



**Minutes of the IWC Bureau Meeting
Monday 3rd June 2024
Virtual Meeting
20:00 to 22:30 (London)**

Attendance:

Bureau Members:

Nick Gales	(Vice-Chair, Australia)
Margie Eddington	(Budgetary Chair, Australia)
Suzi Heaton	(Australia)
Juan Pablo Paniago	(Argentina)
Miguel Iniguez	(CC Vice-Chair, Argentina)
Stephanie Langerock	(Belgium)
Horace Walters	(Saint Lucia)
Ryan Wulff	(F&A Chair, USA)
Mi Ae Kim	(USA)
Alisha Falberg	(USA)
Lisa Phelps	(WGOE Co-Chair, United States)

Invited Participants:

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

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)
Stewart Thomas	(IT Support)
Patrick Naylor	(Publications)

Apologies:

Amadou Télivel Diallo	(Chair, Republic of Guinea)
Francis Nunoo	(Ghana)

1. Opening remarks

The meeting was chaired by the IWC Vice-Chair, Dr. Nick Gales, at the Chair's request, Mr. Amadou Télivel Diallo, who was unable to attend due to travel arrangements. The Vice-Chair thanked Bureau members for attending and noted this is an important meeting as we approach the document deadlines for IWC69.

The Bureau agreed that the rules on quorum do not apply to Bureau meetings but asked for the record to reflect that some members were absent.

2. Adoption of Agenda

The Agenda was adopted with no amendments.

The minutes of the previous Bureau meeting were circulated on 21 March 2024.

3. Appointment of Rapporteur

The Secretariat was appointed as Rapporteur.

4. Status of Financial Contributions

The Status of Financial Contributions was prepared on 23 May 2024. In the meantime, the Secretariat has received a payment from the Republic of Korea, which means the Commission has now received 52 payments (59% members) for 2023 and 28 payments for 2024. The deadline for 2024 contributions is 30 June 2024.

The Secretariat noted that outstanding payments are usually received in the run-up to IWC meetings, but that, in lieu of further payments, IWC69 won't be quorate. The Vice-Chair reminded members that a key role of the Bureau is to ensure there is appropriate geographical representation and therefore encouraged members to reach out to other members in their regions to ensure financial contributions are up to date.

5. Updates from the Scientific Committee

5.1. Scientific Committee Report

The Scientific Committee Chair provided an update on SC69B outcomes.

SC69B was held between 22 April – 3 May 2024, with a total of 270 participants (75 virtual), including 98 from 26 member countries, 130 Invited Participants (IPs), eight observer countries, 10 observers from seven NGOs and 24 members of the Secretariat.

The Scientific Committee leadership introduced a number of cost-saving measures, including a shorter overall meeting, a pre-arranged schedule of subcommittee sessions and a virtual Joint SC-CC meeting after SC69B.

The Scientific Committee elected a new Vice-Chair and developed proposals for a new Vice-Chair Elect. To match the new Biennial cycle, the Scientific Committee recommended changing the terms of the

SC officers to two years, commencing in 2025. These proposed changes to the Rules of Procedure will be presented to IWC69 via the F&A Committee.

The SC69B Report was made available on 24 May 2024.

The Scientific Committee is also in the process of updating the SC Handbook, preparing the Communications Initiative and finalising the Scientific Committee's response to Resolution 2022-1 on Marine Plastic Pollution.

The Bureau thanked Alex Zerbin for his constructive leadership and welcomed Lindsay Porter as the incoming Chair of the Scientific Committee.

6. Preparations for IWC69

6.1. Venue and host arrangements

There will be an in-person ASW meeting between 12:00-14.30 on 22 September 2024. Private Commissioners will also meet between 15:00-18:00 on the same day.

The Secretariat also provided an update on increasing costs since the initial site visit, with an estimated £40,000-£45,000 overspend, due to the additional meetings mentioned above which will be charged at the full-day rate (c.£35,000), with the cost of the ASW meeting to be covered by the ASW Voluntary Fund.

The host Government confirmed it has not allocated any funds to cover this overspend, but there are options to seek voluntary contributions and/or draw on the General Fund. These will be considered as part of the budget discussions.

6.2. Confirmation of arrangements for virtual Sub-Committees, including ASW in-person meeting

The timetable for virtual Sub-Committee meetings has been previously agreed by the Bureau and will be circulated to the Commission in due course.

The Secretariat requested advice on the application of RoP Q.1 to the virtual Sub-Committee meetings, and, in particular, whether these virtual meetings can be deemed intersessional for the purpose of sharing Sub-Committee outcomes before IWC69. The Bureau agreed these virtual meetings can be deemed intersessional in this instance, as a short-term solution, to enable members to prepare for IWC69. Further changes to the RoP will be required to adapt to the new virtual context.

The possibility of timetabling amendments was also raised, but the Bureau accepted that these are operational arrangements and therefore do not require the Bureau's approval.

6.3. Private Commissioners' meeting

The Secretariat provided an update on proposals to ensure there is a transparent record of any decisions agreed in Private Commissioners' meetings, with decisions to be recorded by a rapporteur and approved by the Chair before being announced to the full Commission in Plenary sessions.

6.4. IWC69 draft Agenda & proposed timetable

The draft Agenda will be posted before the 100-day deadline (15 June 2024). The Secretariat will then start to prepare the Annotated Agenda and a proposed timetable of sessions before the 60-day deadline (25 July 2024).

The Bureau reminded the Secretariat to prioritise WGOE and ASW business in the timetable of sessions. The Bureau asked the Secretariat to update the draft Agenda before the 100-day deadline to ensure that ASW business is discussed before Schedule amendments and Resolutions. The draft Agenda was endorsed with these amendments.

6.5. Regional meeting support

The Bureau welcomed the Secretariat's offer to support regional preparatory meetings where required, with further details to be included in the next Circular. The WGOE Co-Chairs also offered to attend these regional meetings to discuss WGOE matters before IWC69.

6.6. Conservation Committee update

A Joint CC-SC meeting was held on 9 May 2024 to coordinate shared topics of interest. A CCPG meeting was held on 22 May 2024 to prepare a plan for IWC69.

Standing Groups and ICGs are working with the Secretariat to update Terms of References and workplans across a range of topics:

- CMPs following endorsement at SC69B (Central American humpback whales, Guiana dolphins, Lahille's bottlenose dolphins & provisional endorsement of a CMP for Irawaddy dolphins)
- CMP Handbook
- Marine debris & response to the Plastics Resolution (2022-1)
- Extinction Alert criteria developed at SC69B
- Next steps on deep-sea mining

The CC Chair also provided an update on the Voluntary Fund, which is in good condition, with c.£180,000 unallocated, while also anticipating a number of financial pressures ahead.

6.7. F&A Update

6.7.1. Budget

The BSC Chair provided an update on budget proposals, subject to change before IWC69.

As agreed at IWC68, the BSC is developing a zero-based budget for the next four years. The BSC anticipates a 2.9% increase for 2025 and a further 0.5% increase in 2026, with the additional cost to be spread across the biennium. Critical needs have also been identified, most notably to address the insufficient capacity in the Statistics Team and a lack of appropriate data-management systems, which are required to deliver core functions of the Secretariat.

The Chair also presented an update on the 2027-28 budget but noted that these figures are still uncertain. Full budget proposals will be available before the 60-day deadline. It was stressed that these figures remain subject to change as further work on the budget is conducted prior to the 60 day submission deadline.

The BSC Chair provided an update on the sale of the Red House, which is a cause for significant uncertainty within the budget. The current proposals assume the Red House will be sold before 2025 - and the Secretariat confirmed there is a conditional offer in place, - but if this assumption isn't met, there will be an income gap of £37,5000 p.a. As discussed in the Bureau's previous meeting, these costs will be covered from the General Fund.

The Vice-Chair encouraged Bureau members to engage with the BSC Chair for any further information. The Secretariat is available to assist where required.

6.7.2. Payment plans

The Secretariat requested guidance on how to respond to requests from members in arrears regarding payment plans. Financial Regulation F5(f) already provides a payment plan for countries in three years of arrears to pay two years' up front, with the balance to be spread across the biennium.

The Secretariat presented four further options to be discussed at IWC69:

1. debt settlement plan for immediate payment with a 10% discount;
2. instalment payment plan with 24 equal payments to be spread across the biennium;
3. debt repayment plan with a 50% downpayment and four further payments across the biennium; and
4. long-term instalment plan, with a 50% downpayment and 48 equal payments across four years.

The Bureau welcomed these proposals and confirmed that any countries which fall into three years' arrears after 30 June 2024 will be limited to the payment plan in Rule F5(f). The Bureau asked the Secretariat to inform relevant countries of this option before IWC69.

6.7.3. WG-OE Update – meetings held 13 March and 3 April 2024

The WGOE Co-Chairs circulated a draft report to the WGOE covering all items discussed at the meetings, including details of the changes required to the Rules of Procedure (RoP). The WGOE has put forward six options on the quorum; a definition of exceptional circumstances; changes to RoP E.2. that would align the suspension of voting rights to the start of the Commission meeting; and payment plans with different options.

Bureau members are welcome to provide feedback, with any comments due on 14 June 2024. A virtual meeting will then be held between 17 and 26 Jun to resolve any queries, with the goal of having the final report by the end of the month, to be circulated before the 60-day deadline.

The Working Group has recommended that changes to the RoP related to these issues and, more broadly, to decision making of the Commission, should be done by consensus. If consensus was not reached, then the existing rules would stay.

6.8. ASW Update

The F&A Chair explained that two out of three conditions have been met for an extension of the ASW Strike/Catch limits, which means it is now for the Commission to address the third condition to determine the extension of the strike/catch limits.

A revised circular was sent out on 1 June 2024 to explain this process.

6.9. Proposed resolutions and Schedule amendments for IWC69

The Vice-Chair encouraged Bureau members to ensure that any proposed Resolutions and Schedule amendments are necessary and relevant as there will be limited time at IWC69 to discuss an extensive Agenda.

There is a template for any Schedule amendments or Resolutions which need to be costed before submission. The Secretariat is available to assist where required.

7. Secretariat Updates

7.1. Update on Secretariat suggestions to maximise effectiveness at future Commission meetings

The Secretariat provided an update on the IWC69 Planning Team's preparations, including measures to reduce the overall number of documents and daily reports to ensure all members of the Commission can keep track of what has been agreed.

The Secretariat is also preparing a Secretariat Report and Intersessional Report for IWC69 to update the Commission on its work since IWC68.

7.2. Secretariat office arrangements

The Secretariat provided an update on its new offices and thanked the Bureau for its support throughout the move. The sale of the Red House was discussed in detail under Item 6.7.1.

7.3. Update on social media

The Bureau supported the Secretariat's plans to establish a new Instagram presence which largely duplicates Twitter content in order to reach a younger audience. Instagram is image-driven, and the Secretariat has compiled an extensive photo library in collaboration with the SC leadership and SC Communications Initiative. The Instagram platform will launch as soon as resources permit.

7.4. Other updates

The Secretariat is currently reviewing recommendations from SC69B against the Secretariat's capacity to ensure that requests are prioritised and the Secretariat's overstretched workload is appropriately managed. The Secretariat will report to IWC69.

The Secretariat informed the Bureau of the retirement of Marion Hughes and the recruitment of an intern to support the Statistics Team. The Bureau asked the Secretariat to pass on its thanks to Marion after 34 years of employment.

The Secretariat also provided an update on its external engagement, including participation in high-level panels on ship strikes, SBSTTA26 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and COP26 of CBD and the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI36). The latter depends on travel funding, but the Bureau highlighted the importance of the IWC's continued engagement in this process.

8. Date of next Bureau meeting

The Bureau agreed to meet on 9 September 2024 in order to discuss any issues which may arise from the virtual Sub-Committee meetings before IWC69.

9. AOB

There was no further business.