

Host Governments of Multilateral Environmental Agreements *A review of financial contributions towards location costs*

Executive Summary:

The International Whaling Commission (IWC) recently adopted a deficit budget and is facing hard decisions about its operations because of financial challenges, including the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a strong case for the UK, one of the original signatories to the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling and the host government to the IWC, to increase its financial support to the Commission. This report makes a strong case for the UK to pay the location costs of the IWC's headquarters:

- 16 out of 19 governments (84 percent) that host Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) pay all the location costs of their headquarters. More than 40 percent of these hosts are developing economies. For 28 out of 34 MEAs reviewed, their host government meets all their location costs.
- The UK supports certain international organisations based in the country, for example paying 80 percent of the accommodation charges of the OSPAR (Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic) secretariat. The UK also assists the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), with the Government owning the premises used by the IMO and leasing it to the organization under a 50-year lease signed in 1996. The Government is responsible for 80 percent of the costs of major repairs on the IMO building and met 90 percent of the cost of a major refurbishment in 2006.
- However, the UK is an outlier in its approach to other MEAs, including the IWC. Of 34 MEAs reviewed, only three receive no contribution towards location costs from their host government. All three are located in the UK. The UK has never made a financial or in-kind contribution to the location costs of the IWC secretariat which it has hosted since 1949.

Background

The International Whaling Commission (IWC) recently adopted a deficit budget and is facing hard decisions as a result of financial challenges and other consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Following approval by the Commission to sell its current headquarters, the Red House in Cambridge, the IWC will need to rent new offices and storage space for its archives. Based on current commercial rents in Cambridge for approximately 2,000 square feet, this is likely to cost in the region of £50,000-60,000 annually.

The United Kingdom (UK) has hosted the IWC since 1949 but has never contributed to its location expenditure. This is out of step with the majority of host governments to comparable Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs).

The paper reviews the financial and other contributions of 19 host governments, including seven developing economies, towards the location costs of the headquarters of 34 Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs).¹ The agreements reviewed include international conventions, Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) and Regional Seas Programmes. Approximately half are United Nations organizations.²

Summary

The host governments of UN programmes/agencies and non-UN organisations are generous in the provision of facilities to the organisations they host. 16 out of 19 host governments reviewed currently (or previously for a significant period) cover the rental or other location costs of the headquarters they host. For 28 out of 34 MEAs reviewed, their host meets all their location costs: the government either provides the headquarters premises free of charge or at a nominal rent, or pays the rent to a private landlord. Four of the seven remaining organizations currently receive significant contributions from their host government towards their location costs: one receives 80 percent of its accommodation costs; one pays rent below market rates and is only responsible for 20 percent of repair costs and 10 percent of refurbishment costs; one receives half of its budget from its host, and one is located at the headquarters of the United Nations Environment Programme on land that was donated by the host government. The remaining three MEAs, including the IWC receive nothing towards their location costs. They are hosted by the UK.

Findings

Australia's 2004 bid to host the secretariat of the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) in Hobart included free office accommodation and other support for up to six years.³ Ultimately, the government of Tasmania provided free office accommodation and other support until 2013.⁴ Since then it has provided administrative support (telephone lines and an email and data storage server) free of charge, and has made an annual contribution of up to AUS \$20,547 (US\$15,864⁵).

The Australian federal government and the state government of Tasmania also provide office accommodation for the secretariat of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) in Hobart.⁶ The headquarters agreement indicates that nominal rent is paid.⁷ In 2012, the federal and Tasmanian governments contributed to the cost of renovations of the building.⁸

Canada was selected over three other Parties to host the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 1995 with an offer of premises and \$800,000 per year for 5 years. In addition, the host city, Montreal, offered US\$100,000 towards office equipment, while the host province, Quebec, offered US\$200,000 per year for five years and up to US\$750,000 in loaned professional and administrative services. The venue itself offered US\$500,000 in order to provide free rent for five years.⁹ From 2000 to 2019, Canada contributed US\$1 million annually to the CBD in rent subsidy.¹⁰

Canada also provides the office accommodation of the secretariat of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) in Halifax. The NAFO budget does not include rent or other building costs. The Government chose new premises for NAFO in 2020 and the secretariat expected that "no additional expenses are anticipated to be incurred by the Organization for the move and has not had any indication otherwise from Canada."¹¹

Côte d'Ivoire hosts the secretariat of the Convention for Cooperation in the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Atlantic Coast of the West, Central and Southern Africa Region (Abidjan Convention). The government provides the headquarters building to the secretariat rent-free.¹²

Denmark hosts the secretariat of the International Council for Exploration of the Sea (ICES) in Copenhagen. The government covers all the costs of the premises.¹³

Finland hosts the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission, also known as the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM). It covers the rent and maintenance costs of the headquarters, material and equipment costs. In financial year 2020/21, it increased this contribution by €30,000 to a total of €322,000.¹⁴

Germany provides rent-free premises in Bonn to the secretariats of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC),¹⁵ the Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)¹⁶ and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS)¹⁷ as well as four of the seven agreements under CMS: the Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe (UNEP/EUROBATS), the Agreement on the Conservation of African Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (UNEP/AEWA), the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ASCOBANS) and the Agreement on the Conservation of Gorillas and their Habitats.

Italy leases premises to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Rome at a nominal rate.¹⁸

Jamaica hosts the secretariat of the International Seabed Authority (ISA). It provides the headquarters premises rent-free to the ISA under a 99-year lease and the ISA contributes a monthly contribution towards the maintenance costs.¹⁹

Kenya hosts the headquarters of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer at the Headquarters of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in Nairobi to which it granted the permanent use and occupation of the land.²⁰

The Federated States of Micronesia leases the headquarters premises of the secretariat of the Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC). It charges no rent on the 55 year lease "as a token of mutual understanding and cooperation between the People of Pohnpei, acting for and on behalf of the Government of the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Tuna Commission."²¹

The Principality of Monaco hosts the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS). It provides the office facilities and office equipment free of charge and pays all operating expenses including secretariat staff.²²

Namibia hosts the South East Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (SEAFO). The headquarters agreement provides that the "Government shall provide the necessary premises for the exclusive use of the Commission, at a nominal rent to be agreed upon by the Commission, which premises shall serve as the Headquarters of the Organisation."²³

Norway hosts the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO). NAMMCO pays rent for the secretariat's headquarters but Norway contributes half of the annual budget.²⁴

Western Samoa hosts the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). The government provided the interim facilities for eight years and donated the site for the construction of a permanent headquarters building.²⁵

The Republic of the Seychelles provides and maintains the headquarters of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), and provides utilities, free of charge.²⁶

Spain hosts the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). A review of the annual budget indicates that it does not pay rent to its government host.

Switzerland provides office space rent-free to the secretariats of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal. The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (RAMSAR) is hosted by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) in premises donated by the Swiss Government.²⁷ RAMSAR pays an administration fee to IUCN but no rent.²⁸

The United Kingdom hosts five international organizations: the IWC in Cambridge; the International Maritime Organization (IMO); the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment in the Northeast Atlantic (OSPAR); the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) in London and the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization in Edinburgh.

The UK has never made a financial or in-kind contribution to the location costs of the IWC secretariat which it has hosted since 1949.²⁹ Initially, the secretary was housed at the offices of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) in London and MAFF provided administrative services in addition to office space, but the UK invoiced the Commission for rent and other office overheads for the portion of the building used by the secretariat, the costs of printing and other expenses, and the portion of the salary and expenses of the administrative staff.³⁰ From 1976 to 2016, the Commission rented the Red House in Cambridge under a commercial lease. It purchased the property in 2016. No assistance was provided by the UK towards rent or the purchase of the premises. Similarly, the UK does not make any contribution towards the location costs of the headquarters of the NEAFC³¹ or NASCO.³²

In contrast, the UK pays 80 percent of the accommodation charges of the OSPAR secretariat.³³ From 1998 to 2018 this annual contribution increased from £49,200 to £145,600 but declined to £117,040 after the Commission moved to new premises in 2019.³⁴ The UK also assists the IMO: The government owns the premises used by the IMO and leases it to the organization under a 50-year lease signed in 1996.³⁵ The annual rent is fixed, providing certainty and economic benefit to the tenant given the increase in commercial rents in London over that period. The government is responsible for 80 percent of the costs of major repairs on the IMO building³⁶ and met 90 percent of the cost of a major refurbishment in 2006.³⁷

The United States of America (USA) hosts the headquarters of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC).³⁸ According to the IATTC budget, its headquarters' office expenses include utilities, insurance, telephone, and office supplies but rent is not listed (although it is for field offices).³⁹ The USA also hosts the secretariat *Pro Tempore* of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles at the US Fish and Wildlife Service office in Washington DC.⁴⁰ The IAC's budget does not itemize rent and the USA contributes almost half of the organization's annual budget.⁴¹

Table 1: Summary of findings

Host Government	Organization	Host government pays (or paid) all rent/charges no (or nominal) rent	Other host government contribution to rent/location costs
Australia	Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP)	✓	Host government originally charged no rent; now donates to costs.
	Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR)	✓	
Canada	Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)	✓	Host government originally charged no rent; now pays US\$1 million annual rent subsidy, donates towards office equipment and professional and administrative services.
	Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO)	✓	
Côte d'Ivoire*	Convention for Cooperation in the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Atlantic Coast of the West, Central and Southern Africa Region (Abidjan Convention)	✓	
Denmark	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)	✓	
Finland	Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (Helsinki Commission)	✓	
Germany	Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS)	✓	

	Convention to Combat Desertification	✓	
	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC),	✓	
	Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe (UNEP/EUROBATS)	✓	
	Agreement on the Conservation of African Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (UNEP/AEWA)	✓	
	Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ASCOBANS)	✓	
	Agreement on the Conservation of Gorillas and their Habitats	✓	
Italy	Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)	✓	
Jamaica*	International Seabed Authority	✓	
Kenya*	Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer		Host government granted permanent use and occupation of the land to UNEP at which the headquarters are based.
Principality of Monaco	Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS)	✓	
Federated States of Micronesia*	Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission	✓	

Namibia*	South East Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (SEAFO)	✓	
Norway	North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission		Host government pays half of organization's budget.
Western Samoa*	South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)	✓	Host government provided interim facilities and the land for the construction of permanent headquarters.
Seychelles*	Indian Ocean Tuna Commission	✓	
Spain	International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas	✓	
Switzerland	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)	✓	
	Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar Convention)	✓	
	Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal	✓	
United Kingdom	International Maritime Organization (IMO)		Host government owns the headquarters building and charges fixed rent. It is responsible for 80 percent of the costs of major repairs and met 90 percent of the cost of refurbishment in 2006.
	International Whaling Commission (IWC)		
	North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO)		
	North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC)		
	Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment in the Northeast Atlantic (OSPAR)		Host government pays 80 percent of the accommodation charges of the secretariat.

United States of America	Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC)	✓	
	Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC)	✓	

* Developing economies

Wildlife and Countryside Link is the largest environment and wildlife coalition in England. We bring together 60 organisations to use their strong joint voice for the protection of nature. Our members campaign to conserve, enhance and access our landscapes, animals, plants, habitats, rivers and seas. Together we have the support of over eight million people in the UK and directly protect over 750,000 hectares of land and 800 miles of coastline.

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¹ In addition to the agreements listed, information was also sought on the headquarters arrangements of the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols in Jamaica and the Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears which receives administrative support from the Biodiversity Working Group of the Arctic Council, known as the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) in Iceland. No budget information could be found online and the Secretariats did not provide the details sought.

² Including UN framework agreements, conventions under UNEP, agreements under CMS, Regional Seas Programmes and organizations established under the Convention on the Law of the Sea.

³ Agreement Secretariat Location. First Meeting of the Parties, 10-12 November 20104. Doc ACAP/MOU1/Doc. 9. Available at: <https://www.acap.aq/meeting-of-the-parties/mop1/mop1-meeting-documents/831-mop1-doc-09-secretariat-location/file>

⁴ Memorandum of Understanding between the Crown in Right of Tasmania (as represented by Antarctic Tasmania) and the Secretariat for the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels. Provision of Office Facilities and Support for the Secretariat for the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels. 20/9/2012. Available at: <https://www.acap.aq/documents/mous/2169-mou-between-state-of-tasmania-and-acap-secretariat/file>

⁵ All monetary conversions contained in this analysis are based on the currency exchange rates on 10 February, 2021.

⁶ <https://www.ccamlr.org/en/organisation/secretariat>

⁷ Headquarters Agreement between the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources and the Government of Australia. Page 25. Available at: <https://www.ccamlr.org/en/document/publications/text-headquarters-agreement-between-commission-and-government-australia>

⁸ Report of the Thirty-Second Meeting of the Commission. Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources CCAMLR-XXXII. Available at: https://www.ccamlr.org/en/system/files/e-cc-xxxii_1.pdf

⁹ Location of the Secretariat. UNEP/CBD/COP/2/2/Rev.1. Available at: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/cop/cop-02/official/cop-02-02-rev1-en.pdf> 18 October 1995

¹⁰ *Ibid* 4

¹¹ Report of the NAFO Standing Committee on Finance and Administration (STACFAD). 41st Annual Meeting of NAFO, 23-27 September 2019. Bordeaux, France. ISSN-2521-7623. Page 204. Available at: <https://www.nafo.int/Portals/0/PDFs/mp/2019-2020/MP-2019-2020.pdf>

¹² Confirmed by emails by Abidjan Secretariat to Sue Fisher, 3 February, 2021.

¹³ Confirmed by email by ICES Secretariat to Sue Fisher, 4 February, 2021.

- ¹⁴ Budget proposal for 2020-2021 and a long-term budget framework. 2019. HOD 56-2019. Available at: <https://portal.helcom.fi/meetings/HOD%2056-2019-597/MeetingDocuments/4-2%20Budget%20proposal%20for%202020-2021%20and%20a%20long-term%20budget%20framework.pdf>
- ¹⁵ *Ibid* 3. Agreement among the United Nations, the government of the Federal Republic of Germany, and the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change concerning the headquarters of the Convention Secretariat. Appendix VIII. Page 297
- ¹⁶ *Ibid* 4.
- ¹⁷ Financial and Administrative Arrangements. 2002 UNEP/CMS/Conf.7.13.1 Available at: https://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/CP7CF7_13_1_budget_proposal_1.pdf. Page 12
- ¹⁸ *Ibid* 2
- ¹⁹ Supplementary Agreement between the International Seabed Authority and the Government of Jamaica regarding the Headquarters of the International Seabed Authority. 17 December, 2003. Available at: <https://isa.org.jm/files/files/documents/isa-ja-suppag.pdf>
- ²⁰ *Ibid* 3. Headquarters Agreement between the United Nations and the Republic of Kenya regarding the Headquarters of the United Nations Environment Programme. Appendix V. Page 231
- ²¹ Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission. Headquarters and Grant Agreement. October 9, 2009 Available at: <https://www.wcpfc.int/doc/commission-06/headquarters-agreement-and-grant-agreement>
- ²² Resolution 1.2 Establishment of the Permanent Secretariat for the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area. 2002. ACCOBAMS-MOP1/2002/Res.1.2 Available at: https://www.accobams.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/ACCOBAMS_MOP1_Res.1.2.pdf
- ²³ Available at: <http://www.seafo.org/About/Headquarters-Agreement>
- ²⁴ Secretariat Costs by Budget Categories. NAMMCO 2019. Available at: https://nammco.no/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/prp2018_43_overview-on-nammco-budget-and-changes-in-the-allocation-of-funds.pdf
- ²⁵ 5th Intergovernmental Meeting. SPREP. September 1991. P24. Available at: <https://www.sprep.org/att/publication/Retro/SPREP-Meeting-Reports/IM-Special-1991.pdf>
- ²⁶ Indian Ocean Tuna Commission Headquarters Agreement. Available at: http://www.fao.org/tempref/FI/DOCUMENT/iotc/Basic/IOTCHQ_E.pdf
- ²⁷ Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) 5th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, Kushiro, Japan. 9-16 June 1993. Recommendation 5.11: The new Bureau headquarters in Switzerland. Available at: <https://www.ramsar.org/document/recommendation-511-the-new-bureau-headquarters-in-switzerland>
- ²⁸ Financial and budgetary matters. Budget scenarios for 2019-2021 and draft resolution on financial and budgetary matters. Doc. SC54-7.3. Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. 54th Meeting of the Standing Committee. Gland, Switzerland, 23 – 27 April 2018. Available at: https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/sc54-7.3_budget_finance_dr_e.pdf
- ²⁹ The secretariat confirmed to Sue Fisher by email on 3 February, 2021, that the UK government provides diplomatic relief on the IWC's business rates.
- ³⁰ Article III of the ICRW provides that the first meeting of the IWC was to be convened by the UK. At this initial meeting in London on 30 May, 1949, the UK Commissioner was appointed Secretary. The Commission agreed that the office of the Secretariat should for the time being be located in London at the offices of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAFF) which would loan administrative staff to the IWC on a part time basis. The UK subsequently extended this arrangement for five years and at the 7th meeting of the IWC in 1955, it made the arrangement permanent. From the outset, the Commission, not the UK, paid the rent and other office overheads for the portion of the building used by the Secretariat, as well as printing and other expenses. In addition to paying the salary and expenses (taxes and social security contributions) of the Secretary himself, it also paid the proportion of the salary and expenses of the administrative and accounting staff loaned by MAFF to the Commission. The UK appears as a creditor in the IWCs' budget at this time. For example, in 1975, the Commission noted "the continuing rise in costs and the full effect of recent increases in the charges for staff and services of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and in the cost print, postage etc". That year, the Commission's expenditure of £2, 372.97 included £8,434.73 as "Charges of Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and Exchequer and Audit Department" and £1,698.55 for stationary, printing and postage.
- ³¹ Confirmed by email by the NEAFC secretariat to Sue Fisher, 3 February, 2021.
- ³² Confirmed by email by the NASCO secretariat to Sue Fisher, 10 February, 2021. The secretariat noted that the organization is granted relief from general rates levied by the local authorities on the premises.
- ³³ Financing the OSPAR Commission. 7th Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans. Helsinki, Finland 18-20 October 2005. UNEP(DEC)/RS.7/INF.16.RS Available at: https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/12519/INF.16.RS_Financing_the_OSPAR_Commission.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
- ³⁴ OSPAR Commission. General budgets 1998 – 2021. Available at: <https://www.ospar.org/meetings/archive/page2?q=commission>
- ³⁵ *Ibid* 4

³⁶ International Maritime Organization. Programme for Change. (b) HQ building refurbishment. Note by the Secretary-General and the United Kingdom I:\COUNCIL\100\4(b).doc. Available at: <https://docs.imo.org/Category.aspx?cid=3>

³⁷ Programme for Change. Headquarters Building Refurbishment. Financial analysis of funding options. Note by the Secretary General. C94/4(b)/Add.1. 21 March, 2005. Council 94th Session.

³⁸ Mario C. Aguilera. New NOAA Ship Strengthens Ties between Scripps Oceanography and Southwest Fisheries Science Center. 22, 2012. Available at: <https://scripps.ucsd.edu/news/new-noaa-ship-strengthens-ties-between-scripps-oceanography-and-southwest-fisheries-science>

³⁹ Fiscal year 2018 results and budgets for fiscal years 2020 and 2021. Document CAF-07-01. Available At: https://lattc.Org/Meetings/Meetings2019/IATTC-94/Docs/_English/CAF-07-01_Review%20of%20proposed%20budgets%20for%202020%20and%202021.Pdf

⁴⁰ <http://www.iacseaturtle.org/secretariado-eng.htm>

⁴¹ IAC Finances 2019 – 2021. Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles. Ninth Conference of the Parties. CIT-COP9-2019-R3. Available at: http://iacseaturtle.org/eng-docs/resolucionesCOP9CIT/CIT-COP9-2019-R3_Finances_2019_2021_Adopted.pdf