

Report of the Joint Conservation Committee Scientific Committee Working Group meeting

Tuesday 8th May 2018, Bled, Slovenia

1. Welcome and aims of the meeting

The meeting was co-chaired by the Chair of the Conservation Committee (Lorenzo Rojas-Bracho, Mexico) and the incoming Chair of the Scientific Committee (Robert Suydam, USA). Sarah Ferriss and Sarah Smith of the Secretariat were appointed as rapporteurs.

The Chair welcomed the group to the fourth meeting of the joint CC-SC working group and noted that IWC Resolution 2014-4 agreed to establish a working group between the Conservation Committee and the Scientific Committee in order to propose a procedure to facilitate the implementation and follow-up of conservation recommendations. He drew attention to the Terms of Reference (Annex A).

The IWC Executive Secretary, Rebecca Lent also gave some words of welcome and thanked the attendees for their participation, underscoring the importance of the coordination between these two Committees.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted (Annex B). The list of documents available to the meeting is at Annex C and the list of participants is given at Annex D.

3. Report of the intersessional Group on the establishment of a database and in-depth review of draft database of recommendations

The Chair recalled that, at IWC66 in October 2016, the Commission approved a recommendation from the Conservation Committee to establish an intersessional Working Group to develop a draft structure and process for populating a web-accessible database of recommendations.

3.1 Report from in-person meeting, September 2017

The May 2017 meeting of the Joint CC-SC WG agreed to hold a small in-person meeting to develop a detailed database structure, including fields and categorisation, and a process for populating the database. This meeting was held at the IWC office in Cambridge in September 2017.

Jamie Rendell (UK) presented the report from the meeting (IWC/M18/CCSC/01). He noted that the database was intended to improve visibility and transparency of IWC recommendations, primarily through the improved availability and dissemination of advice and information and collaboration between and among Committees. The database will be used to monitor implementation and progress of recommendations and to more easily track and report on that progress over time. This will also enable different Commission bodies to identify barriers to implementation and work together to address them. The meeting in September 2017 proposed specific guidance on the development of the database based on expectation of how it might be used. Rendell encouraged the Joint CC-SC WG to input to the development of this database and thanked the Chairs of the Conservation Committee and Scientific Committee, Convenor of the Scientific Committees Global Databases and Repositories (GDR) group (Double, Australia) and the Secretariat for their work.

3.2 In-depth review of draft database of recommendations

Following a generous voluntary contribution from the UK, a pilot version of the database had been developed and a subset of recommendations was entered into the database by the Secretariat. This agenda item allowed the Joint CC-SC WG to review the draft database and make recommendations for improvement. To facilitate this, the Secretariat provided a demonstration of the database and a set of questions for the working group to consider.

i. Database location and accessibility

The Secretariat provided an overview of database location and accessibility (Table 1). Two search options will be available- basic and advanced, with tool tips available on both search screens.

Table 1. Initial proposed access to the database for each user group

Proposed location	Access	Search option	Results	User group
IWC website	Open access	basic search	results on screen and as a .csv file	All
IWC portal	Password	basic and advanced search	results on screen and as a .csv file	Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Commission and its subgroups, Scientific Committee Convenors, Secretariat
IWC portal	Password	basic and advanced search, adding and editing recommendations and actions	results on screen and as a .csv file	Secretariat only

On the basis of concerns about transparency and availability, the Working Group **agreed** that both the basic and advanced search should be accessible to all users and hosted on the IWC website. They **agreed** that the ability to edit and add recommendations should be limited to the Secretariat.

ii. Search options and results

The Secretariat demonstrated the search options and results display. In many cases, Commission subgroups make nested recommendations. It was confirmed that those nested recommendations could be linked to previous (“parent”) recommendations. The nested recommendations would show up in a search. It was also confirmed that if a recommendation was not endorsed by the Commission it would disappear from public view but would still remain in the database.

The Working Group **approved** the search options proposed and **agreed** to add two new options (“Commission meeting endorsed at” and “Commission body” that made the recommendation) to the existing search fields. The outgoing Chair of the Scientific Committee (Fortuna) noted that it was good to see multiple ways of reporting data and progress.

The Working Group noted that it might be useful to be able to search by generalised species terms (e.g. “baleen whales”) and agreed that ways of doing this should be explored.

Australia (Double) noted that, in due course, the columns in the result display might need to be reordered. But this can be addressed as the system is further developed and used.

iii. Database fields and categorisation

The Secretariat presented information on the current database fields and categorisation (“drop downs”) and raised a number of questions for the Joint CC-SC WG. The outcome of this discussion is summarised below:

Recommendation on numbering of recommendations- The Working Group **agreed** that this should be as simple as possible but informative and ideally the number would be generated automatically by the database.

Type of recommendation- The Working Group **agreed** to remove the “Draw attention” category and that statements of this nature could (in future) be added at the beginning of an action-orientated recommendation. It **agreed** that where recommendations are very long with different operative parts they would be split up and entered as separate (but linked) entries.

Decision process- The Working Group **agreed** that the field heading “Decision process” should be amended to make clearer that it applies to Commission-endorsed decisions. The Working Group discussed the proposed categories (‘Consensus Resolution’, ‘Resolution by vote’, ‘Report adoption’, ‘Other-consensus’, ‘Other-vote’). It **agreed** that the database should capture whether decisions are by consensus or vote, and that ‘Schedule amendments’ should be added as a distinct category.

Context- The Working Group **agreed** that this field this was useful for some recommendations (for example, those that do not clearly stand alone without further explanation) but that it should be used only when necessary.

Actioned by- The Working Group **agreed** to add a category “research community” to reflect general calls for additional research but that more thought was needed on whether/how progress of such recommendations could be tracked. Double (Australia) stressed the need for recommendations to identify more specific actions where possible, in addition to more general calls.

Review information- The Working Group **agreed** that the fields for “Outcome” and “Further action” might be useful but to revisit this as the process for review of implementation is developed.

Implications for guidance on recommendations- The incoming Chair of the SC (Suydam, USA) and others noted the need for clear guidance to those drafting recommendations and Double (Australia) suggested that a drafting tool or template would help ensure consistency in drafting and categorisation of recommendations. The Working Group agreed that the Secretariat would develop this tool in consultation with the intersessional group.

The Working Group agreed that, following this meeting, the Secretariat would take forward further development of the database, taking into account recommendations from the joint CC-SC WG and in consultation with the intersessional group.

3.3 Funding and resource requirements

Once finalised, the database will require ongoing technical maintenance and entry of new recommendations; and will be actively used to evaluate progress on implementation of past recommendations. Existing financial provisions will cover some of the further work required to finalise the database, but some modest additional resource may be required. Ongoing costs will include those for IT infrastructure as well as staff time for IT support, data entry and preparation of outputs.

The Working Group noted the resource implications of back-population of the database and agreed the need for a realistic “cut off point” for data entry.

Australia, supported by others, stressed that the database would be fundamental to the work of the Commission and should be funded from the core budget.

The Working Group agreed that these costs will be further elaborated, included in recommendations on the database to the Commission at IWC67, and brought to the attention of the Finance and Administration (F&A) Committee.

4. Data entry, review and use

Jamie Rendell introduced Section 5 of Document IWC/MAY18/CCSC/01 which made proposals regarding data entry and the review of implementation and progress of recommendations.

He confirmed that the Secretariat would have the primary responsibility for populating and maintaining the database and generating reports. He proposed that Commission subgroups should have a standard agenda item to review progress and implementation or recommendations. This would facilitate regular update of the database about implementation of recommendations.

He suggested that data should be entered within a month of the meeting and highlighted the need for guidance and tools to facilitate this and to reduce burden on rapporteurs, convenors, and chairs. The status of recommendations would remain pending until they are endorsed by the Commission.

Rendell outlined different types of review process. Committees could conduct regular review of implementation through the review of Secretariat progress reports. In a formal review, Committees would take more time to review recommendations and provide a detailed report to the Commission on progress. In a third type of review, the Commission might periodically (e.g. once every 5 years) review its effectiveness (e.g. through the review of implementation of recommendations and of outcomes). The F&A Committee have a role here, but the database will be a very useful tool. The process does need to be completely prescriptive. Each committee/subcommittee could have some flexibility in the way that it uses the database so long as they are reviewing progress and reporting progress to the Commission.

The discussion highlighted the role of reporting (e.g. SC progress reports and Voluntary Conservation reports) in providing information relevant to the review of implementation.

The outgoing Chair of the Scientific Committee (Fortuna, Italy) proposed that, if the Commission endorse these proposals, the associated responsibilities for Committee Chairs should be added to their Terms of Reference (as outlined, for example, in the Scientific Committee Handbook).

5. Guidance on language used in recommendations

At IWC66 the Commission endorsed a recommendation from the Conservation Committee that the Joint CC-SC WG work with the existing Scientific Committee process (being undertaken by the SC Chair, Vice-Chair, Head of Science and convenors) to develop guidelines for both reports on the drafting of clear and focussed stand-alone recommendations that highlight rationale/context, objectives and actors. It agreed that the guidelines should also address consistency in language.

In introducing this item, the Vice-Chair of the Conservation Committee (Rendell, UK) drew attention to the existing guidance for the Scientific Committee and the need for similar guidance for the Conservation Committee.

The Secretariat Head of Science briefly introduced the SC guidance which had been in progress for the past three years. The main intention was to ensure that recommendations stand alone and to try and standardise language used. The SC convenors and rapporteurs have found it helpful so far, but this is an evolving process.

Simmonds (UK) and the outgoing Chair of the Scientific Committee suggested that this guidance could be provided to other meetings e.g. IWC workshops.

The Working Group agreed that guidance for the SC and CC would continue to be developed, ensuring its consistency with the database of recommendations.

6. Emerging issues

This item allowed for an update regarding the discussions on the vaquita of the 2017 Joint CC-SC WG including discussions by the Bureau.

Bob Brownell introduced document IWC/MAY18/CCPG/11Rev1 (presented to the Conservation Committee Planning Group the previous day) which provided an overview of species or populations of urgent or emerging concern. He drew attention to 13 species of small cetacean that are Critically Endangered in the IUCN Red List and 10 species or populations of baleen whales which are Critically Endangered or Endangered. Bycatch is a key threat for most of these populations and increased efforts (including fishing area closures and gear modifications) are needed to address this critical threat. Brownell noted that, once a population drops to a number of 100 or less, there are no mitigation options available other than to stop fishing. He highlighted that since this issue was last discussed the Baiji has gone extinct in China and the Vaquita is almost extinct. He urged the Conservation Committee to consider what it can do to speed up the response on such issues.

The Chair of the Standing Working Group on Bycatch (Langerock, Belgium) highlighted the decision at the last Commission meeting to establish the Bycatch Mitigation Initiative (BMI) and outlined its progress including the establishment of the different parts of the BMI and development of a strategic plan and work plan for submission to IWC67. She hoped that the BMI will lead to the IWC taking action and engaging governments and other organisations worldwide to mitigate bycatch. The convenor (Leaper, UK) of the SC HIM subcommittee noted that this group had discussed the selection of pilot projects for the Bycatch Mitigation Initiative and that government support would be critical for these.

Simmonds, UK stressed that the main lesson from the paper was the need to act at an earlier point and noted the need for the IWC to take stock of what it is already doing. He identified the BMI, SC species reviews, Conservation Management Plans and the Small cetacean task team as important mechanisms needing financial support. But that additional action is needed.

Mattila (Secretariat) noted that entanglement response teams had been trained that could respond to entanglements of about 7 of the populations discussed, though this was not the long-term solution.

Slooten, Luxembourg noted the need for action before a population gets below a certain level, when there is then much less that can be done.

The Secretariat Head of Science agreed with previous comments, including the importance of existing mechanisms. He also stressed the need for more efforts to communicate the message from the IWC to the right people.

The Vice Chair of the Conservation Committee recalled previous discussions on how outreach could be taken forward at the higher level, for example through ambassadors or diplomatic missions. New Zealand stressed the need for elevation of this issue to the Commission and for progress through diplomatic means. The UK suggested exploring how this is achieved by other Intergovernmental Organisations.

The Working Group agreed to establish a small working group comprising the Chair and Vice Chair of the SC (Suydam and Zerbini), the UK, Australia, Spain, Portugal, Simmonds, Brownell, Porter, and the Secretariat (including the Bycatch Coordinator) to further explore this issue and present written proposals to the Commission at IWC67.

7. Any other business

The incoming Chair of the Scientific Committee drew the attention of the Working Group to recommendations from the Scientific Committee on the need for closer coordination and communication between its Whale Watching subcommittee (SC-WW) and the Conservation Committee Standing Working Group on Whale Watching.

Annex A. Terms of Reference for the Joint Conservation Committee and Scientific Committee Working Group

The Joint CC-SC working group (CC-SC WG) is tasked with facilitating the communication, implementation, and follow-up of conservation recommendations.

The CC-SC WG shall:

- review, collate and prioritise conservation recommendations made by the Scientific and Conservation Committees where further efforts/actions are needed, in the first instance focussing on those from 2010 onwards;
- report, as appropriate, to the Commission on progress in delivering conservation recommendations;
- develop clear procedures/strategies for effectively transmitting and facilitating the implementation of conservation recommendations to and from the SC-CC WG to the appropriate Committees and sub-committees/working groups, including for further technical work;
- provide advice to the Conservation Committee on those priority conservation recommendations it could assist in implementing;

- provide feedback to the Scientific Committee on further advice and/or actions to assist in the implementation of conservation recommendations;
- respond to specific requests for support in facilitating the implementation of conservation recommendations from the Scientific and/or Conservation Committees.

The CC-SC WG will be comprised of nominees from the Scientific Committee, Conservation Committee and Contracting Governments. Additional expertise may be included as appropriate at the discretion of the Scientific Committee and Conservation Committee Chairs.

Annex B. Agenda

1. Welcome and aims of the meeting
 - i. Appointment of Chairs [Lorenzo Rojas Bracho and Robert Suydam are proposed]
 - ii. Appointment of Rapporteur [The Secretariat will offer to act as rapporteur]
 - iii. Review of Terms of Reference and aims of the meeting
 - iv. Review of documents available to the meeting
2. Adoption of the agenda
3. Report of the intersessional Group on the establishment of a database and in-depth review of draft database of recommendations
 - i. Database location and accessibility
 - ii. Search options and results
 - iii. Database fields and categorisation
4. Data entry, review and use
 - i. Process and timelines for initial data entry and validation
 - ii. Process for communication of recommendations to relevant audiences
 - iii. Process and timelines for review of implementation of recommendations, and associated database updates
5. Language used in recommendations
6. Emerging issues
7. Future work plan and report to Commission of the Joint Conservation Committee and Scientific Working Group
8. Any other business

Annex C. List of documents

Document Reference	Title
<i>IWC/M18/CCSC/GEN/01 Rev01</i>	<i>Annotated Agenda</i>
<i>IWC/M18/CCSC/01</i>	<i>Report of the meeting to develop a database of recommendations</i>
<i>IWC/M18/CCSC/02</i>	<i>Review of draft database of IWC recommendations</i>
<i>IWC/M18/CCSC/INFO/1</i>	<i>Emerging or existing threats to cetaceans: understanding their conservation issues</i>

Annex D. List of Participants

ARGENTINA

Miguel Iniguez

AUSTRALIA

Nick Games
Mike Double
Suzi Heaton
Paula Perrett

AUSTRIA

Michael Stachowitsch

BELGIUM

Stephanie Langerock

BRAZIL

Artur Andriolo
Alex Zerbini

COLOMBIA

Anamaria Gonzalez

DENMARK

Peter Linde

FRANCE

Nadia Deckert

GERMANY

Nicole Hielscher

GUINEA, REP. OF

Samba Diallo

JAPAN

Hideki Morounki
Joji Morishita
Hiroyuki Morita

LUXEMBOURG

Liz Slooten

NETHERLANDS

Anne-Marie Svoboda

NEW ZEALAND

David Lundquist
Julia Reynolds
Amy Laurenson

PANAMA

Lissette Trejos Lasso

PORTUGAL

Marina Sequiera
Luis de Freitas

SLOVENIA

Andrej Bibic

SPAIN

Begona Santos
Graham Pierce

UNITED KINGDOM

Gemma Harper
Jamie Rendell
Catherine Bell
Mark Simmonds
Russell Leaper

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Bob Brownell
Carolyn Doherty
Ryan Wulff

Observers

Jennifer Lonsdale (EIA)
Daniel Hubbell (EIA)

Scientific Committee

Lindsay Porter
Chris Parsons
Naomi Rose

Chair of the Conservation Committee

Lorenzo Rojas Bracho

Incoming Chair of the Scientific Committee

Robert Suydam

Outgoing Chair of the Scientific Committee

Caterina Fortuna

IWC Secretariat

Rebecca Lent
Greg Donovan
Sarah Ferriss
David Mattila
Brendan Miller
Sarah Smith