



## MINUTES SSC/2022/43

March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022

11:00 AM EDT - Via Zoom Conference Call

### Participants:

**Dr Tammy Warren, Commission Acting Chair**

**Prof Stephen de Mora, Commissioner**

**Sen Wilfred Moore, Commissioner**

**Mr Mark Spalding, Commissioner**

**Dr Howard Roe, Commissioner**

**Dr David Freestone, Executive Secretary**

**Fae Sapsford, SSC Secretariat**

### Apologies – Commissioners Colaço and Newbold

#### 1. Minutes of SSC/2022/42

- Approved with a few minor clarifications

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

##### 1.1. Commissioner appointment process

- The **Executive Secretary** noted that the terms for **Commissioner Roe** and **Commissioner Newbold** were coming to an end. Commissioners may only serve a maximum of 3 consecutive terms, as agreed by the Signatories at the 2014 Hamilton Meeting – therefore, **Commissioner Roe** would not be eligible for reappointment. The Commissioners were keen to involve him in an informal role in order to take advantage of his expertise and institutional memory.
- **Commissioner Roe** thanked the Commissioners for their support, and remarked that his empty spot would allow for someone new, with fresh perspectives, to share their expertise with the Commission.
- The **Executive Secretary** said that he would send a notice regarding nomination for the Commission vacancies at the end of the March.

##### 1.2. Collaborating partners

- The **Executive Secretary** reported that Mission Blue re-launched the Sargasso Sea Hope Spot on March 11th, 2022. They prepared a press release, and a film with Sylvia Earle for promotion. These had been sent to the Commissioners. The **Executive Secretary** also highlighted that the High Seas Alliance had launched a profile on the Sargasso Sea on their website as a site they felt should become a marine protected area.

### 1.3. Fisheries

- The **Executive Secretary** reported that Dr Camille Manel (Executive Secretary of ICCAT) had called him to express his support for an MOU between the ICCAT and SSC Secretariats – however, he noted that it would be beneficial for the MOU to come through the ICCAT SCRS. Dr Camille Manel suggested that for the SSC Secretariat, it could come through the Ecosystem Sub-Committee, via Alex Hanke and his colleagues. The **Executive Secretary** noted that Drs Brian Luckhurst and Laurie Kell attend the meetings regularly and they could move it forward.
- The **Executive Secretary** also reported that the Secretariat had held a meeting with a team from the Guy Harvey Research Institute based at Nova Southeastern University, Florida on March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022 about tiger and mako shark data contributions for the FFEM project, in addition to the pelagic fish data the National Marine Fisheries Service had already agreed to provide.
- The **Executive Secretary** also reported that Dr Vardis Tsonetos of COVERAGE was interested in gaining access to ICCAT data as well, and there may be opportunities for collaboration in regard to the MOU.
- The **Executive Secretary** reported that Drs Brian Luckhurst and Laurie Kell would be attending a meeting on ICCAT eco-regions from March 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> 2022. This was advantageous, as the Commission had long sought to highlight the Sargasso Sea as an important area within the eco-region, which may present an opportunity to pilot an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries in the Sargasso Sea – something Drs Brian Luckhurst and Laurie Kell had been promoting at ICCAT meetings on behalf of the Commission for years.
- The **Executive Secretary** reported that the Signatories in principle supported the idea of an MOU between the NAFO and SSC Secretariats, but NAFO had yet to send back their suggestions on the draft the Secretariat had prepared.

### 1.4. Shipping

- The **Executive Secretary** highlighted that he had approached the IMO Secretariat regarding the idea of a Sargasso Sea PSSA, especially as there would be capacity to do this under GEF. Edward Kleverlaan (former environment adviser at IMO) and indicated his interest in being a consultant to assist with this.

- **Commissioner Spalding** reported that the marine environment committee of the IMO (MAPC) is meeting in April, and that Government of Norway supported by The Ocean Foundation and other NGOs would be putting forward a proposal that nurdles (small plastic pellets used to make plastics) should be declared a hazardous material for transport and should have specific carriage requirements under MARPOL. He asked if the Commissioners would be prepared to support the proposal. **Commissioner Roe** suggested they could write a letter expressing their support. **Commissioner Spalding** was grateful for the support, and suggested the Commissioners highlight the negative impact of nurdles accumulating in the North Atlantic Gyre if spilled.
- **The Commissioners** expressed their support – it was agreed that **Commissioner Roe** would draft the letter, and the other Commissioners could comment on it and sign it in their personal capacity, in time for the approaching April deadline.

#### 1.5. Seabed

- **Commissioner Spalding** reported that The Ocean Foundation was putting together a targeted effort related to the ISA and deep-sea mining. It was a two-pronged approach, focusing on the ocean-climate nexus, and challenging the claim that deep sea mining is intended to provide metals necessary for green technologies; and the finance side – focusing on finance and legislation surrounding seabed mining. The **Executive Secretary** cautioned that the Secretariat may not be able to officially support this effort due to differing opinions from the Signatories on the issue. **Commissioner Spalding** agreed, and said that he would appreciate any information the Secretariat may be able to share at this stage. **Commissioner Moore** highlighted that he had contacted the Hon. John McKay, whose work focused on Canadian companies involved in extractive industries abroad including deep sea mining – saying that he may be a useful contact in the future on these issues.

#### 1.6. Migratory species

- The **Executive Secretary** reported that the Secretariat would continue to try and reestablish its work with the Convention on Migratory Species.
- The **Executive Secretary** reported that there had been progress with the proposed MOU with Inter-American Turtle Convention (IAC). The draft MOU had been reviewed at their consultative committee meeting, and

this had moved forward quickly. The IAC Secretariat sent it for comments from their Parties in advance of that meeting, and it was approved with a few minor wording changes. It was to be considered at the upcoming IAC COP (15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> June 2022) for formal adoption.

- **Commissioner Warren** highlighted that the Bermuda Government had just published legislation to increase protection of sharks in the Bermuda EEZ. It would ban fishing of all sharks except for Galapagos sharks, smooth dogfish, and six gill sharks on very limited licenses for local fishermen. **Commissioner Moore** also reported that Canada had instated a ban on import of shark fins in 2019.

#### 1.7. Finance

- The **Executive Secretary** explained that IUCN had invited the Commission to make a proposal, for a small grant for on-the-ground work but had not been successful.
- The **Executive Secretary** reported that the first data coordination meeting for FFEM was held on March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2022, including partners from Duke MGEL, Imperial College London, and NASA COVERAGE. Invoices from Duke MGEL and BIOS had already been submitted to FFEM. He reported that there were some administrative issues with transferring the FFEM money with a correspondent bank, and so an amendment to the agreement may have to be made enabling the funds to be paid in dollars.
- The **Executive Secretary** also reported that a launch event was held on March 2<sup>nd</sup> for the Big Data and AI report that SSC had contracted NLA International to produce. Funding for this project came through IUCN from the Swedish Government. A report of the event was being written up, which would be added to the main report. This would then be published online. **Commissioner Roe** commented that he supported the important observation Dr Eric Lindstrom that the ability to implement AI systems far exceeds our ability to make observations in the ocean.
- The **Executive Secretary** reported that the GEF project was moving forward – a second round of comments had been received relating to the financing of the chief technical officer position, and a workaround was being pursued.

#### 1.7 Mapping and Monitoring

- Nothing noted.

#### 1.8 Communications

- **Fae Sapsford** gave a communications update:
  - The anniversary of the Hamilton Declaration was promoted on social media, alongside the Mission Blue

Hope Spot relaunch. The Secretariat received many congratulations on the anniversary of the Hamilton Declaration.

- The Spring Newsletter was also sent out on the Hamilton Declaration anniversary, and it got the best open rate of any of the newsletters in the past 8 months.
- The Big Data and AI workshop went well, and there was now a web page about it on the SSC website
- A post about lanternfish in particular was doing well on Instagram, with a lot of long-term engagement
- She reported that engagement was up on all platforms -  
FB - engagement up 160%  
LI - impressions up 4.4%  
TW - fish eggs post well liked  
IG - lanternfish post well liked; engagement up 158%

### 3. Any Other Business/Date of Next Meeting

- It was decided that a special meeting would be held on **April 4<sup>th</sup> at 10am ET** to talk through the revised rules of procedure.