



COMMISSION DES PÊCHES POUR L'ATLANTIQUE-CENTRE-OUEST (COPACO)

DIX-NEUVIÈME SESSION

Bridgetown, Barbade, 6-8 Septembre 2023

Rapport du Comité exécutif

La Commission est invitée à prendre note des travaux du Comité exécutif au cours de l'intersession et à fournir des orientations concernant les efforts que le Comité sera amené à déployer au cours des deux prochaines années.

Elle est appelée à prêter une attention particulière à la baisse critique des capacités au sein de ses organes consultatifs et entités *ad hoc*, et invitée à discuter de la proposition de recommandation relative à un appui équitable aux responsables des groupes de travail et aux capacités techniques au sein du Groupe scientifique consultatif (GSC), par le biais:

1. D'un dispositif de répartition durable des fonctions de responsable de groupe de travail par groupe de membres de la COPACO: membres du CRFM, membres d'OSPESCA et autres membres.
2. D'une réactivité accrue aux appels à contribution aux processus intersessions, d'une participation aux travaux du GSC et d'une augmentation des niveaux de ressources fournies par l'ensemble des membres.

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1. Introduction et raison d'être

Ce document vise à traiter des problématiques liées aux activités menées par le Comité exécutif pendant l'intersession 2022-2023.

Conformément au règlement intérieur de la COPACO (2014), le Comité exécutif a pour fonctions de «mettre en œuvre les décisions de la Commission entre ses sessions, de mener les autres tâches qui lui sont confiées par la Commission et de:

- a) proposer une stratégie et un plan de travail avec l'aide du Secrétariat qui seront examinés par la Commission, et assurer le suivi de leur mise en œuvre;
- b) s'assurer que les règles et décisions de la Commission soient opérationnalisées;
- c) coordonner et surveiller les travaux et examiner les avis du Groupe scientifique consultatif, des groupes de travail et de tout autre organe subsidiaire de la Commission.»

Conformément à l'article IV.1, le Comité exécutif est composé de représentants élus par la Commission lors de sa 18^e session, organisée du 26 au 29 juillet 2022 à Managua, au Nicaragua, à savoir: le Président Edward Jackson (Nicaragua), le premier Vice-Président Gavin Bellamy (Jamaïque, représentant les membres d'OSPESCA) et le deuxième Vice-Président Rony Leiva Martinez (Venezuela, point focal du Venezuela pour la COPACO). La Commission n'a pas choisi d'élire trois membres supplémentaires du Comité conformément à l'article IV.1. Nancie Cummings a continué de siéger au Comité après avoir été choisie pour présider le Groupe scientifique consultatif (GSC) en décembre 2021. La Secrétaire a également participé au Comité en tant que membre de droit.

2. Principales réalisations du Comité pendant l'intersession (2022-2023)

Pendant l'intersession, la liaison a été maintenue à un bon niveau de coordination et de consultation entre le Comité exécutif de la COPACO, les responsables des groupes de travail et le Secrétariat. De plus, le Président de la COPACO, Edward Jackson et les Vice-Présidents ont activement interagi avec le Secrétariat, lui prodiguant conseils et suggestions.

Le Comité exécutif a coordonné ses communications et ses travaux par courrier électronique principalement tout au long de la période jusqu'à l'été 2023. Début 2021, le Comité a reconnu l'importance d'une coordination plus régulière et plus directe, et a convenu d'organiser des réunions virtuelles régulières, à raison d'une fois par trimestre et selon les besoins pour préparer les réunions de la Commission. Pendant l'intersession 2022-2023, le Comité exécutif s'est réuni sept fois, soit à une fréquence bien supérieure à celle exigée par le règlement intérieur révisé de 2014 (au minimum une fois par an). La première réunion virtuelle de l'intersession s'est tenue le 27 septembre 2022. Six réunions ont été organisées par la suite, les 19 octobre et 19 décembre 2022 et les 2 mars, 21 avril, 15 juin et 16 août 2023. Le compte rendu des réunions intersessions du Comité exécutif, qui présente les discussions détaillées du Comité, est adjoint au présent document (Annexe 1).

Principales activités du Comité exécutif:

- a) Il a identifié le deuxième Vice-Président de la Commission, dans le cadre d'un processus lancé en octobre 2022 par le Secrétariat de la COPACO et finalisé en mai 2023 après deux cycles de consultations, qui ont eu lieu entre octobre 2022 et mars 2023.
- b) Il a facilité les travaux du Groupe de travail intersessions *ad hoc* (GTI) pour préparer la deuxième réunion préparatoire relative à la réorientation stratégique de la COPACO, ce qui a supposé de réactiver l'adhésion au Groupe de rédaction. La première réunion faisant suite à la COPACO18 a été organisée le 29 décembre 2022, suivie de trois réunions supplémentaires, à l'occasion desquelles le Président a pris l'initiative de rédiger les propositions d'ébauches relatives à la création d'un modèle d'entité ou de dispositif régional de gestion des pêches dans la zone de la COPACO.
- c) Il a dirigé le processus d'examen du règlement intérieur révisé de 2014 après la 18^e session de la COPACO, texte qui a été approuvé lors de la plénière précédente sous réserve d'un examen technique et juridique. Après deux cycles d'examen, respectivement menés par la Division des

affaires juridiques de la FAO et les membres de la COPACO, certains points restent encore à revoir, prêts à être approuvés et adoptés dans leur intégralité. Ces points portent notamment sur des éléments identifiés depuis la 17^e session de la COPACO, relatifs à la capacité de la Commission à mener ses travaux en dehors du cadre d'une réunion formelle, notamment la prise de décisions pendant l'intersession et l'organisation de réunions sous format virtuel. La dernière version du texte sera discutée lors de la 19^e session plénière, à laquelle participera en personne un-e spécialiste de la Division des affaires juridiques de la FAO dans le but de faciliter le processus final.

- d) Il a coordonné et appuyé l'organisation des réunions des groupes de travail de la COPACO et d'autres organes techniques; trois réunions de GT ont été organisées sous format hybride (en personne et en ligne) pendant l'intersession, avec l'aide du Secrétariat (Groupe de travail CRFM/COPACO/JICA/IFREMER sur la pêche utilisant des dispositifs ancrés de concentration de poissons [DACP], Groupe de travail CFMC/COPACO/OSPESCA/CRFM sur les agrégations de pontes [SAWG] et Groupe de travail CFMC/OSPESCA/COPACO/CRFM/CITES sur le lambi).
- e) Il a favorisé la coordination des activités et processus pertinents de la COPACO et de la FAO, tels que l'Année internationale de la pêche et de l'aquaculture artisanales (AIPAA) et la Conférence régionale de la FAO pour l'Amérique latine et les Caraïbes.
- f) Il a poursuivi ses travaux sur le protocole d'entente/accord entre l'ICCAT et la COPACO.
- g) Il a préparé la tenue de la 19^e session de la Commission en septembre 2023, en rédigeant notamment des ordres du jour, calendriers et détails connexes; il a notamment dû trouver un nouveau lieu pour organiser la 19^e session à mi-parcours de l'intersession, car le lieu convenu précédemment n'était plus disponible.

Les résultats concrets de ces activités seront examinés dans le cadre des points de l'ordre du jour pertinents de la 19^e session de la COPACO.

3. Recommandations relatives aux travaux du Comité exécutif pendant la prochaine intersession

Le Comité exécutif continue de recommander que la pratique des réunions régulières/trimestrielles pendant l'intersession, accompagnées de services d'interprétation simultanée le cas échéant, se poursuive à l'avenir, car cela facilite la compréhension des détails et besoins liés aux activités relatives aux travaux de la Commission et encourage la COPACO à continuer de chercher de nouvelles façons d'améliorer la transparence et la mobilisation en faveur de ses travaux menés pendant l'intersession. Le Comité exécutif reconnaît les pertes récentes de capacités au sein des GT (au niveau des responsables) et du GSC (capacités techniques). Il a été observé qu'actuellement, seuls sept des 11 GT sont dotés d'un responsable, et que seuls quatre membres du GSC (sur sept nommés) ont participé à part entière pendant l'intersession, mais aussi que la majorité des tâches et activités de ces groupes ont toujours été appuyées par les mêmes membres. Le Comité exécutif encourage l'examen, à l'occasion de cette session de la Commission, de cette baisse de soutien et d'attention accordés aux capacités des différents groupes techniques (GT, GSC, GTI et Groupe de rédaction). Si l'appui solide de certains membres aux différentes opérations de la Commission, par le biais d'un soutien financier généreux et d'une participation technique à différents groupes est reconnu, un niveau accru d'aide et de ressources est nécessaire de la part de l'ensemble des membres pour garantir que la charge de travail de la Commission soit menée de manière équitable et durable par tous les membres de la COPACO. En ce qui concerne les GT, il est recommandé que la proposition concernant la possibilité de répartir le rôle de responsable des GT par groupe de pays membres (CRFM, OSPESCA, autres membres) soit abordée.

Annexe 1. Compte rendu des réunions du Comité exécutif pendant l'intersession (disponible uniquement en français)

Final Minutes of the First Meeting of the WECAFC Executive Committee
27 September 2022, 10:05 a.m. to 12:37 p.m.

Present

Yvette Diei Ouadi – WECAFC Secretary

Members of the Executive Committee:

Edward Jackson – Chair of WECAFC

Gavin Bellamy – First WECAFC Vice-Chair

Nancie Cummings, Chairperson of the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG)

Sonya Thompson – Assistant to the WECAFC Secretary (**Recorder of minutes**)

The order of the agenda was as follows:

1. Update from the WECAFC Secretariat
2. Update on the Rules of procedure
3. Filling the post of second vice-chair
4. Resumption of the strategic reorientation process
5. WECAFC19 in 2023??
6. Any Other Business

Ms Diei Ouadi welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Executive Committee following the 18th Plenary of the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC). Ms Diei Ouadi indicated she would like to first present an update from the WECAFC Secretariat before addressing the main agenda items and under Any Other Business, discuss the periodicity of the Executive Committee and provide some other information. Ms Diei Ouadi then turned the meeting over to the Chair, Mr Edward Jackson.

Ms Jackson greeted everyone online and called on Ms Nancie Cummings, who had an intervention regarding the agenda. Ms Cummings indicated she wanted to raise questions about the logistics of the Executive Committee and the functionality of the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) during the intersessional period as well as to provide an update on the WECAFC18 report.

Mr Jackson advised that he like to discuss the status of Spiny Lobster and Queen conch stocks under agenda item, Any Other Business.

The amended order of the agenda, as presented above, was endorsed by all.

a. Update from the WECAFC Secretariat

Ms Diei Ouadi provided the following update:

- a. The Secretariat received from the former WECAFC Chair, Mrs Deirdre Warner-Kramer, a reviewed version of the proceedings of the 18th session of WECAFC, with edits and some suggested changes. It is anticipated that by early next week the remaining sections of these proceedings would be translated into French and Spanish and then shared with WECAFC delegates for their inputs.
- b. From August up until now, the Secretariat has been in the process of finalizing all the documents endorsed at the WECAFC18 session. Comments have been received from members on the programme of work and the French and Spanish versions of the programme are being harmonized. All endorsed documents will be posted on the WECAFC website.
- c. There has been follow-up with the conveners of the WECAFC working groups, especially the Convener of the Moored Fish Aggregating Devices (MFAD) working group. It was noted that the EU's comments on the draft Caribbean MFAD Regional Management Plan were not reflected and that this document needed extensive work. An extension of the FAO GCP/SLC/217/EC project supporting

the work of this working group is being considered for the intersessional work on this interim regional management plan.

- d. It was noted that an e-mail, copied to the Executive Committee members, was sent to former members of the small Drafting group, seeking confirmation as to their availability to continue as part of this group, with a deadline 23 September 2022. Only confirmations from Brazil and the Netherlands have been received to date.

b. Update on the Rules of procedure

It was stated that the legally reviewed Rules of Procedure (ROP) had been sent to WECAFC18 delegates for them to provide their inputs by 30 September 2022. However, given that some WECAFC18 delegates have been encountering issues accessing the reviewed ROP and the Spanish version of that document was made available at a later date than the English version, it was agreed by all that the English and Spanish MS Word versions of the ROP be sent to the WECAFC18 delegates, giving them an extended deadline of 14 October 2022 by which to submit their inputs on the specific comments made by the FAO Legal Unit (LEG) to the Secretariat. The French version of the document is not available currently, due to funding availability and translation of other WECAFC matters. It was noted though that the review process so far has been on the English and Spanish documents.

It was further noted that the Secretariat will send all the feedback received from the delegates to the Executive Committee members, which is to be discussed at the next meeting of the Committee. It was pointed out that the Executive Committee would be responsible for addressing the clarifications from LEG and reviewing and consolidating the feedback from members in one consolidated document, for resubmission to LEG.

c. Filling the post of second vice-chair

Regarding the composition of the Executive Committee (EC), Ms Diei Ouadi said there is a non-written rule within the Commission that one representative of the EC should be from an OSPESCA member country, one from a CRFM member country and one member from neither OSPESCA nor CRFM membership.

Ms Diei Ouadi recalled that during the 18th plenary of WECAFC, no nomination was put forward for a second vice-chair and sought the advice of the EC members on how to move forward. It was proposed by the Chair, Mr Jackson that the advice of LEG be sought in this matter and requested Ms Diei Ouadi's follow-up in this regard. Ms Diei Ouadi advised she would write LEG tomorrow, with the hope of getting a response from them, hopefully within a maximum of seven days.

It was also proposed by Ms Diei Ouadi to have an e-mail exchange, following the feedback from LEG about the filling of the second vice-chair post, and thereafter, a follow-up meeting could be held.

The next (second) meeting of the Executive Committee was proposed and agreed by all to be held on Wednesday, 19 October 2022 at 10:00 a.m. Eastern Caribbean Time.

d. Resumption of the strategic reorientation process

It was pointed out by Ms Diei Ouadi that a new Drafting group (DG) needs to be formed, as the inputs from the DG members are essential to plan the second Strategic Reorientation meeting.

A suggestion was made by Ms Cummings to send a reminder to the former DG members who had not yet responded, giving them 7-10 days to (re)confirm their availability. This proposal was accepted by all. Ms Cummings further stressed the need for the DG to have a structured approach to their work, in terms of preparation towards the 19th session of WECAFC.

In response to a query from Mr Gavin Bellamy as to whether there is a proposed quorum for the DG, Ms Diei Ouadi explained that the former group had about 10 members but some of them have now changed posts. It was stated that the DG is an independent group, with its own *modus operandi* and responsible for arranging its own affairs. She said the new DG should be able to organize themselves, based on the previous timeline and Terms of Reference set out for the group.

While noting that the previous DG was missing a formal Chairperson (that group being formerly led by the Chair of the Intersessional Working Group [IWG also Chair of the Commission), Ms Cummings proposed that the DG should elect a Chair, who will lead the group and guide its work. She also requested that copies of the TORs (for both the DG and the IWG) be shared with the Executive Committee (EC) members.

Ms Cummings also raised the possibility of having a member of the EC be a co-leader, noting that the work of the DG falls under the responsibility of the Chair of the EC/IWG Chair, who should ensure that the DG is exercising its TORs and be there to provide the necessary guidance. Mr Jackson confirmed his willingness to assume the leadership of the DG and this approach was agreed by all.

e. WECAFC19 in 2023??

It was recalled by Ms Diei Ouadi that no consensus was reached at the WECAFC18 session regarding the proposal to hold the 19th session of WECAFC in 2023, based on an earlier request from the management of the Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean (LARC) to align the hosting of sessions of all Technical Commissions with the meetings of LARC.

Ms Diei Ouadi said that the 2023 session could be timely, as there were already substantive, pending issues to be discussed by the Commission. For instance, the interim ROP, the interim Caribbean MFAD Regional Management Plan, Strategic Reorientation and so forth. It was proposed to have an abbreviated WECAFC session, about 2-3 days. Ms Diei Ouadi underscored that if the session was not held in 2023, it would have to take place in 2025, running the risk of the Commission's work not being visible.

While noting the significance of having the WECAFC19 session in 2023, the Chair stated that the host country's availability to host this session within the short timeframe and the related financial implications, were two areas of concern for him.

While noting the benefits of having the session in 2023, Ms Cummings also flagged possible time constraints for the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG), given that SAG would also need to meet intersessionally with each WECAFC working group and, as members, to prepare their contributions before the next Commission meeting.

Mr Bellamy queried whether it was feasible for the Secretariat to have the session in 2023; for instance, if there is sufficient time to identify the location and make the necessary arrangements for this session. He also expressed concern about the financial obligations involved in hosting the session.

Following the suggestion from Ms Cummings, it was agreed to have a brief Survey Monkey circulated to WECAFC members so they could vote on whether they are in favour of a 3-day Commission meeting in 2023, to be hosted by CRFM membership. Ms Diei Ouadi said she would enlist the help of one of her young collaborators to organize the proposed survey, with the hope of the Secretariat sending same to members by the end of the week (30th September), giving them a response deadline of 14 October 2022.

Ms Cummings also suggested ordering the agenda for next Commission meeting, similarly to that prepared for the WECAFC18 session. She stressed the need to avoid the back-and-forth which occurred with the preparation of the agenda for WECAFC18.

Ms Cummings further noted that she had received updated recommendations from the Convener of the Spawning Aggregations working group, with feedback from the EU delegate. In response, Ms Diei Ouadi advised that the recommendations were amended in tracked changes in a transparent manner during the WECAFC18 session and the endorsed versions had been posted on the website. Ms Cummings said she would review the recommendations to see whether there were any discrepancies with the versions currently on the website.

f. Any Other Business

It was agreed by the members to have the meetings of the Executive Committee on a quarterly basis. Ms Diei Ouadi advised that the WECAFC Secretariat has been invited to the Third meeting of the Sustainable Ocean Initiative (Global Dialogue with the Regional Seas Organization and the Regional Fisheries Bodies), scheduled to be held in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 25 to 28 October 2022 and that she planned to participate in person. The WECAFC Secretariat had also proposed Ms Elizabeth Mohammed to receive sponsorship from the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), to attend this meeting.

The Secretariat received a draft letter of cooperation with ICCAT which would be shared with the Executive Committee members and LEG in due course. A determination will be made as to whether this letter could be shared with WECAFC members, following the guidance to be received from LEG.

Mr Jackson indicated that he had submitted the name of Mr Gavin Bellamy, as a second person to be sponsored by the CBD, to attend the meeting in Korea; however, Ms Diei Ouadi indicated that she had not come across this proposal and unfortunately, the deadline for submission of names had now passed.

Mr Jackson raised the matter of the proposed listing of Queen conch under the Endangered Species Act, as indicated on NOAA's website. Ms Diei Ouadi said that members had been given up until 8 November 2022 to respond to this proposal. A request was made for the Secretariat to circulate the proposal to the Executive Committee members.

A discussion on Spiny lobster production followed. Mr Jackson stated that Nicaragua's production had been reduced by about 36 percent in 2021 and the situation had been worse in 2020. He enquired from the others about the status of Spiny lobster production in the region.

Ms Cummings said that the process of updating the US-Caribbean stock assessment for Spiny lobster was underway; with one assessment being done back in 2018. Ms Cummings advised that an update on the stock assessment will be presented at a meeting at the end of October. Ms Cummings offered to review the work of the Spiny Lobster working group and revert to Mr Jackson with some feedback, following the meeting.

Ms Diei Ouadi stressed that this issue deserves attention at the next Spiny Lobster meeting planned for 2023 and that it should also be covered in the planning for the WECAFC19 session. She further noted that the Secretariat would follow up with all the working group conveners, who have planned meetings for next year.

Mr Bellamy said during the Covid-19 pandemic, Jamaica did see some reduction of stocks, which could be attributed to reduced effort, but this decrease was not significant. He further noted that a survey is now being conducted to undertake an evaluation on the lobster stock, after which he would revert to Mr Jackson, following the results of the survey. The issue of poaching from persons from nearby countries, which is being addressed by law enforcement officials, was also highlighted.

Ms Cummings said that the Spiny Lobster working group had proposed to meet in December 2022 and that she would follow up with them accordingly. It was also noted that, similarly to the other working groups, the Spiny lobster working group had provided updated terms of reference, which were reviewed at WECAFC18. One of the group's additional, new priorities is to develop improved and proposed measures regarding Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated fishing.

Ms Diei Ouadi was then invited by the Chair to recap the key points and action items arising from the meeting. She also recalled the recommendation made by the previous Executive Committee that the endorsed minutes of these meetings should also be shared with the WECAFC members. There being no other business, Mr Jackson thanked everyone for his/her time and contribution to the meeting, which concluded at 12:37 p.m.

ACTION ITEMS:

1. The Secretariat to send remaining sections of the WECAFC18 report for translation into French and Spanish and then share versions with WECAFC delegates for their inputs. **(Ongoing)**
2. The Secretariat to post all endorsed WECAFC18 documents on the WECAFC website **(Ongoing)**.
3. The Secretariat to send the MS Word versions of the Rules of Procedure to the WECAFC18 delegates, giving them an extended deadline of 14 October 2022. **(Done)**
4. The Secretariat to send all the feedback received from the delegates on the ROP to the Executive Committee.
5. The Executive Committee to review and consolidate the feedback from members in one consolidated document for resubmission to LEG.
6. Ms Diei Ouadi to consult LEG regarding the matter of the second vice-chair position. **(Done)**
7. The Executive Committee and WECAFC Secretariat to liaise via e-mail, once the feedback is received from LEG about the filling of the post of the second vice-chair.
8. The Secretariat to remind the Drafting Group members to confirm their participation in the group. The extended deadline for response is 12 October 2022. **(Done)**
9. The Secretariat to share copies of the TORs of the Drafting Group and Intersessional Working Group with the Executive Committee **(Done)**.
10. A Survey Monkey to be prepared and disseminated by the Secretariat by 30 September 2022. **(Done)**
11. Ms Cummings to review the Spawning Aggregation recommendations to check for any discrepancies with the website versions.
12. The letter of cooperation with ICCAT and the proposed listing of Queen conch to be circulated by the Secretariat to the Executive Committee **(Done)**.
13. Mr Bellamy and Ms Cummings to revert to Mr Jackson regarding status of respective stocks in the region.
14. The Secretariat to follow up with all the WECAFC working group conveners for a meeting with them, and specifically liaise with those who plan to have meetings in 2023.

**Final Minutes of the Second Meeting of the WECAFC Executive Committee
19 October 2022, 10:19 a.m. to 12:23 p.m.**

Present

Yvette Diei Ouadi – WECAFC Secretary

Members of the Executive Committee:

Edward Jackson – Chair of WECAFC

Gavin Bellamy – First WECAFC Vice-Chair

Nancie Cummings, Chairperson of the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG)

Sonya Thompson – Assistant to the WECAFC Secretary (**Recorder of minutes**)

The order of the agenda was as follows:

1. Review of the action items of the 1st meeting: RoP, WECAFC19, Second Vice Chair, Drafting Group/Strategic Reorientation, Queen conch listing on the ESA of the USA, etc.
2. Specific issues linked to the working groups: WECAFC FIRMS partnership, Shrimp and GroundFish Working Group Convener; WG Conveners meeting planning, Collaboration with SPAW-RAC Protocol
3. Any Other Business (Lobster follow-up and SAG composition)

Ms Diei Ouadi, WECAFC Secretary, welcomed everyone to the second meeting of the Executive Committee following the 18th Plenary of the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC).

Mr Jackson, Chair, greeted everyone online and invited Ms Diei Ouadi to review the action items arising from the last meeting on 27 September 2022. The following update on key items was provided:

1. Review of the action items of the 1st meeting: RoP, WECAFC19, Second Vice Chair, Drafting Group/Strategic Reorientation, Queen conch listing on the ESA of the USA, etc.

- a. Action item #1 - The draft report of the 18th session of WECAFC (in English, French and Spanish) have been circulated for members' inputs, with a deadline of 31 October 2022.
- b. Action item #2 – The Secretariat is in the process of arranging for the endorsed recommendations, management plans and programme of work to be uploaded on the WECAFC website. The goal is to have the WECAFC17 webpage archived and replaced by the WECAFC18 documents.
- c. Action item #3 –The three feedbacks received from Colombia, Nicaragua and the USA by the deadline of 14th October have been shared with the Executive Committee members for review. Following this review, the Rules of Procedure (RoP) will be returned to the FAO Legal Unit (LEG) for a final review.
- d. Action item #6 - LEG's reply on the appointment of second vice-chair of the Commission was shared with the members of the Executive Committee. While noting that the endorsement of the RoP was presently under legal review, Ms Diei Ouadi informed that LEG had initially advised that there is no legal basis within the RoP for nominating a second vice-chair intersessionally, despite the RoP being endorsed by members at the WECAFC18 session. However, based on Ms Diei Ouadi's follow-up to that initial message, LEG subsequently informed that they do not object to this matter being dealt with through the intersessional decision-making process, and in their view, this issue was no longer a legal one, but now a policy/political issue within the members' hands.

- e. Action item #8 - Most drafting group members have reconfirmed their interest in continuing as part of the drafting group. Mexico is the only country which has not responded to date. CRFM and OSPESCA are yet to confirm their representatives (IWG co-chairs) for the group. Ms Diei Ouadi enquired whether a call to members should be launched among non-CRFM and non-OSPESCA member countries to replace Mexico or whether to wait until the endorsement of the RoP comes to pass.
- f. Action item # 10 - Regarding the Survey Monkey questionnaire to consult members on the cycle of the Commission meetings, there were affirmative responses by six members to hold the meeting in 2023, five members voted for a meeting in 2025 and 2 members did not answer this question. Ms Diei Ouadi noted that from the limited responses received (13 out of the 34 members), the members did not appear very keen on hosting a session in 2023. She raised this as a concern to be addressed by the Executive Committee.
- g. Action item #11 – This item concerning the review of the Spawning Aggregations recommendations in conjunction with the website versions is to be addressed later by Ms Cummings.
- h. Action item #12 – The letter of cooperation with ICCAT and the proposed Queen conch (QC) listing have both been shared with the Executive Committee.
- i. Action item # 14 – A meeting with the WECAFC working group conveners is planned for early November.

In relation to point d) above, Mr Bellamy suggested proceeding with the call to members for a second vice-chair. This proposal was agreed to by all. It was agreed that the Secretariat would prepare a message by the week of 24th October for approval by the Chair of the Executive Committee, before launching the call for nomination to the members.

In relation to point f) above, Ms Cummings suggested that the Secretariat send a final reminder message to members, advising them that the close of business (5:00 p.m. AST) on 24th October is the extended deadline by which to complete the survey. This was agreed to by all. Ms Diei Ouadi indicated that the results of the survey would be shared with the members of the EC thereafter.

In relation to point d) above, Mr Jackson invited Ms Diei Ouadi to recap the status of the drafting group. Mr Jackson proposed to contact the Mexican authorities and Mr José Infante of OSPESCA regarding their interest in continuing with the drafting group. He agreed to confirm the participation of Mexico and OSPESCA to the Secretariat by Friday, 21 October 2022.

Ms Diei Ouadi informed that once Mexico is confirmed, the first meeting of the drafting group will be convened. She also indicated she would follow up with Mr Milton Haughton regarding CRFM's representative for the Drafting group.

The meeting was also informed that the CRFM Secretariat is convening a meeting tomorrow, Thursday, 20th October to discuss the Queen conch listing. Ms Cummings will be representing the WECAFC Secretariat, while Ms Martha Prada will be representing the Caribbean Fishery Management Council (CFMC) at that meeting.

Ms Cummings took the opportunity to share that the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) members had met twice: on 12 (3 members) and 18 October (2 members) respectively. She said the Queen conch listing was shared with SAG members for review. Ms Cummings said that two SAG members had met and discussed the report, addressing some uncertainties and data gaps regarding the information presented therein. A summary of the discussion was given at ExCom 2.

In response to a query from Mr Jackson regarding the QC listing, Ms Cummings conveyed that SAG generally supports some of the important scientific facts provided in the listing and that there should be action and conservation measures for conch in the region. However, she also stressed that there are gaps (lack of data, reporting, references, etc.) that need to be addressed.

Mr Jackson suggested that the SAG members also need to have broad discussion about three key topics: queen conch, lobster and the impact of Sargassum seaweed in the region. While agreeing with this proposal, Ms Cummings said there should also be a timeline of activities that could lead to advancements in the information content for the three topics.

Mr Bellamy said that from Jamaica's perspective, there is a very good management system in terms of Queen conch. There has been thorough reporting and surveillance on conch and the former is up-to-date. He further noted that conservation measures are very thorough and appear to be working well.

Ms Diei Ouadi also took the opportunity to discuss the letter of cooperation with ICCAT, which she indicated would be shared first with LEG, before it is shared with WECAFC members. Executive Committee members had no issues with the content of the letter and no objections to sharing it with LEG, as it was thought to be in line with their course of action.

2. Specific issues linked to the working groups: WECAFC FIRMS partnership, Shrimp and Groundfish Working Group Convener; WG Conveners meeting planning, Collaboration with SPAW-RAC Protocol

WECAFC-FIRMS partnership

Ms Diei Ouadi said that the issues of getting members more engaged in the partnership and obtaining members' ownership to populate the database were raised by one of her HQ colleagues, Mr Marc Taconet. A letter in this vein was recently dispatched to OSPESCA. Ms Cummings, was invited to further contribute to this topic.

Ms Cummings said there is a need to focus on short-term activities for OSPESCA and CRFM to update and get new inventories as well as to initiate conversation in terms of the Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF) to see how one can begin to incorporate the data into it. It was noted that the USA is very supportive of training that is needed for completion of the data templates for the DCRF; Ms. Cummings also noted that there is a need to identify sources funding for this type of work.

With respect to the WECAFC website, Ms Cummings addressed the various tools that member countries can use, for example, the map viewer, maps, etc. to track their data for data collection purposes. Ms. Cummings further noted that the IUU Working group convener had recommended that there be training opportunities for members in this area, which she strongly supports.

Shrimp and Groundfish Working Group convener and Working Group conveners' meeting

Ms Diei Ouadi indicated there is a need for another convener to replace Mr Fabian Blanchard as Shrimp and Groundfish Working Group convener. In addition, she proposed that the three topics (queen conch, lobster and Sargassum seaweed) to be discussed at the upcoming WECAFC Working Group conveners' meeting, set for 3 November 2022 (**This meeting has subsequently been postponed; planned for 23 November 2022**).

Collaboration with SPAW-RAC Protocol

Ms Diei Ouadi said that the Convener of the Spawning Aggregations working group plans to further collaborate with the SPAW-RAC Protocol on endangered species such as sharks. The Working groups on Moored Fish Aggregating Devices and on Sharks are two other working groups which will be collaborating with the SPAW-RAC Protocol in the future.

3. Any Other Business

Ms Cummings gave a presentation on and cursory analysis of the lobster landings in the Area 31 region. Ms Cummings indicated that a drop in landings was because of Covid-19 in some cases. She also stressed that one of her goals is to encourage data reporting among members. Mr Jackson asked Ms Cummings to share this lobster data with the members of the Executive Committee. An updated summary of the lobster landings for area 31 (based on an extraction from the FAO database using the FishStatJ GUI) was provided on 14 November.

With respect to the SAG, Ms Cummings reviewed the Google Drive webpage which the SAG members utilize to carry out and document their work. She flagged the need to replenish the membership of SAG, which currently has four members only. She underscored the importance of having a full functioning group, as there is a lot of work to be done, especially if a WECAFC19 session is being contemplated for 2023. Ms Cummings also said the full SAG report, which was presented at the WECAFC18 session, is available.

While noting the limited composition of SAG and the fact that the group is supposed to have a composition of 7-9 persons, Ms Diei Ouadi indicated that the Secretariat would launch a call for at least three additional members to strengthen the group.

Ms Diei Ouadi also noted that the SAG report is planned within the 2022 publications and must be reviewed and formatted before it goes through the FAO Publications Workflow System. Ms Diei Ouadi requested Ms Cummings to send the full SAG report to the Secretariat.

It was agreed to have the next meeting of the Committee on 6 December 2022 at 10:00 am Eastern Caribbean Time/8:00 a.m. Nicaragua time. **(This meeting is to be rescheduled for a later date).**

Mr Jackson reported that the fisheries sector in Nicaragua had suffered losses of almost USD3.6 million dollars, because of the recent passage of Hurricane Julia. For the lobster fisheries, it was noted that there were almost 64,000 fish pots lost.

There being no other business, Mr Jackson thanked everyone for his/her time and contribution to the meeting, which concluded at 12:23 p.m.

ACTION ITEMS:

1. The Secretariat to send a message to members, advising them of the extended deadline by which to complete the survey (24 October 2022) **(Done)**.
2. The Secretariat to share the results of the survey with the members of the Executive Committee. **(Done)**
3. Mr Jackson to follow up with Mexico and OSPESCA to the Secretariat and advise of their participation in the drafting group by Friday, 21 October 2022 **(Done, OSPESCA's reply is pending)**.
4. Ms Diei Ouadi to follow up with Mr Milton Houghton regarding the representative for the Drafting group **(Done but no formal feedback to date)**.
5. Ms Cummings to share summary report of Queen conch listing with the Secretariat by the end of next week.
6. Ms Diei Ouadi to share the letter of cooperation with ICCAT with LEG, before sharing it with WECAFC members.
7. Ms Cummings to share the lobster data with the Executive Committee. **(Done)**
8. The Secretariat to launch a call to members to strengthen SAG **(Done)**.
9. Ms Cummings to send the full SAG report to the Secretariat. **(Done)**

**Final Minutes of the Third Meeting of the WECAFC Executive Committee
19 December 2022, 2:35 to 3:40 p.m.**

Present

Yvette Diei Ouadi – WECAFC Secretary

Members of the Executive Committee:

Edward Jackson – Chair of WECAFC

Gavin Bellamy – First WECAFC Vice-Chair

Nancie Cummings, Chairperson of the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG)

Absent (Due to annual leave):

Sonya Thompson – Assistant to the WECAFC Secretary (**Transcriber of minutes**)

The order of the agenda was as follows:

1. Review of the action items of the 2nd executive committee meeting post-WECAFC18
2. Outcome of the survey and timeline of the preparation for WECAFC19
3. Composition of the Executive Committee and state of the advisory bodies (SAG composition and Coordination/convening of WECAFC working groups)
4. Feedbacks of the Legal Division on the Rules of Procedure and the Letter of Cooperation with ICCAT
5. Updates on the resumption of WECAFC strategic reorientation process
6. Any Other Business (Strengthening the communications among WECAFC members: access to the executive committee meeting minutes and miscellaneous documents; Partnerships in the region, etc.)

Ms Diei Ouadi, WECAFC Secretary, welcomed everyone to the third meeting of the Executive Committee following the 18th Plenary of the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC).

The above agenda was reviewed and endorsed by Ms Nancie Cummings and Dr Gavin Bellamy.

1. Review of the action items of the 2nd executive committee meeting post-WECAFC18

- a. Action item #1 - [***The Secretariat to send a message to members, advising them of the extended deadline by which to complete the survey by 24 October 2022***] - Completed. The feedback was received and compiled by the Secretariat.
- b. Action item #2 – [***The Secretariat to share the results of the survey with the members of the Executive Committee.***] - Completed. The Secretariat shared the survey results with the Executive Committee members. Of the 16 respondents, 9 of them were in favour of holding WECAFC19 in 2023, 5 of them were not in favour of a session in 2023 and 2 members did not provide a response. Most respondents (7 members) recommended that the session be held over three days.
- c. Action item #3 – [***Mr Jackson to follow up with Mexico and OSPESCA to the Secretariat and advise of their participation in the drafting group by Friday, 21 October 2022***]. Ms Diei Ouadi indicated that Mexico has now confirmed participation in the Small Drafting Group, while OSPESCA is still to advise of their contribution to the drafting group. Ms Diei Ouadi advised that a meeting of the drafting group was set for tomorrow, 20 December 2022. She suggested Mr Jackson may need to follow up again on this matter.

- d. Action item #4 – [***Ms Diei Ouadi to follow up with Mr Milton Haughton regarding the representative for the Drafting group.***] Ms Diei Ouadi followed up with Mr Milton Haughton but so far, no response has been received regarding CRFM’s nomination to the Intersessional Working Group (IWG). Ms Diei Ouadi recommended that the nomination not be connected to the Ministerial Council but someone who could serve on a longer-term basis. It was highlighted that Mr. Peter A. Murray is CRFM’s representative in the Small Drafting Group.
- e. Action item #5 – [***Ms Cummings to share summary report of Queen conch listing with the Secretariat by the end of next week.***] Ms Cummings confirmed that the lobster numbers were shared with the Executive Committee and the Secretariat. Regarding the queen conch listing, she queried whether the SAG should submit a formal report or response on the initial consideration for the listing.
- f. Action item #6 – [***Ms Diei Ouadi to share the letter of cooperation with ICCAT with LEG, before sharing it with WECAFC members.***] Ms Diei Ouadi has shared with the FAO Legal Unit (LEGN) the letter of intent with ICCAT and is presently awaiting LEGN’s feedback. Consideration will be given as to whether to share LEGN’s comments and the letter of intent with the WECAFC members at the proper time.
- g. Action item #7 - [***Ms Cummings to share the lobster data with the Executive Committee***] - Completed.
- h. Action item #8 - [***The Secretariat to launch a call to members to strengthen SAG.***] – Completed.
- i. Action item #9 – [***Ms Cummings to send the full SAG report to the Secretariat.***] The report of the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) has been shared with the Secretariat. The latter is currently finalising the report to have it as an official FAO publication.

In relation to point c) above, Mr Jackson advised that OSPESCA (Mr José Infante) just confirmed in writing their participation in the drafting group meeting scheduled for tomorrow, 20 December 2022. Regarding point e), Mr Jackson suggested it would be useful to share the document among the group. Ms Cummings agreed to prepare summary on the status of the queen conch listing and share it with SAG by the end of the week of the 26th of December, taking into account a family issue that she is dealing with at the moment.

Regarding point e), Dr Bellamy agreed with Mr Jackson’s suggestion.

Mr Jackson expressed thanks to Ms Cummings for sharing the lobster data. He indicated that Nicaragua had updated the statistics yearbook and it is available on the website.

Ms Cummings said the lobster topic is timely and it is imperative that countries update their data before the 12th session of the SAG, so that one can have the data available for WECAFC region-wide and subregional assessments. The importance of following through with the recommendations to the national offices was underscored.

Ms Diei Ouadi pointed out that the Secretariat would share the SAG summary with WECAFC members next week, once document is received.

In relation to point f) above, the Committee agreed that the feedback from LEGN could be shared with the WECAFC members.

2. Outcome of the survey and timeline of the preparation for WECAFC19

Ms Diei Ouadi said the results of the survey supported the hosting of WECAFC19 session in 2023 and enquired about the tentative dates for the session. She noted that some members had flagged that when

the dates are being set for the session, that dates for some other regional events be taken into account. For instance, the meeting of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission is scheduled for late July.

It was stressed that WECAFC19 must be aligned with the cycle of the FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean and must be held before September 2023

In response to a query from Dr Bellamy as to whether the limited response from countries would not affect the hosting of the meeting, Ms Diei Ouadi advised that there is no provision in the Rules of Procedure that says that when a survey is carried out and the deadline is extended and members do not respond, that it is invalid. Ms Diei Ouadi recalled that the majority of members have opted to have WECAFC19 session in 2023, as agreed by the Executive Committee and now the timing of the session remains to be decided.

Ms Diei Ouadi noted that as First Vice Chair of the WECAFC, Jamaica would be the country hosting the session, unless they wished to defer to another CRFM member country. Ms Diei Ouadi advised that Jamaica would have the final say in the dates of the Commission meeting.

Dr Bellamy indicated he would liaise with the other members of the Executive Committee and the relevant authorities in Jamaica to revert to the Secretariat, with possible dates for the session, by the first week of January 2023.

3. Composition of the Executive Committee and state of the advisory bodies (SAG composition and coordination/convening of WECAFC working groups)

Regarding the second vice chair of the Executive Committee, the Secretariat liaised with USA (given their past experience as the Chair of WECAFC) and asked their assistance in coordinating the selection of a second vice chair. It was noted that this post is to be held by a member of a non-CRFM and non-OSPESCA member country. The USA (Ms Carolyn Gruber, USA focal point) has been reaching out to the relevant members; however, there has been no nomination to date.

With respect to the state of advisory bodies, a call was launched by the Secretariat for volunteers from among the WECAFC members to join SAG and one reminder has been sent. However, there have been no proposals or volunteers coming to the fore to date.

Ms Diei Ouadi expressed great concern that half of the WECAFC working groups will be without conveners.

1. The convener of the working group on Spiny lobster (Yesuri Pino) indicated that she is unsure whether she would be able to continue in this role.
2. With respect to the working group on Deep-sea fisheries, Jorge Paramo advised that he is very busy and will be unable to take it up the role of convener.
3. The convener of the Shrimp and Groundfish Working Group (Fabian Blanchard), who has served for a long time in this role, advised he would be stepping down.
4. The convener of the Sharks Working Group (Mauro Gongora) would be unable to continue in his role, as he is considering transitioning to politics.
5. The Secretariat was informed through diplomatic channels that the former convener of the MFAD Working Group (Jullan Defoe) has now assumed a political portfolio in Dominica as the Minister responsible for Agriculture and Fisheries (Blue and Green Economy) and will therefore be unable to be available to continue as a convener.

Ms Diei Ouadi stated that the convener of the Working Group on Recreational Fisheries has not indicated his unavailability. However, efforts to contact him have been unsuccessful thus far, as he has not been responding to the messages from the Secretariat.

Mr Jackson stressed this situation with the conveners is a complex one and invited the views of the other Executive Committee members on this topic.

While noting that she is novice SAG leader, Ms Cummings said that the group had put certain procedures in place to advance the work and this approach worked very well to achieve certain outputs. A suggestion was made by Ms Cummings to contact the ministers of the respective countries, alerting them of this situation and seeking their feedback on possible replacements to support the work of the Commission. Ms Cummings underscored that since there are 11 WECAFC working groups, she did not foresee a reduction in the amount of work.

Dr Bellamy agreed with Ms Cummings' proposal and that the role of the convener was a demanding one. He also proposed consulting with the leadership of the CRFM Secretariat to see if they could encourage their members to volunteer more of their time in taking on such a role.

Mr Jackson proposed that in early January of 2023, a meeting could be held with a group of ministers (perhaps of 4-5 countries at a time), followed by subsequent meetings in late January or February. He underscored that this situation is not a matter of the Executive Committee alone, but one that should be brought to the attention of all partners within the region.

Ms Diei Ouadi flagged that the office of the Subregional Coordinator would not be active until the second half of January 2023; hence, there would be no formal communication with the ministers before that time. In terms of the agenda for WECAFC19 and given that there is presently no MFAD working group convener, Ms Cummings flagged that it may or may not be foreseeable that there will be revision of the MFAD documents, in particular, the regional management plan, for presentation to the session. She further noted that if the meeting of the ministers is held, the importance of their personnel supporting the work of the Commission, would need to be highlighted.

A proposal was made by Mr Jackson for Ms Diei Ouadi to prioritise the order of the list of countries to be contacted. Ms Diei Ouadi advised that she would discuss this matter with the Subregional Coordinator and revert to the Executive Committee by January of 2023.

4. Feedbacks of the Legal Division on the Rules of Procedure and the Letter of Cooperation with ICCAT

Ms Diei Ouadi said that the legally reviewed Rules of Procedure (ROP), which were shared with members, still need to be finalized. There are specifically 2-3 questions within the ROP (posed by LEGN), which require a response from WECAFC members and/or the Executive Committee. Mr Jackson indicated the Committee would review the questions and revert to the Secretariat by Thursday of this week.

5. Updates on the resumption of WECAFC strategic reorientation process

The first post WECAFC18 meeting of the Small drafting group, which was formed at the last webinar held in 2020, is scheduled to be held tomorrow, 20 December 2022 and will be chaired by Mr Jackson, Chair of the IWG/WECAFC. This group is tasked with preparing the text options concerning the objective and mandate of the transformed WECAFC. This group has met thrice in the past, but no real progress has been made to date, except determining its TORs and timeline. Ms Diei Ouadi indicated she will be delivering a PowerPoint presentation on the strategic reorientation process at that meeting and will also send a reminder message to the drafting group members, after this meeting has concluded.

As Ms Cummings is not a part of the Small drafting group, she asked that her name be removed from messages pertaining to the activities of the group.

For the purposes of preparation, Mr Jackson requested that a copy of Ms Diei Ouadi's PowerPoint presentation ahead of the meeting tomorrow.

6. Any Other Business (Strengthening the communications among WECAFC members: access to the executive committee meeting minutes and miscellaneous documents; Partnerships in the region, etc.)

Ms Diei Ouadi recapped the key action items arising from the meeting.

There being no other business, the meeting concluded at 3:40 p.m.

ACTION ITEMS:

1. Ms Cummings agreed to prepare summary on the status of the queen conch listing and share it SAG by the end of the week of the 26th December.
2. Ministers in the respective countries to be contacted regarding the reduction in the number of conveners for working groups.
3. The Executive Committee members to review the questions within the Rules of Procedure and revert to the Secretariat by Thursday, 22 December 2022.
4. Ms Diei Ouadi to send reminder e-mail about the Drafting Group meeting (**Done**).
5. Ms Diei Ouadi to provide Mr Jackson with a copy of her PowerPoint presentation ahead of the Drafting Group meeting. (**Done**)

**Final Minutes of the First meeting of the WECAFC Executive Committee for 2023
2 March 2023; 3:35 p.m. - 4:37 p.m.**

Present

Yvette Diei Ouadi – WECAFC Secretary

Members of the Executive Committee:

Edward Jackson – Chair of WECAFC

Gavin Bellamy – First WECAFC Vice-Chair

Nancie Cummings, Chairperson of the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG)

Absent:

Sonya Thompson – Assistant to the WECAFC Secretary (**Transcriber of minutes**)

The order of the agenda was as follows:

1. Review of the action items of the last executive committee meeting
2. Preparation for the 19th plenary of the Commission
3. Any Other Business

Ms Diei Ouadi, WECAFC Secretary, welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Executive Committee for 2023.

The above agenda was reviewed and endorsed by Mr Edward Jackson and Dr Gavin Bellamy.

1. Review of the action items of the 2nd executive committee meeting post-WECAFC18

- a. Action item #1 - [*Ms Cummings agreed to prepare summary on the status of the queen conch listing and share it with SAG by the end of the week of the 26th December*] - Completed. Ms Cummings confirmed that the queen conch summary was shared with SAG members on 22 January 2023 and subsequently, with the WECAFC Secretariat. It was also noted that only two of the SAG members (Karina Ramirez and Ms Cummings) were involved in the preliminary review and discussion of the listing. Ms Cummings informed the meeting that she had just resent the summary to the SAG members again.
- b. Action item #2 – [*Ministers in the respective countries to be contacted regarding the reduction in the number of conveners for working groups.*] – Ms Diei Ouadi indicated that the WECAFC Secretariat had discussed this matter initially with the Subregional Coordinator’s Office. Following that discussion, it was felt that the best approach would be to have the OSPESCA subgroup of the Commission follow up first with the Ministers in the OSPESCA region regarding the working group convener situation and Ms Diei Ouadi had requested Mr Jackson’s assistance in this respect. She also added that the Secretariat is proposing to present to the 19th plenary of the Commission for discussion, a background paper on the status of its 11 working groups and possible approaches to an equitable sharing of conveners responsibilities among the three subgroups of the Commission, especially for the 5-6 groups who are or will soon be without conveners.
- c. In response, Mr Jackson said he would follow up with José Infante of OSPESCA on this matter and revert to the WECAFC Secretariat with a response by next Tuesday, 7 March 2023.
- d. Action item #3 – [*The Executive Committee members to review the questions within the Rules of Procedure and revert to the Secretariat by Thursday, 22 December 2022*]. Ms Diei Ouadi said this item was not addressed to date. However, she noted that the legally reviewed Rules of Procedure (RoP) would be one of the discussion items at the 19th plenary of the Commission. It was stated that one of the FAO legal colleagues would be invited to participate in the plenary.

- e. Following a suggestion by Ms Cummings for the Executive Committee to have another opportunity to review the RoP, it was agreed that WECAFC Secretariat would provide the latest version of the document for the Committee members to review and discuss the comments from the FAO legal division and subsequently, revert to the Secretariat by next Wednesday, 8 March 2023.
- f. Action item #4 – [***Ms Diei Ouadi to send reminder e-mail about the Drafting Group meeting***]. Ms Diei Ouadi noted that this action was completed. A meeting of the Drafting Group was supposed to be held last month (February) but this had been postponed until 8 March 2023.
- g. Action item #5 – [***Ms Diei Ouadi to provide Mr Jackson with a copy of her PowerPoint presentation ahead of the Drafting Group meeting.***] This action was completed.

2. Preparation for the 19th plenary of the Commission

Ms Diei Ouadi indicated that ahead of this meeting, the Secretariat had sent potential agenda items and matters of interest for the next plenary of the Commission, for the consideration of the Executive Committee.

Ms Diei Ouadi then reviewed the main headings and items of the proposed agenda, including newly added topics, as proposed by the Secretariat.

In terms of the opening items, Ms Diei Ouadi said she was not certain whether it would still be relevant to hire a consultant to prepare a document on status of fisheries within the WECAFC region.

In terms of Developments in Related Fora, Ms Diei Ouadi noted it would be important to retain the item on the main decisions and recommendations of COFI, given the last session was held in September 2022 as well as the one on the BBNJ, which remains relevant. She noted that the IYAFa project will soon come to an end this year and the activities and outcomes of this project will need to be discussed at the 19th plenary, as part of a stock-taking exercise.

It was also noted that a few working groups, for example, the RWG-IUU, had carried out some intersessional activities that would need to be reported on.

Two documents were flagged as still being having an interim status, given that they were not endorsed at the last WECAFC session: 1) the Caribbean MFAD management plan and 2) the MFAD monitoring guide. These documents are currently being reviewed by a core group, who will incorporate the feedback received from WECAFC members, so this document could be presented to the 5th MFAD Working Group meeting to be held in Dominica and virtually from 17 to 19 April 2023. Following the MFAD meeting, these documents will subsequently be presented to the Commission. A MFAD Governance manual is also being prepared by an FAO consultant.

After reviewing the topics under finance, administrative and institutional matters, Ms Diei Ouadi strongly recommended that the report be endorsed before leaving the plenary on 8 September 2023. She highlighted that the back-and-forth with members, following the hosting of the session, has been a burdensome task for the Secretary of WECAFC.

While referring to a previous e-mail sent to Dr Bellamy, Ms Diei Ouadi stressed the importance of knowing the specific city where the plenary will be held and for the purpose of the Memorandum of Responsibilities, the importance of knowing the key institutional contact which will be officially communicating with FAO to organize the event.

In response to the presentation of the agenda items, Mr Jackson felt that the agenda was generally Ok and requested more time for the Committee members to analyse the items and revert to the Secretariat with their feedback. It was agreed that the Committee members should provide their inputs to the Secretariat by Tuesday, 7 March 2023, before it is shared with the WECAFC.

Ms Cummings suggested having a pre-review before the 12th session of SAG (conducted by one of the SAG members), to have an idea of whether there has been the emergence of new data. This would determine whether to have a report on the state of fisheries in the WECAFC region, which she considers to be an important subject. She also noted that some research might be needed to see if the status of the queen conch listing and the lobster fishery landings are subjects which could be incorporated as emerging/new issues on the agenda.

Dr Bellamy noted that Kingston appears to be the city where the 19th plenary of the Commission. Written confirmation of the city and whether the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries will be the key institutional contact will be provided to the Secretariat by next week.

Mr Jackson said that two important subjects for him are 1) the lobster fishery (which is of significance for the entire region) and 2) the impact of the Sargassum seaweed on fisheries resources. He offered that these topics could possibly be discussed at a side event, even if they do not form part of the topics for discussion by the plenary.

Ms Diei Ouadi welcomed these two suggestions and informed the meeting of a CRFM project which is currently focusing on the impact of Sargassum seaweed in the region as well as potential uses for it. Under the item of developing issues, Ms Diei Ouadi added the subjects of queen conch listing, lobster and the impact and utilization of Sargassum seaweed. She indicated the updated agenda items will be shared with the Executive Committee members.

She further highlighted an upcoming UWI/CERMES workshop in Barbados, which would discuss the impact of Sargassum in the region. In response to a query from Ms Cummings, about whether a desk review or a literature survey on this subject could be done for the plenary, Ms Diei Ouadi noted it would be possible to get a resource person from CRFM or another institution to prepare a background paper on this subject.

With respect to interactions between recreational fishers (some engaging in it for subsistence and sales) and commercial fishers, particularly around MFADs, Ms Cummings enquired whether any thought could be given to the preparation of a background paper on the interactions in these kinds of fisheries of the different user groups.

Ms Diei Ouadi said the idea was exciting, but she noted the absence of a convener for the recreational fisheries working group and hence, the dormancy around this type of fisheries. Following a suggestion from Ms Cummings, Ms Diei Ouadi said she could bring this proposal to the attention of the 5th MFAD working group, which could possibly discuss the subject during their meeting in mid-April this year. Ms Cummings also suggested that a 1-2 pager could then be prepared for presentation at the plenary of the Commission in September 2023.

3. Any Other Business

Ms Diei Ouadi recapped key action items arising from the meeting.

It was decided to hold the next meeting of the Executive Committee on 21 April 2023 from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. AST.

There being no other business, the meeting concluded at 4:37 p.m.

ACTION ITEMS:

1. Mr Jackson to follow up with José Infante and revert to the Secretariat by next Tuesday, regarding an update from the OSPESCA ministers.
2. The Committee members to review and discuss the comments from the FAO legal division and subsequently, revert to the Secretariat by next Wednesday, 8 March 2023.
3. Ms Diei Ouadi to share the updated agenda items with the Executive Committee members. **DONE**
4. The Committee members to provide their inputs to the Secretariat on the proposed agenda items by Tuesday, 7 March 2023. **DONE**
5. Dr Bellamy to confirm in writing the city where the 19th session of WECAFC will be held and whether the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries will be the key institutional contact by the week of 6th March 2023.
6. Ms Diei Ouadi to discuss Ms Cummings' proposal of the interaction of the recreational and MFAD fisheries with the MFAD working group team.

Final Minutes of the meeting of the WECAFC Executive Committee for 2023
21 April 2023; 9:35 a.m. – 11:55 a.m.

Present

Yvette Diei Ouadi – WECAFC Secretary

Members of the Executive Committee:

Edward Jackson – Chair of WECAFC

Nancie Cummings, Chairperson of the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG)

Absent:

Gavin Bellamy, First Vice-Chair of the Commission

Sonya Thompson – Assistant to the WECAFC Secretary (**Transcriber of minutes retroactively**)

The order of the agenda was as follows:

1. Review of the action items of the last Executive Committee meeting
2. Preparation for the 19th session of the Commission (including the city, venue, formal institutional focal point, the agenda incorporating members' inputs)
3. Position of the Second Vice-Chair of the Commission
4. Any Other Business (Article on the IYafa Closure and Alternative venue for the 19th session of WECAFC – Barbados, SAG attendance to SAG work)

1. Review of the action items of the last Executive Committee meeting

- a. Action item #1 - [**Mr Jackson to follow up with José Infante and revert to the Secretariat by next Tuesday, 25 April 2023 regarding an update from the OSPESCA ministers**]- Completed. Mr Jackson contacted Mr Infante regarding this issue. Mr Infante will revert to Mr Jackson in a week's time and the latter will report back to the WECAFC Secretariat accordingly.
- b. Action item #2 – [**The Committee members to review and discuss the comments from the FAO Legal division and subsequently, revert to the Secretariat by next Wednesday, 8 March 2023.**] The Executive Committee members agreed to leave the latest version of the legally reviewed document as is and have it tabled at the 19th session of WECAFC.
- c. Action item #3 – [**Ms Diei Ouadi to share the updated agenda items with the Executive Committee members**]. Done.
- d. Action item #4 – [**The Committee members to provide their inputs to the Secretariat on the proposed agenda items by Tuesday, 7 March 2023**]. Done.
- e. Action item #5 – [**Dr Bellamy to confirm in writing the city where the 19th session of WECAFC will be held and whether the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries will be the key institutional contact by the week of 6th March 2023**]. Despite follow-up with Dr Bellamy, to date, the WECAFC Secretariat has not received any confirmation from Jamaica on either point, which is concerning at this point, as logistical arrangements would need to be arranged in a timely manner, via a Memorandum of Understanding.
- f. Action item #6 – [**Ms Diei Ouadi to discuss Ms Cummings' proposal of the interaction of the recreational and MFAD fisheries with the MFAD working group team**]. Ms Diei Ouadi reported that this proposal was not discussed at the 5th MFAD Working Group meeting, which was held in Dominica, given that 1) the meeting was running behind schedule and 2) the Working Group on Recreational Fisheries presently has no convener and has been dormant for some time. It was suggested that once the Working Group convener is established and the group is operational, then the two groups could liaise and discuss issues of common interest.

With respect to point f) above, Mr Jackson stressed that there is a need to promote the interaction between the two working groups, given their importance in the area of fisheries.

Ms Cummings said it was unfortunate that this matter could not have been included as a discussion item at the MFAD Working Group meeting. In the Wider Caribbean, there is some concern about Dolphinfish, in particular. In the US Caribbean, there has been an update to Amendment III for the Wahoo Dolphinfish Management Plan for which there will be consideration in August for minimum size and bag limits, which would ultimately affect the recreational fisheries. Ms Cummings stressed that it is important that the Wider Caribbean does not lag behind the US Caribbean and that the status of these fisheries is known.

Taking into account the above, Ms Diei Ouadi suggested that in interim, the discussions should start between the WECAFC MFAD Working Group and the Flying Fish-Dolphinfish Working Group, which already has a convener, while the convener and members of the Recreational working group are being established.

While agreeing with Ms Diei Ouadi, Ms Cummings underscored that all these recreational fisheries intersect with the MFAD Working Group because there are associated with the Moored FADs. She therefore suggested that a greater collaboration is needed among the three working groups.

2. Preparation for the 19th session of the Commission (including the city, venue, formal institutional focal point, the agenda incorporating members' inputs)

In the absence of Dr Bellamy, Ms Diei Ouadi said the city, venue or formal institutional focal point, in relation to the 19th session of the Commission, could not be discussed.

While sharing her screen, Ms Diei Ouadi reviewed the proposed agenda items for the WECAFC19 session, including newly added topics.

Some of the key points discussed were as follows:

The United States recommended that the item "*Election of the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of the Commission*" be shifted towards the end of the agenda, according to the Rules of Procedure (RoP). However, Ms Diei Ouadi pointed out that the agenda would be follow the same outline as last year's, since the existing RoP are still pending technical and legal clearance.

Mr Jackson underscored, as a matter of urgency, the need to know the venue for the session, as time is running out. He further noted that one needs to clear about the Chairmanship of the Commission, in particular, the two Vice-Chairpersons, to help advance the work of the Commission.

Regarding Mr Jackson's first point, Ms Diei Ouadi said she would write to Dr Bellamy on Monday, 24 April 2023, to seek written confirmation as to whether Jamaica is still in a position to host the 19th session of WECAFC and give him a week to respond. If for some reason this is not possible, Ms Diei Ouadi said she would offer that the WECAFC Secretariat host the meeting in Barbados, which would be more cost-effective.

Regarding the second point, Ms Diei Ouadi clarified that Mr Jackson, as outgoing Chair, will be responsible for chairing the next (19th) WECAFC session. The election of the Chairperson and Vice-Chairs will be held at the end of the 19th session of WECAFC, and these persons will be the ones to chair the 20th plenary of Commission.

Regarding the clarification being sought from the USA on the agenda item concerning the amendment to the ROP, Ms Diei Ouadi indicated that the WECAFC Secretariat would provide a response.

Regarding the request to have an update on the status of fisheries for the WECAFC19 session, Ms Diei Ouadi informed that the consultant, Mr Jeremy Mendoza, had advised that there have been no significant changes in the data that would require an update since the meeting held last year. He is currently working to complete the assessment work for Area 31, which is due at the end of September 2023, and will include the latest statistical data available, at least up until 2021. It was agreed by the Committee to have an update on this topic as an Information Document for the WECAFC19 session and not as an agenda item. The focus will be on the priority species, as per the USA's suggestion.

Ms Cummings also highlighted the work that Rishi Sharma (NFIFM/Rome) is currently doing to update the status of stocks for the SOFIA, will involve more discussion and review. It was noted, however, that there will be some methodological differences in the approach.

Ms Diei Ouadi also shared her concern about the sensitive nature of using FAO fisheries statistics, which have not yet been published, in the preparation of the WECAFC19 background documents.

Ms Cummings highlighted that it is important not to lose momentum with the Letter of Intent between FAO and ICCAT to advance efforts to improve fisheries data and statistics.

Based on a recommendation from the USA, selected WECAFC working group conveners will present the intersessional activities implemented this year, which would be followed by suggested action from the SAG (SAG summary report). Ms Cummings suggested that the Secretariat share the templates with the Working group conveners to aid them in the preparation of their respective reports.

The Executive Committee recommended that the topic 'Proposal on the queen conch listing' (which was suggested by the USA) be removed from the agenda itself and form one of the Information Documents for the session.

Ms Cummings noted that the reporting on lobster landings, catches and any changes in the environment, will be drawn from two sources: Mr Jeremy Mendoza's Information Document and the Working Group's intersessional report. Ms Cummings will help to prepare the Information Note on emerging issues on Spiny lobster. Mr Jackson added that a lack of data on lobster fisheries would be a challenge to the region, given its importance.

The Committee agreed to have the topic on Convention of Biological Diversity post 2020 (as proposed by the Assistant Director-General/Fisheries, Rome) as one of the Information Documents and the Report of the regional priorities established by the XXXVII FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean and the potential contribution of fisheries and aquaculture as a Reference document.

3. Position of the Second Vice-Chair of the Commission

Due to a change in administration, Ms Diei Ouadi informed that Ms Natali Piccolo is no longer with the Brazilian Government and therefore, no longer holding the post of the Second Vice-Chair of the Commission. In this regard, the Committee agreed that Venezuela, in the person of Hon. Rony Leiva, *Vice-Ministro de Ministerio del Poder Popular de Pesca y Acuicultura de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela* should become the second Vice-Chair, given that he was the second in line for the position. The WECAFC Secretariat will contact Venezuela to advise them that with the departure of Ms Piccolo, Venezuela would assume the position of Second Vice-Chair of the Commission. Thereafter, the WECAFC members would be apprised of the situation.

4. Any Other Business

Ms Diei Ouadi gave an overview of the closing event of IYAF2022, organized by COPPESAALC-FAO, and advised that WECAFC was unable to participate due to the absence of simultaneous interpretation or possibility of streaming the event. It was therefore proposed to have a side event on IYAF2022 at the WECAFC19 session.

It was recalled by Ms Diei Ouadi that the WECAFC Secretariat launched a call for members to join SAG.

Ms Cummings noted that she had prepared a preliminary agenda for the SAG12 session, but she expressed concern that some of the SAG members have not been sufficiently present or engaged. Only three out of seven members are presently contributing to the work of SAG.

Ms Diei Ouadi said she was aware that SAG member, Mr Christopher Parker of Barbados, was recently promoted to Deputy Chief Fisheries Officer, which would translate into increased responsibility. Ms Diei Ouadi promised to follow up with Mr Parker regarding his contribution to SAG.

Ms Diei Ouadi later recapped key action items arising from the meeting.

It was decided to hold the 12th session of SAG during the week of 19th June, subject to CRFM's confirmation that there is no conflict with other meetings.

The next meeting of the Executive Committee is slated for Thursday, 8 June 2023 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 pm. AST.

There being no other business, the meeting concluded at 11:55 a.m.

ACTION ITEMS:

1. Mr Jackson to report back to the WECAFC Secretariat after receiving feedback from Mr José Infante on the subject of OSPESCA Ministers' contact with the WECAFC working group conveners.
2. Ms Diei Ouadi to write to Dr Gavin Bellamy on Monday, 24 April 2023, to ascertain whether Jamaica is still in a position to host the 19th session of WECAFC. **(Done)**
3. The WECAFC Secretariat to consolidate the amendments to the WECAFC19 agenda and share the clean and tracked changed versions with its membership to request their inputs within a week's time. **(Done)**
4. The WECAFC Secretariat to encourage the liaison between the MFADs and DolphinFish working groups.
5. The WECAFC Secretariat to a response to the USA regarding the Letter of Intent between FAO and ICCAT. **(Done)**
6. The WECAFC Secretariat to share the templates with the Working group conveners to aid in the preparation of their respective reports.
7. Ms Cummings to assist in preparing the Information Note on emerging issues concerning Spiny Lobster.
8. The WECAFC Secretariat to contact Venezuela concerning the position of the Second Vice-Chair of the Commission and subsequently, the WECAFC members to advise them of the change. **(Done)**
9. Ms Diei Ouadi to follow up with Mr Christopher Parker regarding his contribution to SAG.

**Final Minutes of the Second meeting of the WECAFC Executive Committee for 2023
15 June 2023; 2:07 p.m. - 3:31 p.m.**

Present:

Yvette Diei Ouadi – WECAFC Secretary

Members of the Executive Committee:

Edward Jackson – Chair of WECAFC

Nancie Cummings, Chairperson of the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG)

Hon. Rony Leiva (Second Vice-Chair) and team from the *Ministerio del Poder Popular de Pesca y Acuicultura (MPPPA)*, Venezuela

Milagro Molina, Venezuela

Sonya Thompson – Assistant to the WECAFC Secretary (**Transcriber of minutes**)

Absent:

Dr Gavin Bellamy – First Vice-Chair of the Commission

The order of the agenda was as follows:

1. Preparation for the 19th plenary of the Commission
2. Cooperative framework of ICCAT
3. Any Other Business

Ms Diei Ouadi, WECAFC Secretary, welcomed everyone to the second meeting of the Executive Committee for 2023 and extended a special welcome to the Second Vice Chair of the Commission, The Hon. Rony Leiva Martínez and thanked him for his willingness to join in the work of the Commission. The Chair, Mr. Edward Jackson, reiterated these sentiments.

Hon. Rony Leiva thanked everyone for the opportunity to participate in this prestigious Committee. He underscored that Venezuela is going to do their best to support the sustainability of fisheries nationally and internationally. He further noted that Venezuela was assuming this task with great responsibility; hence the big team present, who will be supporting him in this undertaking. Given his post as Vice minister of the Ministry, Hon. Rony Leiva said at times, it would be difficult for him to attend all the meetings; nevertheless, the team will ensure its presence. The vice minister said the names of the persons on the Venezuelan team would be circulated.

The above agenda was reviewed and endorsed by those present.

1. Preparation of the 19th session of WECAFC

The following update was provided by WECAFC Secretary, Ms Yvette Diei Ouadi:

- All the invitations were dispatched to the WECAFC members and partners since last week; with the last batch sent on 9 June 2023. A few nominations have been received so far.
- The Secretariat is currently exploring venue options in Barbados and making enquiries about simultaneous interpretation services. It is hoped that the 19th session of WECAFC will be productive and that there will be a good turnout in terms of the participation.

- With respect to technical preparedness for this session, some documents such as the Cooperative framework of ICCAT are being prepared and the Rules of Procedure are expected to be fully endorsed at WECAFC 19.
- The WECAFC Secretariat has requested the in-person participation of the FAO Legal Division at the session.

The Chair, Mr Edward Jackson, agreed that the Legal Division needs to be part of the session to provide relevant advance. He also indicated that he would physically attend the session.

2. Cooperative framework of ICCAT

Ms Diei Ouadi provided some background on the cooperative framework of ICCAT that was recommended at the 17th session of WECAFC in Miami, Florida. Between 2019 and 2022, FAO and WECAFC members and the Contracting Parties of ICCAT have worked on this document.

WECAFC, as an Article VI Body of the FAO constitution, received advice from FAO Legal Division (through its LEGA service) regarding the framework.

The members of the Executive Committee reviewed LEGA's feedback on the Letter of Intent from ICCAT in a meeting, held on 19 December 2022.

The feedback was shared with WECAFC members on 2 December 2022, stating the deadline for their inputs as 20 January 2023. This deadline was further extended until 30 January 2023. No comments were received from the members on this version.

Ms Diei Ouadi stated that the latest version of the Letter of Intent was shared with ICCAT as of January 2023 and feedback from ICCAT was received on 31 May 2023. The WECAFC Secretariat is now seeking the advice of the Committee.

The Committee members all agreed it would be best to share the latest version of the Letter of Intent with the feedback from ICCAT with the WECAFC membership, giving them a deadline of 7 July 2023 to respond. The said feedback from ICCAT would be shared with LEGA for their comments.

It was decided that any feedback received from members would be shared with the Executive Committee latest by 12 July 2023.

3. Any Other Business

Ms Diei Ouadi indicated that the preparation for the Twelfth session of SAG (SAG XII), scheduled for 19 and 20 June 2023, is well on track, with about 80 percent of the documents uploaded on the WECAFC website and the link to the meeting documents disseminated to participants.

Ms Sonya Thompson was invited to provide an update on anticipated attendance for SAG XII. She confirmed the participation of nine WECAFC member states (Belize, Brazil, Colombia, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom and United States of America), three partners and about 11 FAO personnel (staff and consultants), bringing the total number of participants for the session to 46.

Mr Jackson informed that Mr Renaldy Barnuty would be joining SAGXII session as an observer from Nicaragua. Ms Thompson indicated that she did not recall seeing a nomination from Nicaragua in the WECAFC Inbox and was requested by Ms Diei Ouadi to double check. On the other hand, Mr Jackson was encouraged to submit the official nomination from Nicaragua, in the event that this was not done.

It was flagged by Ms Diei Ouadi that there has been no feedback from the First Vice-Chair, Dr Gavin Bellamy, despite many efforts to reach him and she sought the advice of the Executive Committee. After some discussion, Mr Jackson indicated he would try to get in touch with Dr Bellamy and revert to Ms Diei Ouadi by Wednesday, 21 June 2023.

Ms Cummings raised the issue of the limited composition of SAG and the continued pressure on a few individuals to carry out the work. It was noted that while there are six SAG members, only three of them are actively working. It is also doubtful that Barbados would continue to be part of SAG, due to competing duties.

Ms Diei Ouadi noted that at present, SAG is primarily composed of members from Barbados, Brazil, Cuba, EU/France, Mexico and the USA. She stressed that if there continues to be a lack of interest from the membership in participating in SAG, the Commission will eventually die, as no such a body can sustain without any scientific advice.

Venezuela enquired about participating in SAGXII as an observer and they were encouraged to submit their official nomination. They also expressed an interest in becoming a member of SAG. Ms Diei Ouadi said that while it was too late now to join SAG, this item will be tabled at the WECAFC 19 session.

It was noted that Ms Cummings only has one term left, as she was nominated and elected as Chair of SAG in 2021. The next Commission meeting is scheduled to be held in 2025.

Mr Jackson stressed that Ms Cummings is doing a great job and is essential to SAG. He said he would prepare an individual message to each SAG member, with a view to encouraging him/her to stay the course and continue their contribution to the work of the Commission.

Ms Cummings indicated that she would like to see a better liaison between SAG and ICCAT in the future. It was decided that the next meeting of the Executive Committee would take place on 13 July 2023 from 2:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Atlantic Standard Time.

There being no other business, the meeting concluded at 3:31 p.m.

ACTION ITEMS:

1. Venezuela to share the names of the persons who comprise their team.
2. Mr Jackson to contact Dr Gavin Bellamy of Jamaica and revert to Ms Diei Ouadi by 21 June 2023.
3. The Secretariat to translate ICCAT feedback and share it with the members as well as the FAO Legal Division [**Done**].
4. The Secretariat to share any feedback received from the members on the Letter of Intent with the Executive Committee latest by 12 July 2023.
5. The Secretariat to check for the nomination from Nicaragua as well as add the name of the observer (Mr Barnuty) to the SAG list of participants [**Done**].
6. Venezuela to submit their nomination to the Secretariat by 12:00 noon on Friday, 16 June 2023. [**Done**]
7. Mr Jackson to prepare individual messages for dispatch to the SAG members. [**Done**]

Final Minutes of the meeting of the WECAFC Executive Committee for 2023
13 July 2023; 2:42 p.m. – 4:09 p.m.

Present:

Yvette Diei Ouadi – WECAFC Secretary

Members of the Executive Committee:

Edward Jackson – Chair of WECAFC

Nancie Cummings, Chairperson of the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG)

Hon. Rony Leiva (Second Vice-Chair) and team from the *Ministerio del Poder Popular de Pesca y Acuicultura (MPPPA)*, Venezuela

Sonya Thompson – Assistant to the WECAFC Secretary (**Transcriber of minutes**)

Absent:

Dr Gavin Bellamy – First Vice-Chair of the Commission

The order of the agenda was as follows:

7. Review of the action items from the previous meeting
8. Preparation for WECAFC19: Update on list of participants and local logistics
9. Any Other Business

Review of the action items from the previous meeting

1. Venezuela to provide names of their team.

Venezuela to provide the names of their Venezuelan team from the *Ministerio del Poder Popular de Pesca y Acuicultura (MPPPA)*. Venezuela also thanked FAO for the invitation to WECAFC19 session and indicated that they would be participating. Venezuela promised to send the official correspondence to the WECAFC Secretariat, which should come from the Ministry within the coming week.

2. Mr Jackson to contact Dr Gavin Bellamy of Jamaica and revert to Ms Diei Ouadi by 21 June 2023.

Mr Jackson has tried to contact Dr Gavin Bellamy (Representative of CRFM/First Vice-Chair of the Commission) via various media (calls, WhatsApp, text and e-mail) but did not have any success in reaching him. While expressing concern, Mr Jackson said it is safe to conclude that Dr Bellamy is no longer a part of the Committee and enquired about the next step.

Ms Diei Ouadi said she had informally flagged this situation to Mr Milton Haughton (CRFM) about the matter after unsuccessfully contacting Dr Bellamy herself and considered the possibility of having a proxy for Dr Bellamy at the meetings of the Executive Committee, in light of his absence at the most recent meetings.

Following a suggestion from the WECAFC Secretariat and some discussion on this matter, it was decided that Mr Jackson would first make informal contact with Mr Haughton about this matter, before preparing any formal correspondence in this regard. Ms Diei Ouadi to share the WhatsApp number for Mr Haughton with Mr Jackson after this meeting.

It was pointed out by Ms Diei Ouadi that according to the WECAFC Rules of Procedure, the Executive Committee does not itself have the authority to replace anyone in the Committee due to a lack of attendance and/or performance. She also underscored that with the 19th session of WECAFC fast approaching, it would be essential to have a completely functioning Executive Committee in place.

4. The Secretariat to share any feedback received from the members on the Letter of Intent with the Executive Committee latest by 12 July 2023.

Feedback was only received from the USA on the ICCAT letter of intent. The USA is in agreement with the concerns raised by ICCAT Contracting Parties and the modifications suggested by them. In this regard, the USA would prefer to see a non-binding approach used, utilising an informal exchange of ideas, rather than having any substantive edits that propose the development of a formal mechanism or stating that such a mechanism is required between the two parties. Ms Diei Ouadi stated that there will be a specific agenda item at the upcoming WECAFC session to address this matter.

It was suggested that the WECAFC Secretariat could share this feedback from the USA with the Executive Committee, LEGA and WECAFC members.

5. The Secretariat to check for the nomination from Nicaragua as well as add the name of the observer (Mr Barnuty) to the SAG list of participants [**Done**].

Mr Barnuty attended the Twelfth (virtual) session of the SAG, 19-20 June 2023.

6. Venezuela to submit their nomination to the Secretariat by 12:00 noon on Friday, 16 June 2023. [**Done**]

Venezuela also attended the Twelfth session of SAG.

7. Mr Jackson to prepare individual letters for dispatch to the SAG members. [**Done**]

In light of the very few SAG members, who are presently engaged in preparing documents for the 19th session of WECAFC, Ms Cummings indicated that it would not be beneficial to transmit the letter to SAG at this stage.

Mr Jackson proposed that during the plenary session, all the members could provide feedback on the Letter to SAG members.

Venezuela indicated they strongly support the strengthening of the SAG and the work that Ms Cummings and her team is doing. It was noted that there was a scientist from Venezuela that participated in the last meeting of one of the WECAFC working groups; hence, Venezuela indicated they would continue to support the work of the Commission and in particular, the working group.

Ms Cummings also expressed concern that there is no representation in some of the working groups, which means that the work is moving slowly.

2. Preparation for WECAFC19: Update on list of participants and local logistics

Ms Thompson reviewed the current list of confirmed members and observers for the WECAFC19 session to date. It was noted that there were 35 delegates from 13 WECAFC member states and seven observers confirmed so far, in addition to the FAO staff and resource persons. Two official partner nominations (from CRFM and IFRMER) would be received shortly.

Regarding the SAG, Ms Cummings indicated that if there are funds available, the SAG member from Mexico (Ms Karina Ramirez) would participate in person as well as Mr Christopher Parker (who is based in Barbados). It is also hoped that Brazil will participate in the session and that the members from Cuba and France, even though they have not attended any of the SAG meetings for the year, would still be able to attend the session.

In terms of logistical arrangements, Ms Thompson indicated that the meeting venue was confirmed as the Main Conference Room on the first floor of the United Nations House, Hastings, Christ Church, Barbados. She noted that the SLC-Procurement Unit was currently seeking quotations for hotel accommodation, catering services and so on.

Ms Diei Ouadi also encouraged Venezuela to participate in the 19th session of WECAFC. Venezuela indicated they have every intention of attending the meeting, given its importance, and would do their best effort to participate. Venezuela will provide their official nomination to the Chair and the WECAFC Secretariat within the coming days.

Ms Diei Ouadi said the technical preparation of the documents is underway. She noted that next week the aim is to have all least 80-90 percent of the working documents available on the website of the Commission. With respect to the Rules of Procedure, the latest version of this document will be tabled with the tracked changes and comments received from the FAO Legal Division (LEGA).

The draft agenda items were reviewed at the previous meeting of the Executive Committee and was subsequently sent to the WECAFC members for their inputs. All members were given an opportunity to contribute to the agenda.

3. Any Other Business

It was pointed out by Ms Diei Ouadi that the European Union (EU) had flagged some concerns with the provisional agenda for WECAFC19:

1. Several agenda items seem to be simply updates on the work of other organizations or instruments and do not appear essential for this meeting. For example, some papers, like the COFI paper and the BBNJ, are not essential and should come towards the end of the agenda (as opposed to Day 1). It was proposed that these agenda items should be reduced by 30 minutes each and moved towards the end.
2. A presentation of the status of key resources in the WECAFC region is missing from the agenda. It was noted that there has been no change to this item since the update provided on this topic at WECAFC18 session last year. However, the document on this topic is currently being updated by HQ but will not be ready before September 2023. The consultant, Mr Jeremy Mendoza, is not prepared to deliver a presentation on this topic at the WECAFC19 session. A decision has been made to have this document as an Information Document instead for the session, not a working document.
3. The EU is also proposing that the space and time dedicated to the Strategic Reorientation (SR) process be prioritized and that this important agenda item needs one full day.

It was noted that these comments will be posted on the WECAFC website and shared with the nominees. The WECAFC Secretariat has also reached out to former FAO consultant, Mr Freddy Arocha, to inform him of this situation and to ask him to prepare a presentation on his document "Review of the Biological Data, the Stocks Spatial Distribution and the Ecological Connectivity between the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction and the Exclusive Economic Zones in the WECAFC region", which aims to inform the SR topic.

In light of the above, the Chair opined that 1 or 2 hours may be inadequate to discuss the topic of SR but the allocation of one day is too much for this topic.

In response to a query from Ms Cummings about circulating the proposed, amended agenda with timeline, Yvette stressed that as per the Rules of Procedure, there will be no amendment to the agenda before the Commission meeting takes place in September 2023. Any amendments to the agenda will have to be made on Day 1 of the meeting. It was further noted that the relevant speakers at WECAFC19 have been asked to be flexible and they were notified that their PowerPoint presentations may need to be shifted, if any rearrangement of agenda items occurs.

Ms Cummings suggested pushing the Conservation management measures papers to Day 1 ahead of the topic of SR to save time.

While agreeing to incorporate the discussion on the SR, Mr Jackson also underscored that they would need to be very strict with time to get through the many items on the WECAFC19 agenda.

It was agreed that the next meeting of the EC would be held on Wednesday, 9th August 2023, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. AST. (*This was later rescheduled to Wednesday, 16 August 2023*).

Yvette took the opportunity to recap the key action items arising from the meeting. There being no other business, the meeting concluded at 4: 09 p.m.

ACTION ITEMS:

1. Venezuela (Second Vice Chair of the Commission) to send in writing the names and affiliations of the persons who comprise their team to the WECAFC Secretariat by the week of 17th July.
2. The WECAFC Secretary to share the contact number of Mr Milton Haughton, Executive-Director of the CRFM with Mr Jackson, following this meeting. (**Done**)
3. The Chair of WECAFC, Mr Edward Jackson, to informally contact the Executive Secretariat of CRFM (via WhatsApp) concerning the matter of the First Vice-Chair of the Commission, before sending any formal correspondence, as needed.
4. The WECAFC Secretariat to continue the technical preparation and posting of the WECAFC19 documents as well as finalization of logistical arrangements. (**Ongoing**)
5. Venezuela to submit their official nomination for the WECAFC19 session to the WECAFC Secretariat within the coming days.
6. The WECAFC Secretariat to brainstorm and look at different, feasible options for the restructuring of the WECAFC19 provisional agenda, based on the EU's feedback.

Final Minutes of the meeting of the WECAFC Executive Committee for 2023
16 August 2023; 3:12 p.m. – 4:43 p.m.

Present:

Yvette Diei Ouadi – WECAFC Secretary

Members of the Executive Committee:

Edward Jackson – Chair of WECAFC

Nancie Cummings, Chairperson of the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG)

Hon. Rony Leiva (Second Vice-Chair) and team from the *Ministerio del Poder Popular de Pesca y Acuicultura (MPPPA)*, Venezuela

Sonya Thompson – Assistant to the WECAFC Secretary (**Transcriber of minutes**)

Absent:

Dr Gavin Bellamy – First Vice-Chair of the Commission

The order of the agenda was as follows:

1. Review of the action items from the previous meeting
2. Updates on the preparation for WECAFC19
3. Documents under the purview of the Executive Committee and/or the Chair of IWG
4. Feedback from FAO Legal Division on the cooperative framework between ICCAT and WECAFC
5. Any Other Business
 - The position of the First Vice Chair on the WECAFC Executive Committee
 - The New Executive Committee

The Chair raised the matter of the instability of the position of the First Vice Chair of the Executive Committee (presently held by a representative from Jamaica, Dr Gavin Bellamy) and indicated he would like to address it under Any Other Business. In particular, he referred to Dr Bellamy's infrequent appearance at these meetings and the future of this post. He also expressed concern that there was no nomination received from Jamaica, as far as he was aware, for the 19th session of WECAFC.

Ms Diei Ouadi informed that this matter had been brought twice to the attention of the Executive Director of the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), Mr Milton Haughton, and the Committee should let him have the opportunity to address this matter and await the outcome of the situation. She also notified that Jamaica did submit a late nomination to the session in the persons of the Hon. Floyd Green, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Mining and Dr Gavin Bellamy, who are both physically expected to attend the session.

1. Review of the action items from the previous meeting

1. ***Venezuela (Second Vice Chair of the Commission) to send in writing the names and affiliations of the persons who comprise their team to the WECAFC Secretariat by the week of 17th July.***

Hon. Rony Leiva said that Venezuela will send the names of the people who will be taking part in the meetings of the Executive Committee to the WECAFC Secretariat latest by Wednesday, 23 August 2023. **(Done)**

2. ***Mr Jackson to contact Dr Gavin Bellamy of Jamaica and revert to Ms Diei Ouadi by 21 June 2023.***
(Done)

3. The Chair of WECAFC, Mr Edward Jackson, to informally contact the Executive Secretariat of CRFM (via WhatsApp) concerning the matter of the First Vice-Chair of the Commission, before sending any formal correspondence, as needed.

Done. It was stated that last week, there was an internal meeting of the Executive Committee, in which Dr Bellamy participated. However, it was noted that he was absent for this meeting.

4. ***The WECAFC Secretariat to continue the technical preparation and posting of the WECAFC19 documents as well as finalization of logistical arrangements. (Ongoing)***

The technical preparation of meeting documents is well underway. All of the background documents have been posted on the WECAFC website, most of them in the three languages of the Commission. The only outstanding documents are the Report of the Executive Committee, the Intersessional report of the WECAFC working groups and the Impact of Sargassum seaweed document being prepared by CRFM.

5. ***Venezuela to submit their official nomination for the WECAFC19 session to the WECAFC Secretariat within the coming days.***

The Focal Point of the Ministry of the Fisheries and Aquaculture of Venezuela is presently deliberating on this matter to finalise the names of the delegates from Venezuela who will be attendance at WECAFC19. It is hoped that Venezuela can participate in person and if the logistical arrangements no longer allow for in-person participation, Venezuela will attend virtually.

The Chair, Mr Jackson, encouraged Venezuela to submit their nomination soonest. He enquired about the deadline for the submission of the names of the official delegates and any deadline in terms of logistical arrangements.

It was noted by Ms Diei Ouadi that the deadline for the submission of nominations had long passed but given that the current guidelines of the WECAFC Rules of Procedure do not stipulate a deadline for the submission of nominations, greater flexibility was being exercised to accommodate the participation of WECAFC members, as was done in the case of the late nomination received from Jamaica.

The WECAFC Secretariat stressed that Venezuela submit their official nominations before Wednesday, 23 August 2023, which would be at least two weeks before the session.

6. ***The WECAFC Secretariat to brainstorm and look at different, feasible options for the restructuring of the WECAFC19 provisional agenda, based on the EU's feedback.***

Ms Diei Ouadi said this discussion is ongoing and noted that she had a TEAMS meeting tomorrow to discuss this item with the members of the FAO Secretariat who will be present at the session. Coming out of this meeting, it is hoped that there would be at least two options for the WECAFC19 provisional agenda, which would be shared with the members of the Executive Committee.

Ms Cummings expressed concern about the EU's proposal to have one full day to discuss the Strategic Reorientation (SR) and opined that the science deliveries will suffer. She appealed to the WECAFC Secretariat to intervene, wherever possible, to protect the time for the deliveries by the SAG, for which 20 minutes was estimated for their presentation.

In response, Ms Diei Ouadi informed that the time allocated to discussing the topic of the SR would be left to members to deliberate on Day 1 of the session.

2. Updates on the preparation for WECAFC19

Ms Thompson reviewed the current list of confirmed members and observers for the WECAFC19 session to date. It was noted that nominations were received (most of them confirmed) from 19 WECAFC member states (Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, European Union, France, Guatemala, Jamaica, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Panama, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom and United States of America) and eight observers (CERMES/UWI, CNFO, CRFM, GCFI, ICCAT, RSS, Sargasso Sea Commission, SPAW-RAC and UNDP/GEF PROCARIBE+ Project Coordination Unit), in addition to the FAO staff and resource persons. From a recent count of the list of participants, there are approximately 32 in-person delegates and 48 attending on-line.

In response to a query from Mr Jackson about the participation of Mexico and OSPESCA, Ms Thompson said that there were no nominations received from them to date and that given the capacity of the meeting room, the space was looking a bit tight. In this regard, Mr Jackson indicated he would follow up with Mexico and OSPESCA to see if they could participate virtually.

Ms Thompson urged that the names of these delegates be sent early in the week of 21st August 2023 so they could be included in the list of participants and before the circulation of the relevant information to the delegates.

The logistical arrangements are underway. There are nine delegates (including a minister from Jamaica) whose travel expenses will be funded by FAO and about 19 self-funded persons. In the case of Venezuela, Ms Thompson indicated that she would follow up with the hotel to see if they could accommodate at least one more delegate, in the event Venezuela makes an in-person nomination.

Ms Thompson further noted that the numbers for catering would need be adjusted, once the number of in-person participants has been finalised. She informed that the interpreting company had been selected and that the transportation arrangements would be finalised, once the final head count is known. The interpretation equipment (e.g., the headsets) would also need to be adjusted to coincide with the final numbers.

Venezuela enquired about possible sponsorship to attend the session in person. Ms Diei Ouadi explained that delegates were funded by the WECAFC Secretariat on a first come first serve basis, and at this point in time, the funds have been exhausted and is not possible to sponsor any of the late nominees. She noted in the case of the Minister from Jamaica, it was noted that the Subregional Coordinator had offered to fund his attendance at the session; the WECAFC Secretariat could not accommodate him.

It was further noted that the 19th session was supposed to be held by Jamaica, which would have absorbed a lot of the meeting costs. However, given the limited budget of the WECAFC Secretariat, it is no longer in a position to offer sponsorship of delegates.

While thanking Ms Thompson for all her efforts, Mr Jackson granted her request to leave the meeting early to deal with outstanding logistical matters for the WECAF19 session.

3. Documents under the purview of the Executive Committee and/or the Chair of IWG

While reviewing the documents online for the WECAFC19 session, Ms Diei Ouadi pointed that the Report of the Executive Committee, the Finalization of the Amendment of 2014 Rules of Procedure and the Strategic Reorientation are documents which fall under the remit of the Executive Committee and/or the Chair of the IWG, who is also Chair of the Commission (Mr Jackson). Ms Diei Ouadi added that the update on draft text options is to be presented by the Intersessional Working Group (IWG) to the delegates. It was suggested

that since the Chair will be chairing the session, that he follows up and delegates someone from the group to present the draft text options in the plenary.

Regarding the Rules of Procedure, the WECAFC Secretariat would make itself available during the plenary to make any tracked changes to the MS Word document on the screen, as needed. Changes will be made, based on the deliberations by the Chair of the session. It was pointed that WECAFC Document 3a on the WECAFC website would be the version that would form the basis of the discussion in the plenary. Following a brief introduction on this document, the FAO Legal Unit will provide their guidance and members will be able to provide their inputs.

To lift the burden from the Executive Committee, the agenda item on the cooperative framework between ICCAT and WECAFC, will be presented by the WECAFC Secretariat.

It was decided that the Report of the Executive Committee would be presented by Ms Cummings in English, while Mr Jackson would deliver his PowerPoint presentation in Spanish. Ms Diei Ouadi said that this is possible, given that there will be simultaneous interpretation to facilitate communication among all the delegates. The WECAFC Secretariat will be responsible for sending the main text of the Report of the Executive Committee (excluding the Appendices) for translation into French and Spanish.

Ms Diei Ouadi also noted that the WECAFC PowerPoint presentation should be used for the meeting and will be shared with all the speakers for them to prepare their respective presentations.

It was discussed and agreed that the in-person members of the Executive Committee would meet in the Courtyard by Marriott hotel (where delegates are being accommodated) around 4:00 p.m. AST on Tuesday, 5 September 2023 to discuss their approach to their presentations. Venezuela indicated that it would not be possible for them to attend the proposed meeting, given their late time of arrival in Barbados around 7:00 p.m. AST.

4. Feedback from FAO Legal Division on the cooperative framework between ICCAT and WECAFC

Ms Diei Ouadi gave an overview of the process involving the cooperative framework between ICCAT and FAO. She explained that the relevant document (Letter of Intent) was shared with WECAFC members for their inputs and that the Secretariat only received one feedback (from United States of America), which supported the position of the Contracting parties of ICCAT. This feedback was shared with the FAO Legal Division for their review. A suitable option has resulted for ICCAT, i.e., there would be an exchange of letters which will build on the existing, overarching Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between ICCAT and FAO. The implementation of the MoU would be within five specific areas of intervention, which were previously identified. It is hoped that this process, which has been ongoing, since the hosting of the WECAFC17 session in July 2019, could be concluded.

The WECAFC Secretariat will send the feedback received from the United States of America, together with the exchange of letters between FAO and ICCAT (presently available on the website) to all the WECAFC members, ahead of the WECAFC19 session.

5. Any Other Business

Yvette took the opportunity to recap the key action items arising from the meeting and expressed gratitude to the Chair and the other members of the Executive Committee for their patience, cooperation and productivity during the intersessional period. It is hoped that, with the appointment of a new Chair, the good work of the Committee could be continued during the next intersessional period.

It was further noted that there will be meeting tomorrow of the FAO Secretariat, including the Chair of the SAG, Ms Cummings to discuss note-taking responsibilities for the WECAFC19 session.

There being no other business, the meeting concluded at 4: 43 p.m.

ACTION ITEMS:

1. Venezuela to submit their official nomination for the WECAFC19 session to the WECAFC Secretariat by Tuesday, 22 August 2023.
2. Venezuela to formally send the names of their team who will be attending the Executive Committee meetings to the WECAFC Secretariat latest by 23 August 2023. **(Done)**
3. The WECAFC Secretariat to share at least two options for the WECAFC19 provisional agenda, which would be shared with the members of the Executive Committee. **(Done)**
4. Mr Jackson to follow up with Mexico and OSPESCA to see if they could participate in the WECAFC19 session virtually. **(Done)**
5. Mr Jackson to follow up and delegate someone to present the draft text options in the WECAFC19 plenary.
6. The WECAFC Secretariat to send the main text of the Report of the Executive Committee for translation into French and Spanish **(Done)**.
7. The WECAFC Secretariat to share the WECAFC PowerPoint template for the preparation of presentations by the speakers. **(Done)**
8. The WECAFC Secretariat send the feedback received from the United States of America, together with the exchange of letters between FAO and ICCAT to all the WECAFC members **(Done)**.
9. Ms Thompson to prepare the minutes of this meeting by next week to have this included in the appendix to the Report of the Executive Committee for the WECAFC19 session. **(Done)**