

## **IWC Database of Recommendations**

*Submitted by the Vice Chair of the Conservation Committee*

### **Issue**

A pilot database that supports the collation and analysis of Scientific Committee and Conservation Committee recommendations has been developed under the auspices of the joint Conservation/Scientific Committee Working Group (CC/SC). This database is now ready to be adopted and embedded into business as usual working practices.

The Commission is now invited to:

- Endorse the pilot database, the principles for its use, and proposal for its continued development and integration into the working practices of the IWC.
- Provide any views on its continued development, including the Commission's role in assessing progress towards the implementation of Recommendations and how it can be best used to help maximise the effectiveness and reach of IWC advice.

Specific actions pertaining to the above are highlighted within this document.

### **Background**

1. In order to support the work of the Scientific and Conservation Committees and delivery of conservation focussed Recommendations, a joint Conservation Committee and Scientific Committee Working Group (Joint CC/SC WG) was established by the Commission under Resolution 2014-4.
2. At its 2015 meeting, this Joint Working Group agreed to undertake a collation and analysis of conservation-relevant recommendations from the Scientific Committee and organise these recommendations into key issues/areas highlighting those that feature regularly (see paper IWC/M17/CCSC/01).
3. The result of this analysis was submitted to the Commission for endorsement at IWC66 (IWC/66/CC25) and the following recommendation was subsequently made:
  - *In order to improve the accessibility, effectiveness and reach of IWC Recommendations, and provide a more effective means of assessing progress with implementing Recommendations and analysing the broader work of the IWC, it is recommended that the Commission establishes an intersessional group to develop a draft structure and process for populating a web-accessible database of recommendations (and outcomes), not necessarily limited to conservation Recommendations or Recommendations of the Scientific Committee.*
4. In September 2017 a small group met in Cambridge to progress the development of a pilot database. This group included the Scientific Committee Chair, Secretariat (including Head of Science, Heads of Programme Development, IT Officer, and Head of Statistics), Conservation Committee Chair and Vice chair, and convenor of the Scientific Committee Global Data Repositories and National Reports working group.
5. As a result of this meeting, a template for a database was proposed and a contract let to develop it. The pilot database was presented and endorsed at the 2018 joint SC/CC.

### **Key aspects of the database**

#### **Overarching Aims**

6. The database is intended to support the Commission, its Committees/Sub-Committees in:
  - Collating and tracking progress towards the implementation of their recommendations over time.

- Assessing the effectiveness of their recommendations through periodic reviews.
  - Identifying and overcoming barriers preventing the effective implementation of recommendations.
  - Improving the transparency of IWC advice by giving recommendations more prominence and external accessibility.
7. The joint CC/SC has discussed the functionality of the database and provided advice which has been reflected in its development. Further information can be found in paper IWC/MAY18/CCSC/02 and is summarised in Annex 1.

### Principles

8. There are a number of important principles to note with regards the development and use of the database:
- (a) The database was initially focused on conservation recommendations from the Scientific and Conservation Committees as the original recommendation arose from the CC/SC WG. However, flexibility has been built in to allow the database to be extended to other work areas of the Commission. From the outset, the Secretariat will use it to support its work planning processes, and its wider use will also be encouraged with the Chairs of other Sub-Committees to highlight the potential and gauge the appetite for expansion.
  - (b) The use of standardised language and structure for Recommendations is essential if information is to be easily uploaded to, and retrieved from, the database. Recommendations should stand alone, be specific and tangible, timebound (e.g. completion or progress review date), and have clear actors associated with their delivery. Guidance has been developed for use by the Committees to ensure this (see Annex 2).
  - (c) The database will be publically available although access to view and modify will be restricted for certain types of information.
  - (d) The overall process of data entry and workflow will be 'owned' by the Secretariat but working closely with Scientific Committee convenors and Conservation Committee members and rapporteurs.
  - (e) Standing agenda items should be included on the relevant Committee/sub-committee agendas to allow for regular review and reporting of progress in delivering recommendations.
  - (f) (Sub) Committees should endeavour to re-iterate previously made Recommendations rather than creating new Recommendations on the same issue, and thus help eliminate redundancy in the Commission's work.

### **Action 1 – The Commission is asked to endorse the overarching aims and principles of the database.**

#### Population of the database

9. Population of the database will be undertaken by the Secretariat after each Commission meeting to reflect decisions taken, as well as after each meeting of the Scientific Committee. It is proposed that this data entry becomes part of routine Secretariat practice, that supports the external implementation of recommendations as well as internal work planning.
10. In addition, an online template will be developed for use by Scientific Committee convenors and rapporteurs to report their SC outcomes in a format that allows direct updating of the database.

**Action 2 – The Commission is asked to instruct the Secretariat to populate the database and facilitate its use by the relevant (Sub) Committees, including through the development of a data entry template for use by convenors.**

*Embedding the database into the working practices of the IWC*

11. For the database to become an effective tool it must be embedded into the working practices of the IWC. Annex 3 outlines a possible workflow in more detail, however flexibility should be afforded (Sub) Committees in how they approach this.
12. There are three distinct aspects to reviewing the implementation of Recommendations:
  - (i) *Regular progress review.* (Sub) Committees should keep their Recommendations under review and provide regular progress updates to the database as a matter of standard practice. This review should be embedded into meeting agendas, for example, as standing items under the relevant discussion points. The database should be used to create lists of live Recommendations e.g. by topic for the (Sub) Committee to discuss. Efforts should be made to rationalise the number of Recommendations by using the database to draw attention to repeated recommendations and create links to overlapping or interdependent Recommendations.

For those Recommendations of a procedural nature e.g. the Secretariat to write a letter, discretion is given to the Secretariat and Chairs to judge when the action has been completed and to update the database accordingly without the need for Commission oversight.

- (ii) *Periodic status review.* For those Recommendations not considered to be procedural in nature, (Sub) Committees should ensure a review of their status is carried out periodically and advice on the status of implementation provided to the Commission as part of their current reporting practices. This will ensure the Commission retains overall ownership and sign-off. These periodic reviews could be specific to a (Sub) Committee or more cross cutting. The Commission may also request a review be carried out on a particular issue.
- (iii) *Full Effectiveness review.* Should this process be adopted widely across the Commission, it would facilitate a full periodic review (e.g. every 5+ years) of the effectiveness of the organisations as a whole. This would require further consideration and planning and likely fall under the auspices of the F&A committee in the first instance.

**Action 3 – The Commission is asked to endorse the above review process and request that the Scientific and Conservation Committees begin to implement this into their standard working practices and report back at IWC68.**

**Action 4 – The F&A Committee and its subsidiary body the Working Group on Organizational effectiveness is asked to consider and advise on the value in developing a formal process for reviewing the wider effectiveness of the organisation, drawing on the outputs of the database and work of the Committees in considering and reporting their own progress towards implementation.**

*Budgetary implications*

13. The development of the database was made possible through a voluntary contribution from the Government of the UK. The use of the database will bring with it a small additional resource burden in the form of ongoing technical maintenance and data entry, in particular for the Secretariat. However, it is expected that these costs can be met through existing resource availability. Furthermore, the database represents an 'invest to save' opportunity,

improving overall efficiency and effectiveness, for example in preparing material for meetings and by helping direct discussions to matters of priority for the IWC.

- The Secretariat has estimated the following resource requirements:
- Staff time for IT support (annual) -6-8 days
- Staff time for data entry (annual) – 10-15 days in the first year (for some back-data entry) and subsequently 5 days after each Commission and Scientific Committee meeting.
- Staff time to prepare outputs – c.5 days per Commission/SC meeting, depending on number of recommendations
- IT infrastructure (web and database hosting, other infrastructure, backup storage and software licensing). Approx. £500 per annum. This will be met through the ongoing review and prioritisation of IT services that is being undertaken by the Secretariat.

**Action 5 – The Commission is asked to agree to the resource requirements necessary to operationalise the database.**

**Annex 1 – Detailed features of the Recommendations Database****Database accessibility**

- There are three key interfaces for the database: 1) basic search; 2) advanced search; 3) editing function.
- The ability to add and edit recommendations will be restricted to the Secretariat only. This is to avoid the scope for duplication/confusion that could be created with multiple editors.
- The database will be publically available via the IWC website. A further password protected interface will be available through the portal interface, allowing for more detailed searches and the updating of information.

*Table 1 – overview of database fields.*

<b>Data fields in database</b>	<b>Format</b>	<b>Additional information</b>	<b>Accessibility</b>
Recommendation text	Free text from Commission reports		Public
Number		Unique identifier number	Public
Type of recommendation	Standardised categories (drop down menu)	E.g. Resolution, Recommendation, Workplan action	Public
Year	Standardised categories (drop down menu) to reflect the year the recommendations was made.	E.g. 2017, 2016, 2015.	Public
Commission body (owner)	Standardised categories (drop down menu) to indicate the body that made the recommendation	E.g. Commission, Budget sub-Committee Conservation Committee Finance & Administration, ASW Sub-committee, WKM&WI, Infractions sub-committee, Scientific Committee	Public
Endorsed at Commission?	Standardised categories (drop down menu)	Yes, No, Pending	Public
Commission endorsed at	Standardised categories (drop down) to indicate the Commission meeting recommendation was endorsed at.	IWC66, IWC67 5	Public
Decision process	Standardised categories (drop down)	Consensus Resolution, Resolution by vote, Report adoption, Other-consensus, Other-vote	Public
Theme	Standardised categories (drop down)	E.g. Bycatch & Entanglement Climate Change, Marine debris, Noise	Public
Species	Standardised categories (drop down)	E.g. Amazon River dolphin, Harbour porpoise, Vaquita, Arabian Sea Humpback Whale	Public
Context/Notes	Free text	E.g. any additional information to include	Visible in private search only
Category of action	Standardised categories (drop down)	E.g. Communication Data/monitoring/research, Cooperation with industry, Cooperation with Governments	Visible in private search only
Actioned by	Standardised categories (drop down)	E.g. Commission, Conservation Committee, Budget sub-Committee, Scientific Committee	Public

Relevant to	Standardised categories (drop down)	E.g. parts of the IWC and external organisations such as ASCOBANS, CBD, FAO.	Public
Document reference	Free text or standardised category (drop down)?	Standardised way of writing section number.	Public
Document URL	URL format	Reference to the online report	Public
Target completion date	a calendar options to choose a date	e.g. 01/01/2018	Visible in private search only
Meeting to be reviewed	Add a reference?	Meeting reference with year	Visible in private search only
Preceded by	Link to previous Recommendations		Public
Superseded by	Link to subsequent Recommendations		Public
<i>Implementation information</i>			
Progress	Standardised categories (drop down)	E.g. Not started ongoing unknown	Public
Actions taken	Free text		Public
Actions needed	Free text		Visible in private search only
<i>Review information</i>			
Status	Standardised categories (drop down)	Open Closed	Public
Last reviewed	A calendar options to choose a date		Visible in private search only
Outcome	Free text		Visible in private search only
Further action	Free text		Visible in private search only

**Annex 2 – Guidance on Drafting Recommendations.**

<b>Language option for Recommendation</b>	<b>Guidance</b>
<b>Recommends</b> <b>[and may be in conjunction with reiterates]</b>	<i>Specific</i> important actions aimed at targets e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commission or its sub-groups (e.g. CC, SC, AWS, WKM&amp;WI)</li> <li>• Contracting Governments within a region or ‘range states’ (should name them unless ‘all’)</li> <li>• Secretariat</li> </ul>
<b>Draws attention to/advises</b>	<i>General</i> considerations (e.g. of concern, areas of importance) or <i>specific</i> advice (e.g. on SC/CC conclusions) should identify targets e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commission or its sub-groups (e.g. CC, SC, AWS, WKM&amp;WI)</li> <li>• Contracting Governments within a region or ‘range states’ (should name them unless ‘all’)</li> <li>• IGOs</li> <li>• General scientific community</li> </ul>
<b>Encourages</b>	Work that it would be good to be undertaken but is not high enough priority to be considered a recommendation (primarily for internal use)
<b>Agrees</b>	<i>Internal</i> actions for the Committee in question (e.g. actions for the workplan)
<b>Concludes</b>	To be used to highlight that a major piece of work has been completed  e.g. <i>Implementation Review, in-depth assessment,</i>

7

**Guidance**

*How to handle management ‘recommendations’ or ‘advice’ to CG(s), non-members or IGOs?*

Options: ‘**Recommends** that the Commission **requests**<sup>1</sup> (or *vice-versa!*) Country ‘X’ or Countries ‘X, Y and Z’

[Options: **Recommends** that the Secretariat **requests** IGO X]

**Structure of ‘recommendations’<sup>2</sup>**

(1) Must be deemed **high priority**, be focussed and be standalone (i.e. include short explanation as to why it is needed as well as what is needed). NB Workshops should follow these guidelines in their reports and their ‘recommendations’ if deemed high priority by the Committee/Sub-Committee

<sup>1</sup> Note that the Commission may then instruct the Secretariat to write

<sup>2</sup> Some relevant to the other categories

must be brought forward into the main report (where not deemed high priority it is possible to 'encourage')

(2) Where appropriate (i.e. linked or sequential actions), should have the main introductory chapeau followed by a series of numbered 'actions' (NB as appropriate sub-items may have different targets/categories)<sup>3</sup>

(3) If one or more actions lead to a budget item, cross-reference to proposed budget

(4) Must be identified by a unique code e.g.

SC67aR1; SC67aE1; SC67aC1

If sub-actions SC67aR1.1 etc

(5) Specify the target(s)

(6) Provide time-frame where possible

---

<sup>3</sup> Need to discuss if necessary to specify differences in targets etc for sub-items in report or only database



**Annex 3 – Proposed process for the review of the implementation of Recommendations**

