

DRAFT
2024 Scientific Committee (SC69B)
Annotated Plenary Agenda

SUB-GROUP AGENDAS WILL BE DEVELOPED BY THE RELEVANT CONVENORS

*** Indicates a note in the annotated agenda**

1. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS*

- 1.1 Chair's welcome and opening remarks
- 1.2 Remembrances
- 1.3 Appointment of rapporteurs
- 1.4 Meeting procedures and schedule
- 1.5 Establishment of sub-committees and working groups

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA*

3. REVIEW OF AVAILABLE DATA, DOCUMENTS AND REPORTS*

- 3.1 Documents submitted
- 3.2 National Progress Reports on research
- 3.3 Data collection, storage and manipulation
- 3.4 Guidance for the format of recommendations and discussion of Recommendations Database
- 3.5 Review of Commission resolutions from 2022

4. COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS [OBSERVER]*

- 4.1 Summary of Secretariat co-operation with other organisations
- 4.2 African States Bordering the Atlantic Ocean (ATLAFCO)
- 4.3 Arctic Council [no official observer but report welcome]
- 4.4 Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) [Secretariat]
- 4.5 Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR)
- 4.6 Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS)
 - 4.6.1 *Scientific Council*
 - 4.6.2 *Conference of Parties*
 - 4.6.3 *Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas (ASCOBANS)*
 - 4.6.4 *Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS)*
- 4.7 Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) [no official observer but report welcome]

4.8 Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO)**4.9 Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs)***4.9.1 Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC)**4.9.2 Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC)***4.10 International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)****4.11 International Maritime Organisation (IMO)****4.12 International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)***4.12.1. IUCN Red List status of cetaceans**4.12.2. Integrated Conservation Planning for Cetaceans**4.12.3. IUCN Task Force on Marine Mammal Protected Areas (formerly ICMMPA)**4.12.4. Co-ordination between IUCN and the IWC SC***4.13 North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO)****4.14 North Pacific Marine Science Organisation (PICES)****4.15 Protocol on Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) of the Cartagena Convention for the Wider Caribbean****4.16 Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP) [Secretariat]****4.17 Other****5. GENERAL ASSESSMENT AND MODELLING ISSUES (IST)*****5.1 Progress on previous recommendations****5.2 Biennial workplan****6. AWMP AND RMP IMPLEMENTATION-RELATED MATTERS (IST)*****6.1 Plan for provision of AWS advice to the Commission in 2024***6.1.1 Consideration of gray whale hunts in the light of new information on inter alia the UME (and see Item 7.1.3)**6.1.2 Greenlandic humpback whales (and see Items 7.1.7 and 8.2.5)**6.1.3 Other hunts (and see Items 7.1.1, 7.1.2, 7.1.4, 7.1.5, 7.1.6)***6.2 Review of the *Implementation Review Schedule*****6.3 Progress on previous recommendations****6.4 Biennial and long-term workplan****7. STOCKS SUBJECT TO ABORIGINAL SUBSISTENCE WHALING (ASW)*****7.1 New information and progress on recommendations***7.1.1 Eastern Canada/West Greenland bowhead whales**7.1.2 Bering-Chukchi-Beaufort Seas bowhead whales**7.1.3 North Pacific gray whales**7.1.4 Common minke whale stocks off East Greenland**7.1.5 Common minke whale stocks off West Greenland**7.1.6 Fin whales off West Greenland*

7.1.7 Humpback whales off West Greenland (see Item 8.2.5)

7.1.8 Humpback whales off St. Vincent and the Grenadines (see Item 8.2.5)

7.2 Biennial workplan

8. WHALE STOCKS NOT SUBJECT TO DIRECTED TAKES BY CONTRACTING GOVERNMENTS*

8.1 Comprehensive or In-depth Assessments (IA)

8.1.1 Comprehensive Assessment of North Pacific humpback whales

8.1.2 Comprehensive Assessment of North Pacific sei whales

8.1.3 Progress on in-depth assessment of western North Pacific common minke whales

8.1.4 In-depth assessment of Antarctic Blue Whales

8.1.5 Biennial workplan

8.2 Potential new assessments: progress on previous recommendations and prioritised workplan (SH and NH)

8.2.1 Non-Antarctic blue whales in the Southern Hemisphere (including NIO populations) (SH)

8.2.2 Southern Hemisphere right whales not the subject of CMPs (SH)

8.2.3 North Pacific blue whales (NH)

8.2.4 North Atlantic right whales (NH)

8.2.5 North Atlantic humpback whales (and see Items 7.1.7 and 7.1.8) (NH)

8.2.6 Rice's whales (NH)

8.2.7 Biennial workplan

8.3 New information (if provided) for other northern stocks (NH)

8.3.3 Unusual mortality events affecting northern stocks (NH; also see Item 14.3.2)

8.3.4 Biennial workplan

8.4 New information (if provided) for other Southern stocks (SH)

8.5 Progress on previous recommendations

8.6 Biennial workplan

9. STOCKS THAT ARE OR HAVE BEEN SUGGESTED TO BE THE SUBJECT OF CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLANS (CMP)*

9.1 Stocks with existing CMPs: new information and progress with previous recommendations

9.1.1 SE Pacific southern right whales (CMP, SH)

9.1.2 SW Atlantic southern right whales (CMP, SH)

9.1.3 North Pacific gray whales (CMP, IST, ASW)

9.1.4 Franciscana (CMP, SM)

9.1.5 South American river dolphins (CMP, SM)

9.2 Progress with identified priorities

9.2.1 Humpback whales in the northern Indian Ocean including the Arabian Sea

9.2.2 Central American humpback whales

9.2.3 Mediterranean sperm whales

9.2.4 Mediterranean fin whales

9.2.5 Guiana dolphins

9.2.6 Lahille's bottlenose dolphin

9.3 Progress on previous recommendations

9.4 Biennial workplan

10. STOCK DEFINITION AND DNA TESTING (SD-DNA)*

10.1 Provide advice to other sub-groups on population structure for requested stocks

10.1.1 North Pacific gray whales

10.1.2 Non-Antarctic blue whales

10.1.3 North Atlantic fin whales

10.1.4 Guiana dolphin

10.2 DNA data quality

10.3 DNA guidelines checklist

10.4 Recommendations on the avoidance of sample depletion

10.5 Review terminology used for stock structure related terms used within the IWC

10.6 New genetic approaches (if submitted) for use by the Scientific Committee in addition to stock structure issues

10.7 Progress on previous recommendations

10.8 Biennial workplan

11. CETACEAN ABUNDANCE ESTIMATES AND STOCK STATUS (ASI)*

11.1 Review of abundance estimates

11.2 IWC Table of Agreed Abundance Estimates and the abundance page on the IWC website

11.3 Methodological issues

11.4 Provide advice to the Commission on the status of stocks

11.4.1 Status of Stocks Initiative (SOSI) intersessional progress

11.4.2 Review of proposed SOSI contents

11.4.3 SOSI workplan

11.5 Progress on previous recommendations

11.6 Biennial workplan

12. BYCATCH AND ENTANGLEMENTS (HIM)*

12.1 IWC's Bycatch Mitigation Initiative

12.2 Collaboration on bycatch mitigation with IGOs (including FAO, Regional Fisheries Management Organisations, CCAMLR and others)

12.3 Review new methods and estimates of bycatch and entanglement rates, risks and mortality

12.4 Reporting of bycatch and entanglements (both small and large cetaceans) including National Progress Reports

12.5 Review mitigation measures for preventing bycatch and entanglement

- 12.6 Review progress on definition of r_{max} for small cetaceans for use by the Scientific Committee
- 12.7 Review proposals for best practice protocols for releasing free-swimming, entangled small cetaceans
- 12.8 Progress on previous recommendations
- 12.9 Workplan

13. SHIP STRIKES (HIM)*

- 13.1 Review new methods and estimates of rates of ship strikes, risk of ship strikes and mortality (including review progress on ship strike database)
- 13.2 Mitigation of ship strikes in high-risk areas
 - 13.2.1 Review progress towards assessing and mitigating ship strikes in previously identified high risk areas
 - 13.2.2 Review new research relevant to mitigation
- 13.3 Co-operation with IMO Secretariat and relevant IMO committees
- 13.4 Progress on previous recommendations
- 13.5 Workplan

14. ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS (E)*

- 14.1 Chemical pollution
 - 14.1.1 Review intersessional work on Pollution 2025
 - 14.1.2 New information on pollution
- 14.2 Diseases of concern
 - 14.2.1 Review progress in intersessional work on emerging diseases
 - 14.2.2 Other information
- 14.3 Strandings and mortality events
 - 14.3.1 Review progress of steering committee for IWC Strandings Initiative
 - 14.3.2 New information on unusual mortality events
 - 14.3.3 Other information
- 14.4 Climate change
 - 14.4.1 Review progress in intersessional work on climate change
 - 14.4.2 Review new information
- 14.5 Underwater noise
 - 14.5.1 Review progress from intersessional work on impacts to cetaceans from underwater noise
 - 14.5.2 Review new information
- 14.6 Marine debris
 - 14.6.1 Develop program to address Commission Resolution on Plastics
 - 14.6.2 Review progress on recommendations on marine debris from intersessional correspondence group
 - 14.6.3 Review new information
- 14.7 Deep sea mining impacts to cetaceans
 - 14.7.1 Review progress in intersessional work on impacts on cetaceans of deep sea mining

14.7.2 Review new information

14.8 Habitat alteration as anthropogenic impact on cetaceans

14.9 SOCER report (Mediterranean and Black Sea)

14.10 Review strategy to better integrate Environmental Concerns workplan with other Committee sub-groups

14.11 Review strategy on developing and using a “One Health” approach

14.11.1 Review progress in intersessional work on One Health approach to cetacean management

14.11.2 Review new information

14.12 Progress on previous recommendations

14.13 Biennial workplan

15. ECOSYSTEM MODELLING*

15.1 Workshop on the Role of Cetaceans in Ecosystem Functioning: Gap Analysis

15.1.1 Review outcomes of the joint CMS/IWC workshop

15.1.2 Review new and updated information

15.1.3 Work plan

15.2 Ecosystem modelling in the Antarctic Ocean

15.2.1 Review progress on evaluation of krill distribution and abundance

15.2.2 Cooperation with CCAMLR

15.3 Modelling of competition among whales and relationships between whales and prey

15.4 Standing Topics

15.4.1 Progress on multi-species distribution models (MSDMs)

15.4.2 Progress on considering effects of long-term environmental variability on whale populations

15.5 Progress on previous recommendations

15.6 Biennial workplan

16. SMALL CETACEANS*

16.1 South Pacific Island small cetaceans

16.2 Iberian killer whale vessel interactions

15.6.1 Outcomes of the 2024 Madrid Workshop

15.6.2 Killer whale interactions in other areas

16.3 Recommendation review

15.6.3 Overview

15.6.4 Maui and Hector’s dolphin

15.6.5 Greenland small cetacean hunt

16.4 Progress with previous recommendations

16.4.1 Vaquita

16.4.2 Finless porpoise

16.4.3 Amazon river dolphins

- 16.4.4 *Asian river dolphins*
- 16.4.5 *Atlantic humpback dolphin*
- 16.4.6 *Beaked whales*
- 16.4.7 *Harbour porpoise (in HIM)*
- 16.4.8 *Beluga (in ASG/ASI)*
- 16.4.9 *Franciscana (in ASG/ASI and HIM)*
- 16.4.10 *Lahille's bottlenose dolphin (in CMP)*
- 16.4.11 *Guiana dolphin (in CMP)*

16.5 Review direct takes and live captures of small cetaceans

- 16.5.1 *Direct takes*
- 16.5.2 *Live captures*

16.6 New initiatives and emerging issues

- 16.6.1 *Trans-Caribbean surveys*
- 16.6.2 *Indian Ocean humpback dolphin*
- 16.6.3 *New and increased trade in fish products*

16.7 Status of the voluntary fund for small cetacean conservation research

16.8 Biennial workplan

17. WHALE WATCHING*

17.1 Assess the impacts of whale watching and swim-with-whale operations on cetaceans

- 17.1.1 *Studies on assessing impacts*
- 17.1.2 *Review responses to MAWI questionnaire*

17.2 Progress with regional reviews of whale watching

- 17.2.1 *Sri Lanka*
- 17.2.2 *Latin America*
- 17.2.3 *Timor-Leste*
- 17.2.4 *Southern Ocean Sanctuary*
- 17.2.5 *Other priority regions*

17.3 Collaborative work within the IWC

- 17.3.1 *Update on IWC's Whale Watching Handbook*
- 17.3.2 *Communication with Conservation Committee's Standing Working Group on Whale Watching*
- 17.3.3 *Collaboration with other SC sub-groups on platforms of opportunity and citizen science*

17.4 Progress on previous recommendations

17.5 Biennial workplan

18. WHALE SANCTUARIES (SAN)*

18.1 Review of the Southern Ocean Sanctuary (SOS)

18.2 Progress on previous recommendations

18.3 Biennial workplan

19. EXTINCTION ALERT***20. IWC LIST OF RECOGNISED SPECIES*****21. IWC DATABASES AND CATALOGUES (PH AND GDR)****21.1 Guidelines for IWC catalogues and photo-ID databases (PH)****21.2 Progress with existing or proposed new catalogues (PH)***21.2.1 Right whale photo catalogues**21.2.2 Happywhale database**21.2.3 Flukebook**21.2.4 Southern Hemisphere Blue Whale Catalogue (SHBWC)**21.2.5 Antarctic Blue Whale Catalogue (ABWC)**21.2.6 Fin whale photo catalogues**21.2.7 Humpback whale photo catalogues**21.2.8 Other photo-identification catalogues***21.3 Progress with existing IWC databases (GDR, Secretariat)***21.3.1 Summary of IWC databases and current priorities**21.3.2 IWC National Progress Reports**21.3.3 Review database procedures, evaluate integration and consolidation of existing databases, and define rules for accessing data***21.4 Potential future IWC databases (GDR)***21.4.1 IWC database proposal pro forma**21.4.2 New proposals for IWC databases***21.5 Biennial workplan****22. MULTINATIONAL RESEARCH PROGRAMMES AND NATIONAL SURVEYS (ASI)*****22.1 Surveys that include IWC funding and/or support, including IWC-POWER and IWC-SORP****22.2 Surveys that seek IWC funding and/or request IWC oversight****22.3 Surveys that seek advice from the Committee regarding survey or analysis methods****22.4 Other survey reports and plans****22.5 Biennial workplan****23. SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE BUDGET*****23.1 Report from the Budgetary Steering Group****23.2 Status of funded research, workshop proposals, data processing and computing needs****23.3 Fund reallocations and contingencies for the Research Fund, Voluntary Fund for Small Cetaceans and SORP Voluntary Fund****23.4 Proposed budget for 2025-2026 developed under the Committee's guidelines****24. COMMITTEE PRIORITIES FOR THE BIENNIUM 2025-26 AND INITIAL AGENDA FOR FUTURE MEETINGS***

25. WORKING METHODS OF THE COMMITTEE*

- 25.1 Updates on Rules of Procedure and Handbook of the Scientific Committee**
- 25.2 Communications Initiative and matters related to reporting to the Commission**
- 25.3 Capacity building and succession plan for the Scientific Committee**
- 25.4 Update on data availability requests and consideration of potential updates/clarifications**
- 25.5 Governance review update following IWC68**
- 25.6 Joint Conservation Committee-Scientific Committee Working Group**
- 25.7 Election of officers**
- 25.8 Any other matters**

26. PUBLICATIONS*

27. ADOPTION OF REPORT*

CHAIR'S NOTES TO THE 2024 SC MEETING (SC/69B) AGENDA

ITEM 1: INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

The Scientific Committee (Committee or SC) will meet in Bled, Slovenia, from 22 April to 3 May 2024 and will be preceded by two pre-meetings (20-21 April) (see item 1.4 below).

At IWC68, held in Portorož, Slovenia, in October of 2022, the Commission approved a reduced budget to balance the Commission's finances. This resulted in cuts of £50,000 in the SC budget and £75,409 in the IWC Meeting budget. The Commission has directed the SC to change their meeting schedule to biennial meetings to be held in the years that the Commission meets (even years) with a combination of smaller workshops or virtual meetings in the interim (odd) years. At SC69B, the Committee will continue to discuss the approaches needed to adapt to this new meeting schedule and to reduce their agenda.

Due to both procedural and logistical limitations, the SC69B will not be held in a hybrid format (that is with both in-person and virtual attendance). Virtual participation will be limited to SC members identified by the convenors to present and/or discuss specific agenda items, as has occurred in previous meetings. The SC recognises that virtual attendance is beneficial to the work of the Committee therefore, a process to implement hybrid meetings is being developed (see item 25) for consideration by the Commission at IWC69.

The Commission welcomed a new Executive Secretary, Dr. Martha Rojas Urrego. The Committee will meet Dr. Rojas, who will be attending the SC for the first time.

Please feel free to contact the SC Chair (Alex Zerbini: alex.zerbini@noaa.gov), Vice-chair (Lindsay Porter: sc.vice.chair.porter@iwc.int), and/or the Head of Science, Conservation, and Management (Iain Staniland: iain.staniland@iwc.int) if you have any questions or concerns related to the agenda or organisation of the 2024 SC meeting.

Item 1.2: Remembrances

Please let the Chair or Vice-Chair know if any SC members have passed away since the 2023 meeting.

Item 1.4: Meeting procedures and time schedule

SC69B will be held in-person at the Rikli Hotel in Bled. This is the same hotel used by the SC in 2023. The tentative schedule is provided in Table 1 below. The SC meeting will follow two pre-meetings. The pre-meeting of the Abundance Steering Group (ASG) and a pre-meeting to review catch data for future assessments of southern right whales. After the conclusion of SC69B, there will be a meeting of the convenors. This meeting used to be held the day after the SC meeting ended, but, to reduce meeting costs, the plan this year is to close SC69B before or around the afternoon coffee break on 3 May and convenors will meet during and after this break.

In 2024, the SC meeting will be shortened by a day to accommodate the Committee's budgetary restrictions. A schedule for plenary and sub-group sessions during the whole meeting will be provided well in advance, as an attempt to allow for more efficient planning and use the time of IPs and delegates. The schedule of sub-group sessions at SC69B will be the same used by the SC in previous in-person meetings: three concurrent sessions of the SC sub-groups, five times a day between 8:30 and 18:00. Half an hour coffee breaks will take place at 10:30 and 15:00. The lunch break will take place between 12:00 and 13:30. The convenors will meet as needed to discuss if adjustments to the schedule are required. SC members will be informed of any changes via a combination of postings on the meeting SharePoint, regular announcements by the convenors or the Secretariat and via email.

Primary meeting documents and For Information papers must be submitted by 25 March 2024. Documents submitted after this deadline, may be delayed in the approval process and may not be uploaded in time to be included on the SC69B meeting page. Only in exceptional circumstances, and with permission from the relevant convenor and the SC Chair, can papers be submitted after the deadline of 25 March 2024. For Information papers (i.e., documents previously published, in press or submitted to other fora) may be relevant to certain agenda items and must be sent to the convenors (convenors@iwc.int) stating which sub-committee(s) the paper is intended for and who will present it. It is the submitters responsibility to ensure that any permissions from the publishers for making these papers available to the meeting participants are met. Please supply a freely accessible web address and/or full reference details for these documents (including a DOI no./web access URL).

Table 1 - The tentative time schedule for SC69B, and for pre-meetings.

Date	Item	Comments
20-21 April	Pre-meeting of the Abundance Steering Group (ASG) and pre-meeting to review Southern right whale catches.	
22 April	Plenary sessions (8:30-10, 10:30-12) Convenors meeting (15:00-15:30) Initiate review of the Southern Ocean Sanctuary (15:30-18:30) Head of delegation meeting (18:45-19:00)	Items 1-4, plans for items 23-26 (budget and working methods of the Committee).
23-29 April	Predominantly sub-group meetings (5 sessions/day, 3 concurrent sessions). If all groups finish as intended, a plenary session may be held in the afternoon of 29 April.	Complete sub-group agendas and agree sub-group reports.
30 April	Report consolidation day	SC Leadership, convenors, co-convenors and rapporteurs to finalise sub-group reports and prepare chair's summaries for presentation at plenary.
1-3 May	Plenary sessions: finish open agenda items by 3:00pm on 3 May	Complete all agenda items, agree report, including work plan, budget (if applicable) and initial agenda for next SC meeting.

Submit primary papers online [via this link](#). Document numbers will be assigned by the Secretariat. For help with the submission of papers, please contact documents@iwc.int. Primary meeting documents and for info papers must be of strict relevance to the topics identified in the SC69B meeting's draft agenda. During the submission process, authors must provide a brief summary, limited to 300 words. The summary should be suitable for inclusion in the sub-committee report, written in the third person (referencing the paper) and highlighting only the main finding(s) of relevance to the Committee's agenda. The paper will not be accepted without this summary. Papers deemed not relevant to the agenda by the appropriate sub-committee Convenor, in consultation with the SC Chair, will not be accepted.

All meeting papers, tentative time schedules, and other information will be available on the SC69B SharePoint (<https://iwcoffice.sharepoint.com/teams/sc69b>). Please check the SharePoint frequently for up-to-date information on meeting documents and announcements. This year the SC report will follow its traditional format with sub-committee discussions captured in individual annexes and Chairs' Summaries in the main report. Chair's summaries, after adoption by the plenary, are to communicate the recommendations of the SC to Commission and other stakeholders. Sub-group annexes provide greater detail on the discussions held during the meeting.

The Secretariat's IT Team will organise and provide training sessions for zoom and the use of SharePoint prior to the beginning of the SC meeting.

Item 1.5: Establishment of sub-committees and working groups

The following 16 sub-groups (Table 2) were identified by the Chair, Vice-Chair and Head of Science, Management and Conservation to meet in 2024. It is important that SC members consult the registration and document submission details that can be found on the IWC website: (<https://iwc.int/sc69b>).

Table 2 - Committee sub-groups and convenors for 2024.

Sub-committees/working group name	Convenor	Co-convenor
Scientific Committee Plenary	Zerbini (alex.zerbini@noaa.gov)	Porter (lindsay.jp@gmail.com)
<i>Ad hoc</i> Working group on Photo-id, PH	Olson (paula.olson@noaa.gov)	
Sub-Committee on Abundance estimates, stock status and international cruises, ASI	Givens (geof@geofgivens.com)	New (lnew@ursinus.edu)
<i>Ad hoc</i> Working Group on Sanctuaries, SAN	Parsons (ecm-parsons@earthlink.net)	Rojas (lrojasbracho@gmail.com)
<i>Ad hoc</i> Working Group on Databases and related issues, GDR	Double (Mike.Double@awe.gov.au)	
Sub-committee on Implementation Simulation Trials, IST	Donovan (corkblue1o@gmail.com)	Wilberg (wilberg@umces.edu)
Sub-committee on Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling, ASW	Walløe (lars.walloe@medisin.uio.no)	Nelson (thomas.nelson@govt.lc)
Sub-Committee on Stock Definition and DNA testing, SD&DNA	Lang (aimee.lang@noaa.gov)	Tiedemann (tiedeman@uni-potsdam.de)
Sub-Committee on In-depth Assessments, IA	Palka (Debra.Palka@noaa.gov)	
Sub-Committee on the other Northern Hemisphere whale stocks, NH	Cholewiak (danielle.choleiwak@noaa.gov)	Robbins (jrobbins@coastalstudies.org)
Sub-Committee on the other Southern Hemisphere whale stocks, SH	Bell (elanor.bell@awe.gov.au)	Herr (helena.herr@uni-hamburg.de)
Sub-Committee on Conservation Management Plans, CMP	Brownell (rlbcetacea@aol.com)	Weller (dave.weller@noaa.gov)
Sub-Committee on Non-deliberate Human-Induced Mortality of cetaceans, HIM	Leaper (russell@rcleaper.com)	Minton (gianna.minton@gmail.com)
Sub-Committee on Environmental Concerns, E	DeMaster (doug.demaster@gmail.com)	Genov (tilen.genov@gmail.com)
Sub-Committee on Ecosystem Modelling, EM	Kitakado (kitakado@kaiyodai.ac.jp)	
Sub-Committee on Small Cetaceans, SM	Porter (lindsay.jp@gmail.com)	Trujillo (Fernando@omacha.org)
Sub-Committee on Whale watching, WW	Suydam (rssuydam@gmail.com)	Urban-Rámirez (jurban@uabcs.mx)

ITEM 2: ADOPTION OF AGENDA

The Agenda is based upon the priority items identified by the Commission from the biennial meeting in October 2022, the Committee's priorities, and practical considerations related to the location of the meeting and availability of Invited Participants.

We recognise that some Contracting Governments do not believe that certain topics should be on the Commission and/or Scientific Committee Agendas. Statements to this effect will again be incorporated as an Annex to the report with no discussion. To facilitate plenary and sub-committee discussions, the practice of past years will be followed. We strongly request that any objections to specific items or topics on the Agenda be raised briefly under this Agenda Item during plenary and then provided in writing to the rapporteur for inclusion in the SC report. It is not acceptable for these objections to be repeated during discussions of the items in the plenary sessions or during sub-group meetings.

ITEM 3: REVIEW OF AVAILABLE DATA, DOCUMENTS AND REPORTS

Item 3.1: Documents submitted.

As in previous years, you must use the online system for registration, submission of documents, and downloading of documents [see the IWC website for more information](#).

Please note that:

- (1) only primary documents and For Information papers that are directly relevant to the Committee's/sub-groups agendas will be accepted – acceptance will be determined by the convenors of the relevant sub-groups who will take advice when appropriate from convenors of intersessional groups – if in any doubt at all please submit your proposed document title and a short summary of what it will contain to the relevant convenor (see above) before you write the paper;

- (2) the ‘classic’ agenda item ‘other’ will not appear on sub-group’s agendas – should important and urgent new findings become available after the initial deadline for comments on the full agenda (25 March 2024) the relevance and importance of presenting the information at the SC69B meeting will be evaluated by the Chair, Vice-chair, and Head of Science, Conservation and Management.

Authors should make every attempt to submit primary papers by 25 March 2024. Papers expected to be discussed during pre-meetings should be sent to the relevant convenor as soon as possible. Late submissions will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. They will be evaluated by the Chair, Vice-Chair and Head of Science, Management and Conservation in consultation with the relevant convenors and in light of their importance to the agenda. Documents will be distributed wholly electronically (via the SC69B SharePoint) by the Secretariat.

Item 3.2: National Progress Reports on research

Despite considerable effort and costs to develop an online system to encourage and facilitate reporting (for details of how to submit National Progress Report (NPR) data see circular [IWC.All.470](#)), many countries still fail to submit the required reports. As such, the Committee recommended that all Contracting Governments electronically submit their NPRs. Heads of Delegations are strongly encouraged to ensure that NPRs are compiled and uploaded. The online reporting system has been updated and improved to facilitate data entry. Secretariat staff are available to provide assistance with data submission and can provide a bulk upload service if required. Please contact it.support@iwc.int in the first instance if assistance is required. Suggestions for improvements should be submitted in writing to Mike Double (Mike.Double@awe.gov.au) the convenor of the Intersessional Correspondence Group responsible for NPR.

Item 3.3: Data collection, storage and manipulation

Under this agenda item, the Secretariat will report on catch data and other statistical material, progress of data coding projects and verification projects.

Item 3.4: Guidance for the format of recommendations and discussion of Recommendation Database

The Secretariat will provide guidance to the sub-groups on the style and format of recommendations as in previous years. They will also provide an update on the status and usability of the IWC’s database of recommendations. Each sub-group will be provided with a document with past recommendations specific to that group.

Item 3.5: Review of Commission resolutions from 2022

The SC’s workplan is based on direction from the Commission. We will review the resolutions passed by the Commission during its 2022 meeting to help facilitate and guide our agendas and discussions in each sub-group.

ITEM 4: COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

Cooperation with other organisations is increasingly important. Many of the organisations on this list are ones that have met since our last meeting and with whom we exchange observers. They are included in alphabetical order after Item 4.1 which will be a summary of Secretariat engagement with international organisations. Observers, please send your reports to the Secretariat as soon as possible (secretariat@iwc.int) – if meetings did not take place and you have relevant information to provide, please do so. This year, this will be an information item with no discussion - directly relevant scientific matters will be dealt with under appropriate Agenda Items during sub-group meetings.

ITEMS: 5-23

These items have been prepared in consultation with the Convenors to specifically take into account relevant Commission Resolutions and Agenda Items, along with the feasibility of discussion. We hope that this will help the communication process and guide your expectations. Note also that some of the Agenda Items here will incorporate discussions from more than one sub-group – this is indicated on the Agenda itself.

ITEM 5: GENERAL ASSESSMENT AND MODELLING ISSUES (IST)

Work related to the IST sub-committee with respect to providing advice to the Commission on the status of stocks will be covered under agenda item 11.4 (led by with ASI). Consideration to the definition of R_{max} for small cetaceans for use by the Scientific Committee (joint with HIM) will be covered under agenda item 12.7.

ITEM 6: AWMP AND RMP IMPLEMENTATION-RELATED MATTERS (IST WITH ASW/SD/ASI, AS NECESSARY)

Under agenda item 6 the Committee will work on the preparation for *AWMP Implementation Reviews* for Western Greenland humpback whales and Eastern North Pacific gray whales (item 6.1). The Committee will also consider gray whale hunts given new information on Unusual Mortality Events (UMEs) documented for this species in recent years (Item 6.2) and the information on a link between a humpback whale from the Cape Verde islands and West Greenland (Item 7.1 and Item 8.2.5). It will confirm information on the *SLAs* to provide advice to the Commission.

ITEM 7: STOCKS SUBJECT TO ABORIGINAL SUBSISTENCE WHALING (ASW)

In 2018, the Commission renewed catch/strike limits for all the aboriginal subsistence whaling hunts. Those limits are in place from 2019 to 2025 and will be extended for subsequent six-year periods if certain provisions are met including no changes in the strike limit requests and no changes in the scientific advice that hunts will not harm the stock. The Committee has agreed that the best way to provide advice to the Commission on such hunts is through long-term *SLAs*. Note that the new Schedule does not require annual provision of advice by the Committee.

Under this agenda item, the Committee will review harvest data and new information for stocks that are subject to aboriginal hunts will be discussed.

ITEM 8: WHALE STOCKS NOT SUBJECT TO DIRECTED TAKES BY CONTRACTING GOVERNMENTS (IA, SH, NH WITH SD&DNA/ASI, AS NECESSARY)

Under this agenda item the Committee normally considers: stocks in the process of (or final preparations for) an in-depth assessment (i.e. North Pacific sei whales and North Pacific humpback whales) and Northern (NH) and Southern Hemisphere (SH) stocks for which a recent in-depth assessment has occurred or for which data are being assembled to assess whether an in-depth assessment is feasible (e.g., Southern Hemisphere humpback, right, fin and blue whales; North Pacific blue and right whales; North Atlantic right and bowhead whales; Sea of Okhotsk bowhead whales; and sperm whales). Items related to the stock structure and abundance of these stocks will be dealt with early in the meeting by the sub-committees on SD&DNA and ASI.

Item 8.1: In-depth Assessments (IA)**Item 8.1.1 Comprehensive Assessment of North Pacific humpback whales**

Considerable progress on this agenda item has been made in the last few years, including on stock structure base on new photo-IDs and genetic data, abundance estimates, and removals. The Committee will review the report of an intersessional meeting held to advance the Committee's work on this topic and expects to complete the Comprehensive Assessment of North Pacific humpback whales in 2024.

Item 8.1.2 Comprehensive Assessment of North Pacific sei whales

The Comprehensive Assessment of North Pacific sei whales is also expected to be completed at SC69B. In 2023, the Committee reviewed new information and agreed to re-establish an intersessional correspondence to further progress this assessment and to produce a summary document for review in 2024.

Item 8.1.3 Progress on In-depth Assessment of western North Pacific common minke whales

In 2019, an Implementation Review (IR) of western North Pacific common minke whales was undertaken within IST (IWC 2019, Annex 06). Because Japan withdrew from the IWC and no other member countries are hunting those whales, the SC agreed that the IR should continue as an In-depth Assessment (the original Comprehensive Assessment occurred in 1991) within IA. In 2023, the Committee reviewed information on abundance estimates and updates in the modelling framework. In 2024, the Committee will review the report of an intersessional

meeting and continue to work towards completing the In-depth Assessment for common minke whales in the North Pacific.

Item 8.1.4 Antarctic Blue Whale

In 2023 the Committee (under SH) finalised the pre-assessment of Antarctic blue whales. The last assessment was completed in 2008. The Committee expects to initiate a new (In-depth) Assessment of this species will in 2024 (under IA).

Item 8.2: Evaluation for potential new In-Depth Assessments

Item 8.2.1 Non-Antarctic blue whales in the Southern Hemisphere (SH)

The Committee is preparing for a Comprehensive Assessment of Non-Antarctic blue whale stocks and anticipates updates on the Southern Hemisphere blue whale photo catalogue, new information on distribution and seasonal movements in the northwest and southwest Indian Ocean, new estimates of abundance for New Zealand, Australia and Chile, and progress on the development of regional catch scenarios. The Committee encourages presentation of new photo-identification data from the Central, southwest and northwest Indian Ocean to the Southern Hemisphere Blue Whale catalog to support mark-recapture analysis.

Item 8.2.2 Southern Hemisphere right whales not the subject of CMPs (SH)

The Committee is reviewing assessment related parameters for southern right whales with the goal of conducting regional population assessments in future. The Committee is expecting to receive updates on stock structure, population dynamics modelling, abundance estimates and catches from various intersessional groups established or re-established in 2023. A pre-meeting will be held prior to SC69B to advance the work on Southern right whale catches. The Committee is also developing a global standardised body condition and visual assessment protocol for this species. The Committee encourages updates on these topics if available (including the reports of the intersessional groups).

Item 8.2.3 North Pacific blue whales (NH)

The Committee is at the pre-assessment stage for blue whales in the North Pacific, where at least two, possibly three populations occur. The status of the eastern North Pacific population was assessed by the Committee in 2016. In recent years, the Committee has been evaluating the data available to assess blue whales in the less studied central and western North Pacific. Given the time constraints due to the need to host virtual meetings during the COVID pandemic and the existence of an intersessional group to advance the work, detailed discussion of this topic has been postponed. The Committee welcomes new information on North Pacific blue whales to progress with the pre-assessment of these stocks.

Item 8.2.4 North Atlantic right whales (NH)

In the past years, the Committee recognised the substantial efforts of the USA and Canada to better understand the status of this species and to mitigate human impacts but nonetheless the SC again expressed serious concern over the status of this species. The Committee welcomes updates and new information on the status of North Atlantic right whales.

Item 8.2.5 North Atlantic humpback whales (also see Items 7.1.7 and 7.1.8) (NH)

The Committee has been reviewing new information in preparation for an In-depth Assessment of North Atlantic humpback whales. The intersessional correspondence group under Robbins continues to compile information on stock structure, abundance, biological parameters, and human impacts in preparation for the assessment. A previously agreed, in-person workshop is expected to occur in the near future to further advance the assessment. The Committee welcomes any other new information on NA humpback whales.

Other discussions on North Atlantic humpbacks include new information on humpbacks off West Greenland and St. Vincent and the Grenadines (Items 7.17 and 7.1.8, respectively).

Item 8.2.6 Rice's whales (NH)

Gulf of Mexico Bryde's whales have recently been recognised as a new species, Rice's whales. In 2021, the Committee reviewed information on research and management activities and received a new population estimate for this critically endangered species. We encourage presentation of new research outcomes for Rice's whales in 2024.

Item 8.3 New information (if provided) for other northern stocks (NH)

The Committee will review new information about other Northern Hemisphere stocks not subject to directed takes as meeting time allows. It particularly welcomes new information about North Atlantic blue whales, North Atlantic common minke whales, East Greenland-Svalbard-Barents seas bowhead whales and North Pacific right whales. The Committee also welcomes new information about Unusual Mortality Events affecting northern stocks.

Item 8.4: New information for other southern stocks (SH)

New information on other southern stocks, especially Southern Hemisphere humpback and fin whales will only be reviewed if time allows. The Committee will continue to work on these species through intersessional correspondence groups.

ITEM 9: STOCKS THAT ARE OR HAVE BEEN SUGGESTED TO BE THE SUBJECT OF CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLANS (CMP)

This agenda item considers stocks, with a specific focus on progress with scientific aspects, that are: (1) the subject of existing CMPs (e.g., southeast Pacific and southwestern South Atlantic right whales, North Pacific gray whales, the Franciscana, and South American river dolphins) or (2) are likely candidates for a CMP (e.g. Arabian Sea humpback whales) or have been suggested to be candidates. Items related to the stock structure and abundance of these stocks will be dealt with intersessionally or early in the meeting by the sub-groups on SD&DNA and ASI.

Item 9.1: Stocks with existing CMPs: new information and progress with previous recommendations**Item 9.1.1 SE Pacific southern right whales (CMP, SH)**

The Committee will review new information on the scientific work and international cooperation between Chile and Peru on passive acoustic monitoring and will review information on the use of satellite imagery to locate SE Pacific right whales off Chile.

Item 9.1.2 SW Atlantic southern right whales (CMP, SH)

The Committee will review the report of a in-person workshop held in March 2024 to review and update research, monitoring and conservation actions under the CMP for SW Atlantic southern right whales. The Committee will welcome new information on ongoing research with right whales in the western South Atlantic Ocean.

Item 9.1.3 Western North Pacific gray whales (CMP, IST, ASW)

An Implementation Review was completed for North Pacific gray whales in 2021 by IST. The Committee will receive an update and new about the on-going scientific studies across the range of the North Pacific gray whales, including progress on scientific aspects of the North Pacific gray whale CMP..

Item 9.1.4 Franciscana (CMP, SM)

The Committee will review new information on estimates of bycatch of franciscana dolphins throughout the species range and evaluate whether there is sufficient information to conduct a Comprehensive Assessment of the species in the future (with SM).

Item 9.1.5 South American river dolphins (CMP, SM)

The Committee welcomes new information, including intersessional work, on the boto (*Inia sp.*) and tucuxi (*Sotalia fluviatilis*) and progress on activities related to the recently-established CMP for South American river dolphins.

Item 9.2: Progress with identified priorities**Item 9.2.1 Humpback whales in the northern Indian Ocean including the Arabian Sea**

The Committee welcomes an update on the efforts to initiate collaboration among range states and efforts to enhance our scientific understanding of northern Indian Ocean humpback whales, including crew-based observer programmes, collection of sightings and entanglement data, passive acoustic monitoring and collection of genetic samples. The Committee expects to receive new information on abundance and trends and on genetic

analysis to assess the taxonomic status of Arabian Sea humpback whales.

Item 9.2.2 Central American humpback whales

The Committee previously received new information indicating that this population is small and agreed that it would benefit from a CMP. The Committee welcomes new information, including from intersessional work, about this population and efforts to increase collaborative efforts among range state for research and conservation.

Item 9.2.3 Mediterranean sperm whales

The Committee will welcome an update about the status of a possible CMP for Mediterranean sperm whales.

Item 9.2.4 Mediterranean fin whales

The Committee will welcome an update about the status of a possible CMP for Mediterranean fin whales and efforts on outreach to relevant range states and stakeholders.

Item 9.2.5 Guiana dolphin

The Committee will receive new information about the status of a possible CMP for the Guiana dolphins.

Item 9.2.6 Lahille's bottlenose dolphin

The Committee established a task team for the Lahille's bottlenose dolphin in 2021. In 2023, this subspecies was recommended as a priority candidate for a CMP. The Committee will receive new information about the status of a possible CMP for the Lahille's bottlenose dolphin in 2024.

ITEM 10: STOCK DEFINITION AND DNA TESTING (SD&DNA)

This agenda item merges two previously separate sub-groups, the Working Group on Stock Definition and the Working Group on DNA. Topics related to DNA have been considered since 2000 in response to a Commission Resolution (IWC, 2000). Under SD&DNA, the Committee: (1) reviews new papers on stock structure on behalf of other sub-groups; (2) reviews and updates of guidelines for ensuring DNA data quality and for analyses of genetic data; (3) considers general statistical and other issues related to stock structure matters using a suite of data and techniques; (4) develops terminology appropriate to stock definition, unit-to-serve and 'viable' population for use across sub-groups and the Committee; (5) considers use of population models to test spatial stock structure models; (6) evaluates genetic methods used for species, stock and individual identification; (7) provides advice on the collection, archiving, and preservation of tissue and DNA samples from catches, bycatches, and biopsies of free-ranging cetaceans; and (8) reviews reports of reference databases and standards for diagnostic DNA registries. Information on specific stocks will be considered and incorporated under those Agenda Items.

Item 10.1: Provide advice to other sub-groups on population structure to required stocks

The Committee expects to review information from intersessional email groups that focused on (1) clarifying terminology and re-evaluating plausibility of gray whale stock structure hypotheses, new information on population structure of (2) North Atlantic humpback whales and (3) North Atlantic fin whales, and (4) reviewing available evidence pertaining to population structure in Guiana dolphins. Additional topics may be discussed at the request of other sub-committees.

Item 10.2: DNA data quality

An intersessional correspondence group continues reviewing revised sections of the DNA quality guidelines that apply to data generated from next generation sequencing platforms, including SNPs and whole genome sequencing. The Committee welcomes a report from intersessional progress made by this ICG.

Item 10.3: DNA Guidelines Checklist

An ICG has been established to generate checklist of key aspects of the genetic data analysis guidelines and to identify aspects of the guidelines that may need updating, particularly in the context of genomic methodologies and analysis. The Committee will review and update from the ICG.

Item 10.4: Recommendations on the avoidance of sample depletion

The Committee will review work of an ICG about sample depletion. The Committee will provide advice about genomic approaches to maximise the utility of tissue samples that are in danger of becoming depleted.

Item 10.5: Review terminology used for stock structure related terms used within the IWC

An ICG continued to revisit definitions that were previously put forward for stock-related terms at the IWC, particularly those related to large whale assessments, and revise them as necessary. The report of the ICG will form the basis of reporting under this item.

Item 10.6: New genetic approaches of use to the Scientific Committee in addition to stock structure

This item considers papers related to new genetic approaches of use to the SC, such as epigenetic ageing, close kin mark-recapture. The Committee encourages the submission of papers on these topics given the relevance of these techniques to the work of the Committee.

ITEM 11: CETACEAN ABUNDANCE ESTIMATES AND STOCK STATUS (ASI)

The Committee has recognised the need for consistency in the way it reviews and categorises abundance estimates, which in the past were reviewed only within the sub-group to which they were submitted. Since 2017, all abundance estimates have been reviewed by the Standing Working Group on Abundance Estimates, Stock Status and International Cruises (ASI) and the advice passed on to the relevant sub-group early in the meeting. ASI has also taken the lead on providing easy access to abundance estimates via three resources: (1) for the Committee, an updated table of an endorsed set of abundance estimates; and, for the Commission and the public, (2) a biennial document and (3) IWC website content comprising abundance estimates by species, ocean basin, and, if appropriate, by specific areas. ASI continues to develop the Status of Stocks Initiative (SOSI) (item 11.4) to provide information on the status of whale stocks, largely based upon completed assessments and or RMP/AWMP Implementations or Implementation Reviews

Item 11.1: Review of abundance estimates

Under this item, the Committee will review estimates of abundance of cetacean stocks. In order for ASI to review an estimate, this must be requested by a SC subgroup Convenor according to the procedures established by IWC (2020) (Report of the Scientific Committee, Annex P: Scientific Committee Procedures for Submission, Review, and Validation of Abundance Estimates. *J. Cetacean Res. Manage.* 21(Suppl.): 273-276), and amendments thereof. An initial review of most or all estimates will occur during a pre-meeting. During the SC meeting, the Committee will endorse noncontroversial cases without further review, and discuss cases that warrant further consideration.

Item 11.2: IWC Table of Agreed Abundance Estimates and the abundance page on the IWC website

The Committee will review and update the table of abundance estimates maintained by the IWC and the IWC website, and consider issues related to public access and interpretation of that table. The Committee will also review and recommend revisions to website content related to abundance.

Item 11.3: Methodological issues

The Committee will discuss and consider recommendations regarding certain technical aspects of mark-recapture abundance estimation, novel acoustic abundance estimation methods for franciscana, spatially explicit statistical models for line transect data, and other matters..

Item 11.4: Provide advice to the Commission on the status of stocks

The Scientific Committee is expected to provide advice on the status of whale populations. The Status of Stocks Initiative is a recent major effort by the SC to disseminate such information broadly, including on a new portion of the IWC website. The Committee established a Steering Group (SG) and several ICGs to advance this work and expects to review intersessional work on all aspects of this project. In particular, the Committee has been working with the Secretariat toward designing a website summarizing status of stocks for the Commission and the general public. During SC69B, the Committee expects to be in a position to consider endorsing the overall website design and the first three SOSI assessments.

ITEM 12: BYCATCH AND ENTANGLEMENTS (HIM)

This Item consolidates the discussions of bycatch for large whales and small cetaceans with respect to both estimation and scientific aspects of mitigation.

Item 12.1: IWC's Bycatch Mitigation Initiative

The Committee will receive an update on the IWC's Bycatch Mitigation Initiative (BMI) from the Secretariat with implications for the work of the Committee. The update will include progress of the Expert Panel, which first met immediately prior to the 2019 SC meeting in Nairobi, and progress on the implementation of pilot projects and next steps. This will be a high priority item with a focus on implications for the work of the Scientific Committee.

Item 12.2: Collaboration on bycatch mitigation with IGOs (including FAO, Regional Fisheries Management Organisations and others)

Important aspects of the work of the IWC on bycatch mitigation involve collaborations with other IGOs. The Committee will discuss the scientific aspects of these collaborations, which include IOTC, CCAMLR and other regional fisheries management organizations.

Item 12.3: Review new methods and estimates of bycatch and entanglement rates, risks and mortality

The Committee will review new estimates of bycatch and entanglement rates, risks and mortality. The Committee will also review papers, if submitted, related to: (a) observer programmes, including technology use and required levels of coverage; (b) role of fisheries data collection schemes; (c) use of strandings data for quantitative estimation of bycatch; (d) mortality estimates.

Item 12.4: Reporting of bycatch and entanglements (both small and large cetaceans) including National progress reports

The Committee will continue to review data provided and National Progress reports and to discuss how reporting mechanisms may be improved.

Item 12.5: Review mitigation measures for preventing bycatch and entanglement, including pingers.

The Committee will continue to discuss and review studies related to mitigation measures for preventing bycatch and entanglement and provide advice where appropriate.

Item 12.6: Consider definition of r_{max} for small cetaceans for use by the Scientific Committee

It became apparent during discussions in 2020 that a definition of r_{max} in respect with small cetaceans was needed for use by the Committee, including how and when it should be used. The Committee initiated discussion of this topic in 2022 and recommended that an ICG continued its work and discuss potential methods for estimating/setting r_{max} and to provide data requirements, strengths, and weaknesses of each approach. The Committee will discuss an update on this work.

Item 12.7: Review proposals for best practice protocols for releasing free-swimming, entangled small cetaceans

Under this agenda item, the Committee will review a draft of best practice protocols for releasing free-swimming, entangled small cetaceans. This draft was adapted from protocols developed by NOAA for use in the United States, with inputs from members of an ICG that was established in 2023 for this purpose.

ITEM 13: SHIP STRIKES (HIM)

This Item consolidates the discussions of ship strikes with respect to both estimation and scientific aspects of mitigation.

Item 13.1: Review new methods and estimates of rates of ship strikes, risk of ship strikes and mortality (including review progress on ship strike database)

The Committee will review progress on the IWC global ship strike database as well as any new information on risk analyses and estimates of mortality associated with ship strikes. This will include discussion of progress by the IWC Ship Strike Working Group.

Item 13.2: Mitigation of ship strikes in high risk areas

The Committee will review any new information presented on mitigation and specifically expressed interest in receiving more information about the efficacy of implementing new mitigation measures in high risk areas identified in the IWC Strategic Plan to Mitigate the Effects of Ship Strikes on Cetaceans.

Item 13.3: Co-operation with IMO Secretariat and relevant IMO committees

The Secretariat will provide the Committee a review of actions taken to cooperate with the IMO Secretariat on the development of new routing measures and ship strike issues.

ITEM 14: ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS (E)

The Commission and the Scientific Committee have increasingly taken an interest in the environmental threats to cetaceans. In 1993, the Commission adopted resolutions on research on the environment and whale stocks and on the preservation of the marine environment. As a result, the Committee formalised its work by establishing a Standing Working Group that has met every year subsequently. The E sub-committee has three standing agenda items: pollution, diseases of concern and strandings; and two items that are dealt with on a cyclic basis.

Item 14.1: Chemical pollution

The Committee welcomes new information about a contaminant mapping tool that will provide information about contaminants worldwide and updates about Pollution 2025, including assessing multiple stressors within the framework of Pollution 2025. An intersessional correspondence group was established in 2019 to progress the IWC's Pollution 2025 programme including establishing planning activities and work priorities. This ICG continued intersessional discussions during 2020 to 2021. In 2024, the Committee will review new information received on the effects of chemical pollution on cetaceans.

Item 14.2: Diseases of concern

The Committee will review new information and the work from an intersessional correspondence group established to advance discussions on emerging diseases on cetaceans.

Item 14.3: Strandings and mortality events

The Committee will review progress of intersessional work, including the report of workshop on the Stranding Initiative held in May 2023.

Item 14.4: Climate change

The Committee will continue to receive and review information on impacts of climate change on cetaceans.

Item 14.5: Underwater noise

The Committee will review updates from an ICG established to advance underwater noise topics of interest, including collaboration with the Conservation Committee and consideration of outcomes on noise related to the Marine Environment Protection Committee of the International Maritime Organization.

Item 14.6: Marine debris

The Commission passed a resolution in 2022 (Resolution 2022-1 on Marine Plastic Pollution) and requested the Committee to develop an approach to assess the current knowledge of the impact of marine plastic pollution on cetaceans and to provide a global risk assessment that identified "hotspots" of cetacean exposure to plastic debris. The Committee will review progress on intersessional work towards developing this approach.

Item 14.7: Deep sea mining

The Committee will receive information on potential impacts of deep sea mining on cetacean populations, including the report of an ICG establish to gather information on this topic.

Item 14. 8: Habitat alteration as anthropogenic impact on cetaceans

The Committee will review information on habitat alteration as a form of anthropogenic impact to cetaceans.

Item 14.9: SOCER report (Mediterranean and Black Sea)

This year the SOCER report will focus on the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Committee members are encouraged to make submissions using the standardised form for data entry, which can be downloaded from: <http://iwc.int/socer>. The Committee will continue discussions about the future of SOCER given the current financial challenges.

Item 14.10: Review strategy to better integrate E workplan with other Committee sub-groups

The Committee will review efforts in developing a strategy to better integrate the workplan of the sub-committee on Environmental Concerns across other groups within the Committee.

Item 14.11: Review strategy on developing and using a “One Health” approach

The Committee welcomed the One Health Approach in 2021. This initiative recognises the intricate relationships between humans, animals and the environment. The Committee recommended developing specific recommendations on how the One Health approach can be operationalised within its sub-groups to facilitate the protection and health of cetaceans and marine ecosystems. The Committee will review progress of an ICG established to developing these recommendations.

ITEM 15: ECOSYSTEM MODELLING

Each year, under this Item the Committee reviews new work on a variety of issues related to ecosystem modelling, falling under three areas: (1) reviewing ecosystem modelling efforts undertaken outside the IWC; (2) exploring how ecosystem models can contribute to developing scenarios for simulation testing of the RMP; and (3) reviewing other issues relevant to ecosystem modelling within the Committee. Given Resolution 2016-3 (Resolution on Cetaceans and Their Contributions to Ecosystem Functioning), ecosystem services was added in 2017 as a new standing topic.

Item 15.1: Workshop on the role of cetaceans in ecosystem functioning: Gap Analysis

The Committee recognised that investigating the contributions of cetaceans to ecosystem functioning was a complex long-term task and agreed to start the process by holding a gap analysis workshop. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the in-person meeting scheduled for 2021 was postponed until 2022, but a pre-meeting was held prior to SC68C to plan a process by which the Committee would respond to Resolution 2016-3. A second in-person intersessional workshop was organised jointly by CMS and the IWC and the Committee will review the report of that workshop.

Item 15.2: Review results of ecosystem modelling in the Antarctic Ocean

The Committee will review progress on ecosystem modelling in the Antarctic Ocean.

Item 15.3 Modelling of competition among whales and relationships between whales and prey.

Under this agenda item, the Committee will address new information relevant to further understanding of three overarching topics: (1) the relationship between whales and prey; (2) marine ecosystems; and (3) analytical methods for ecological modelling.

Item 15.4: Standing Topics

Under this standing agenda item, the Committee will receive updates on standing agenda items that are planned for future biennia or for which insufficient progress was made to change previous recommendations, including reviewing intersessional progress on an ICG established to develop best practices for species distribution modelling (SDM) and multi-species distribution modelling (MSDM).

ITEM 16: SMALL CETACEANS (SM)

Increasingly, SM is integrating its workplan with other relevant subgroups and will conduct joint sessions with both HIM and CMP at SC69B.

Item 16. 1 South Pacific Island small cetaceans

The Committee will review a report from an intersessional workshop held in New Zealand to discuss the status

of small cetaceans in the South Pacific Islands.

Item 16.2 Iberian killer whale vessel interactions

The Committee will discuss the report of a workshop sponsored by the governments of Spain and Portugal on the interactions between killer whales and vessels along the Iberian Peninsula.

Item 16.3 Recommendation review

The Committee will receive the report of an ICG established to develop a framework to review recommendations made by SM and to establish regional and species assessment teams.

Item 16.4 Progress with Previous Recommendations

The Committee will receive updates on standing agenda items that are planned for future biennia or for which not sufficient progress was made to change previous recommendations. No substantial discussion is expected and this will largely be a reporting item. The Committee will receive updates on ongoing work, including CMP, Task team and ICG relevant to SM. Some of these agenda items will be discussed with CMP, particularly the Guiana dolphin and the Lahille's bottlenose dolphin which have been subject to considerable intersessional work since last year.

Item 16.5 Review direct takes and live captures of small cetaceans

The Committee has a long-standing recommendation to review direct takes of small cetaceans. The Committee will receive updates from ICG addressing matters related to direct takes and live captures of small cetaceans.

Item 16.6 New Initiative and emerging issues

The Committee will review new information on trans-Caribbean surveys, Indian Ocean humpback dolphins and trade in fish products with consequences to small cetaceans.

Item 16.7 Status of the voluntary fund for small cetacean conservation research

An update on a new call for proposals for the SCVF and on research funded by this Fund will be provided and fund status reported.

ITEM 17: WHALE WATCHING (WW)

The IWC Resolutions 1993-9 and 1994-14 directed Member States to submit information on whale watching. With Resolution 1996-2, the Commission directed the Scientific Committee to examine whale watching and its impacts on cetaceans.

Item 17.1: Assess the impacts of whale watching and swim-with-whale operations on cetaceans

The Committee will receive information from studies that assess the impacts on the short, mid-, and long-term impacts of whale watching on cetaceans, impacts from swim-with operations on cetaceans and emerging areas of concern. This is the main priority of WW this year.

A planned 3rd workshop on Modelling and Assessment of Whale Watching Impacts (MAWI) was postponed because of COVID-19 and funding returned to the IWC for budgetary reasons. The Committee will receive an update from an ICG and establish a workplan for MAWI.

Item 17.2: Progress with regional review of whale watching

The Committee welcomes updates and new information about the development of whale watching in Sri Lanka, Latin America, Timor-Leste, Australia, and the Southern Ocean Sanctuary. The latter will assist with the review of the Sanctuary, which will take place during SC69B (see item 18 below).

Item 17.3: Collaborative work within the IWC

The IWC's Whale Watching handbook was finalised and added to the IWC's website in 2018. The Committee will receive an update on development of new content for the handbook and promotion of the handbook. The Committee will also receive an update on progress toward improving communication and coordination between the Scientific Committee and Conservation Committee on whale watching.

The Committee agreed that it would be useful for the WW to engage with other relevant sub-committees (e.g.,

EM, IA and ASI) to identify types of analyses that would be acceptable when using data from platforms of opportunity and citizen science. The Committee will receive an update on those engagements.

ITEM 18: WHALE SANCTUARIES (SAN)

The Ad hoc Working Group on Sanctuaries (SAN) was established in 2001 to conduct the reviews of the scientific aspects of the Indian Ocean Sanctuary (IOS) in 2002 and the Southern Ocean Sanctuary (SOS) in 2004. The group was re-established in 2013 to review the SOS again in 2014. A new decadal review of the SOS is expected by the Commission in 2024.

The Southern Ocean Sanctuary (SOS) was established by the Commission in 1994. Paragraph 7(b) of the Schedule specified that the SOS shall be reviewed ten years after its initial adoption and at succeeding ten-year intervals. The year 2024 marks the third decade of this Sanctuary. The Committee will review scientific aspects of the SOS during the meeting.

ITEM 19: EXTINCTION ALERT

The Extinction Alert aims to explain clearly, factually and publicly why the SC is concerned about the extinction of a particular species or population. The first Extinction Alert statement was issued for the Vaquita during the intersessional period. The Committee will receive an update on the reach and impact of the statement including lessons learnt. In light of this the committee will consider updating the procedure on how and when future statements should be developed". Other groups wishing to develop statements for particular species or populations may wish to use the vaquita example for general guidance on length, tone and level of detail.

ITEM 20: IWC LIST OF RECOGNISED SPECIES

Our practice is to follow the Society for Marine Mammalogy (SMM) list of species. If changes have occurred in the SMM list, the approach for modifying the IWC list is routine and does not need formal discussion. The Committee expects updates to the list of recognised species.

ITEM 21: IWC DATABASES AND CATALOGUES (PH, GDR)

The ad-hoc working group on Photo-identification has not meet for a few years. At SC69B, PH will continue work on Guidelines for the IWC catalogues and photo-id databases. The group will also evaluate progress with existing and proposed new catalogues.

For other IWC databases the Secretariat will present an update on the status of current IWC data-holdings including outlining a new data management strategy and ongoing work integrating current databases. Ways to improve National Progress Report submissions will be discussed including results of a questionnaire circulated to member countries. A pilot project using scripts to automate the summary of submitted data at the country level will also be presented.

ITEM 22: MULTINATIONAL RESEARCH PROGRAMMES AND NATIONAL CRUISES THAT REQUIRE ENDORSEMENT (ASI)

The Committee will review the report of the IWC-POWER Technical Advisory Group and the Planning Committee that met in 2023 and 2024 and review recommendations for the 2024 cruise. The item will integrate advice from the NH, IA and ASI sub-groups. The Committee will also review progress under the Southern Ocean Research Partnership (SORP) programme, including updates on previously funded projects and a review of new projects proposed for funding. This item will integrate advice from several sub-groups. Other past and future cruises will be noted.

If applicable (e.g., requests are presented), the Committee will provide advice on future surveys designed to estimate abundance. Priority will be given to surveys producing abundance estimates to be used in the context of an IST (i.e., AWMP, RMP) or IA.

ITEM 23: SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE BUDGET FOR THE CURRENT BIENNUM

At IWC68 the Commission endorsed a recommendation from the Budgetary sub-committee that only balanced budgets be presented to the Commission. Rules of Procedure rule B.3 was changed from 'The Scientific Committee shall meet annually' to 'The Scientific Committee shall meet at least biennially.' Savings from the SC research budget made by the three-year period of virtual meetings have been used to delay the move to biennial SC meetings, however, the cut of £50,000 from the biennium budget, coupled with a high inflation rate, has resulted in considerable shortfall of the funds usually available for SC meetings and assigned to approved research projects. A Working Group assessed ways to address the realised budget and agreed to reallocate IP funds so that previously approved research projects were unaffected. This agenda item and item 25 will discuss how the Committee can operate under the new financial rules of procedure and move to biennial in-person meetings.

The Committee will receive a brief update on all activities conducted during 2023-24, including the status of the current funding. The Committee is also expected to develop a budget for the 2025-2026 using a new "zero-based" approach.

ITEM 24: COMMITTEE PRIORITIES FOR THE BIENNIUM 2025-26 AND INITIAL AGENDA FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee will develop a workplan for 2025-2026, taking into consideration the current workload and the need to change to a biennial schedule, for the Commission's consideration. The Committee workplan will be based upon the priority topics recommended by the sub-groups that aim to address the resolutions and recommendations of the Commission.

ITEM 25: WORKING METHODS OF THE COMMITTEE

The Committee has agreed to keep this Item on the Agenda to allow for discussion of proposals to improve the working methods of the Committee, including discussion on the balance between cost savings and the efficiency of the Committee (see Item 23) and how to enable broader participation (e.g., hybrid meetings) to the SC in-person meetings. The Committee also agreed to place this Item on the agenda to stimulate discussion on best to improve communications on conservation matters with the Conservation Committee and Commission.

Under this item the Committee will also discuss succession planning of SC expertise, particularly those members who work on Implementation Review and In-depth Assessment processes as such modelling skills are highly customised to IWC.

The research funding application procedure, for all SC funds, has been streamlined and moved to an online platform, with the intention of making the application process easier both for applicants and for accounting. This new process will be discussed under this agenda item.

The Committee will receive updates related to IWC governance developed by the Working Group on Operational Effectiveness. The Committee will also receive a draft SC Communication Initiative which the SC will comment on in preparation for the Commission meeting in September. The main objective of the Communications Initiative is to develop new material tailored to providing relevant information in a digestible way to the Commissioners, as the principal audience, and to other, non-technical groups such as policy makers, the general public and scientists new to the IWC.

The Scientific Committee Handbook, which details all of SC processes and procedures, can be found at <http://iwc.int/scientific-committee-handbook>. The handbook has been under review and an update on progress will be provided during the meeting.

The Committee is expected to elect new officers this year as the current Chair is expected to complete his term at the end of the Commission meeting in September 2024.

ITEM 26: PUBLICATIONS

The Committee will review progress with publications and will receive updates on the Journal of Cetacean Research and Management.

ITEM 27: ADOPTION OF REPORT

The draft report will be adopted following the SC's standard procedures. Sub-group reports (Annexes to the SC Report) will be agreed by the sub-groups at the end of the sub-group discussion period. The Chair's summaries of sub-group reports will be considered draft SC Plenary report and agreed during plenary sessions, at the end of the SC meeting.