

# Friends of Soqotra April 2021 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

**Name of Association:** Friends of Soqotra (UK Charity Number 1097546)

**Type of Meeting:** Executive Committee Meeting

**Date and Time of Meeting:** Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> of April 2021, 16:00 – 17:00 UK time (UTC)

**Venue:** Virtually (Zoom)

## 1. Attendees and Apologies

The AGM was opened by the Chair. Attendants included FoS committee members, who joined through the online meeting platform (Zoom).

FoS committee members present included Raquel Vasconcelos (RV), Vladimir Melnik (VM), Kay Van Damme (KVD), Haifaa Abdulhalim (HA), Petr Maděra (PM), Hana Habrová (HH), Martin Rejzek (MR), Eike Neubert (EN), Tullia Riccardi (TR), Miranda Morris (MM), Francesca Pella (FP), Mark Thomlinson (MT), Fabio Attorre (FA), Petr Vahalík (PV). Apologies: Dana Pietsch, Rowan Salim. The agenda is attached as Appendix 1.

The meeting agenda was presented following a PowerPoint presentation where each reported on activities for which they are responsible.

## 2. Executive committee meeting and supporting Miro Presentation

### Communications and Outreach

#### Tayf

HH reports that the Tayf Issue number 17 (2020) was printed in full colour in English and Arabic. The printing costs were covered by Mendel University and Tayf has been distributed in Soqotra. Tayf was also sent through WhatsApp to Socotra Tourism Agencies, and copies were handed directly on the island and the Arabic version was well received. The next Issue, number 18 (2021), has three articles submitted and four articles on preparation and is well on track. The children Section has yet to be defined. A lack of photos was highlighted, this gap could be managed by i) asking the members to send few photos pertinent to the topics of the Issue; ii) Asking the members to send their pictures to create a proper Picture Section on Tayf;

iii) Asking the members and the Socotra inhabitants to share their photos with FoS, which can be used either in a Picture Section or published in Tayf.

Note: KVD suggests, taking into account a suggestion by FoS members, to change “The Soqotra Newsletter” to “The Friends of Soqotra Newsletter”. Sue Christie created an Index of Tayf articles that are going to the FoS website; the users have the opportunity to find publications through keywords.

## **Website**

On the Website, the minutes of the AGM 2020, the new committee, the Tayf 17 and the News were added. The links of PayPal still need to be renewed.

## **Social Media**

KVD reports - FoS uses Facebook, seventeen posts were published since 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020, some of them reached 8K-10K people, of which the majority recorded in Yemen. With these numbers, we can certainly say that the interest in the Charity looks strongly increased. The comments and/or interactions were always positive. VM looked for reactions in other social media, such as Instagram and Twitter and, like in FB, and reports that there were no negative comments in social media about FoS. The proposal of VM, in order to make the page of FB more appealing, is to publish some articles from the archive or from the past issues of “Tayf” magazine. HA suggests attaching some as images.

## **Archive**

MR reported that he is adding the new published scientific papers, in the archive in particular those of 2020-21.

## **Core Functioning**

### **Finances**

The current cash balance is c. £6000 [8350 USD], while in September 2020 was around £5300 [7380 USD]. The expenses remain minimal; accrued, but not yet spent, are the insurance, the website and Mailchimp subscription, overall, the amount is about -£350. MT asked members to contact him (Treasurers.fos@gmail.com) if some have an invoice that needs to be reimbursed. MT reminded that the Charity annual accounts are due and need to be submitted around September (2021). About the updates, the Treasurer (MT) remarked that: i) The PayPal transfer option for donation and subscription are updated and now functioning, included the links in the FoS website (donations are possible in USD only); ii) The RBS transfer

is still progressing, not finished yet; iii) All paperwork sent by the former treasurers has been received by MT. The document archive is updated.

MT recommends reviewing the management of the current management expenses, in order to explore some way to save money. If FoS registers as a charity on PayPal, it can save c. £60 [84USD] per year on PayPal; and c. £50-100 [70-140 USD] per year exploring the similar option given by Gift Aid. FoS should explore the option “Facebook Giving” as well.

## **Governance**

The Work focussed on drafting a Privacy Policy template, made together with solicitors, that gives the member an overview about the management of personal data inside the Charity. This draft is checked by lawyers, who worked on a volunteering basis on it. This document should be finalised and updated within the Governance Subcommittee.

## **Membership**

### *Update*

The current number of active FoS members is 33, and ten were registered since 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020. In general, FoS is raising interest, and it is recording a wish from the members to be more involved and engaged. The recipient of MailChimp collates the current and the ex-members, reaching the total of 107 recipients.

## **Projects & Science**

### **Mangroves**

The Mangrove Project is carried out with EPA/ARC-WH and implemented by Al Tamek Association.

83 trees are alive and growing since 2018, and new trees were recently planted. All the work is performed on a voluntary basis, with the constant engagement by local communities, in the vision of “Good Practice Example in Nature-Based Solutions” (HA).

The local Association wishes to carry out more awareness activities with local Schools and other realities, to inspire Others (through Publications Where FoS is Mentioned).

The Mangrove Project inspired several publications on this since 1 Oct 2020 (HA) which were shared with the committee and via the website of FoS.

### **Culture**

MM read a document reporting Culture and Language projects and/or activities outside of FoS.

### **Other Grants**

The “Al Khair Project” was granted 500 USD (the small FoS grant) at the AGM in Brno in 2020 as a collaboration of FoS/EPA/Al Khair (local NGO). The project was able to involve sixty families in homegarden support. Moreover, awareness workshops were carried out. The local responsible sent the final report of the performed activities (in Arabic – HA will provide a brief translation for our records). Another campaign was a beach cleaning activity, in Erher locality, done by volunteers.

## **AGM Sept 2021**

The next AGM will be organised at Ghent University, 25-27 September 2021. It will be combined with the second DRAGON TREE Consortium Meeting. The meeting will be mainly virtual, taking into account Covid restrictions.

### **Education**

Mangrove Awareness (see above under Mangroves – education activities were suggested to be important, and support was requested by local communities)

### **Any Other Business**

(FA) presented an ongoing project, managed with colleagues Vito Emanuele Cambria and Stefano Martellos, called the “Information System on the Flora of Socotra”. The aim of the project is the creation of an application (App) that allows to identify plants on Socotra Island. The project, carried out without its own funds, is now reaching the stage where the contribution and help from other volunteers can speed up the finalisation of the App. (FA) pointed out that several photos of the plant species are still missing, together with descriptions of some species. So, he asked FoS to help the project to collate photo of the Socotra flora, and he called on other experts to write short descriptions of the species. The new outcomes and contributions will be uploaded in the project website. At that point, (FA) is confident that there will be the possibility to apply for a grant that ultimately will help the project in developing an offline App. Once the App will be available, either it could be accessible for free or it could cost a reasonable amount of money, amount that would be divided in two parts: half for App maintenance and the other half in supporting conservation projects and initiatives of FoS. Answering the request of FA to continue to work on this project under the umbrella of FoS, 12 on 13 people confirmed the interest with a positive vote, therefore FoS will support this initiative. The logo of FoS will be shared on the project website. A Communication Meeting was proposed, the majority of the participants voted to organise and attend it.

### **Any Other Points**

The treasurer drafted a series of commonly asked questions by members (FAQ), with their potential answers on the website and/or for the committee. To stress the neutrality of the FoS and to have prompt, consistent and shared opinions. The treasurer is asking if all the members of the committee agree with this kind of policy and is inviting them to add comments on the draft provided.

The chair (KVD) read the mission of the Constitution and the objectives of the Charity.

Appendix 1:

**Friends of Soqotra**  
**Online Committee Meeting**

**23<sup>rd</sup> April 2021**

**16:00 – 17:00 UK time (BST0°)**

**17:00-18:00 Europe (Italy and Czech Republic) time (GMT+1)**

**18:00-19:00 Yemen time (GMT+3, without Summer Time)**

**Agenda**

**1 - Objectives**

The subcommittees are sharing the information about news and activities that they are carrying out since the last AGM (September 2020), highlighting the development of the planned engagements for this year, such as the Friends of Soqotra (FoS) Conference.

**2 – Timetable**

<b>Type of session</b>	Plenary, online
<b>Session focus</b>	Meeting of the FoS Committee Members & Summary of the activities of the Charity FoS
<b>Duration</b>	One Hour

<b>Meeting Chair</b>	The meeting is chaired by the Chairperson, minutes/notes by Secretary
<b>Online meeting link</b>	The zoom link will be sent by email to registered attendees; the meeting may be recorded
<b>Time (BST)</b>	<b>Subject</b>
16:00-16:05	<b>Welcome Remarks.</b>
16:05-16:15	<p><b><i>Communication and Outreach</i></b></p> <p><b>Tayf</b> (FoS Newsletter). Lead: Hana Habrová. Other: Haifaa Abdulhalim, Kay Van Damme</p> <p><b>Website.</b> Lead: (Dana Pietsch). Other: Luca Malatesta, Tullia Riccardi, Kay Van Damme</p> <p><b>Media &amp; Social Media.</b> Lead: Kay Van Damme. Other: Tullia Riccardi</p> <p><b>Archive (Photo/Bibliography).</b> Lead: Martin Rezejek. Other: Petr Madera, Vladimir Melnik, Dirk van Dorpe</p>
16:15-16:30	<p><b><i>Finances, Budgeting and Fundraising/Donations</i></b></p> <p><b>General Finance.</b> Lead: Mark Thomlinson. Other: Francesca Pella, Haifaa Abdulhalim</p> <p><b><i>Governance/Policies (incl. Privacy) and Regulations/Ethics</i></b></p> <p><b>General Governance.</b> Lead: Kay Van Damme. Other: Francesca Pella, Mark Stanley Price, Fabio Attorre, Raquel Vasconcelos</p> <p><b><i>Membership (Engagement, Updates, Membership Admin)</i></b></p> <p><b>Membership.</b> Lead: Francesca Pella. Other: Haifaa Abdulhalim, Mark Thomlinson, Kay Van Damme</p>

<p><b>16:30-16:40</b></p>	<p><b><i>Projects, Grants and Scientific Research</i></b></p> <p><b>Mangrove Project.</b> Lead: Haifaa Abdulhalim. Other: Samuel Lvoncik, Fabio Attorre, Petr Madera, Kay Van Damme, Martin Rezbek.</p> <p><b>Indigenous Culture &amp; Language.</b> Lead: Miranda Morris. Other: Haifaa Abdulhalim</p> <p><b>Grants.</b> Lead: Francesca Pella. Other: Eike Neubert, Kay Van Damme, Haifaa Abdulhalim</p> <p><b>Other Projects &amp; Links (nature).</b> Lead: Kay Van Damme. Other: Francesca Pella, Haifaa Abdulhalim, Eike Neubert.</p>
<p><b>16:40-16:45</b></p>	<p><b><i>Conferences/Meetings/AGM</i></b></p> <p><b>Meetings and Events.</b> Lead: Kay Van Damme. Other: Francesca Pella, Fabio Attorre, Petr Madera, Tullia Riccardi, Luca Malatesta.</p>
<p><b>16:45-16:50</b></p>	<p><b>Education/Awareness materials.</b> Lead: <i>(to be decided)</i>. Other: Samuel Lvoncik, Kay Van Damme, Haifaa Abdulhalim</p>
<p><b>16:50-16:55</b></p>	<p><b>Any other business</b></p>
<p><b>16:55-17:00</b></p>	<p><b>Closure of meeting</b></p>