



MINUTES SSC/2020/31
May 19, 2020
11:00 AM EDT - Via Zoom Conference Call

Participants:

Dr Tammy Warren, Commission Acting Chair
Mr Frederico Cardigos, Commissioner
Prof Stephen de Mora, Commissioner
Sen Wilfred Moore, Commissioner
Prof Howard Roe, Commissioner
Mr Mark Spalding, Commissioner
Dr Billy Causey, Emeritus Commissioner
Dr David Freestone, Executive Secretary
(Apologies, Mrs Rochelle Newbold, Commissioner)

1. Minutes of 14 April 2020 Meeting (MOS/SSC/2020/30)
 - Approved.

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

 - 1.2. Commission
 - **Commissioners Warren, Moore, and Cardigos'** terms are expiring this year and all are eligible for reappointment. The **Executive Secretary** will follow up with the Signatory governments and PS Rozy Azhar in Bermuda about the Commissioner appointment process.
 - **Commissioner Roe** reported that the Second World Ocean Assessment has been peer reviewed and is currently under review by the UN member States, with comments expected sometime in June.

 - 1.3. Secretariat
 - Nothing to report.

 - 1.4. Collaborating Partners

Professor Alex Rogers of REV Ocean has expressed interest in using their research vessel for a cruise in the Sargasso Sea. The **Executive Secretary** will follow up with REV Ocean about becoming a Collaborating Partner and the cruise might qualify as cofinancing for the FFEM and/or GEF projects.

1.5. Fisheries

- **Laurie Kell and Brian Luckhurst** participated in the SCRS Ecosystem Subcommittee, which was held virtually from 4-6 May. They gave a presentation on their work developing ecosystem indicators, which will be circulated to the Commission. The **Commission** passed a vote of thanks to Dr Luckhurst and Dr Kell for their hard work.

1.6 Shipping

- Nothing noted.

1.6. Sea Bed

- The MoU between the Secretariats of the International Seabed Authority and the SSC has been finalized and signed by both parties.
- The **Executive Secretary** will follow up with the Gallifrey Foundation regarding their possible interest in supporting the SSC delegation in the future.
- Commissioner Spalding recommended a candidate to represent the Sargasso Sea Commission at future International Seabed Authority meetings. There was general support for this candidate, funding permitting.

1.7. Migratory Species

- The CMS COP in Ghandhinagar, India in February 2020 approved the proposal for the preparation of a Single Species Action Plan for the European Eel that had been prepared by the CMS and SSC Secretariats and presented by the Principality of Monaco. The SSC is supporting the development of the Single Species Action plan, which will be circulated to the Commission. The Secretariat is discussing planning a series of virtual meetings with a regional focus to discuss the action plan with the CMS Secretariat. Both the EU Commission and the Government of Sweden had expressed interest in joining Monaco in supporting this process.

1.8. Finance and Fundraising Report

- The Ocean Foundation was approved for a small business grant due to COVID-19, which includes support for the Programme Manager's salary. The Secretariat would like to express their gratitude to The Ocean Foundation, in particular Tamika Washington, for their work to secure the loan.
- The contribution agreement with the Department of Fisheries & Oceans Canada to provide \$100K of operational funding to the Secretariat this fiscal year ended in March 2020. The Commission expressed its gratitude

to the Canadian DFO for this. The Commission is expecting the %10 hold back of the funding (10K CAD) since the final report and accounts have been submitted. The Secretariat are in discussions with DFO staff about a renewal.

- 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 final proposal received a favourable review from the Scientific and Technical Committee in September and the FFEM Steering Committee in November 2019. The Secretariat has a three hour call scheduled for 20 May with the FFEM consultants, who will be assisting with writing the final project document. The Secretariat expects that the final document for approval by the Steering Committee will be ready in September 2020, with contracts to be signed thereafter.
- The “Common Oceans” Programmatic Proposal for ABNJ was submitted by FAO to GEF Secretariat for the June GEF Council Meeting. If the Program is approved, the Sargasso Sea Project would be eligible to receive a \$100k Project Preparation Grant from GEF. This PPG would allow for the hiring of consultants to prepare the final project document to be sent for GEF CEO approval within 12 months.
- **Commissioner Spalding** recommended that there may be opportunities for seeking funding support from NOAA.

1.9. Mapping and Monitoring

- Regarding the NASA COVERAGE Project. Dr Vardis Tsonetos has been in discussion with the Secretariat about collaboration on the FFEM/GEF work. He reports “considerable progress and exciting developments on the COVERAGE Phase B work”. A Steering Committee (on which the Executive Secretary sits) is being scheduled for late June).

1.10 Communications

- The Secretariat Programme Manager, **Ms Tess Mackey**, reported that the next edition of the newsletter will be released next month for World Oceans Day. Commissioners are encouraged to submit photos and blurbs of recent happenings to the newsletter.
- The Ocean Foundation, in partnership with REV Ocean, has launched the #BlueShift campaign leading up to World Oceans Day. This campaign aims to raise awareness about ocean health. More information is available at www.oceanfdn.org/blueshift. The Executive Secretary proposed that the Commission join as an official partner, and asked that any objections be sent directly to the Secretariat.

3. Any Other Business

- The Odyssey Connect Hackathon has been moved to a fully virtual format, and will be held 13-15 November, with a number of preparatory meetings first.
- **Commissioner Cardigos** noted that the Commission has been invited to become a partner of Oceano Azul Foundation's 'Rise Up' initiative. As explained, it calls on governments and businesses to take the bold, fair actions required to set the ocean on a course to recovery and there are more than 200 signatories. Commissioners agreed that this sounded like a good idea. The Secretariat will circulate more information to the Commission.
- Emeritus Commissioner Causey shared information about a webinar held by UN Environment on 26 May about Sargassum in West Africa and the Caribbean, the link for which will be circulated to the Commission.

4. Date of Next Meeting

- As agreed on the call, the next SSC meeting will be **June 18 at 11 AM EDT**.