



## Annual General Meeting Minutes

**Date:** Monday 27 February 2023

**Time:** 16:00-17:30 HKT

**Location:** Zoom

**Attendees:**

22 individuals, representing:

16	Members	1	Technical Advisor
0	Observers	4	Steering Committee members
1	Secretariat	0	Independent consultants

## Agenda

Section	Time	Item	Lead
Introduction	4:00 - 4:05	Housekeeping	Secretariat
	4:05-4:15	Recapping HKSSC Vision HKSSC achievements and challenges in 2022	Technical advisor
Welcome from Chair	4:15 - 4:20	Welcome remarks and reflections on 2022	Chair
	4:20 - 4:25	Welcome to new members	Technical advisor
WG updates and member progress	4:25 - 4:55	Working Group updates and member progress in 2022 / 2023	WG Chairs Technical advisor
2023 focus areas and events	4:55 - 5:05	Strategic focus Sustainable Seafood Symposium World Oceans Day campaign	Technical advisor
Finance and Admin	5:05 – 5:15	Current budget and targets Budget and funding gap for 2023 Policy on non-paying members and expansion Sustainability plan for HKSSC	ADMCF / Technical advisor
	5:15 – 5:20	Next steps / News and resources	Secretariat
	5:20 - 5:30	AOB	All
Closing	5:30	Closing remarks	Technical advisor / Chair



## 1. Housekeeping

- Reminder of Chatham house rules and transparency of meeting minutes.

## 2. Recapping HKSSC Vision, achievements and challenges in 2022

- HKSSC's vision is for all seafood imported into Hong Kong to be legal, traceable and biologically sustainable.
- HKSSC members are committed to improving their sourcing practices, and encouraging the whole seafood industry to improve.

### *Achievements in Outreach & Communication:*

- Raised HKSSC international profile through two policy campaigns;
- Started Minderoo-funded research on Hong Kong's seafood trade and regulations;
- Engagement: over 30 restaurants and hotels in Hong Kong and Macau participated in the first World Ocean Day campaign, and achieved 420 followers on HKSSC LinkedIn account;
- Launched promotional videos (English and Traditional Chinese) with member logos;
- Continuous effort in recruitment and acquired two new members;
- Increased engagement with WWF-Hong Kong to explore collaboration opportunities.

### *Achievements in Member Support:*

- 16 Working Group meetings held, and the first face-to-face meeting since the pandemic;
- Organised four guest speakers for HKSSC meetings / webinars. Guests included Prof. Yvonne Sadovy, Global Dialogue on Seafood Traceability (GDST), Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP), and Global Seafood Alliance (GSA);
- More discussions and support for members on Chinese cuisine species;
- Published member support tools in Traditional Chinese and launched Member Portal on OneDrive.

### *Achievements in Marketplace:*

- Engaged multiple industry stakeholders to share feedback on platform design;
- Major focus: maximising the security for Trusted Seafood platform;
- Platform design phase has been completed. Will start with development once funding is secured.

### *Achievements in Seafood Risk Assessment:*

- Updated 3 tuna profiles and published 7 new species profiles: Pearl oyster, Noble scallop, 3 sea cucumbers, Antarctic toothfish and Arapaima fish;
- Soon to publish the profiles for the wild and farmed soft-shell mud crab;
- Engaged with Mozambique Oceanographic Institute on sea cucumber assessment;
- Collected 7 responses to the member survey, which has helped to identify common species traded and source of origin / flag states.

### *Major challenges in 2022:*

- Discussions with WWF-Hong Kong on the need to provide clarity to the market on the difference between the WWF seafood business programme and HKSSC membership, and the potential to work together, with limited agreements reached;
- Member recruitment was slow due to the negative impact of the pandemic on the industry;
- Assessment of Chinese cuisine species taking up more resources due to the lack of information along the supply chain.



### 3. Welcome remarks

- Benjamin So, Chairperson of the HKSSC, also the Founder of 178 Degrees sent his apologies for being absent from the meeting due to personal reasons.
- Acknowledged 2022 has been a busy year with many achievements in different aspects despite the challenges due to the pandemic, and appreciated the time and effort of all members and the steering committee in driving HKSSC's agenda.

### 4. Welcome to new members

- Warm welcome to new member that joined in January 2023;
- A representative introduced the hotels and colleagues at the meeting;
- Over 1200 hotel properties fall under the global group; membership to the HKSSC comprises four hotel properties in Hong Kong
- The company is committed to increasing responsibly sourced seafood, with a focus on MSC and ASC certifications, and works toward maintaining a minimum of 50% sustainable seafood. Endangered species and shark fin are banned;
- Most of the sustainable seafood sourced in other properties globally is either MSC or ASC certified;
- Acknowledged that it is challenging to only focus on two certifications;
- The company looks forward to exploring seafood alternatives with HKSSC by considering other certifications and guides such as WWF-Hong Kong Seafood Guide and Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch, and fishery improvement projects.

### 5. Working Group updates

#### Seafood Risk Assessment Working Group

- The WG Chair acknowledged that business is recovering after the pandemic, screening of new supplies is needed due to the changes in product availability, and allocating time and resources on certification renewal;
- Members continued to face challenges in working with local suppliers but found larger suppliers or other HKSSC supplier members are able to provide the information needed to ensure sustainability and traceability.

#### *Progress shared amongst hotel WG members includes:*

- Mapping of suppliers and high-level screening, identifying high-risk seafood products and/or high volume purchases to be focused on;
- Working via procurement teams to ask suppliers to fill in assessment sheets, or liaising directly with suppliers due to lack of internal resources;
- Setting mid-term targets on seafood sustainability;
- Updating sustainability policy / guidelines for procurement teams and chefs to differentiate between sustainability and IUU;
- Reviewing all fine dining and buffet menus for Chinese cuisine species and developing an in-house colour coded seafood risk rating list to assist the procurement team on decision making;
- Removal of certain high-risk products / endangered species from menus such as fish maw, sea cucumber and eel;
- More work needs to be done on Chinese and Japanese cuisine species. Sea cucumber, fish maw, and eel are problematic in terms of traceability and data and HKSSC suppliers hope to find alternatives for the industry.

#### *Progress shared amongst supplier WG members includes:*

- Sharing risk assessment sheets with suppliers;



- Setting percentage-based targets to increase sales revenue from sustainable products with incentives offered for sales teams;
- Successfully identifying alternatives for popular Chinese and Japanese cuisine species including groupers, sea cucumbers and abalones, and conducting quality tests;
- Removal of certain high-risk products / endangered species from catalogs such as eel.

*Updates on SRA website and projects:*

- Completed risk assessments and peer-reviews for the outstanding species from 2021 / 2022 and uploaded profiles onto SRA website;
- Now completed the second phase of SRA profiles (10 in total), except the profile of a sea cucumber species from Mozambique due to the lack of data;
- Currently lacking the funding to assess further species. HKSSC welcomes individual members or the general public to put forward self-funded requests for assessments;
- Started to build useful connections with NGOs that are part of the [Global Seafood Ratings Alliance](#) to explore how to increase assessments on species common to Chinese / Japanese cuisine:
  - Monterey Bay Aquarium (Seafood Watch guide);
  - Qingdao Marine Conservation Society (QMCS)
    - Agreed on featuring the species profiles from the China Seafood Sustainability Assessment (CSSA) website on the SRA website;
    - Currently seeking funding to support the cost of translating Chinese profiles into English;
    - Also keen to explore a fisheries improvement project targeting eel with HKSSC.
  - Australian Marine Conservation Society (Good Fish Guide).

*Engagements with WWF-Hong Kong*

- A sub-committee of steering committee members and HKSSC members consulted on the best approach to work with WWF-Hong Kong to reduce confusion in the market on there being multiple seafood programmes.
- It was felt that WWF-Hong Kong uses different approaches to HKSSC but there are still areas where the two could work together to ensure we achieve our overall aims to improve seafood supply chains.
- Outcomes of three meetings with WWF-Hong Kong in the past year:
  - Agreed to collaborate on policy work and signed an MOU with ADM Capital Foundation;
  - WWF-Hong Kong expressed potential interest in applying the methodology of Seafood Risk Assessments (SRA) on local farmed species to increase the assessments of local species.
- The most recent feedback from WWF-Hong Kong:
  - Following a few rounds of internal discussions on the feasibility of a joint venture between WWF-Hong Kong and HKSSC they have decided they do not want to create any unnecessary conflicts with ADMCF or HKSSC over items such as decision-making power and communication strategies, and that now is not the right time for a joint venture on sustainable seafood membership programmes;
  - The WWF International network has strict internal guidelines regarding long-term partnerships, on issues such as branding, assessment standard and financial model;
  - They remain keen however, to build a stronger collaboration with ADMCF on sustainable seafood.
- It was proposed that members sign an engagement letter to channel industry feedback and expectations to WWF-Hong Kong on the problem of having multiple seafood membership



programmes, and to suggest WWF-Hong Kong best focus on their strength which is the seafood guide and internal database / directory, consumer education and local campaigns to mobilise local stakeholders, including businesses, on problematic species.

- One member supported the proposal and shared their experience of working with WWF-Hong Kong:
  - Noted the limited understanding of the actual needs of the industry;
  - Expressed their disappointment about receiving limited member support and the simplified seafood assessment results from WWF-Hong Kong;
  - Felt that WWF-Hong Kong tends to focus too much on marketing through their logo being allowed on menus and company websites;
  - Found the benefits of membership of the WWF-Hong Kong seafood business programme unclear and the overall lack of transparency in terms of the work being put forward.
- Two HKSSC members reached out / will reach out to WWF-Hong Kong for seafood sustainability assessments using their global database, which is offered at an affordable rate and seems to be a relatively quick-fix approach.
- It was proposed that further discussions were needed on developing a consultancy service for HKSSC members to fill this gap.

### **Outreach & Communications Working Group**

#### *Recruitment and outreach:*

- The WG Chair reported that individual WG members have increased effort to introduce networks to HKSSC and successfully acquired two new members this year;
- Recruitment database now comprises 23 target companies;
- Recruitment remains a major focus for HKSSC. This requires ongoing active outreach by members and follow-up from Secretariat and Technical advisor;
- Insights into the current market were shared and possible factors that hold back businesses from joining the coalition. Businesses have been under cost-control pressure during the pandemic, particularly in the F&B industry.

#### *Events:*

- The 2022 World Oceans Day (WOD) campaign partnered with the MSC regional office in China and successfully gathered over 30 restaurants and hotels in Hong Kong and Macau;
- Following the success last year, the campaign is to be put forward in 2023. The first meeting dedicated to 2023 WOD has been scheduled for March;
- The Sustainable Seafood Symposium is scheduled for June; funding dependent, it aims to bring the market up to speed on international best practices;
  - to share regional developments (China and Japan);
  - to introduce HKSSC to more industry stakeholders and support recruitment.

#### *International and local policy campaigns and advocacy:*

- These are to encourage governments to deliver on robust policies and to raise HKSSC profile internationally.
- Two policy campaigns in 2022 included:
  - 1) *Fisher safety*
    - To support the development of a mechanism that records and reduces fisher mortality;
    - Signed an industry statement that was led by Pew Charitable Trusts;
    - FAO recognised the request from the industry and approved the development.
  - 2) *Biodiversity in areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ)*
    - Partnered with SSC in the UK and Global Tuna Alliance;
    - To support the high seas treaty on BBNJ to alleviate pressure on High Seas biodiversity and integrate an ecosystem approach in policy-making;



- Joint letter was sent out to a number of flag states and received positive sentiments from the Spanish Government.

*Key focus areas of O&C WG in 2023:*

- Advocacy for the ratification of The Cape Town Agreement for the Safety of Fishing Vessels:
  - The campaign would be supported by Pew Charitable Trusts;
  - Aiming to make commercial fishing vessels safe and capable of operating in the high seas, and promote the development of safety standards for construction and related seaworthiness;
  - Successfully identified 35 flag states through the member survey.
- Hong Kong seafood import policy research:
  - Funded by Minderoo Foundation;
  - Research started in 2022 and to be completed by the end of 2023;
  - Progress to date: completed customs data capture, legal review of comparative countries and market survey with HKSSC members;
  - Some members have helped to connect us to dried and live seafood suppliers;
  - Outstanding task: to interview Hong Kong Chamber of Seafood Merchants and FMO.

**Marketplace Working Group**

- An update on Trusted Seafood platform was given; continued engagement with industry stakeholders to better understand the seafood ordering process and for feedback on the design of the platform in hopes for the system to be friendly to the buyers and sellers;
- Introduced the development of categorisation system for seafood naming in different languages; the naming system is based on different sources including the seafood name database of FAO involving over 2500 species;
- It aims to enhance the specificity of seafood naming along the supply chain, support seafood procurement, and resolve naming problems for seafood, which remain a common challenge for procurement teams;
- Acknowledged the importance of the accuracy of seafood names in achieving sustainability, traceability and legality;
- The development team endeavours to build a Chinese name system to support local industry working in Chinese language;
- IUCN status and CITES listing of seafood species are also included in the system;
- Also shared the challenges in transforming the complex seafood ordering process into an online procurement platform and ensuring data security;
- Insights into seafood naming issues were shared, and that this can only be resolved by using the Latin scientific species name:
  - Members agreed and suggested hotels could bring the practice of requesting scientific names from suppliers into the procurement policy;
  - A session will be included at the Sustainable Seafood Symposium about setting up seafood sustainability targets and alignment in policies.

**6. Strategic focus for 2023**

- Now is likely a better time to push forward recruitment because business is bouncing back after the pandemic;
- To prioritise recruitment in order to get HKSSC to be self-sustaining by 2024 / 2025;
- To consider regional membership as recently received enquiries by a Singapore-based entity and Rosewood Hotel Group;
- To continue driving discussions through the Working Groups which appear to be very useful platforms for members to engage with one another, to share challenges and good practices, to learn and check in on internal progress;
- To consider addressing any major gaps that might exist in the HKSSC service offering, given the confusion we have seen in the market following the launch of the WWF Sustainable





Seafood Business Membership Programme. For example, how HKSSC supports members in doing sustainability risk rating of species and providing alternative options;

- Despite efforts to try to develop linkages between the WWF and HKSSC programmes to ultimately better support members and prevent competition, it does not look likely that there will be any strategic connection between them;
- To consider developing a consulting arm in seafood assessments and supplier due diligence to fill any gaps in member's internal capacity:
  - Insights were shared on how a consulting arm could benefit members; will work on a consulting model suitable for HKSSC members and circulate by the end of March 2023;
  - Looking at the Sustainable Seafood Coalition in the UK, the Secretariat is important in driving the coalition and holding industry hands in applying the risk assessments;
  - One of the benefits of developing a consulting arm is to get additional funding to support administration and the work of the Secretariat.

## 7. Key focus areas in 2023

- Presented the focus areas remaining within the broader categories of leadership, membership, partnership and stewardship to drive the HKSSC forward.

### *Leadership*

- To continue with the seafood trade research supported by Minderoo Foundation and potentially publish a position paper in 2023/2024 on improving Hong Kong's regulations of seafood imports;
- To continue to support international policy advocacy campaigns, with a focus on advocacy for The Cape Town Agreement for enhancing the safety of fishing vessels.
- To deliver the Sustainable Seafood Symposium and World Ocean Day campaign in June.

### *Membership*

- Aim to recruit at least 6 large and 6 medium/small companies this year to cover Secretariat costs;
- To start building capacity for outreach to Chinese industry groups and local hotels / retailers;
  - proposed appointing a new SC member that is locally well connected.
- To consider regional membership to expand HKSSC recruitment potential and influence;
- To recruit new members through the Sustainable Seafood Symposium;
- To develop a consulting arm to support gaps in member's internal capacity, this is above and beyond the general onboarding and technical support for members.

### *Partnership*

- To support Trusted Seafood Platform development through Marketplace WG;
- To expand on the sustainable seafood assessment profiles through partnering with other ratings platforms and NGOs, currently seeking funding to translate Chinese profiles from QMCS;
- To explore FIP or traceability pilot with Qingdao Marine Conservation Society (QMCS) to showcase regional leadership;
- To organise at least one internal webinar for members with a focus on local cuisine species.

### *Stewardship*

- Bi-annual member meetings, bi-monthly Steering Committee meetings and quarterly Working Group meetings (SRA, O&C, Marketplace and World Ocean Day committee).

## 8. Sustainable Seafood Symposium



- Shared that HKD 100k of funding has been secured from Swire Charitable Trust, covering one-third of the total cost;
- The Blueprint venue (Swire Properties; same venue for the symposium in 2017) has offered one day of the event pro bono;
- Exploring with Swire Hotels on barter agreement for catering and hotel rooms for speakers in exchange for HKSSC membership;
- Engaging with The Intern Group to identify an intern to coordinate the symposium (full-time position for 2.5 months), with TA overseeing and managing the symposium;
- Meeting with CPCS / CX to discuss the possibility to sponsor speaker flights;
- Proposed the symposium to be a two-day event on 12 and 13 June, subject to changes depending on intern appointment and final funding;
- Encouraged members to suggest possible ways or ideas on fundraising.

#### 9. World Oceans Day campaign

- 1st WOD committee meeting to be on 14th March, at 3pm HKT;
- To target fast food restaurants and retail groups to bring it down to street level;
- To explore collaboration opportunities with Hong Kong Chefs Association on potential capacity-building sessions for Chinese chefs;
- To call for Hong Kong and Macau restaurants and hotels to launch sustainable seafood menus on the first week of June, or 8th June 2023.

#### 10. Current budget and targets

- 10 out of 17 members have paid fees in 2022 or signed a barter agreement, raising a total of HKD119,000;
- 7 non-paying members tend to have a low participation rate at HKSSC meetings;
- Proposed membership fee structure for 2023 to remain unchanged and continue to base on employee number, where 'Employee' refers to operational team based in HK and Macau;
- Target budget:
  - 6 large corporate members would increase the budget by HKD 150,000;
  - 6 small-mid sized corporate members would increase the budget by HKD 30,000;
  - Aim is to at least cover Secretariat costs this year (HKD 300,000).

#### 11. Budget and funding gap for 2023

- TA costs will potentially increase this year to HKD 320,000 for the first six months and potentially HKD 225,000 for the last six months of the year to support further recruitment needs;
- A translation budget of HKD 250,000 is needed to translate 30 Chinese seafood assessments (QMCS) into English;
- Total budget needs for 2023 would be about HKD1,095,000;
- Main funding gap will be to cover the expense of translation of seafood assessment profiles and the Technical Advisor grant for remainder six months of 2023;
- Members suggested approaching financial institutions such as investment banks through the WOD campaign to promote HKSSC, and consider the development of additional income streams alongside the membership fees.

#### 12. Policy on non-paying members and expansion

- Some non-paying members that were founding members of the HKSSC will continue to be recognised as founding members on the website; Members were invited to share views on the following items through voting. Votes from more than one representative of a company will be considered as a single vote. Results were as follows:
  - A. Expect all members to be paying membership fees, despite their economic situation (Yes: 8 / No: 1 / Abstention: 0) - **Pass**





A member suggested giving members a payment timeline and possibly waiving or offering a discounted fee for a period of time, particularly for those with financial challenges.

- B. Allow final few months of leeway before membership withdrawal at the end of June  
(Yes: 8 / No: 0 / Abstention: 1) - **Pass**
- C. Expand membership to allow regional companies to join HKSSC  
(Yes: 9 / No: 0 / Abstention: 0) - **Pass**

### 13. Sustainability plan for HKSSC

- Given the current funding discrepancy for the Secretariat and Technical Advisor costs;
- To aim to fully cover Secretariat costs by meeting the target of recruiting additional 6 large and 6 small companies;
- To fully cover Secretariat cost and Technical Advisor costs (for remainder six months of the year) by recruiting more than 12 large companies;
- The less ideal situation is to secure enough budget for Secretariat only. This comes along with the risk of not meeting the needs of an increasing membership base;
- Proposed to explore the development of a consulting arm to support members through an additional fee structure;
- Clarified that the proposed Secretariat cost is based on the previous quote from Elevate, a consultancy. ADM Capital Foundation stepped in to support HKSSC with the Technical Advisor cost and a part-time Secretariat role, who is to commit full time to support the WOD campaign;
- It would be best to have a full-time Secretariat to fully support the HKSSC and members moving forward;
- A member supported previous suggestions on approaching large institutions for funding, and encouraged other members to explore other sources of funding with an open and creative mind through their connections.

### 14. Next steps

- **[Action]** To issue invoices for HKSSC membership in 2023;
- **[Action]** To circulate important dates for member diary:
  - SRA WG meetings: 8th May 2023 at 3-4pm HKT;
  - O&C WG meetings: 8th May 2023 at 4:30-5:30pm HKT;
  - Sustainable Seafood Symposium: 12-13th June 2023 at 8am-6pm HKT;
  - Second AGM: 27 July 2023.

### 15. News and resources

- Shared a list of useful resources for members, including member support tools training videos, assessment tools and implementation guide in Traditional Chinese, and marketing materials;
- **[Action]** to circulate the [ID Guide to Live Reef Food Fish in Hong Kong's Wet Market](#);
- **[Action]** to share details of a free online webinar about Aquatic Animal Welfare 101 scheduled on 15th March;
- **[Action]** to explore other file sharing platforms such as Box, to align with industry practices in data sensitivity and security.

### Any Other Business

- **[Action]** to update Outreach & Communications WG slide to reflect Wynn Macau & Wynn Palace as a member.
- **[Action]** to remove Indoguna Lordy from Marketplace WG slide, as they are already active on two other WGs.