



MINUTES SSC/2022/44

May 31, 2022

10:00 AM ET - 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

Mrs. Rochelle Newbold, Commissioner

Dr. Ana Colaço, Commissioner

Dr David Freestone, Executive Secretary

Fae Sapsford, SSC Secretariat

1. Minutes of SSC/2022/43
 - Approved.

2. The Executive Secretary gave an update from the Signatories
 - The **Executive Secretary** explained that the Signatories had expressed support for the convening of a joint meeting to discuss the revised rules of procedure, however such a meeting was out of budget for the Secretariat at the moment (estimated cost of c\$40,000). He also emphasised that it would be best to combine such a meeting with other objectives so as to make the best use of the budget. He suggested that the joint meeting could take place with or shortly after the GEF inception workshop, or the SARGADOM steering committee meeting, both set to take place within the next 6 months.
 - The **Executive Secretary** also explained that Pedro Neves had moved on and his position as the Azorean governmental focal point was now filled by Mario Rui Pinho. The Executive Secretary planned to have a one-on-one meeting with him in the near future to explain the structure and work of SSC.

3. **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. **Commissioner Newbold** and two other candidates had submitted their materials for consideration. The **Executive Secretary** explained that as part of the appointment process, nominations would be sent to the Signatories for comment and also to Collaborating Partners.
- 1.2. Collaborating partners
 - Nothing noted
- 1.3. Fisheries
 - The **Executive Secretary** reported that the Secretariat and its ICCAT team had just had a meeting with the UK DEFRA office about the representation of the Commission in ICCAT meetings as part of the Bermuda delegation. DF reminded DEFRA of the entrustment agreement for Bermuda that was renegotiated to enable Bermuda to represent the interest of the Commission at international meetings. A team had been working with ICCAT for 12 years, and there was a lot of support for their work from the UK. Drs Brian Luckhurst and Laurie Kell would be part of the delegation for the upcoming SC-ECO meeting, where they would recommend an MOU between the SSC and ICCAT secretariats, an internal MOU recommendation approach suggested by ICCAT Executive Secretary Dr Camile Manel.
 - The **Executive Secretary** reported that he was waiting for the June meeting of NAFO for comments to be finalized on the pending MOU between the SSC and NAFO Secretariats.
- 1.4. Shipping
 - The **Executive Secretary** reported that IMO will be holding a parties meeting on high seas PSSAs in July, an idea for a meeting the Commission had originally thought to pursue with World Maritime University. He was now contemplating a follow up meeting highlighting the Sargasso Sea as an example case study.
 - **Commissioner Warren** highlighted that she was aware of a Bermudian pursuing a master's degree at the University of Edinburgh on Bermuda's cetaceans. She is interning at IMO and is investigating whether PSSA designation would be appropriate to increase protections for cetaceans in

Bermuda. **Commissioner Warren** said that she would put the student, Catherina Hay, in touch with the Secretariat.

1.5. Seabed

- The **Executive Secretary** had sent the Commissioners a copy of the International Seabed Authority (ISA)'s Regional Environmental Management Plan (REMP) for the northern Mid-Atlantic Ridge which was out for comments. The **Executive Secretary highlighted** his concerns that the REMP did not include the potential impacts of mining on adjacent areas – like the Sargasso Sea. He reported that the Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP) had decided to make detailed comments to the ISA on the REMP, and after discussions with the Executive Secretary, GESAMP had taken up the concern about mining plumes on the mid-Atlantic ridge being swept into the north Atlantic gyre in their comments.
 - **Commissioner Colaço** reported that she had submitted comments on the REMP from the Deep Ocean Stewardship Initiative, and reported that she had been involved with the workshops that contributed to the creation of the REMP. She also highlighted that EBSA description was mentioned as a consideration for the ISA in drafting these REMPs – and highlighted the strong case that the Sargasso Sea could make for protection as the Sargasso Sea EBSA included the seafloor.
 - **Commissioner Spalding** reported that his team at The Ocean Foundation had been highlighting the risks that investors in the Metals Company (previously Deep Green), a seabed mining company, faced and some 85% of their investors had left. The TOC strategy focused on clarifying that the Company's statement that deep sea mining for rare metals can solve climate change could be seen as a misrepresentation of facts to their shareholders.

1.6. Migratory species

- The **Executive Secretary** reported that an MOU between the SSC and Inter-American Turtle Convention (IAC) Secretariats was up for consideration at their COP, scheduled for June 15-17 in Panama.

1.7. Finance

- **Commissioner Spalding** reported that he was looking for a funder for the joint meeting, as the Secretariat had provided him with a budget.
- The **Executive Secretary** reported that all documents for FFEM were signed at the end of last year. He also reported that the implementing partners, Duke, Imperial, and BIOS, had already started work. There had been various administrative issues since then, but the drawdown was expected before the end of June.
- The **Executive Secretary** reported that the GEF project had now received endorsement from the GEF CEO.
- The **Executive Secretary** reported that the GEF budget was renegotiated because the GEF Secretariat said there was too much money allocated to staff. The CTO, finance officer, and communications officer will all be kept, but now some funding for the positions will be sourced from the FFEM project, so the finance and communications officers will be joint positions, serving both FFEM and GEF. He also reported that terms of reference for all positions were being moved forward by IOC-UNESCO. The plan was to appoint the CTO before the other two positions so that the CTO could collaborate on hiring other members of the team, and IOC guidelines preferred that each position was advertised for a month.

1.7 Mapping and Monitoring

- Nothing noted.

1.8 Communications

- **Fae Sapsford** gave a communications update:
 - She reported on a few recent posts that had done well on social media:
 - Releasing the NLAI Big Data report, which was also promoted by IUCN and NLAI online
 - Celebrating GEF being endorsed
 - Celebrating Earth Day with a short video
 - She reported that next week is World Ocean's Day, so the World Oceans Day newsletter would be released on 8 June, highlighting the GEF grant and other developments; a whale louse would be the subject of the "creature feature" section.
 - She also reported that the Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute had just unveiled a new exhibit, which featured the Sargasso Sea.
 - She also reported that she was giving a talk at Bermuda High School for girls this week about the Sargasso Sea ecosystem.
 - She also reported that the NOAA Okeanos Explorer would be completing another expedition from June 16-July 13. As with its last voyage, the relationship between SSC and NOAA would be strong, and **FS** was drafting two articles for their website on high seas governance. She would also update the website with more images from the cruises.

- She also reported that engagement had increased across all social media platforms.

3. Any Other Business/Date of Next Meeting

- UN Ocean Conference: the **Executive Secretary** reported that Hon Walter Roban, the Bermuda Minister in attendance, will be happy to speak about the Sargasso Sea Commission and invite other countries to sign the Hamilton Declaration. He reported that **Fae Sapsford** would be attending as part of the University of Brest delegation. Commissioners attending included: **Commissioner Colaço, Commissioner Newbold, Commissioner de Mora, Commissioner Spalding, and Commissioner Warren.**
- The Commissioners agreed that their next meeting would be scheduled for **July 19th at 10am ET.**