



MINUTES SSC/2019/27

November 14, 2019

10:00 AM EST - Via Zoom Conference Call

Participants:

Dr Tammy Warren, Commission Acting Chair

Mr Frederico Cardigos, Commissioner

Dr Billy Causey, Commissioner

Prof Stephen de Mora, Commissioner

Sen Wilfred Moore, Commissioner

Prof Howard Roe, Commissioner

Dr David Freestone, Executive Secretary

(Apologies, Mr Mark Spalding, Commissioner)

1. Minutes of 25 September 2019 Meeting (MOS/SSC/2019/26)

- Approved.

2. Executive Secretary presented an update of Work Programme implementation to-date:

1.1. Signatories

- Former Commissioner Ricardo Serrão Santos has been appointed as the new Portuguese Minister of the Sea
- A new focal point has been appointed for the British Virgin Islands: Marcia Potter who now serves as PS for the Ministry of Natural Resources, Labour and Immigration.
- The Secretariat is following up with The Bahamas about appointing an official focal point following the retirement of Philip Weech.

1.2. Commission

- Two Commissioner's terms are eligible for reappointment this year. The SSC Secretariat has sent the feedback from Signatory governments to the Bermuda Permanent Secretary for their review prior to making appointment decisions. The process has been delayed because of pressure of Cabinet business, but the **Executive Secretary** will continue to follow up with the PS.

- Commissioners agreed that it would be beneficial to invite former Commissioner Ricardo Serrão Santos to be an Emeritus Commissioner in recognition of his time serving on the Commission. **Commissioner Cardigos** agreed to follow up with him on this personally.
- The draft chapter for the 2nd UN World Ocean Assessment has been submitted to the editors for review. The Commission thanked Howard Roe for taking the lead on this and his writing team – including Laurie Kell and Brian Luckhurst - for all their work on this draft.

1.3. Secretariat

- Nothing to report.

1.4. Collaborating Partners

- The Commission now has 29 Collaborating Partners including most recently the Florida Atlantic University (Harbor Branch), the Global Oceans Project, Global Fishing Watch, and the Bermuda Institute of Ocean Sciences. The **Executive Secretary** is exploring MoUs with the International Seabed Authority, OSPAR, BirdLife International, and ICCAT.
- There is also a new page on the Commission website to highlight Programmatic Partners, including ATLAS, COVERAGE, MiCO, and I-Atlantic.

1.5. Fisheries

- Dr Brian Luckhurst attended the ICCAT SCRS meeting in Madrid and was able to ensure that the Ecosystem Subcommittee's recommendations regarding using the Sargasso Sea as a pilot site for ecosystem based indicators was included in the report (relevant section attached). Due to SSC financial constraints, he will not be attending the ICCAT Commission meeting this month. Instead he will be participating in a Symposium at FAO Headquarters in Rome that will include discussions of ecosystem-based fisheries management.

1.6. Sea Bed

- The wording of a draft MoU between the Secretariats of the International Seabed Authority and the SSC has been finalized. The technical co-ordinates annexed to the MOU are being reviewed.

1.7. Migratory Species

- The Third Meeting of the Range States of the European Eel, convened in Malmo in June 2019 by the CMS and SSC with the support of Monaco, had recommended that a proposal for the development of a Single Species Action Plan be put to the forthcoming CMS Conference of the Parties in Gandhinagar, India in February 2020.
- The CMS and SSC Secretariats have drafted such a proposal, which the Principality of Monaco will present to CMS COP13, 15-22 February 2020.

- The SSC will aim to support the development of this Single Species Action plan if it is approved.

1.8. Finance and Fundraising Report

- The Commission is grateful to the Curtis & Edith Munson Foundation for their continued support at the Workshop in The Bahamas and also for their new grant of \$50,000 over the next two years.
- The Principality of Monaco has contacted the Commission Secretariat regarding a voluntary contribution, as they have generously done in previous years.
- The William H. Donner Foundation gave the Commission a grant for \$100,000 for general support in October 2018. A report has been submitted by the Secretariat on the use of these very welcome grant funds and a request for further funding. Commissioner Moore agreed to follow up with his contact at the Foundation.
- Thanks to support from the French biodiversity agency (AGF), the French **Global Environment Facility (FFEM)** is currently considering a joint proposal from the Sargasso Sea Commission and the Costa Rica Thermal Dome project, with the Ocean University in Brest, for a 3 million Euro grant over 5 years. The **Executive Secretary** has circulated the final proposal to the Commission and Signatories. It received a favorable review from the Scientific and Technical Committee in October and will be considered by the FFEM Steering Committee on November 25th.
- The **Executive Secretary** formally expressed his gratitude to the Bermuda Institute of Ocean Sciences (BIOS) that has submitted a letter offering co-financing in terms of science grants amounting to some \$23 million over the 5 years as “co-financing” for the FFEM project and expressing willingness to provide a similar letter for the GEF proposal in due course. The Commission Secretariat will circulate this letter.
- On the same note, Professor Alex Rodgers with the REV-Ocean project has informed the Secretariat that he is hoping to arrange an expedition in the Sargasso Sea with their new research vessel sometime in 2022, and noted his support for both the FFEM proposal and the GEF proposal.
- Regarding the GEF ABNJ Proposal. There is still uncertainty about the time table but it is expected that a Programmatic Proposal will be submitted by FAO to the June GEF Council Meeting, which can include Child Project Proposals.
- It will be recalled that In November 2018 the GEF International Waters team had deemed the Sargasso Sea proposal eligible. An advanced draft of this proposal, developed by Dr David Vousden was discussed at the July Bahamas Workshop, and he is in the process of revising it to reflect points raised in the Workshop discussions. It will be circulated for a further round of comments before Christmas.

- The **Executive Secretary** had a productive meeting with the Nippon Foundation on his trip to Japan, and will continue to explore a possible partnership with them and the Sasakawa Global Oceans Institute at WMU.
- **Commissioners Cardigos** and **de Mora** agreed to follow up with the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation and Oceano Azul about the potential for cofinancing.

1.9. Mapping and Monitoring

- The NASA COVERAGE Project is now in phase B. It is hoped that NASA will also be a co-financier for the FFEM and GEF projects.

1.10 Communications

- The Secretariat Programme Manager, **Ms Tess Mackey**, reported that the October 2019 newsletter had almost a 60% open rate, and all other social media outlets are doing well. Articles about European eel tend to generate a lot of attention. Commissioners were encouraged to send photos for the Sargasso On-the-Go section of the upcoming newsletter, which will be released before the holidays.

3. Any Other Business

4. Date of Next Meeting

- The next SSC meeting is tentatively scheduled for the week of 16 December and will be confirmed via Doodle poll.