



**MINUTES SSC/2022/48**  
**April 18 2023**  
**10 AM ET - Via Zoom Conference Call**

**Participants:**

**Senator Wilfred Moore, Commissioner**  
**Professor Murray Roberts, Commissioner**  
**Dr. Ana Colaço, Commissioner**  
**Dr Tammy Warren, Commission Acting Chair**  
**Mrs. Rochelle Newbold, Commissioner**  
**Mr. Mark Spalding, Commissioner**

**Dr David Freestone, Executive Secretary**  
**Fae Sapsford, SSC Secretariat**

**Apologies**

**Professor Stephen de Mora, Commissioner**

1. Minutes of SSC/2022/47
  - Approved, with note to amend typo and question about ICCAT webpage.
2. Signatories update
  - **The Executive Secretary** reported that no new draft of the new Rules of Procedure had been submitted to him by the Signatories yet.
  - **The Executive Secretary** celebrated the conclusion of the BBNJ agreement process. He noted it would take 60 ratifications to bring it in to force, and it would establish a Conference of the Parties (COP). The Agreement would give the COP the power to establish marine protected areas on the high seas that would be recognised by all the parties, which is very positive for the work of the Sargasso Sea Commission.
3. **Executive Secretary** presented an update of Work Programme implementation to-date:

- 1.1. Commissioner appointment process
- **The Executive Secretary** noted that this summer **Commissioner Warren** would be coming to the end of her third term, and **Commissioner Moore** would be coming to the end of his second term. **Commissioner Warren** would not be eligible for reappointment, but **Commissioner Moore** would be eligible to stand again. The deadline for nominations is May 31<sup>st</sup>. Nominations are then sent to Signatories and collaborating partners for comments over a two-month period, and the candidates and comments are sent to the Bermuda Minister who then makes a recommendation to Cabinet which ultimately makes the appointments, usually in August or September.
- 1.2. Collaborating partners
- Nothing noted
- 1.3. Fisheries
- The **Executive Secretary** reported that an MOU between the ICCAT and SSC Secretariats proposed in principle by the ICCAT SCR ecosystem sub-committee had now been approved by the full SCRS to the ICCAT Commission. The ICCAT Commission supported the MOU, so drafting had begun – ICCAT was now reviewing the first substantive draft.
  - The **Executive Secretary** reported that he met Prof Gideon Henderson, DEFRA’s science advisor, during a meeting in Oslo in February. He was very interested in the work of the Commission and receptive to the possibility of the UK introducing measures through ICCAT.
  - **Commissioner Roberts** reported that he knows Gideon Henderson, and his predecessor Sir Ian Boyd, and would be happy to strengthen contact with them if helpful. He also reported that he will be going to the UK overseas territories joint ministerial council reception hosted by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office with Zach Goldstein on May 12<sup>th</sup>, in case any connections he could make there would be helpful. The **Executive Secretary** reported that Goldstein is aware of the Commission’s activities, and he would be delighted if **Commissioner Roberts** could introduce himself as a Sargasso Sea Commissioner.
  - The **Executive Secretary** reported that the finalization of the draft SSC/NAFO MOU had been delayed in 2022 after comments received from the Signatories. These comments have been reviewed and a final version had been agreed by the Signatories and Commissioners, which had now been sent to the new NAFO Executive Secretary, Dr Brynhildur Benediktsdóttir.

#### 1.4. Shipping

- The **Executive Secretary** noted that IMO (with the World Maritime University) is planning a workshop on PSSAs in the high seas scheduled for November 13-15 in Costa Rica. There is a plan for an additional meeting on the Sargasso Sea to which technical experts would be invited. The SARGADOM second steering committee meeting would also take place in accordance with the PSSA meeting, on November 16<sup>th</sup>.
- **Commissioner Murray Roberts** reported that the University of Edinburgh would be hosting a workshop called 'The High Seas Treaty – from negotiations to implementation,' from 6-7 October 2023, in Edinburgh and online. He invited the Commissioners to share their thoughts on the preliminary programme and [join the mailing list](#) for more information.

#### 1.5. Seabed

- The **Executive Secretary** reported that the Commission's letter to the OSPAR Secretariat in support of the NACES MPA had been submitted in February.

#### 1.6. Migratory species

- The **Executive Secretary** reported that a signing event for the MOU between the Secretariats of the IAC and SSC would take place during the IAC's 16<sup>th</sup> Consultative Committee, on April 26<sup>th</sup> from 11-12 ET. All Commissioners and Signatories were invited, and Minister Roban, Deputy Premier and Minister of Home Affairs for the Bermuda Government, had agreed to give remarks.

#### 1.7. Finance

- The **Executive Secretary** reported that Goslings Rum through The Ocean Foundation had agreed to support the Commission by donating part of the proceeds of a popup they would host at a New York City bar.
- The **Executive Secretary** reported that he would be sending an email to the Signatories to encourage them to make voluntary contributions as the Secretariat was running critically short of money again.
- The **Executive Secretary** reported that SSPI had gratefully received 20,000 euros from Monaco on December 5<sup>th</sup>, and \$25,000 from the Munson Foundation on December 12<sup>th</sup>. He expressed his sincere gratitude to the Signatories that had historically made contributions, and to the Commissioners who had made voluntary contributions.
- **Commissioner Moore** reported that he was hopeful that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans of Canada will contribute as the Minister was seeking

alternate funding sources. The **Executive Secretary** thanked the Commissioner for his efforts.

- The **Executive Secretary** reported that the FFEM project is mid-way through year 2, but money from year 1 had not yet been spent in full as the project activities started late. The contracts for the implementing partners were still outstanding but were expected to finish this year. **Commissioner Moore** emphasised the importance of the silos of activity both within the FFEM project, and between the FFEM and GEF project to talk to each other, and the **Executive Secretary** agreed and explained that the ongoing meetings around the projects were invaluable for collaboration.
- The **Executive Secretary** also reported that the analyses for the FFEM and GEF projects had been combined into a common framework that would work for both: the socio-ecosystem diagnostic analysis (SEDA). Dr. David Vousden, CTA for the GEF project, had created a terms of reference document mapping the inputs of all the partners into the headings of the framework to ensure all criteria were met and to ascertain what work needed to be done to fill gaps.
- The **Executive Secretary** reported that **Commissioner Roberts** had sent an email outlining the contributions that the University of Edinburgh could make. **Commissioner Roberts** reported that he had a lot of information both from Atlas and iAtlantic – some of the work was ready to be mapped and visualised, but other products from those projects would take a time investment to apply them to the goals of the SEDA, which would require funding – possibly through the GEF project.
- The **Executive Secretary** reported that the GEF project timeline was good – **Fae Sapsford** had been appointed as the Communications officer, and David Vousden had been appointed as the CTA. Mandimby Ramilison had also been appointed as the finance and admin officer.
- **The Executive Secretary** reported that the Secretariat had met with consultants working on a project worth 40 million euros from the European Union focusing on global ocean issues, especially BBNJ. About 3-4 million euros might be available to the SARGADOM project partners through this project – and they had encouraged SARGADOM to send a list of activities and an informal budget.

## 1.7 Mapping and Monitoring

- The **Executive Secretary** reported that the NASA COVERAGE project had not had its funding renewed, so the project had stopped and the website discontinued. All the data the project used is still available, but losing COVERAGE has meant losing the data curation, interoperability, and visualization it provided.

## 1.8 Communications

**Fae Sapsford** gave a communications update:

- **FS** celebrated the conclusion of the high seas treaty and reported that there had been a lot of communications activities around that on the Commission and SARGADOM channels.
- **DF** gave a virtual talk as part of an IMPAC 5 event on February 8<sup>th</sup> 2023 hosted by the High Seas Alliance highlighting the first generation of marine protected areas in the high seas.
- **FS** gave a talk on April 2<sup>nd</sup> 2023 at the Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute about the high seas treaty and the work of the Commission.
- SARGADOM will have a presence at the European Maritime Days in May to promote the project.
- There is a Mission Blue event at the Explorers Club event planned for June 5<sup>th</sup> at which **DF** has agreed to speak on the Sargasso Sea “Hope Spot” and the new high seas treaty.
- **FS** shared some important dates:
  - IUCN high seas workshop + SARGADOM advisory board: 27-29 June in Gland, Switzerland.
  - PSSA workshop + SARGADOM steering committee w/c November 13<sup>th</sup> in Costa Rica
- Twitter and Instagram had very good engagement, LinkedIn slightly less. Facebook had very good reach. The top Tweet for the last month was a video showing the Sargassum microfauna, and positioning them as some of the species at stake in high seas treaty negotiations.
- The SSC newsletter for April was released on April 7 and it had a 46% open rate.
- The SARGADOM website was also up and running.

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

- **The next meeting would be a Joint Meeting with the Signatories scheduled for June 21 at 10am ET.**
- **Commissioner Moore** brought up the bad press that Sargassum had been having lately, due to the Great Atlantic Sargassum Belt inundating beaches. He suggested that the Commission could put out new communications clarifying that the beach inundations were not caused by Sargassum originating in the Sargasso Sea. The **Executive Secretary**

and Fae Sapsford agreed, and the **Executive Secretary** suggested that a scientist could be interviewed so that the Commission could put out a scientific statement – Professors Jim Franks and Hazel Oxenford were suggested.

- **Commissioner Warren** reported she had to field questions about Sargassum blooms as a result of the news in Florida. She also noted that *S. natans VIII* is still rare in Bermuda.
- **Commissioner Moore** also reported that DFO Canada had closed the eel fishery for 45 days after escalating conflict. [He shared a press released about the issue.](#)