



**Secretariat Updates Paper**  
Bureau Meeting – 6 February 2025

**1. Follow up to IWC69**

The preparation and running of IWC69, which included virtual meetings of the IWC sub-committees, was the main focus for all the Secretariat team since the last meeting of Bureau. The Secretariat has circulated the resultant reports and updated key documents (e.g. RoP) from the meeting and is reviewing and acting upon the outcomes and recommendations made therein. Document BUR-2502-04-01 provides a summary of the activities arising from the IWC69 Outcomes for sub-committees. Work is ongoing in relation to activities requested to the Secretariat. The Secretariat is also reviewing the feedback provided in the participant survey in order to help improve its services for future Commission meetings. A summary of the survey result can be [found here](#).

**2. IWC70 preparations (including 80th anniversary)**

The Secretariat conducted a site visit from 9–13 December 2024 to evaluate four shortlisted venues in Brisbane, Hobart, and Sydney for the IWC70 meeting in September/October 2026. The evaluation assessed factors such as venue suitability, accessibility, logistics, and local support. The Brisbane Convention Centre and the Grand Chancellor Hotel in Hobart emerged as the preferred options, offering excellent facilities, budget alignment, and high levels of support. While Brisbane excels in accessibility and modern infrastructure, Hobart provides exclusivity and thematic connections to the IWC's work. The Secretariat is confident that Brisbane or Hobart would provide an outstanding setting for IWC70, meeting all logistical and operational needs, while fitting within the available budget. Subsequent to the visit, the host government has selected Hobart as the venue and are working with the local team to fix dates and other arrangements such as support with delegates' visas. Formal dates will be confirmed in due course after the Bureau meeting.

The Secretariat would like to thank the Government of Australia for their offer to host IWC70 along with their assistance in selecting a venue and in securing a substantial grant of \$600,000 AUD to put towards meeting costs.

The Secretariat is bringing to the attention of the Bureau and the host government of IWC70 that 2026 is the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the IWC, so it is recommended that this milestone be celebrated in the lead-up to and during the biennial meeting. It is requested that if Bureau members have any ideas for appropriate ways to celebrate this, to bring them to the next Bureau meeting for consideration.

**3. Update Secretariat Office arrangements**

The Council approved the regularisation of use classification of the Red House, bringing it all to be under office/ ancillary office space. We are now working towards a change in use classification application.

The prospective buyer is working with a planning consultant to develop a transport report, in the hope to have this completed by the end of January. This was one of the missing elements from the previous application. The re-application will be submitted in early February with a 56-day turnaround for the Council to provide a decision. This step is thus expected to be completed in mid-April.

The legalities will proceed in tandem with the 56-day wait in the hope that sale completion will be in early May.

#### 4. Personnel update

Oxford University agreed to assign and fund three students from the Crankstart Internship program working on one project for the first time, the Species Spotlight social media initiative. Helena Marshall came to the IWC from 10 – 24 December 2024 and worked with Kate Wilson drafting social media posts and outlining species factsheets in collaboration with SC members. Also, the IWC has been awarded the Oxford University Internship Scheme Gold Award, which is based on student feedback that our internship projects are relevant and rewarding.

#### 5. External engagement

The Secretariat participated in the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity held on 21 October – 1 November 2024 in Cali, Colombia. The aim was to ensure that the science and stewardship of the IWC contributes to, and is supported in, the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), as called for in the Resolution 2024-2. In addition to the high-level segment and plenary interventions, we engaged in key areas of the agenda, most notably on marine and coastal biodiversity, monitoring and review, and cooperation. We also co-led events for Ocean Day and with the Biodiversity Liaison Group on our contributions to the Global Biodiversity Framework and were speakers in five side events. COP16 also provided an opportunity to hold numerous bilateral meetings with key partners and stakeholders, all helping to advance our work in relevant areas such as engagement on the High Seas Treaty (BBNJ) and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission Ocean Decade. With some 15,000 policy makers, scientists and other stakeholders attending, COP16 provided an important opportunity to transmit our messages about the IWC's work and relevance to this large and influential audience.

The Secretariat followed CCAMLR 43 online and subsequently met with the CCAMLR Head of Science and the Scientific Committee observer to CCAMLR to discuss relevant details. The increasing role of cetaceans in CCAMLR was noted along with the need for continued cooperation. Current areas of overlap were identified as: whale entanglements/bycatch, whale science to inform krill fisheries management, the role of cetaceans in CCAMLRs ecosystem monitoring programme, Marine Protected Areas and Ecosystem Modelling. In response to Resolution 2024-1 the necessary steps required for the development of an MOU were outlined, with a plan to submit a draft document for comment to CCAMLR 44.

The Secretariat attended the 5<sup>th</sup> virtual meeting of the ASCOBANS common dolphin group presenting on the work of the IWC. Issues around unsustainable high levels of bycatch were raised and recommendations and advice from the IWC scientific Committee on management measures, including temporal spatial closures, were outlined.

At the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee meeting, the Secretariat attended virtually presenting on related IWC work areas and recommendations. Areas of mutual interest include bycatch and the progress on joint ACCOBAMS/IWC CMPs.

As part of the virtual ocean pavilion at the United Nations Climate Change COP29 the Secretariat participated in a panel discussion on “The future of shipping at the biodiversity and climate nexus: Arctic in perspective”. The presentation and subsequent Q&A highlighted the work of the Scientific and Conservation Committees and in particular the Vessel Strikes Global database.

The Secretariat has also attended virtually meetings of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission working party on data collection and statistics (WPDCS20) and the International Maritime Organisation Ship Design and Construction group.

The Executive Secretary signed Memoranda of Understanding with the Permanent Commission for the South Pacific (CPPS) in the margins of IWC69 and with the Pelagos Agreement on 18 December, at the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Agreement. Both MoUs had been approved by IWC69.

The Secretariat will also participate virtually before the Bureau in the eight meeting under the Collective Arrangement for the management of selected areas in the North-East Atlantic, jointly organised by OSPAR and NEAFC on 27-28 January 2025 and in the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Joint Bycatch Working Group of ASCOBANS & ACCOBAMS on 5-6 February.

Immediately after the Bureau Meeting the Secretariat has kindly been invited by the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission to attend their Annual Whaling Captains Convention in Utqiagvik 10-14<sup>th</sup> February. The Chair of the Commission and the Chair of the ASW Committee are also attending and there will be an afternoon session dedicated to the IWC and in particular how it deals with Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling matters.