paid.
- the deadline for payment of 2024 contributions is 30 June 2024.

In discussion it was clarified that a proactive approach is in place for collection of outstanding payments. The Secretariat will be sending targeted, quarterly statements and offering one-to-one discussions with members in arrears. The Secretariat also stands ready to work with the Working Group on Operational Effectiveness (WG-OE) as they move forward on proposals regarding the relationship between financial contributions and voting rights.

The Bureau noted the status of contributions and stressed the importance of timely payment to ensure the effective operation of the Commission.

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

### **5.1. Work underway for SC69B**

The Chair of the Scientific Committee (SC) provided a summary of preparatory work for the Scientific Committee meeting which begins in April. Work has been undertaken to reduce costs wherever possible, with the overall length of the meeting shortened by one day, a culled and tightly prioritised agenda, and the two-week schedule planned in advance to optimise resources and available time for Invited Participants.

The SC Chair also thanked the Governments of Spain, the Netherlands and France for voluntary contributions which are both generous and valuable, particularly in support of Invited Participant attendance.

The Bureau thanked the Scientific Committee for their extensive efforts to find cost-efficiencies and wished them a successful meeting.

## **6. Preparations for IWC69**

### **6.1. Venue and host arrangements [[DOCUMENT](#) - Secretariat Updates [BUR/2403/07/01](#)]**

The Government of Peru provided an update on meeting arrangements, explaining that an unavoidable parliamentary approvals process was delaying circulation of information to meeting delegates. The Government fully recognised the importance of timely information and is working extremely hard to expedite this process.

In discussion it was acknowledged that information related to visa applications was particularly important and has the potential to directly affect the ability of governments to participate in the meeting. The Government of Peru undertook to explore the scope to handle this aspect of the process separately and more quickly, and to continue to work closely with the Secretariat to finalize the arrangements for the meeting.

On behalf of the Government of Austria, the Chair sought information on the availability of inexpensive accommodation within a short and safe distance from the venue, and the implications of an outbreak of Dengue fever.

The Secretariat and the Government of Peru provided assurances on both matters. There are 2-3 hotels within safe walking distance of the meeting venue. The travel advice received by the Secretariat is that Lima is considered Dengue-free. The city is also accustomed to hosting large, multinational meetings and has experienced no problems concerning either issue.

The Bureau thanked the Government of Peru for the update and all their hard work.

## 6.2 Confirmation of arrangements for virtual Sub-Committees including ASW in-person meeting [see [IWC.CCG.1585](#)]

The Chair noted that a new, virtual format for sub-committees, reduced plenary time, and several complex agenda items will present major challenges. Bureau members were encouraged to reach out within their regions and wider constituencies so that concerns can be explored, and proposals developed and shared before the meeting begins.

The Secretariat explained that scheduling for the virtual sub-committee stage of the meeting was developed following an assessment of the time required by each sub-group at previous meetings. The dates for these meetings (28 August – 5 September 2024) and time-slots had been agreed by the Bureau prior to the meeting and circulated to the Commission. The Circular also reminded the Commission that the meeting of the ASW Committee will be in person on 22 September.

The Bureau noted the Sub-Committee sessions proposed, stressing the challenges resulting from the arrangements agreed in IWC68. The Secretariat explained that the schedule has some flexibility to minimise the risk of running out of time.

Given the constraints, the Bureau noted the particular need to avoid repetition of identical debates in sub-committees and plenary.

The Secretariat proposed several measures to maximise efficiency and these were agreed by the Bureau:

- reduction in the number of documents presented (there were 148 at IWC68) and separation of documents required to support the decision-making of the Commission and those which are for information.
- production and circulation of a daily report of decisions taken during the plenary meeting.
- a record kept of any decisions taken during Private Commissioners meetings to ensure their substance is accurately reflected in the report of the meeting.
- a report and brief presentation to Plenary by the Executive Secretary of the work of the Secretariat to address questions and maximise accountability.

## 6.3. IWC69 Draft Outline Agenda [[DOCUMENT](#) – IWC69 Draft Outline Agenda [BUR/2403/06.3/01](#)]

It was agreed that the agenda item on Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling should be moved higher on the agenda and a new sub-item added under ASW on the extension process.

The Bureau also noted that it is important to follow the previous practice of opening difficult or complex agenda items as early as possible during the plenary to maximise discussion time.

The agenda was agreed with the above modification. It was noted that a working programme will be developed that will address the order in which the different items of the agenda will be considered.

#### 6.4 F&A Update

##### 6.4.1 Budget

The Bureau welcomed the new Chair of the Budgetary Sub-committee who gave an update on the work of the group, reminding the Bureau that the Commission had adopted new principles for financial management at IWC68. These include setting balanced budgets that align income and expenditure, zero-based budgeting where each budget is built afresh with no roll-over from previous years, and a longer, four-year budgetary cycle.

Inevitably at this point in the budgetary process there are still some uncertainties. Work will continue with more detailed information available at the next Bureau meeting.

##### 6.4.2 WG-OE - Update from Co-chair on progress made on priority items arising from IWC68 [DOCUMENT – WGOE Updates and timeline [BUR/2403/06.4.2/01](#)]

The Co-chair of the Working Group on Operational Effectiveness gave an update on the complex and multi-faceted series of proposals to be presented at IWC69. The main areas of work were summarised as:

- Quorum (RoP B.1)
- A definition of 'Exceptional Circumstances' (RoP E.2.(a))
- voting rights and payment plans.

Timelines and milestones have been developed to break down the work into separate areas with a series of virtual meetings due to begin next week.

The importance of outreach and inclusion was again emphasised and a Circular was proposed as a good way of sharing the timeline and milestones as widely as possible across the Commission. The option of WG-OE leadership attending specific events such as preparatory meetings was also raised. In the past this has been successful in lesser-represented regions.

##### 6.5 ASW Update [DOCUMENT – Extension of the ASW Strike/Catch Limits at IWC69 [BUR/2403/06.5/01](#)]

The Government of the US presented a [paper summarising the process](#) for handling renewal of ASW quotas which will be used for the first time this year. The Bureau agreed the process proposed, noting that it is important to remind the Commission what was agreed at IWC67 and ensure delegates receive all the information needed to understand the procedure that will be followed.

As part of the process agreed, two Circular Communications should be sent: the first at the end of March, before the Scientific Committee, to outline the process and mindful of the requirement to notify the SC of any potential quota changes. The second Circular will be sent after publication of the SC report and before the Commission's 60 day deadline (aiming for 90 days beforehand). The ASW

Sub-Committee will meet on 22 September, followed by consideration by IWC69 in plenary session.

## **7 Secretariat updates** [[DOCUMENT](#) - Secretariat Updates [BUR/2403/07/01](#)]

The Chair reported that, after many months of negotiation and preparatory work, the purchaser of the Red House had pulled out of the sale. The Secretariat had made arrangements to move to a much smaller, purpose-built office rental and he had approved that this move will still go ahead to ensure the welfare and basic working conditions of the Secretariat.

The Bureau agreed that the Red House is no longer fit for purpose. The building has been largely empty for four years and was in need of significant renovation before that. Asbestos, a leaking roof and a failing heating system are some of the factors that mean it has become a health and safety concern. The Secretariat had analysed the costs involved in moving to the rental premises. Should we not sell the Red House during 2025 we will have a shortfall in funds of £25k. Once the Red House is sold, we can use the interest from the invested proceeds to cover this shortfall. Thanking the government of the UK for its generous voluntary contribution to support rent and running costs, as well as those related to the transition until the sale of the Red House.

The Secretariat thanked the Chair, the Bureau and the Government of the UK for their support and informed the Bureau that it has taken immediate steps to re-market the Red House and consult the local planning office to ascertain what type of redevelopments they are likely to approve to help focus on specific prospective buyers.

The Secretariat also updated the Bureau on recent collaborative activity including participation in the Bern III process with 4 Commission members and the Convention for Migratory Species COP14. It also mentioned the impact of the budgetary restrictions that impeded accepting the invitation to participate in the United Nations Environment Assembly which focused on multilateral processes.

## **8 Date of next Bureau meeting**

The Bureau will next meet on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> June.

## **9 AOB**

None

The meeting closed at 12:10.