ICRI CPC Procedures
A Report to the International Coral Reef Initiative, Coordination and Planning Committee
Maputo, Mozambique
November 29, 2001
Prepared by A. Hooten

Introduction

During the ICRI CPC Meeting in Cebu, Philippines in April, 2001, the Chair and Secretariat requested that a working group be formed to discuss and recommend meeting procedures that might assist ICRI with enhancing the efficiency of its future meetings. This report outlines what has been discussed to date, and offers several recommendations for the CPC to consider[1].

Mr. Dan Wilhelmson posted a discussion to the ICRI Community posing questions and examining possible changes as to how the ICRI-CPC may conduct its future business ("***ICRI in a Changing World***"). While Mr. Wilhelmson's discussion addresses a range of issues, like this discussion, it includes questions about procedures that ICRI should consider in looking for ways to enhance the efficiency and satisfaction of its meetings.

This report does not address issues concerning whether ICRI should or should not become formal body; it addressees only a set of recommended steps that the CPC may wish to consider in improving the flow of information and procedures to benefit its meetings. However, by incorporating several of the recommendations discussed herein as a first step, the CPC may find that other potential formalities may not be necessary at this time.

Background

Based on the minutes of the ICRI CPC meeting in Cebu in April, a decision was reached through consensus that a sub-group be formed to develop guidelines for CPC procedures. The subgroup included: the ICRI Secretariat, R. Kenchington, A. Hooten, J. Oliver, B. Tobias, D. Obura, G. Verbrugge and N. Hornby. Mr. John Baldwin of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority also contributed helpful suggestions in considering future procedures. Some of the sub-group members have now been replaced with new representatives. This group has not officially met or communicated together since the April CPC meeting[2]; however, several of the members have discussed the issues separately, and have also communicated within a private discussion space on the ICRIForum to address the issue. The discussion thread on the ICRIForum has been converted to a public conference and can now be viewed by all ICRI members at:

http://www.icriforum.org/router.cfm?show=discuss.cfm&Item=18

---

[1] Special note (and admission of guilt): The reporter wishes to apologize in advance for the tardiness of this report to CPC members. It is embarrassing to present this report and series of recommendations above-- only just immediately before the CPC meeting-- while the recommendations clearly advocate a minimum of two months for the CPC to review. This is an obvious case of the need for improved performance and practicing what the working group members are preaching. This being stated, however, it is apparent that this same prescription is relevant to other areas of CPC discussion. At the time of this CPC meeting there have only been a limited number of ICRI members who have taken advantage of the ICRIForum as a tool in preparing documents, reports, proposed resolutions and in furthering discussions. The author wishes to make note of how straightforward it was to prepare this brief by being able to rely on the complete thread of discussions on this topic within the ICRIForum. All of the material was in a single location, and made review of the opinions straightforward in compiling, editing and reporting. Use of the ICRIForum for this purpose in the future is highly recommended.

[2] ICRI CPC Members listed as discussion-enabled participants included: John Baldwin, Barbara Best, Edgardo Gomez, Andy Hooten, Robert Jara, Richard Kenchington, David Obura, Jamie Oliver, Tom Praster (in place of Adrienne Stefan and Barbara Tobias), ICRI Secretariat, David Souter, Francis Staub, and Genevieve Verbrugge.

Summary of Comments

Without the need for a scientific poll of any sort, it is obvious that the evolution and expansion of ICRI CPC meetings presents challenges in organizing the agenda so that there is collective satisfaction in making progress toward the goals defined in the Framework For Action. Many of the ICRI CPC members have expressed concern at the amount of information that is covered during the meetings within limited time.

Consequently, there is a legitimate need to find ways in which each CPC meeting can operate as efficiently as possible. Based on communications between some of the sub-group members, several suggestions emerged that could help ICRI participants prepare and filter the most relevant information. The majority of these suggestions involve the processing of information and preparation of agenda items in advance, so that all CPC participants can be prepared to discuss the most substantive issues during the CPC meeting.

The suggestions that were part of the on-line discussion are presented below (although in no order of significance):

1. A support paper should accompany agenda Items. No Agenda Item should be considered for a "decision"/"resolution" unless a paper exists. Each support paper should consist of a summary cover sheet, a background paper and the "decision"/"resolution" as proposed.

2. Papers not received by the Secretariat within two weeks of the meeting (to allow for circulation) should not be considered for the agenda unless specifically added by consensus at the meeting (but see footnote #1). Others argued that a 6 or 8 week deadline prior to each meeting for partners to receive papers proposing resolutions should be required. Thus, such discussions could be used as the basis for constructing an agenda, which would be based on a few, limited number of issues to be discussed and decisions or actions taken.

4. Some of the suggestions involved minimizing, eliminating, or replacing national and organization reports with national and organization statements. Other suggestions included making more lengthy progress reports available as hand-outs at the back of the meeting room, or posted for download on the ICRI web site.

5. Other alternatives suggested a three-minute executive summary of a paper that would focus on changes, needs for collaboration, or pull out the highlights relevant to the topic of a given ICRI meeting. Delegations could thus bring their national and organizational experience to bear in discussion of any issues currently being considered by the CPC (for example, if the topic is "marine protected areas," then ICRI participants could be encouraged to come prepared to report relevant info on MPA experiences.)

6. Also, working group chairs might give reports in place of country reports. This might streamline the agenda because the meeting schedule of semi annual CPC meetings coincides with regional ICRI meetings, at least for the next two years.

Discussion

Over the past six years of ICRI's existence, CPC meetings have loosely followed parliamentary procedures, or rules of order. In fact, the majority of CPC meetings have operated (within a parliamentary procedural context) in quite ordered fashion. In the past, the efficiency of ICRI CPC meetings has resided as much with the strength of the Chair (to ensure order) as it has in the thickness of the Agenda, so that as many voices and issues as possible have been heard within the allotted time.

The challenge now is the increasing member participation and volume of content covered within the Agenda, and more importantly, following up on any progress in which a CPC decision, resolution or action may have resulted. Of all the cornerstones of the Framework for Action, "review" is exclusively a critical

function of the CPC, yet in past meetings (other than ITMEMS, 1998) there seems to have been little opportunity for synthesis of collective progress when the CPC convenes.

Therefore, the main focus of this discussion is to examine procedures leading up to and including CPC meetings and identify where information efficiency might be improved without sacrificing quality assurance. Before proceeding with various recommendations, however, it should be stated at the outset that electronic communication and Internet Communication Technology (ICT) are enabling mechanisms to improve efficiency in information transfer and organization--provided of course that such technology is used to fullest advantage.   Because ICRI participants live and work in all corners of the world, it would be naïve to ignore such platforms *and their future trends in demographic distribution* as significant enablers in helping ICRI achieve its goals. The ICRIForum[3] is one potential application that has been developed and customized exclusively for the ICRI community. The ICRIForum serves as the stable home for the Secretariat's web site. This was done to minimize costs and loss of institutional documentation and memory for each rotating ICRI Secretariat. However, it must be emphasized that any automated, electronic system has to be used and modified to meet the demands of the user community. So, while reference may be made within this discussion to "posting on the ICRIForum", this is meant only as the current familiar tool with the potential to streamline CPC procedures, and is not intended to advocate (or lobby) that it serve as the only platform for the CPC to improve upon procedural efficiency.

The over-riding comment in the communications from the various working group members was to prepare discussion and issues in advance, and stage that information so that:

a)   either the ICRI Secretariat could make the best judgement on, or
b)   ICRI-CPC participants could review the material in advance and rank as to the level of importance in tabling for the next CPC meeting.

What the CPC should consider is whether is wants to allow its "membership" to:

- independently rank those items that should be covered on future agendas
- whether this should be a function entrusted to the Secretariat to provide judgement and guidance (after all, the Secretariat is being hosted by a given government{s}, which has priorities that it would like to see championed), or
- a combination of these.

In his on-line comments, Mr. John Baldwin suggested (and provided draft copies) forms that could be used to route items to be considered for discussion in advance of the meeting. Both forms and routing procedures can be easily automated electronically on the ICRIForum, to aid in review and screening/ranking process, and in routing the results to the Secretariat or designated coordinator.

Recommendation: *The CPC may wish to take a decision[4] on whether or not future agenda items should be submitted in advance with routing procedures as prerequisites. It will need to instruct a subcommittee or the Secretariat to develop/approve such forms and work flow and the most appropriate mechanism (e.g. email, conference calling, the ICRIForum) for organizing.*

The CPC may also wish to discuss and consider placing (save those urgent, unexpected orders of business), a limitation on the number of reports, decisions, and resolutions that will be entertained at a given meeting. For example, if the Secretariat or CPC decides that there is only room for three resolutions to be considered and discussed, then this may motivate ICRI participants to engage in dialogue in developing the most urgent ones well in advance of the meeting.

---

[3] F. Staub will provide an update on this later in the CPC Agenda.

[4] The terms used here (and also referred to in Mr. Wilhelmson's discussion): decisions, resolutions, actions, are terms that have been repeatedly used within past CPC meetings. While they follow general rules of order, the CPC may wish to officially use such terms in the outline of its future agendas. This may assist in organizing submissions for consideration at future CPC meetings.

Other suggestions have centered on minimizing the routine reporting of progress at the CPC meetings, particularly country and organization reports. These can be time-consuming and on many occasions provide limited insights into a synthesis of progress within the Framework for Action. Possible alternatives suggest that before the CPC meeting and during ICRI regional workshops, poster sessions be established before or after dinner, so that ICRI participants can informally mingle and engage in more involved discussions with other participants. A CPC subcommittee might possibly review the posters, with findings reported to the Chair during the actual CPC meeting. Such an approach has the potential to tie into an ICRI Scorecard process[5], whereby significant advancements toward coral reef conservation might be recognized and rewarded, or areas of significant need might be identified for collective CPC action[6].

Recommendation: *The CPC should consider refining the quality of progress reporting during future CPC meetings. Reporting should be as concise as possible, and reserved for those situations that can demonstrate significant progress either through a-priori posting and review of a report electronically, (or possibly during poster sessions around the CPC meeting), or can clearly demonstrate need for the CPC to assist with a decision, action or resolution. If posters are considered an option by the CPC, then a sub-committee should be appointed, in concert with the Secretariat to organize the sessions and provide a review function and report to the Chair.*

As stated above, ICRI's role as a review body is critical for the success of the Framework for Action. While other partners can help to implement other ICRI cornerstones, the role of review is critical for the CPC, so that it can mobilize its network and diplomatic influence to affect changes with governments and organizations when needed. As part of improving its procedures, the CPC may benefit by more closely tracking its past progress and routinely incorporating such review in future meetings. Not only should partners be ranking their own progress within the FFA, but the CPC, as the main review body, should also be accountable for tracking and examining its own progress.

Recommendation: *The CPC should include as part of its future agendas a special section that specifically reviews the decisions and actions from previous meetings. For example, if a resolution has been given ICRI's support, then there should be a follow-up report to the CPC concerning the outcome of that resolution, action or decision, and how it is being used. This has direct relevance to the review responsibility of ICRI and can form an important component of ICRI's scorecard. In future meetings, upon acceptance of a resolution or action, a follow-up date or requirement should be specified at the time of that initial action. Use of ICT, like the ICRIForum, can assist with this review and follow-up function, through the public or private conferences, or by posting results for CPC members to review and comment.*

It is hoped that this summary and recommendations will be useful in moving the CPC forward, so that it may best focus its limited time and resources.

---

[5] M. Hatziolos will provide an update on this later in the CPC Agenda.

[6] ***Editorial comment:*** During the April, 2001 meeting in Cebu, a report was made by the Southeast Asia Regional Seas coordinator where it was noted that donated dive equipment was detained in the customs department of one of the region's countries. It is the opinion of this author that the ICRI CPC should have used it diplomatic influence and taken a decision and acted to write a letter to the government to request that such equipment be released. To the best of knowledge, this has not occurred. However, this is an example of a small, yet potentially significant action that could have real meaning in raising awareness and providing monitoring tools. It is the kind of information that should supercede a status report that provides little or no new information to the CPC.