

Governance procedures within the IUCN SSC African Rhino Specialist Group (AfRSG)

1. Preamble

The African Rhino Specialist Group (AfRSG) is one of more than 140 Specialist Groups (SGs) of IUCN's Species Survival Commission (SSC) and provides a professional network composed of experts who, for the most part, volunteer their time to represent and do work on behalf of the SSC to further rhino conservation in Africa. By virtue of their appointment, AfRSG Members are Members of the SSC and, as such, commit to adhere to the IUCN SSC's vision, mission, structure and policies. As such, the procedures by which decisions, recommendations or positions are taken by the AfRSG remain a critical part of the SSCs general governance framework.

The SSC and its worldwide network is uniquely placed to enable IUCN to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve biodiversity, and to ensure that the use of species is both equitable and sustainable, through the provision of knowledge on biodiversity status and trends, undertaking analyses of threats and facilitating action on the ground.

In general terms, the Chairs of the SSC's SGs provide leadership, guide the activities of their Group and have responsibility for the overall governance, conduct, administration and activities of their Group. As such, SG Chairs play a vital role in achieving a smooth working relationship between IUCN and their SG members. Chairs / Co-Chairs are appointed by and operate under the leadership of the SSC Chair. SG Chairs are normally appointed for a 4-year fixed-term quadrennium, lasting until 90 days after the subsequent IUCN World Conservation Congress. At the discretion of the SSC Chair, their tenure can be for a shorter period of time. There are plans to limit the number of terms any SG Chair can serve to two terms.

2. IUCN Vision and Mission

IUCN's Vision is: A just world that values and conserves nature.

IUCN's Mission is to: Influence, encourage and assist societies to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and ensure any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable.

3. Principles by which the IUCN SSC operates

Every SSC Member is expected to contribute to the Vision and Mission of IUCN and the mandate of the Commission. SSC Membership embodies a relationship of mutual trust and respect within the entire IUCN network, including its Members, Secretariat and other Commissions. As such, each SSC Member will abide by the Commission's Code of Conduct:

https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/content/documents/commissions_code_of_conduct_0.pdf and pledge to achieve the high standards of all IUCN Commissions in the following areas: integrity and professionalism; accountability; ethical leadership; transparency; responsiveness and reliability; mutual respect for colleagues, peers, the IUCN Secretariat and other Commissions; dignity and cultural sensitivity; environmental responsibility and safety; and confidentiality.

4. Species and area of focus of the AfRSG

The AfRSG's focus is the conservation of Africa's black and white rhinos, with priorities determined by needs. Obligations are to the rhinos and rhino-range States – our main clients. The AfRSG's Mission, '**To guide and facilitate the conservation of viable African rhino populations across their natural range**', aptly reflects what it hopes to achieve.

The geographic area of reference is, by its very nature, restricted to Africa, but the Group has links with *ex situ* conservation efforts on behalf of these species (e.g. zoos and Asian rhino-range States).

5. The AfRSG's Vision, Mission and Objectives

Vision: Thriving wild African rhinos valued by people and contributing to their well-being

Mission: The AfRSG guides and facilitates the conservation of viable African rhino populations across their natural range.

Objectives:

1. To establish and enhance healthy and persistent rhino populations through advising and facilitating the efficient protection and dynamic biological management of African rhinos within their natural range
2. To foster multiple values of rhinos for all peoples' well-being through promoting sustainable conservation
3. To facilitate research, collate information and report on the status of African rhinos to the IUCN and other parties
4. To support targeted communication to a wide range of stakeholders
5. To ensure effective leadership through capacity building and mentorship of the next generation of rhino conservationists
6. To promote sustainable finance and good governance for African rhino conservation
7. To manage, monitor, and evaluate the Group via effective, efficient, and transparent governance

6. The AfRSG's Chair's Terms of Reference (ToR)

The Chair of the AfRSG is seen as a key face, eyes and ears of the SSC on matters of rhino conservation in Africa and relies upon the Secretariat and links to IUCN Membership. The ToR are detailed in ANNEX 1 and have been adapted from IUCN documentation:

https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/tor_ssc_sg_tf_sc_chairs_2017-2020_final.pdf

7. Criteria for selecting Members and the proposed structure of the AfRSG

The SSC is encouraging SGs to draw upon more 'local' (i.e. within range States), younger experts, with a comfortable gender balance. In order to deliver the Mission of the AfRSG, and in view of the demands of providing informed and balanced technical advice based upon cutting-edge science and best practice in conserving rhinos that are facing huge pressures from illegal overexploitation, it is proposed that the AfRSG requires Members who are: actively involved in rhino conservation; or have a huge amount of experience and knowledge on the subject that would add value; add or have skills required by the Group; a track record of contributing; and a willingness to continue to contribute.

Hence, it is suggested the AfRSG should consist of (see also Annex 2):

SECRETARIAT:

In a voluntary capacity:

- **Chair** (appointed by the Chair of the SSC)
- **Two Vice-Chairs** (appointed by the Chair of the AfRSG), one each from the eastern and southern African rhino-range States. They are to provide representation of the AfRSG regionally. Consideration would be given to those coming from the regional eastern (EARMG) and southern (RMG) African rhino management groups
- **POSSIBLE: Part-time Treasurer**

In a paid capacity:

- A **Programme Officer** (part-time position) to help with technical and administrative issues associated with the AfRSG, as well as playing a role between the Chair / Secretariat and Members, external communication, financial management
- A **Scientific Officer** (part-time position) who will deliver a specific set of scientific-focused tasks, such as managing the African Rhino Database and coordinating the Red List Authority (RLA)

MEMBERSHIP

Members: These would include:

- Rhino Range State country representatives/coordinators for the current 12 rhino-range States
- Experts: These include rhino managers and required technical experts on a wide range of skills identified in the skills audit and required to deliver effectively and efficiently on the AfRSG's Mission. The Members should ideally be actively involved in rhino conservation, recognised as experts in their own right, and making an impact in their countries and/or respective fields. In addition, it is important that the AfRSG remain open to other skills to help take rhino conservation into the post Covid-19 conservation environment in addition to helping address other emerging issues

All Members should provide input into the triannual general meeting. Every effort would be made to cover the costs of attending the triennial AfRSG meetings.

Observers:

These are people who contribute directly or indirectly to the Mission of the AfRSG and would be allowed to attend and participate in the general triennial meeting but not the formal Members' Meeting. These could include technical experts invited to discuss a specific subject, local observers involved in rhino conservation in the country in which the meeting is being held, and could include supporting NGOs who may be represented by different individuals over time (beyond those individuals who are included in the formal Membership in recognition of their own expertise). This category could be used as a platform for introducing potential new Members to the Group as well as capacitating young, emerging rhino conservationists.

The intention is to maintain a relatively small AfRSG to facilitate the ability to meet approximately every three years.

8. The roles and responsibilities of the AfRSG

The roles and responsibilities of the different positions and groupings in the AfRSG are listed in Annex 2.

9. Procedures for decision making in the AfRSG

Although there is no set framework for the governance of decision making within the Group, the following procedures draw upon the AfRSG's Chair's ToR, the roles and responsibilities of the Group, and are developed with expediency in mind, in order to provide general guidance for decision making. These are open to review pending the evolving structure of the Group, emerging issues and at the discretion of future Chairs.

9.1 Selection of new Members

Based upon an assessment of the skills audit of the AfRSG, the Chair, assisted by the Membership Working Group (WG), would highlight other skills not present or under-represented in the AfRSG. These would be shared with the Membership, which would recommend potential candidates to the Chair, who makes the final decision. If the Chair agrees to a proposed Member, the Chair will approach the person asking if s/he would like to join the AfRSG. Regarding the current 12 rhino-range State representatives, the Chair will approach the national / provincial conservation authorities to identify a suitable representative in middle to

upper management actively involved in rhino conservation¹. On acceptance by the new Member, s/he would be provided with relevant IUCN documents regarding membership, the Code of Conduct, Conflict of Interest Policy and Declaration, and these AfRSG governance procedures.

The decision to retire Members will reside with the Chair. This would apply to inactive Members of the Group (i.e. those not attending the triennial meetings, not participating in other activities such as Working Groups (WGs) or those who are no longer involved in rhino conservation).

9.2 Addressing urgent tasks

In order to address issues requiring immediate responses, or in response to a formal request to the AfRSG to undertake work, the Chair may appoint specific individual(s) or establish a time-bound Task Force (TF) with clear ToR, comprised of a TF chair and TF members based upon the required skill set to undertake the work. The remainder of the AfRSG will be informed of these recommendations, so that Members are able to help the identified individual/s or the TF if they so wish. Outputs, which may not be in the form of reports, from the appointed individual(s) or TF will be shared with the Group for input and comments within a given timeline, with the Chair making the final decision on the output and whether or not to issue it under the AfRSG logo, on the basis of feedback received from the Membership.

9.3 Providing on-going advice to the Chair on specific themes

In order to provide ongoing or longer-term advice on certain issues / themes, the Chair will establish working groups (WGs), each with clear ToR, including the expected activities and outputs. The Chair will nominate members based upon the required skills and identify a convenor. The WG will collectively identify a chair. The Group will be informed of the nominations, opening it to the membership if they so wish to join. Outputs from the WG will be shared with the Group for information and comments.

Thematic WGs currently include: African Rhino Database management WG; Membership WG; Protection, law enforcement, investigations and intelligence WG; Biological management WG; International collaboration and political support WG; Communication and public support WG; Innovative financing WG, Capacity WG and Community involvement WG. These WGs are subject to revision based upon perceived needs of the group e.g. Illegal markets WG.

9.4 Delegation of work within the AfRSG

The AfRSG is a voluntary organisation. The only funded positions would be those of the part-time Scientific Officer (SO) and Programme Officer (PO). The funding of other AfRSG Members to perform requested tasks would be determined based on the work-for-pay policy (still to be developed). However the basic principle would be to offer some compensation (to be determined on a case-by-case basis and dependent upon available resources) to individuals who are required to put considerable time into undertaking a task (i.e. the individual leading a project or task), notably those who are either self-employed or whose time is not covered by their employer.

9.5 Reaching consensus on controversial subjects

Aspects of rhino conservation matters, such as trade or use, have become highly contentious issues leading to considerable debate, division and/or divisiveness within the AfRSG. IUCN SSC and its SGs strive to be providers of objective, evidence-based technical information and advice to IUCN and beyond. As SGs are not charged with formulating policy on behalf of the IUCN or SSC, the Group must avoid making position statements or advocating any specific position. Contentious issues will be discussed in the Group allowing for all opinions to be openly expressed. In trying to come to some form of consensus on such matters, the Chair would make the final recommendation(s) to the SSC and IUCN in line with the IUCN mission, objectives and

¹ Every effort should be made by the Chair to get the right person as many key rhino management decisions depend on government approval. This would also proactively foster diversity and equitable or proportionate representation from rhino-range States and specialists within the Group – a goal of the SSC.

principles. This would include a clear statement of any reservations or dissenting views expressed by individual Members.

9.6 Representation of the AfRSG

As explained in Annex 1, the SSC is represented formally by the Chair. However, to reduce the burden, due consideration will be given to delegating AfRSG representation where possible. No Member can represent the AfRSG, express an opinion or provide confidential information on behalf of the AfRSG at any meeting or forum or claim to be formally representing the AfRSG without the Chair's specific support. The same applies to commissioned or voluntary work carried out in the name of the AfRSG.

Approval to represent the AfRSG at any meeting or forum must be sought in advance. This would entail providing detail on the meeting and what message or information is to be shared or the type of work involved and should be directed via the PO (if in place) or via the Vice Chair(s) (if in place), at least two weeks prior to such a meeting, failing which they should write directly to the Chair.

When no formal delegation has been given, any AfRSG Members should make it clear to those present that they are only expressing their personal views or those of their organisations, and have not been authorised by the Chair to publicly present information or advice on behalf of the AfRSG. No Member may use the AfRSG logo without the Chair's written agreement as per IUCN guidelines.

Dr MH Knight, Chair, AfRSG, December 2020

ANNEX 1. Terms of Reference of the Chair of the AfRSG

The ToR for the AfRSG Chair and SG include:

1.1. Contribution to the SSCs conservation mandate through:

- 1.1.1 Providing technical input to: IUCN and SSCs contribution to international conventions (e.g. CITES); development of species assessments; interventions to urgent conservation issues; development of IUCN policies, guidelines etc; species planning; expert knowledge on species; technical information and support for Red Listing; ensure that the contributions are based upon cutting edge conservation science and best practice.
- 1.1.2 Contributing to achieving the Key Species Results of the Species Strategic Plan, which is updated every quadrennium.
- 1.1.3 Providing the necessary support to Red List assessments through the identification of a Red List Authority (RLA) Coordinator from the Group for appointment by the SSC Chair.

1.2 Specialist Group leadership and functioning through:

1.2.1 Governance

There is no prescribed structure in this regard with the Chair ultimately responsible for the overall governance of the Group. This entails:

- a) Determining the governance structure, policies and decision-making procedures and communicating them to Members.
- b) Establishing clear appointment procedures internally, clarifying roles and responsibilities.
- c) Acting in line with IUCN and Global Species Programme (GSP) / SSC policies and procedures.
- d) Familiarization with formal IUCN and SSC statements and policy documents.
- e) Appointing and removing Group Members.
- f) Managing internal Members' interactions to maintain cohesion, cooperation and effectiveness.
- g) Establishing work plans to guide the Group's activities for the duration of the quadrennium, including work relating to Red Listing, action planning, communication, membership and policy engagement.
- h) Providing GSP staff and the SSC Chair's Office with the names and contact details of all SG Members within the Group within 90 days of reappointment.

1.2.2 Appointment of membership

Chairs are responsible for:

- a) Constituting and maintaining a dynamic, balanced and representative membership.
- b) Making clear the procedure and requirements for anyone wishing to join.
- c) Informing the Network Support Team (Membership) of all Member appointments and details.
- d) Informing Members of their responsibilities to the IUCN SSC.
- e) Contributing expertise to the wider work of the SSC with regard to the use and trade of species.
- f) Considering, as appropriate and feasible, a focal point or working group with expert knowledge in *ex situ* conservation of the species in their remit.

1.2.3 Oversight and coordination

- a) Managing the Group's finances (in conjunction with a host institution or partner).
- b) Managing the Group's communications (both internal and public).
- c) Overseeing the work of SG Members making clear their duties and, if relevant, terms of employment.
- d) For projects undertaken by the SG, ensuring proper and efficient implementation reporting.
- e) Maintaining good working relations with other institutions that offer in-kind assistance.

1.2.4 Conduct of the Group

Chairs should guide their Group through challenging and complex issues, through the provision of sound, scientifically rigorous, and unbiased technical information and arguments, avoiding taking positions or strong advocacy roles. Everything must be done in conformity with IUCN policy. The Chair must ensure

wide consultation and review within Groups where issues are potentially controversial, as well as consultation with GSP staff and the Office of the SSC Chair.

1.2.5 Code of conduct

Members, when engaging in activities carried out on behalf of the SSC (and/or IUCN), are expected to adhere to the basic standard of conduct and behaviour as detailed in the Code of Conduct https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/content/documents/commissions_code_of_conduct_0.pdf. The Code of Conduct applies across all Commissions to explicitly define the professional high standards expected by its Members.

1.2.6 Communication

This is an important function of the SGs. Only the Chair is authorised to speak on behalf of the AfRSG directly and using his/her own signature and the AfRSG letterhead, although the Chair may delegate authority to do so. Furthermore, the Chair is responsible for (unless delegated to a Vice Chair):

- a) Communicating to the SSC Chair on matters of vital and strategic importance to the Group or the species or issues in their remit.
- b) Communicating to and amongst Members through multiple means.
- c) Communicating to the public and the wider SSC.
- d) Communicating with the SSC Chair's Office or relevant GSP staff as appropriate on the needs, development and delivery of organisational partnerships to support the efforts and capacity of their Group.
- e) Communicating with relevant staff at IUCN Headquarters and in Regional and Country Offices, other IUCN Commissions, IUCN Members, IUCN National Committees and SSC Steering Committee as required.
- f) Recognising the AfRSG's affiliation with the SSC and IUCN in its letterheads and signatures, as well as in scientific publications resulting from their work as SSC Members.

1.2.7 Species annual report

The Chair is to submit a condensed report on the AfRSG's activities annually that will be consolidated into a main Species Annual Report providing a complete summary of the work of the SSC Network.

1.2.8 Partnerships

The Chair is responsible for working with stakeholders and partner organisations in a manner they feel best serves the needs of the SSC and the AfRSG. In addition, the Chair is responsible for maintaining positive relationships with partner organisations including communicating clear expectations and deliverables and providing adequate reporting.

1.2.9 Fundraising

The Chair is responsible for working with the Members, GSP staff and the SSC Network Support Team to secure resources needed to support the activities of the Group.

1.2.10 Succession

The Chair should effectively plan for succession and a seamless transition not to impact the working of the Group.

ANNEX 2: The roles and responsibilities of the Vice Chair(s), Programme Officer, Scientific Officer and Members of the AfRSG

Position	Roles and responsibilities
Vice-Chairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represent the AfRSG in the eastern and southern Africa regions • Communicate on behalf of the Chair, in accordance with appropriate delegated authority • Provide advice to the Chair and SO • Represent the Chair (the eastern African Vice-Chair) on the <i>Pachyderm</i> Board in any local face-to-face meetings • Facilitate capacity building of the AfRSG through the identification and cultivation of young rhino conservationists • Engage with local rhino-range State representatives • Facilitate AfRSG activities, projects or assignment in the region • Coordinate, together with the rhino-range State representatives and other rhino conservation managers the collation of rhino population and status information for the two regions • Help coordinate the triennial AfRSG Members' meeting • Help the Chair with raising funds and managing / monitoring the AfRSG's finances
Programme Officer (PO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide administrative support to Chair, Vice-Chairs and Membership • Report to the Chair • Communicate between Chair / Vice-Chairs and members, range State reps • Organize the triennial Members' meeting • Organize other subgroup / WG/ TF meetings (as required) within the SG and set up Zoom calls • Consolidate the donor reports • Consolidate and edit Chair's report to <i>Pachyderm</i> • Manage finances of AfRSG and provision of six-monthly financial reports • Manage Membership database • Manage the annual renewal of Col Declarations and Register of Members' Interests
Scientific Officer (SO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide technical and scientific advice and support on rhino matters to the Chair, Vice-Chairs, AfRSG Members, IUCN and other organisations such as CITES and TRAFFIC • Collate, analyse and manage the rhino population database for the AfRSG • Remain abreast of rhino conservation literature and initiatives • Undertake detailed assessments on rhino conservation issues as instructed by the Chair • Liaise with stakeholders as required by the Chair • Coordinate and/or engage with AfRSG Task Forces and Working Groups as required • Coordinate and/or provide technical inputs to reports: the Chair's <i>Pachyderm</i> report, documents, scientific papers and rhino plans as required • Remain abreast of CITES-related matters / proposals / decisions / resolutions and keep the Chair and Vice Chairs informed and to develop a positive working relationship with the CITES Secretariat and any relevant CITES

	<p>working groups as needed. <i>(NB: this function may be allocated to an appropriately skilled Member)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represent the Chair / Vice-Chairs / AfRSG at rhino conservation meetings, as requested • Develop a positive working relationship with IUCN, in particular the SSC, Global Species Programme and Red Listing Programme and Committee • Act as the Red Listing Authority within the AfRSG <i>(NB: this function may be allocated to an appropriately skilled Member)</i>
Members	<p>Rhino-range State representatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide up-to-date information on national rhino populations’ data and conservation issues • Provide technical advice on rhino conservation issues • Interface with national conservation authorities • Participate in AfRSG and working groups or task forces as requested by the Chair • Attend the triennial AfRSG meetings and participate in the Members’ Meeting <p>Other rhino, technical experts (‘Observers’):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide technical information and advice on rhino conservation issues • Participate in AfRSG activities, projects or assignments at the Chair’s request • Provide rhino population data • Provide up-to-date scientific advice on the conservation of rhinos • Provide information on other conservation and related issues affecting rhino conservation • Attend the triennial AfRSG meetings at the invitation of the Chair
Working Groups (WGs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver to a written ToR with specified activities and output(s) • Provide technical advice and support to the Chair (and Secretariat) on ongoing (longer-term) rhino conservation issues by drawing upon the relevant expertise in the Group
Task Forces (TFs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver to a written ToR with time-bound activities and output(s) • Provide technical advice and support to the Chair (and Secretariat) on short-term urgent rhino conservation issues by drawing upon the relevant expertise in the Group