

# Minutes of the 14th Annual General Meeting of *Friends of Soqotra* 2015 in Porto, Portugal.

## Present

Kay Van Damme, Dana Pietsch, Hugh Morris, Miranda Morris, Sabina Knees, Katja Setzkorn, Alan Forrest, Dirk van Dorpe, Vladimir Melnik, Abdul Rahman Al-Eryani, Raquel Vasconcelos, Felicity Anderson, Marine Pouget, Carl Phillips, Dominique de Moulins, Mauro Fasola, Salvador Carranza

## Apologies

Julian Jansen van Rensburg, Fabio Attorre, Lisa Banfield, Eike Neubert, Fareed Krupp, Peter De Geest, Sue Christie, Issam Eldin Mohamed Ali, Wolfgang Schneider, Uwe Zajonz, Fouad Naseeb Saeed, Malek A. Abdulaziz, Ahmed Saeed Suleiman, Petr Madera, Petr Nemeč, Hana Habrová

## Contents

1. 2014 Minutes (AGM)
2. Chairman's Annual Report
3. *Friends of Soqotra* Accounts and Treasurer's Financial Report and Membership
4. The Election of *Friends of Soqotra* Executive Committee (2015 – 2016)
5. The Office Bearers of the new Executive Committee and Trustees
6. Membership Fees
7. The Virtual Committee Meeting
8. Website
9. *Friends of Soqotra* Facebook page
10. Ongoing and Potential Future Projects
11. *Tayf* Production and Editing
12. Venue for 2016
13. Any Other Business

## 1. Matters arising from the 2014 minutes

The 2014 minutes were approved and there were no matters arising that were not otherwise in the agenda – note by Miranda Morris on moving the Election of the Executive Committee and Office Bearers to higher up in the Agenda, as agreed on in 2014.

## 2. Chairman's Annual Report

See activities under Accounts and Projects

## 3. Friends of Soqotra Accounts and Treasurer's Financial Report and Membership

Hugh Morris submitted Accounts for 2014 – see also **Appendix 1**

### **FINANCIAL REPORT to accompany the Accounts 01/01/14 - 31/12/14**

The accompanying accounts relate to the full calendar year of 2014, which is the same period as that for our returns to the UK Charity Commission. The left hand column provides the figures for 2013 for comparison (as do the figures in brackets below).

**Income:** - Despite a £300 increase in subscriptions, the overall income in 2014 was down by £100 – this was because *FoS* received no large donation in 2014. There are currently 67 fully paid-up members (62) and a further 35 (42) in arrears with their subs, giving *FoS* a total of 102 (104) active members.

#### **Expenditure:** -

**Tayf 11:** 500 copies of the Arabic version of *Tayf* were again delivered to Soqotra; 60 (74) English paper copies were sent out and 94 (72) electronic versions. Once again our thanks are due to Sue Christie, for performing the role of Editor and for printing the English hard copies (in Northern Ireland) and to Omar Hamdoon for printing the Arabic hard copies (in Makalla); because of this, and because of the increasing numbers of e-Tayfs, our costs remain low for the principal funded activity of *FoS*.

**Projects:** - Towards the end of 2014 US\$ 450 was sent to Soqotra to help fund the Project for Disabled Children – but the cost (£312.41) was not reimbursed in 2014, (A), and does not feature in the 2014 accounts.

**Insurance:** - the annual premium was £232.30 (£217.30) but it, too, was not reimbursed in 2014, (B). Largely because of the two above outstanding payments, *Friends of Soqotra* ended 2014 with an increase in our reserves to £6492.69.

At the present time, *FoS* is **£6940 (£5606)** in credit – but this is before most of the expenses for Tayf 12 have been paid. It is important to note, also, that we have not so far funded other projects this year.

Following the presentation of the Treasurer's Report a discussion took place as a result of which the following proposal was passed unanimously:

**That in the present and future years FoS should be able, when finances allowed, to make a contribution of up to £300 to the organisers of the Annual Conference/AGM towards those costs which resulted from bringing participant(s) from Soqotra to the Conference/AGM.** In doing so it was recognised that FoS would be acting in accordance with the Objectives of the Organisation as stated in the Constitution of FoS (available on the website: <http://www.friendsofsoqotra.org/> About FoS/ FoS Mission/ FoS Constitution/ Section 2)

#### **4. The Election of *Friends of Soqotra* Executive Committee (2015 – 2016).**

*The following were elected to the Executive Committee for 2015 - 2016:*

Fabio Attore, Lisa Banfield, Salwa Barkwan, Sue Christie, Peter De Geest, Hana Habrova, Mohamed-Ali Isam-Eldin, Dirk Van Dorpe, Julian Jansen Van Rensburg, Sabina Knees, Vladimir Melnik, Hugh Morris, Miranda Morris, Dana Pietsch, Kay Van Damme and Raquel Vasconcelos

The Committee thanked Bohdana Rambuskova for her previous contribution to the committee and wished her well in the future and welcomes Dirk Van Dorpe (Belgium) as a new committee member.

#### **5. The Office Bearers for 2015 – 2016**

*Remain as follows:*

Chairperson Kay Van Damme, Vice-Chairperson Dana Pietsch, Secretary Julian Jansen Van Rensburg and Treasurer Hugh Morris

Hugh Morris indicated that he would welcome being relieved of his post of Treasurer – if there were any other member of the Committee willing to take this on.

*The Trustees of Friends of Soqotra remain the following:*

Diccon Alexander, Lisa Banfield, Sue Christie, Martin Coree, John Dickson, Roderic Dutton, Julian Jansen Van Rensburg, Nick Jeffries, Sabina Knees, Tony Miller, Hugh Morris, Miranda Morris, Dana Pietsch, Rowan Salim and Kay Van Damme

## **6. Membership Fees**

The membership fees were decided on to remain as present, even though we are aware of the difference between sums due to conversion (£20/Euros 30/US dollars 30). The ways of payments remain either by cash or by PayPal (available on the website) or by bank transfer (details available from the treasurer) or by cheque. Cash and bank transfer are the least costly to FoS, PayPal's costs are modest but the charges on processing a cheque are large.

## **7. Virtual Committee Meeting**

Julian Jansen van Rensburg organized the Virtual Meeting in April, which was successful. The minutes of the meeting were agreed on, and it was generally agreed that this is necessary, especially in organizing the AGM and for mid-term evaluation of projects. Such a meeting is also required by our constitution. The next Virtual Meeting is set as in 2015, in April. In contrast to the AGM minutes, the minutes of the virtual meeting will not appear on the website, it is only for the committee members. Will be available at the following AGM for members if they wish to consult the minutes.

## **8. Website**

Website technical issues (website was down for a month) have been solved. Dana Pietsch requested for more input on the bibliography, and to replace images and slidehows (Vladimir offered new images), as well as updating current and future projects and research listed on the website. There is also a need for updated news and someone to help streamline this information to Dana. Photographs can be added before Xmas. Dana thanks Richard Porter, Miranda Morris, Raquel Vasconcelos, and others that have contributed to the website. A question was raised if there is a place on the website for questions, and it is agreed to not put a forum (as before until 2011) yet to send requests to the general FoS email. Leaflets for tourists as far as they are ready should be added to the website too.

## **9. Friends of Soqotra Facebook Page**

No updates– the facebook page is being kept and updated by Lisa Banfield, and photos of the AGM will be posted. Good to keep track of updates and interest through the fb page, important to keep the fb page alive and fresh, with regular updates and news + links to the website.

## **10. Ongoing and Potential projects**

### **10.1 Leaflets**

Intro: Miranda Morris reports on the status of the leaflets with Dana Pietsch. The leaflets have been finalized, translation is incomplete, some languages done others not. Dana Pietsch to coordinate with Julian Jansen van Rensburg to complete the leaflet project. Julian brought some copies to the island. See also short report on the leaflets in Virtual Meeting minutes.

With funds from FoS, Julian had all the leaflets (Birds; Reptiles; The Traditional Soqotri Way of Life; The Soqotri Language; Soqotra: General Information and Advice for Visitors and Tourists printed and laminated, and took copies to show to the Soqotri Tourist Guides who had been the first ones to request such information leaflets. The two plant leaflets (on Trees, and Shrubs and other plants of interest (Lisa) were not ready. The Di-Hamri leaflet was likewise not ready / printed out and laminated.

Julian had little time in Hadiboh, but reported that he had gone to the school and shown the leaflets to Matthew of the English School and various tourist guides and others who were present and asked for feedback (together with the Tourist Guides). They were enthusiastic, and this should project should be followed up.

The plant leaflets are yet to be written (in English ) and various of the others are yet to be translated into the languages requested by the Soqotri tourist guides (Arabic, French, Italian, German and Russian)

Status of Leaflets (in English):

- Reptiles (Raquel Vasconcelos) - FINISHED
- Soqotra general information and advice for visitors (Miranda Morris) – TEKST FINISHED, PHOTOS NEEDED
- The Soqotri Language (Miranda Morris) – TEKST FINISHED, PHOTOS NEEDED
- Birds 1&2 (Richard Porter and Ahmed Saeed Suleiman) – FINISHED
- Plants & Trees (Lisa Banfield & Sabina Knees) – INCOMPLETE (FOLLOW UP)
- DiHamri Leaflet – USE?

Next steps are

1. Completion of leaflet templates as set out in 2014 (eg., photos, completion of plants),
2. Translation of leaflets into other languages (Arabic, Russian, Italian, German, etc.),
3. Distribution/promotion of leaflets to Tourist Guides/Tourists,
4. Identification of remaining leaflets (eg., invertebrates, archaeology, geology, other protected areas?)

Since this is the only larger project we have at the moment, and since Julian (who was originally organising it) has currently limited time, we highly appreciate the kind offer of Dana to act as central organiser of translations etc.

Katja Setzkorn proposed that several things could be printed and laminated from their Socotra office if needed.

## **10.2 Children with special needs**

The donation was made and the activity will be reported in the next Tayf. The project was successful and FoS was glad to have been able to help support it; however it has unfortunately had to be discontinued due to the present circumstances.

From Judith: *“Thank you Friends of Socotra! Thank you for the money you sent which has bought various puzzles (Arabic alphabet and numbers) plus another simple puzzle, early children’s story books, activity books for learning to write and read, as well as some simple matching nesting blocks. Each of the three families who I’ve been working with have each received a set of all these items and are enjoying being able to use them at home, instead of waiting for me to visit them”*



## **10.3 AGM**

The question whether we should ask for further donations/attract funds to finance the AGMs (travel of Soqotris and Yemenis) was discussed, but not answered finally, and should be further discussed (at the virtual meeting).

## **11. Tayf Production and Editing**

Sue Christie - Request for more articles, but in general also longer articles for Tayf. Problem with distribution could be solved by printing directly IN Socotra (sending per pdf and printing there), proposed by Katja Setzkorn. Suggestions for articles for next Tayf on the “wild goats”, or on the finger millet project by GIZ, etc. Sue to continue as Tayf Editor.

For next AGM, a few extra Tayfs should be printed and brought to the meeting for distribution among non-members and visitors.

## 12. Venue for 2016

Dana Pietsch offers to have the next meeting in Tuebingen, Germany, 2<sup>nd</sup>- 4<sup>th</sup> of September, 2015. Alan Forest as RBGE and CMEP, proposes to co-host the meeting and help organise the schedule for 2016, all agreed.

## 13. Any Other Business

- Definition of roles of committee members and office bearers could be formalized (DP)
- Vladimir suggests a small project on the use of local plants (aloe) for wound dressing on Socotra, as he witnessed unhygienic treatment of wounds during his last visit. Vladimir, Hugh and Miranda to look into this and check feasibility before next Virtual Meeting and the idea of first aid information + training
- Other suggestions include leaflets and educational materials for schools (eg, Darwin material?), more diversity in the leaflets
- Suggestion of school twinning rejected – perhaps not feasible at this point in time
- As an output of the Workshop in the AGM, Kay Van Damme and Raquel Vasconcelos will coordinate a press release immediately following the meeting, to bring the problem of wood consumption/gas shortage on the island as a result of the political situation, to the attention of the media.
- **Small Island Development States and Regional Networks in the Western Indian Ocean.** Check with Fabio Attorre for updates
- The large UN/GEF project (cf. report previous AGM by Uwe Zajonz, Kay Van Damme, Eduardo Zandri) is to start end 2015 (mention for Tayf?)