

**First Joint Meeting of the Signatories to the Hamilton Declaration
and the Sargasso Sea Commission**

The Pocantico Center of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund

20-22 October 2014

Minutes of the Meeting

DAY ONE- 20 OCTOBER 2014

MEETING OF THE SIGNATORIES

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks

The Meeting of the Signatories opened at 2:00 pm on Monday 20 October 2014 with welcome remarks from Dr. David Freestone, Executive Secretary, Sargasso Sea Commission. A moment of silence was held in memory of the late Richard G. Rockefeller, Chair of the Sargasso Sea Alliance Executive Committee, with thanks for his leadership and support; it was noted poignantly that he had personally arranged for this meeting to be hosted by the Pocantico Center of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. The Hon. Jeanne Atherden, JP, MP, Minister of Health, Seniors and Environment, Government of Bermuda, added her welcoming remarks, followed by remarks from each of the representatives of the Hamilton Declaration Signatory governments. Filipe Porteiro (Azores), Louise Savill (UK), and Peter Oppenheimer (US). The representative from Monaco joined the meeting later.

2. Election of Meeting Chair

Chair: Dr. David Freestone proposed that the Hon. Jeanne Atherden, JP, MP serve as Meeting Chair and Chair of the Meeting of Signatories, seconded by the United Kingdom. Hon. Jeanne Atherden, JP, MP proposed Dr. David Freestone to Co-Chair. Both proposals were accepted by acclamation.

Minister Atherden called for the election of a Vice-Chair for the Meeting of Signatories. Filipe Porteiro from the Azores was nominated by the United Kingdom. The nomination was seconded by the United States. It was agreed that Filipe Porteiro serve as Vice-Chair for the Meeting of Signatories. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Meeting of Signatories will serve for two years.

3. Approval of Agenda

Dr. David Freestone presented the Draft Agenda which was approved.

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4. Background Presentations

A series of invited guest speakers shared background presentations to provide context for the Sargasso Sea initiative and to present examples of large-scale protection and monitoring, ocean health tools.

Prof. Dan Laffoley, Senior Advisor, Marine Science & Conservation, Global Marine and Polar Programme IUCN, Vice-Chair, Marine, IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas, presented via Skype, which included an overview of global-scale initiatives to address high seas conservation, recent publications by IUCN and close partners, the emerging understanding of the role of *Sargassum* in carbon pathways and highlights of cutting-edge technologies that may be available to the global marine conservation community to better understand large-scale marine areas in the coming years.

Discussion following Prof. Laffoley's presentation urged the Government of Bermuda to revisit a potential collaboration with a private sector organization to carry out a survey underneath a *Sargassum* canopy, adding to the near shore work they had previously undertaken in Bermuda coral reefs. The Bermuda Government agreed to re-open discussions on *Sargassum* canopy survey.

Dr. Billy Causey, Sargasso Sea Commissioner and Southeast Regional Director, NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, presented "The Challenges and Tools to Managing Large, Remote Areas of the Ocean" and described the importance of connectivity in understanding the ecology and biology of species, understanding the spatial scale of influence, and the need for collaboration between like-minded organizations.

Dr. Nigella Hillgarth, representing the Phoenix Islands Protected Area (PIPA) and the New England Aquarium, presented "The Phoenix Islands Protected Area: Then, now, and beyond" and provided an overview of the process to develop PIPA, its recent call for closure of commercial fisheries as of January 2015, the challenges of coral bleaching events, and the PIPA 10-year plan for scientific research, including exploration, climate change, connectivity and ecological economics. Dr. Randi Rotjan participated via phone for the question and answer session.

Dr. Eric Lindstrom, NASA's Physical Oceanography Program, provided an update of on-going work to synthesize data for the Sargasso Sea as a pilot for the COVERAGE program. Using data previously collected by Salinity Processes in the Upper Ocean Regional Study (SPURS), Lindstrom explained ways in which NASA data can deliver facts for the Sargasso Sea as part

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of the CEOS Work Plan (Ocean Variables Enabling Research) over the next three years. For more information: <http://ourocean.jpl.nasa.gov/ceos/>. Questions posed included: (1) What are the highest priority data driven capabilities needed by the Commission? (2) What data layers are needed to populate the database? and (3) What is the best platform for the database? Further information was provided on the option for the Sargasso Sea (via governments and other organizations) to apply to become a Regional Alliance under the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS). It was agreed that the Commission consider next steps to further collaboration with COVERAGE-SPURS pilot project.

'Aulani Wilhelm, of Big Ocean, presented "*Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument-How A Crazy Idea Started a Trend: A Story About Why Size (and Tenacity) Matter(s)*", via Skype, and described the connectivity and global threats which unite many marine conservation efforts and the importance of taking action with information you have at the time. Wilhelm shared the story of how large scale protection was achieved with the new application of an old law (US Antiquities Act), emphasized the critical importance of research partnerships and how scientific research permits in the area are required to provide data to a larger information management system. Wilhelm also commended the use of an Advisory Committee to assist with information collection and planning as a way to engage a broader base of experts and interested individuals. For more information: www.bigoceanmanagers.org.

Dr. Steven Katona, Managing Director, Ocean Health Index (OHI), Gordon and Betty Moore Center for Science and Oceans, Conservation International, presented "*Defining and measuring ocean health: the Ocean Health Index project.*" Katona noted that "we must gain ocean benefits but not harm the system" and that the mission of the OHI was to "provide a new standard of measurement using the best available science and expertise to continually inspire decisions that will positively impact the health of Earth's oceans and the well-being of humanity." OHI was said to offer a new definition of ocean health that recognizes that people are part of the ocean system and focuses on achieving a sustainable flow of ocean benefits to people. Subsequent discussions will occur between OHI and the Sargasso Sea Commission to better understand methodology and scoring for the greater Sargasso Sea region. For more information: www.ohi-science.org. Dr Katona will introduce the Commission to OHI scientists to share information on OHI methodology and scoring specifically for the Sargasso Sea area.

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DAY TWO- 21 OCTOBER 2014

MEETING OF THE SIGNATORIES (CONT'D)

5. Overview of Sargasso Sea Initiative Accomplishments

Dr. David Freestone presented an “*Overview of Sargasso Sea Initiative Accomplishments*”, summarizing highlights over the four-year initiative, with the suggestion that the Sargasso Sea Commission may wish to carry-over some of these activities into the Commission Work Programme, so as not to lose momentum. Group discussion focused on opportunities for next steps with collaboration and working through international and regional organizations. For fisheries, the Meeting discussed the progress that was being made with the Ecosystem Subcommittee of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT) Standing Committee on Research and Statistics. A question was posed whether pelagic sharks are covered by ICCAT, separate from addressing them from a bycatch perspective. It was noted that that some countries do not think that ICCAT has a mandate to “manage” sharks. If correct, this was suggested as an additional reason governments need to modernize and expand the Convention mandate. It was also noted that WECAFC- Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission is considering converting from serving as an advisory to a fisheries management entity over time, with the support of a new Secretariat. The Sargasso Sea Commission Secretariat explained that while they did participate in a WECAFC meeting in 2012, resources have been focused on ICCAT and NAFO which currently have fisheries management authority.

With regard to the International Maritime Organization (IMO), participants discussed the challenge of proposing potential protection measures in a dynamic, moving area. In addition, the Commission faces the continued challenge of demonstrating direct adverse impacts on the Sargasso Sea ecosystem from the shipping industry (and problems of reliance on addressing this by analogy), as well as the possible cost of vessel related measures. “Platforms of opportunity” and potential partnerships with industry groups were suggested as a way to potentially address data gaps in the open ocean. Regarding passenger vessels landing in Bermuda, the government will continue discussions with select cruise lines on a potential partnership with the Sargasso Sea Commission on higher environmental stewardship and public education.

The potential opportunity to become a Regional Alliance under the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) was recognized. The potential benefits are large, but the Sargasso Sea

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Commission does not currently have the capacity or resources to collect and process data nor to act in a coordinating role between data providers and users. The Commission agreed to continue to discuss the feasibility and timing of a proposal in conjunction with a fund raising strategy. The United States noted the success of the coordination between the US, Europe and Canada on the Atlantic Ocean, via the 2013 Galway Declaration, and they will clarify lead agency and funding commitments to the Commission per their request. The Commission will continue to discuss the feasibility, timing and fund raising for GOOS Regional Alliance. The US representative agreed to clarify for the Commission Secretariat details of the US lead agency and funding commitments under the Galway Declaration process as a referencing model.

6. Discussion-Process and Operations: Rules of Procedure

Minister Atherden called for a discussion on the **Draft Rules of Procedure** presented to the Signatories.

Collaborating Partners- Drafting suggestions included a clarification to show consistency with the Sargasso Sea Commission Draft Rules of Procedure. Revised Rules of Procedure are attached as Appendix I (**MOS/SSC/2014/App.I**).

Communications-A question was posed on how communication would flow between the Commission and Signatories and how the Secretariat can support that communication. Minister Atherden suggested that rather than amend the Rules of Procedure to include these specifics, that the Secretariat shall draft a *Communications Modus Operandi* to explain this system at a practical level, allowing flexibility for adjustments as needed without formally amending the Rules of Procedure. Commission Secretariat to draft a *Communications Modus Operandi* for Signatories and Commission review.

The group shared the desire to consider translation (and requisite budgets) in the future as additional Signatories join over time. Representatives from Monaco and the Azores agreed to assist with translating the Hamilton Declaration on Collaboration for the Conservation of the Sargasso Sea into French and Portuguese, respectively.

Dr. David Freestone emphasized the role of the new Commission website (forthcoming Spring 2015) to provide a role in not only building and maintaining interest for the initiative, but also to provide transparency with Commission and Signatory operations.

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PART X CONSULTATION ON THE APPOINTMENT OF COMMISSIONERS- Discussion called for the need to list regular dates for the selection process for Commissioners in Appendix I (**MOS/SSC/2014/1/App.I**) and for that timetable to be consistent from year to year. A new paragraph 16 was agreed: “Each year there shall be a selection of Commissioners to the Sargasso Sea Commission using the procedure set out in Annex I (**MOS/SSC/2014/1/App.I/Ann.I**). At this time, the Signatories may also agree to increase the number of Commissioners serving on the Commission.”

Minister Atherden called for agreement on the approval of the Rules of Procedure for the Signatories, including Annex I as amended. It was agreed and the final version is included as Appendix I (**MOS/SSC/2014/1/App.I**) to these minutes.

7. Discussion- Next Steps in Collaboration

Dr. David Freestone further reviewed the role of the Meeting of Signatories per the Hamilton Declaration (para 5, para 7, para 10) and Minister Atherden facilitated a discussion on next steps in collaboration, furthering comments raised in the morning discussion session.

The United States suggested documenting contributions that have been made to-date by Signatories and other partners- financial and in-kind, for information purposes. It was agreed that the Commission Secretariat develop a working document of financial and in-kind contributions by Signatories and other partners.

Dr. David Freestone updated the group on pending efforts with new prospective Hamilton Declaration Signatories including governments that had participated in past negotiating meetings: viz Bahamas, Netherlands, South Africa, Portugal, Dominican Republic, Trinidad & Tobago, and Sweden. Others suggested outreach to a number of other countries also. While the Secretariat is pleased to facilitate the acceptance of interested governments, further discussion of active outreach to new Signatories should be discussed in the Commission Work Programme discussions.

Given the recent news regarding the high abundance of *Sargassum* in the Caribbean region, it is suggested that the Commission determine the potential role it may serve as a clearinghouse for *Sargassum* observing information, or as a conduit to connect the general public and media with expert scientists for tracking and forecasting. The Commission to further discuss potential role regarding *Sargassum* information clearinghouse.

Minister Atherden adjourned the Meeting of the Signatories at 12:30 pm.

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Minister Atherden opened the Meeting of the Sargasso Sea Commission at 2:30 pm with welcome remarks, followed by introductory remarks from the Commissioners.

Dr. Billy Causey

“I am very appreciative to have been named to be one of the pioneering commissioners for the Sargasso Sea Commission. I want to use this time to point out my dedication to what we are all striving to do- a work of both scientific and personal pleasure which will lead to conservation of a very important resource. I think the Sargasso Sea is so important to human kind, that we have an important job to do and I think it’s going to take many partners. There will be times when seems like we’re not making progress and presented with challenges, but it is worth the challenge and effort. I plan to be committing myself to helping with the scientific areas and working with others to bring a focus to remote sensing and the use of technology to better understand the area, to pull together scientific information on the Sargasso Sea. I will spend time trying to energize the scientific and management communities to get them involved with what we are doing. Working in an area outside of national boundaries is going to give us hope for use of this tool elsewhere. We need to be successful here to demonstrate its value to other people. I can commit myself to bringing all of my resources that I can to focus on this and to explore ways to leverage funding. I’m very pleased to be here and thank you for the opportunity.”

Professor Howard Roe

“I’m delighted to be here, thank you for your confidence in appointing me. I have been involved with the Sargasso Sea Alliance more or less since the beginning, and we have come farther and faster than I thought we would from our initial meeting in Bermuda. My interest is to move onto the next stage, which I believe is much harder than where we’ve been so far. We’ve established the ecological importance of the area--so what do we do about it? That is the challenge and I will do my best to help.”

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“It is a big pleasure for me to be here. I was the Chair of the CBD Experts Workshop in 2007 in the Azores where the criteria for EBSAs were established. I am a scientist and I also recently became a member of the European Parliament. I have done research for more than 30 years- many of it on the protection of marine ecosystems, deep-sea/open ocean ecosystems. I also represented Portugal and the Azores on the OSPAR Commission, establishing MPAs for the OSPAR Convention outside the EEZs of the Azores and Portugal and in the deep sea. The Sargasso Sea is one of the most interesting ecosystems in the open ocean- it is difficult to find another one with these unique characteristics. It deserves to be protected and to spread interest in the ecosystem. It harbors unique endemic species but also species of commercial interest of wider distribution. I remember, as young student in the late 70s, I worked to help aquaculture cooperatives and I was surprised to learn about the eel reproduction and life stage cycle- one of the most incredible life stages in the Sargasso Sea. This is the single reason this miracle of our planet should bring everything together. I commit as a scientist and as a politician in Europe to mobilize people and interests. Our big drive is to have a large managed and protected area recognizing the Sargasso Sea as an EBSA. The EBSA is a unique instrument to protect world oceans, and the Sargasso Sea an unique environment.”

Professor Dire Tladi

“Let me also express my deep appreciation and honor at being nominated to be one of first commissioners to serve as commissioner. I am the only lawyer, but I have been involved in this initiative since very early on- I was at the very first meeting in Hamilton, Bermuda. It has been an interesting journey for me. I am interested generally in what can be done to ensure the protection of the oceans in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) in general- just trying to get over the hump of reluctance on the part of States to take action and measures in accordance with UNCLOS in their own self-interest. I think this initiative is an opportunity to see what is possible in terms of the currently existing governance structures and also to show the limits of what is possible. We are trying to push the envelope in trying to get protection for a specific area. I also suggest the creation of new rules and governance opportunities are required. I am keen to contribute to making this work to see what is possible under existing governance structure and working to create something to make initiatives like this easier for others. I will offer whatever assistance I can offer to make the Sargasso Sea Commission a success.”

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“Good Day. I, like my fellow commissioners, feel honored to have been chosen as the Bermudian member of the Commission. Like a couple of others, I have been here almost since the beginning and I have been very proud with the way Bermuda has led this effort. Even though we are a small island, we are leading a very important initiative and I am not only having an impact in Bermuda, but one of importance regionally and globally. I have been involved in the ICCAT endeavor and I am learning quite a lot about international commissions and am looking forward to having some help in that work. Hopefully we can work together with international organizations to protect the Sargasso Sea. I am among illustrious scientists and lawyers and I come with a passion and willingness to learn and will assist in whatever way I can.”

2. Overview of Initial Mandate (per Hamilton Declaration Annex II)

Dr. David Freestone gave an overview of the Commission mandate, per the Declaration, focusing on paragraph 8 of the Hamilton Declaration and Annex II.

Brief discussion was held on Annex II, paragraph j regarding Environmental Impact Assessments, and whether the intent was for the Commission to develop EIAs or to receive EIAs. It was clarified that the intent was for the Commission to begin to develop expertise in the need for the development of EIAs, to show that this is a gap they may be seeking to fill.

Further details to operationalize the initial mandate were deferred until the discussion of Work Programme development.

3. Discussion and Adoption of Rules of Procedure

Minister Atherden led a discussion of the Rules of Procedure for the Sargasso Sea Commission.

Delete paragraph 2 “Each Member shall have one (1) vote,” and move to new paragraph 7, and further clarify procedure for tie, with a new paragraph 7: Decisions of the Commission shall be by consensus of those present or, failing consensus, then by a majority of the Commission present and voting. Each Member shall have one (1) vote. In the event of a tie, the Chair shall have an additional vote.

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Minister Atherden called for approval of the Rules of Procedure for the Sargasso Sea Commission. : The Rules of Procedure for the Sargasso Sea Commission were adopted as amended with paragraph 2 and 7- see Appendix II (**MOS/SSC/2014/1/App.II**).

AGREED**4. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair for Commission**

Minister Atherden called for an election of a Chair and a Vice-Chair for the Sargasso Sea Commission to serve for a term of two years. Dr. Billy Causey nominated Prof. Howard Roe as Chair and Dr. Tammy Trott as Vice-Chair. Prof. Dire Tladi seconded the nomination. It was agreed that Professor Howard Roe will serve as Chair and Dr. Tammy Trott will serve as Vice-Chair of the Sargasso Sea Commission until 21 October 2016.

5. Procedure for agreeing to Collaborating Partners

Dr. David Freestone facilitated a discussion of the process to agree to Collaborating Partners, and proposed that the Secretariat put forth a list of Sargasso Sea Alliance partners and other organizations for Commission approval. Upon approval the Secretariat will then distribute letters of invitations to join as Collaborating Partners. Each Collaborating Partner will be asked to join and work toward a specific activity and they will not speak on behalf of or represent the Commission.

Regarding timing, it was suggested to announce the initial Collaborating Partners in December 2014 when the UN Omnibus Resolution on Oceans and the Law of the Sea is released. The Secretariat will develop a list of initial Collaborating Partners for Commission approval. Letters of invitation will follow from the Secretariat as appropriate.

6. Concept Note on the importance of *Sargassum* and the Sargasso Sea for Atlantic Sea

Dr. David Freestone introduced a *Concept Note on the importance of Sargassum and the Sargasso Sea for Atlantic Sea Turtles* as the first outcome of an approach by an external partner to the Commission. The intent of the document, which was drafted by the Secretariat of the Inter-American Convention on the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles, the Sargasso Sea Alliance, and Bermuda experts, is to describe issues of mutual interest regarding sea turtles and the Sargasso Sea, as a first step toward possible further collaboration with the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea

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Turtles. This follows informal introductory discussions between 2013-2014 between the Sargasso Sea Alliance and IAC Secretariats, and the participation by the Alliance Secretariat in the IAC Consultative Experts Meeting in June 2014. Comments will be collated by Prof. Howard Roe, Chair, Sargasso Sea Commission by 7 November. The final version of the document will be jointly published by the IAC and Sargasso Sea Commission and posted on each organization's website. Prof. Howard Roe will collate comments on Concept Note by 7 November. The Secretariat to continue discussions with IAC on next steps to finalize document.

7. Discussion: Work Programme Development

The Commission Secretariat presented a potential framework for a discussion on Work Programme Development, beginning with a status report on Alliance activities to-date and potential next steps. The Secretariat noted that due to limited resources, a two-year priority Work Programme is suggested which will be used in fund-raising efforts. To be considered in the context of the full Hamilton Declaration text, over-arching goals include the following : (1) Promote international recognition of the unique ecological and biological nature and global significance of the Sargasso Sea, (2) Encourage scientific research to expand existing knowledge of the Sargasso Sea ecosystem in order to assess its health, productivity and resilience, and (3) Develop proposals for submission to existing regional, sectoral and international organizations to promote the objectives of the Hamilton Declaration.

The afternoon session continued with Work Programme drafting.

8. Continued Discussion: Work Programme Development

The morning session continued Work Programme development discussions. The Work Programme is under development and will be made available on the website when finalized (www.sargassoalliance.org). (SSC/2014/1/Doc.1).

Minister Atherden adjourned the meeting at 12noon.