



MINUTES SSC/2024/52

19 June 2024

11 AM ET - Via Zoom Conference Call

Participants:

Professor Murray Roberts, Commissioner

Dr Robbie Smith, Commissioner

Mr. Mark Spalding, Commissioner

Senator Wilfred Moore, Commissioner

Dr. Ana Colaço, Commissioner

Fae Sapsford, SSC Secretariat

Dr David Freestone, Executive Secretary

Apologies

Mrs. Rochelle Newbold, Commissioner

Professor Stephen de Mora, Commissioner

1. Minutes of SSC/2024/51 and JM/2024/10

- Approved.

2. Matters arising from minutes

- The Commissioners reported that the Honourable Diane LeBouthillier, P.C., M.P. (Canadian Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard) had not yet replied to the letter the Commissioners sent regarding the closure of the eel fishery in Canada. **Commissioner Moore** explained that the Canadian Government had made the decision to give 50% of the current elver quota to the indigenous population, with no compensation for current license holders, creating significant issues with their livelihoods.

3. Executive Secretary presented an update of Work Programme implementation to-date:

- 1.1. Commissioner appointment process
 - **DF** reminded Commissioners of the Commissioner appointment process and said that **Commissioner de Mora and Spalding's** terms would be expiring this summer. Both were term bound. **Commissioner Colaço's** term was also expiring but she was available to be nominated again. Signatories had been informed of the nomination process and timeline. Nominations were due at the end of June and the new nominations were expected to be appointed in September.
- 1.2. Collaborating partners
 - **DF** reported that the OSPAR MOU had passed the Jurists and Linguists Committee, and it would go to the full Commission meeting from June 24-28.
- 1.3. Fisheries
 - **FS** reported that she had attended the SOI Global Dialogue for Regional Fisheries Management Organisations and Regional Seas Organisations, from June 11-14 in Seoul, Korea. The meeting focused on collaboration between fisheries management organisations, environmental organisations, industry, and more. It included in depth presentations and discussions on the CBD Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, including its monitoring framework, and the new BBNJ agreement. A report would be produced from the meeting that would be shared when finalized. She highlighted that the stakeholder engagement strategy that was part of the SEDA was a proactive step in involving all relevant bodies in conservation measures.
- 1.4. Shipping
 - **DF** noted that the signatories had agreed to establish a working group on possible shipping impacts to the Sargasso Sea. This would be primarily focused on scientific data.
 - **DF** reported that a successful initial stakeholder meeting with the shipping community of the Sargasso Sea had been held in April at BIMCO headquarters in London. Topics discussed included ships of opportunity and voluntary measures. A readout had been produced which was published on the website.
 - **Commissioner Smith** shared a new technology that may be able to provide real time updates on ocean noise with the Commissioners and wondered if this could help with cetacean monitoring. He thought that there may be opportunity to introduce voluntary measures related to shipping based on cetacean noise detection technology. He also emphasized the importance of including industry in discussions.

- **DF** reported that he had had a meeting with a representative from Maersk, and they were interested in setting up 'green corridors' where companies voluntarily used less harmful fuels.

1.5. Seabed

- **Nothing noted.**

1.6. Migratory species

- **DF** reported that the SSC had proposed [a migratory corridor for humpback whales](#) during the North Atlantic Important Marine Mammal Area (IMMA) workshop in Mexico in May. Support for the proposal was provided by Duke MGEL, Andrew Stevenson, and Lea-Ann Henry. Another candidate IMMA was also proposed around Bermuda by Andrew Stevenson and Lea-Ann Henry. This is a fact-based scientific process, and the proposals would now be peer reviewed. A final decision on the areas was expected near the end of the year.
- **Commissioner Moore** thanked the Secretariat for sharing the IMMA map with Commissioners.
- **DF** also mentioned that he had met with the IUCN Manager Charlotte Boyd of the Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) in marine areas programme. There was a possibility for SSC to host a meeting next year with GEF resource on the designation for the Sargasso Sea.

1.7. Finance

- **DF** thanked **Commissioner Spalding** for facilitating the Commission's relationship with the Munson Foundation. Munson had awarded the SSC \$25,000 at the end of last year, but this would be the final award. **DF** asked **Commissioner Spalding** if he would be willing to put feelers out for other sources of funding.
- **DF** reported that the FFEM account was overdrawn due to project overhead.
- **DF** reported that UNESCO conceded that UNDP rules could be used for some bureaucratically cumbersome processes, including perhaps procurement and travel, which would make administering the project easier.
- **DF** reported that Dr Vousden hoped that a first draft of the SEDA could be available by late summer.
- **Commissioner Smith** reported that he had come across a charity called the Simons International Foundation – they had been supporting two projects at BIOS for over 20 years and there may be scope to seek funding from them. **Commissioner Smith** would follow up in bilaterally about a proposal. He was scheduled to meet with the organisation at the end of July.

1.7 Mapping and Monitoring

- **DF** reported that the Commission was in meetings with Kristina Raab of Global Fishing Watch about adapting their marine manager tool for the high seas. An MOU was in development with GFW.
- **Commissioner Smith** wondered if it might be possible for SSC to fund some GFW activities and **DF** thought it was possible but likely to be beyond our GEF resources.
- **DF** reported that a Greenpeace cruise from the Bahamas to Bermuda in support of a Sargasso Sea ocean sanctuary had agreed to take eDNA samples for the Sargasso Sea Commission. He expressed his thanks to **Commissioner Roberts** for his help in organizing this and the and the processing the samples. A bilateral was planned to talk further about the details of the sample processing.
- **Commissioner Roberts** explained that the second High Seas Symposium, planned for Oct 17-18 in Singapore, was running into planning difficulties, so the agenda was not yet developed, though the Government of Singapore had committed to fund the conference itself.
- **Commissioner Smith** gave a report of the Greenpeace workshop, highlighting that Greenpeace could be very effective in pushing the UK to ratify the treaty, especially post the upcoming election. They had started an open letter to the UK government on the issue.

1.8 Communications – **FS** gave a [communications update](#):

- **FS** reported on statistics from SSC's social media channels, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.
- The last newsletter was released for World Oceans Day with 60% opens, and the next newsletter would release in Sept/Oct
- A readout from the shipping stakeholder meeting was published on the website, and three articles had been published reacting to the meeting.
- The Sargasso Sea Commission had a stall at the BIOS World Oceans Day open house.
- The project had had articles published in the IW LEARN newsletter.
- **FS** reported on the SOI global dialogue for RFMOs and RSOs in Seoul, Korea. The meeting focused on collaboration, focusing on the CBD Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and the BBNJ agreement.
- **FS** also shared various upcoming events including the high seas symposium in Singapore October 17-18, and the UN Ocean Conference in Nice, June 2025.

3. Any Other Business/Date of Next Meeting

- **The date of the next meeting would be determined by email circulation.**