



# Terms of Reference 2021-2025

IUCN Species Survival Commission  
Specialist Group and Task Force Chairs

*As revised and adopted by the SSC Steering Committee, 4 September 2020*

## Table of contents

1. Relevance of the role for the IUCN SSC
2. Profile description
3. Responsibilities of SSC Chairs
  - 3.1. Contributing to SSC's Conservation Mandate
  - 3.2. Red List assessments
  - 3.3. Technical input
4. Specialist Group and Task Force leadership and functioning
  - 4.1. Governance
  - 4.2. Appointment of membership
  - 4.3. Oversight and coordination
  - 4.4. Conduct of the Group
  - 4.5. Code of Conduct
  - 4.6. Communication
  - 4.7. Species Annual report
  - 4.8. Partnerships
  - 4.9. Fundraising
  - 4.10. Succession

## 1. Relevance of the role for the IUCN SSC

The Specialist Groups (SG) and Task Forces (TF) Chairs have a relevant role and responsibility within the Commission

## 2. Profile description

Specialist Group and Task Force Chairs are appointed by the Commission Chair in consultation with the Steering Committee, and with the Chairs of other IUCN Commissions in consultation with their Steering Committees where such Specialist Groups and Task Forces are cross-Commissional in nature.

Specialist Groups and Task Forces are global networks of volunteer experts organized by taxon group, discipline or geographical region. The primary difference between them is that SG are established for an indefinite time, while TF have time-bound specific objectives. TF may dissolve after achieving their mandate, or evolve into creation of a SG to carry on their work.

The establishment of new SG is frequently preceded by a TF, especially those of a disciplinary nature. SG and TF are embedded in the Species Conservation Cycle, and may include activities in one or more of its five components: Network, Assess, Plan, Act and Communicate.

The Chair will have the opportunity to be reappointed for up to two terms; any additional consecutive term will be possible after an additional consultation process led by the SSC Chair is conducted with group members, before commencing each additional term.

## 3. Responsibilities of SSC Chairs

### 3.1. Contributing to SSC's Conservation Mandate

The [SSC Mandate for 2021-2025](#) was established by the IUCN World Conservation Congress, and is driven by our vision of *A just world that values and conserves nature through positive action to prevent the loss of diversity of life on earth.*

Specialist Group and Task Force Chairs are required to:

- Acquaint themselves with the SSC Mandate and the IUCN Species Strategic Plan Framework (2021–2025), which includes the Key Species Results and their indicators.
- Lead the definition of the quadrennial targets for their group, which will be part of the IUCN Species Strategic Plan 2021-2025.
- Provide annual reports of progress on these targets through SSC Data, contributing particularly to the indicators established on the IUCN Species Strategic Plan Framework (2021-2025).

### 3.2. Red List assessments

For SSC Specialist Groups that act as Red List Authorities for the taxa within their remit, the SG Chair is responsible for recommending a suitable candidate to the Chair of the SSC to act as the Red List Authority (RLA) Coordinator of the Specialist Group. The RLA Coordinator cannot be the same person as the SG Chair (or co-Chair).

Specialist Group Chairs are responsible for:

- Identifying suitable candidates for the proposed RLA Coordinator.
- Ensuring that the RLA Coordinator maintains regular contact with the IUCN Red List Unit,

regarding the status of species assessments consistent with the IUCN Species Strategic Plan (2021–2025) and the IUCN Red List Strategic Plan (2021-2025).

- Provision of information regarding the status of species, in collaboration with the RLA Coordinator, to relevant global and regional biodiversity assessment processes.
- Together with the RLA Coordinator, ensure that species assessment deadlines are planned for and met in a timely manner.

### **3.3. Technical input**

Specialist Groups and Task Forces will be invited to contribute:

- a) Technical information for international conventions, national, regional or global species assessments and indicators, development of IUCN policies, standards and guidelines, position statements, interventions, and occasional papers.
- b) Expert knowledge for species planning, in situ conservation, and sustainable use.
- c) Understanding of emerging conservation issues and opportunities, as well innovative solutions to major challenges.

## **4. Specialist Group and Task Force leadership and functioning**

### **4.1. Governance**

Specialist Group and Task Force Chairs may appoint deputies, vice or regional chairs, assistants, programme officers and any other internal positions to assist them in fulfilling their duties. SSC strongly encourages its leaders to delegate responsibilities among a core group appointed by them, and to build a diverse leadership team that reflects the range countries of the taxa in question, and is equitable in terms of gender, age, expertise and institutional affiliation.

Specifically, they are responsible for:

- a) Establishing internal leadership appointment procedures that clearly define roles and responsibilities (please note that Chair/Co-Chair and RLA Coordinator positions may only be appointed by the SSC Chair).
- b) Acting in line with existing policies and procedures.
- c) Familiarizing themselves with existing policies and position statements, guidelines, standards and other documents.
- d) Appointing and removing group members.
- e) Managing member interactions to maintain cohesion, cooperation and effectiveness.
- f) Establishing work plans to guide their activities for the duration of the quadrennium.

### **4.2. Appointment of membership**

Specialist Group and Task Force Chairs are responsible for:

- a) Constituting and maintaining a dynamic, balanced and diverse membership in terms of expertise, geographic location, gender, age and institutional affiliation.
- b) Making clear the procedure and requirements for anyone not already linked to the existing network and wishing to be considered for membership in the SG/TF, and providing timely feedback to such persons wishing to join
- c) Ensuring new member registration in IUCN's Commission System which forms the official record of SSC membership and is accessible to the IUCN constituency via the Union Portal.
- d) Appoint focal points on sustainable use, conservation planning, *ex situ* conservation and others that could be created in the future.

### 4.3. Oversight and coordination

The implementation of routine functions may be delegated to SG/TF members, although this is ultimately the responsibility of the group's Chair.

Specialist Group and Task Force Chairs are responsible for:

- a) Managing the group's finances (not privately, but ordinarily in conjunction with a host institution or partner), ensuring that funds are raised on behalf of the group, adheres to the [IUCN Commission Financial Rules](#) adopted by Council on 6 June 2017.
- b) Managing the group's communications.
- c) Overseeing the work of group members, ensuring proper and efficient implementation reporting.
- d) Maintaining good working relations with other institutions who offer in-kind assistance, such as hosting the group's secretariat or paid staff, and ensuring that the activities of the group comply with the administrative policies and procedures of the host institution.

### 4.4. Conduct of the Group

Specialist Groups and Task Forces are often called upon to address complex and controversial conservation issues. They carry a powerful role, able to influence the policies of IUCN and others through the provision of sound, evidence-based technical information and arguments.

SSC groups are clearly passionate in their support of the species within their remits, so there is a risk that Chairs could be perceived as biased advocates - their integrity and credibility as technical advisors for the SSC, IUCN and others may become compromised. When speaking in the name of the Specialist Group or Task Force, Chairs need to work in conformity with IUCN policy and should assume responsibility for the overall conduct of their group with respect to such issues.

Specialist Group and Task Force Chairs are therefore in charge of:

- a) Seeking opportunities to provide input to relevant conservation debates and fora.
- b) Making interventions on technical issues in the name of the group, and ensuring adequate consultation within the group prior to making such interventions.
- c) Maintaining standards of conduct that enhance the group's professional profile, standing, contribution and effectiveness.
- d) Recognizing members' contributions.
- e) Where any issues bear on the work of another SSC group, Commission or IUCN regional office, ensuring adequate and proactive consultation and coordination of activities.

### 4.5. Code of Conduct

SSC members pledge to achieve the high standards of IUCN Commissions, as established in the [Code of Conduct of the members of IUCN Commissions](#), adopted by IUCN Council on 17 August 2016. The Chairs of SSC groups are the first level of response to claims of infractions to the Code of Conduct on their groups, following the [Guidance on the Code of Conduct and Practices for its Implementation](#) and should also broadly and regularly promote awareness about the Code of Conduct among members of their groups.

### 4.6. Communication

Communication and networking are crucial roles of SG and TF Chairs. This includes communicating outputs to relevant stakeholders and target audiences, profiling the work of the group, and creating mechanisms for responding to requests for information and expertise. Chairs should consult the SSC Chair before communicating to external audiences on potentially controversial issues.

Specialist Group and Task Force Chairs are thanked for:

- a) Regularly communicating with their members through direct contact, correspondence, IUCN Union Portal, social media, Listserv, or other available media.
- b) Communicating to the public and the wider SSC by establishing a dedicated website or Facebook page, production of a newsletter (electronic or otherwise), and articles or news stories suitable for inclusion on the IUCN website, SSC e-bulletin or proposing species to be profiled on the Amazing Species website.
- c) Communicating with relevant staff at IUCN Headquarters and in Regional and Country Offices, other IUCN Commissions, IUCN Members, IUCN National Committees, SSC Steering Committee Members, SSC Committee Chairs and other SSC leaders as may be relevant.

Specialist Group and Task Force Chairs, as well as the members of their groups, are encouraged to recognise their affiliation with SSC, in their [logos](#) (see Logo Guidelines), letterheads and signatures, as well as in scientific publications resulting from their work as SSC members.

#### **4.7. Species Annual report**

Specialist Groups and Task Forces are required to submit an SSC Data report annually. The reports will be consolidated into a main Species Annual Report which provides a summary of the work of the SSC Network, the SSC Chair's Office and the GSP.

At the start of each year, the Chair or a member of her/his team will request reports to be submitted by a specified deadline. All groups are asked to comply with this request in a timely manner and to ensure that the report sufficiently reflects the scope and diversity of the work carried out in the previous year.

#### **4.8. Partnerships**

Organisational partnerships can help support the group's core administration but can also bolster capacity or provide extra support for groups with Red List assessments, conservation planning and implementing priority actions. Partnering with organisations such as zoos, aquaria, botanic gardens, NGOs, universities or the corporate sector can lead to sustainable, long-term support. This may materialize in the form of in-kind contributions such as: access to facilities, financial hosting, staff support (e.g., Programme Officers or Red List assistance), website hosting, meeting hosting or communication support. These relationships may lead to financial support to deliver on joint objectives.

In return, groups offer many benefits to these organisations, such as provision of up-to-date information, guidance on conservation priorities or approaches, boosted credibility and access to SSC's network of expertise and conservation tools.

#### **4.9. Fundraising**

Specialist Group and Task Force Chairs are responsible for working with their members the SSC Chair's office and GSP staff to secure resources needed to support the activities of their Group, by:

- a) Following [IUCN Commission Financial Rules](#), which require that:
  - For projects over CHF100,000 a hosting agreement is established.
  - For In-kind contributions (such as provision of office services, technical and administrative support) between CHF25,000 and 100,000, a memorandum of understanding with the funding institution or partner is established.
  - Establishment of letter of agreements for those donations over CHF10,000 and up to 100,000.

- All these funding or in-kind contributions must be reported to the Secretariat through the SSC Chairs Office.
- b) Promoting projects and ensuring that funding proposals are widely reviewed by recognized technical experts, SSC Chair's office and GSP staff, as appropriate.
- c) Maintaining good donor relations and fulfilling all technical and financial reporting requirements in a timely and adequate manner.

#### 4.10. Succession

After serving two consecutive terms, the SSC Chair's Office will consult with members of each SSC group before recommending reappointment of a leader. Although there are no term limits, all Chairs are encouraged to develop a succession plan and mentoring future leaders. Special attention should be placed on fostering diversity in terms of geography, gender, age and institutional setting.

This means identifying potential successors and working with them in a direct and intentional fashion, which is particularly important once a Chair has expressed a desire to step down from the role. In this way, SSC will continue to have a healthy flow of new energy, new ideas and new leaders to ensure a positive and proactive future.

The Chairs must familiarize with IUCN Species Strategic Plan and SSC By-laws and other governing documents:

Governance Framework	
1	IUCN Programme 2021-2025
2	IUCN One Programme Charter
3	SSC Mandate
4	SSC By laws
5	Code of Conduct for IUCN Commissions
6	Guidance on the Code of Conduct and Practices for its Implementation
7	IUCN Species Strategic Plan, Species Conservation Cycle
8	Red List Partnership
9	Guidelines for IUCN SSC Leaders
10	Guidelines for SSC Members on Engaging in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)
Terms of Reference	
11	Terms of Reference of the SSC Steering Committee members
12	Terms of Reference IUCN SSC Regional Vice-Chairs
13	Terms of Reference of the IUCN SSC Conservation Committees
14	Terms of Reference of the Chair of the IUCN Red List Committee
15	Terms of Reference of Chairs of Specialist Groups and Task Forces
16	Terms of Reference of the Red List Authority Coordinators
17	Terms of Reference of the IUCN SSC National Species Authority
18	Terms of Reference for SSC Members

Governance Framework	
19	Terms of Reference of Focal Point Ex-situ Conservation
20	Terms of Reference of Focal Point Conservation Planning
21	Terms of Reference of Focal Point Sustainable Use