

**Minutes of the Friends of Socotra Annual General Meeting held at Tübingen, Germany  
on 22 September 2016**

**Present:** Kay Van Damme, Dana Pietsch, Miranda Morris, Sabina Knees, Alan Forrest, Dirk van Dorpe, Abdul Rahman Al-Eryani, Raquel Vasconcelos, Sultana al-Qu'aiti, Lenka Ehrenbergerova, Julian Jansen van Rensburg, Fabio Attorre, Lisa Banfield, Eike Neubert, Uwe Zajonz, Petr Madera, Tony Miller, Peter de Geest, Samuel Cvoniok, Francine Stone, Lukaš Karas

**Apologies:** Hugh Morris, Katja Setzkorn, Vladimir Melnik, Nathalie Peutz, Carl Philips, Dominic de Moulins, Sue Christie, Robert and Ron Felix, Vladimir Hula, Fared Krupp, Fouad Naseeb Saeed, Malek A. Abdulaziz, Ahmed Saeed Suleiman, Hana Habrová, Salvador Carranza, Isam-Eldin Mohamed Ali

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## **1. The minutes of the AGM 2015**

The 2015 minutes were approved and there were no matters arising.

## **2. The Election of FoS Executive Committee (2016 – 2017)**

After many years as the FoS treasurer Hugh Morris has decided to stand down. The committee all expressed their sincere thanks for all the hard work that he has done over the years, especially his recent work in helping arrange monies for the Cyclone relief fund. Miranda Morris proposed Sabina Knees for the position of treasurer, this was seconded by Julian Jansen van Rensburg. The committee all congratulated Sabina on her new appointment. Sabina will be shadowing Hugh during the first half of this financial year before taking on the role full time. The rest of the committee were all voted back into their positions.

*The Executive Committee for 2016 - 2017:*

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

## **3. The Election of Office Bearers of the new Executive Committee**

Miranda Morris stated that FoS representative on Socotri Mohammed Amir Ahmad is no longer able to represent FoS on Socotra as he is no longer on the island. It was therefore decided that a new representative be sought, one that could also speak English as it may not be possible for an Arabic speaker to always be available. Kay Van Damme agreed to speak to Ismael Mohamed to see if he would be able to find someone, or would take on the role himself. Petr Madera proposed Mohamed Salem Hamdeei, for the position. The remaining office bearers were all re-elected.

## **4. The Election of Trustees of Friends of Socotra**

Lisa Banfield, Sue Christie, Julian Jansen van Rensburg, Sabina Knees, Hugh Morris, Miranda Morris, Dana Pietsch, Kay Van Damme and Tony Miller have been re-elected as trustees. Julian Jansen Van Rensburg proposed Alan Forrest as a trustee. This was seconded by Miranda Morris. As Julian is currently in Berlin it is difficult for him to be one of the signatories. Alan Forrest agreed to become a signatory in the place of Julian.

Diccon Alexander, Martin Coree, John Dickson, Roderic Dutton, Nick Jeffries and Rowan Salim are to be removed from the list of trustees.

## **5. Chairperson's Annual Report**

Kay reported on the success of the Cyclone relief fund. He also mentioned that it may be of interest for FoS to be part of the Society for Island biology, while Fabio Attore said that the Global Island Partnership were interested in knowing about FoS. Abdul Rahman Al-Eryani

also mentioned that it would be useful if FoS were able to increase its expertise in the field of socio-economics, which was agreed by Kay.

## **6. FoS Accounts and Treasurer's Financial Report and Membership**

Sabina Knees, read out the financial report that had been drawn up by Hugh Morris. See appendix 1 and appendix 2 for the financial accounts. A report concerning the Cyclone relief fund money was also given to all present, see appendix 3. Additional money is available in the relief fund, and we are waiting for the next round of projects as proposed by Ismael Mohamed. The committee thanked all those involved and all the hard work they had put in.

## **7. The Virtual Committee Meeting**

The virtual committee meeting for 2016 formed part of the Cyclone relief fund, which was a huge success. Julian Jansen van Rensburg proposed a set date for the Virtual Committee meeting. It was agreed to hold this on the **1 March** each year.

## **8. 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.

## **9. Ongoing and Potential Future Projects**

### **a. Leaflets**

Julian reported that the leaflets he managed to take out to the island were well received, although it was still necessary for further leaflets to be done. Julian to check which are still required and to send these out to people to get this process underway. Julian and Kay to ask Katja Setzkorn whether GIZ would still agree to the printing and laminating of these leaflets. Julian mention a new series of leaflet designs that were done by Kate Brenner. The format and design were criticised by Raquel for being too unscientific. It was decided to ensure that content of the leaflets were to be pursued before any action was taken on a new design. Main points raised, were to ensure the current leaflets were all translated and that there be leaflets with images for fauna and flora, and information leaflets for visitors to the island.

### **b. Website**

Everyone thanked Dana for all the hard work she has put into the website. Dana to put a link on the website to the Friends of the Hadhramaut site, which would be reciprocating this.

**c. Friends of the Hadhramaut (FoH)**

The FoH invited a member from FoS to their meeting in Paris on 13 May 2017. Kay and Julian to possibly attend.

**d. Cyclone relief fund**

Kay mentioned that, while the cyclone relief fund had gone well, it may be necessary that should this need to happen in the future the mobilisation of people would need to be worked out, as a few people had very difficult roles in getting this effort working. Uwe Zajonz said that Skype meetings may be helpful for faster communication. Miranda mentioned that this was a very intensive process and required the treasurer, Hugh, to devote a large amount of his time to facilitate this. It was decided that this type of relief effort was difficult for FoS to deal with and in future it may not be possible, however, it was agreed that this would be looked at on a case by case basis. Lisa Banfield was asked to write a one page document on how difficult this was to setup and how we did it.

**e. Funding**

Lisa mentioned that the funding scheme that was set up for the cyclone relief could also be set up to raise funds for other specific projects on Socotra, which could be highlighted on the website. Lisa and Kay to also look at the projects that were proposed by Ismael during this period and see if it would be possible for this to be taken further.

**f. Citizen archaeology project**

Julian proposed a recording system that could be used by the Socotri to record their heritage using a phone and an app. Julian to speak to Abdul Rahman Al-Eryani about instigating this and others about how to use the phone and app combination.

**g. GIZ project**

Julian and Miranda suggested that it would be useful to pay for Fouad Naseeb Saeed to look into the needs of the fishermen along the south and west coast, who have not been included in many of the relief efforts.

## **10. Tayf Production and Editing**

Miranda said that Isam-Eldin Mohamed Ali had been ill and it was not possible for him to translate Tayf into Arabic. Miranda also reported that Sue Christie has struggled to obtain enough articles. Uwe suggested that by getting a citable, doi number and a ISBN for Tayf

would encourage people. Raquel, Sabina and Julian to look into this Abstracts to be sent before the 15 February. Julian to chase the speakers. Miranda has reported that Isam is better and in Sudan, although he is having an issue with his email which needs to be resolved before he is able to do the translation.

### **11. Venue for 2017**

Three proposals were made: Eike, Bern, Switzerland; Julian, Berlin, Germany and Abu Dhabi. The majority of votes were for Bern, Switzerland. Eike to contact the committee about further details.

Salalah, Oman was proposed for 2018, which was provisionally agreed upon.

No other business, the AGM was brought to a close.

### **Action points**

**Miranda and Julian** to work on leaflets.

**Julian and Kay** to ask Katja Setzkorn whether GIZ would still agree to the printing and laminating of these leaflets.

**Dana** to put a link on the website to the Friends of the Hadhramaut site.

**Lisa Banfield** to set up a document on the Cyclone Relief Fund process.

**Lisa and Kay** to also look at the projects that were proposed by Ismael during this period and see if it would be possible for any of these to be taken further.

**Julian** to speak to Abdul Rahman Al-Eryani about citizen archaeology.

**Uwe** to look at possibility of getting Fouad Naseeb Saeed to check if fishermen on the western and southern coast may need assistance.

**Raquel, Sabina and Kay** to look into requirements for DOI and ISBN for Tayf.

**Julian** to chase speakers for articles for Tayf before the 15 February.

## Appendix 1

*Friends of Soqotra*

*UK Charity Number 1097546*

### **AGM, Tübingen, FINANCIAL REPORT, September 2016**

#### **Accompanying the Accounts for 01/01/15 - 31/12/15**

The accounts for 2015 are in the same form as in previous years (with notes relating to individual items). Figures, below, in [ ] are those for 2014.

**Income:** - In 2015 **subscriptions** dropped by £500 (c.f. last year's increase of £300); this fluctuation is not new. There are currently 52 [67] fully paid-up members and a further 59 [35] in arrears with their subs; giving *FoS* a total of 111 [102] 'active' members. The **donations** came from (and are for) the Cyclone Appeal and 'distort' the overall income as a result. Although a similar sum to that raised was sent to the island in 2015 (by HCTM), this was not reimbursed by *FoS* in 2015 and will feature in the 2016 accounts.

#### **Expenditure:** -

**Tayf costs:** it remains difficult to make comparisons of *Tayf* costs in the annual accounts because expenses cover two years. However: *Tayf 10* cost £917.88 (years 13/14); *Tayf 11* £1041.67 (14/15); and *Tayf 12* £876.96 (15/16). In 2015, 42 [60] hard copies (English) were distributed and 100 [94] electronic copies. As previously, 500 Arabic copies were sent to Soqotra for distribution (with particular thanks to Abdul-Rahman al-Eryani for his help with this).

**Projects:** - The Disabled Children's Project was funded in 2014, but was not reimbursed until 2015. In 2015 *FoS* also funded a project to print, laminate and distribute leaflets on Soqotra.

**Insurance:** - the annual premium continues to be paid in November, for one year in advance, but to be reimbursed in arrears.

The present state (i.e. at the time of the AGM 2016) of the *FoS* accounts is a credit of £8134.91 – but, as is explained elsewhere, this includes a residual sum raised (or pledged by *FoS*) for the Cyclone Appeal of £1918.03, which is still to be disbursed. This leaves £6216.88 'for' *FoS*. I would also draw attention to the fact that *FoS* has not, as yet, sponsored other projects in 2016.

Hugh Morris  
Treasurer, *Friends of Soqotra*

27/08/2016

## Appendix 2

### FRIENDS OF SOQOTRA (UK Charity Number 1097546)

Accounts for **01/01/2015 to 31/12/2015**

**BALANCE IN THE ACCOUNTS ON 01/01/15** **£6492.69**

<b>INCOME</b>	[01/01/14 to 31/12/14]	01/01/2015 to 31/12/2015
Membership subscription	[£1909.20]	£1420.29
Donations	[£51.55]	£2285.91 (A)
Interest	[£2.35]	£2.37
<b>Totals</b>	<b>[£1963.10]</b>	<b>£3708.57</b>

#### **EXPENDITURE**

Projects in 2014/2015	[£312.41] (B <sup>1</sup> )	£443.41 (B <sup>2</sup> )
Website Domain	[£43.16]	£313.59 (C)
Tayf costs	[£1093.53] (Tayfs 10/11)	£146.88 (Tayfs 11/12)
Insurance Premium	[£232.30] (D)	£232.30 (D)
Auditor's fees (2013 & 2014)	[£50.00]	£0.00 (E)
Admin. Costs	[£16.69]	£4.80
<b>Totals</b>	<b>[£1203.38] – less (B<sup>1</sup>)&amp;(D)</b>	<b>£1140.98</b>

**BALANCE IN THE ACCOUNT ON 31/12/15** **£9060.28**

Accounts audited and original signed by Jackie Barclay

Notes accompanying the accounts for the year 2015:

As in previous years, these accounts relate to actual expenditure and receipts within the year. The figure at the top, showing the total assets of FoS at the start of the year (£6492.69), is the same figure as that which concluded last year's accounts.

(A) This figure, £2285.91, is entirely made up of donations to the Cyclone Appeal. Towards the end of 2015: £813.44 was paid into the *FoS PayPal account* and £1472.47 was paid directly into the *FoS RBS bank account*.

The figure (A) does **not** include the payments that were made in 2015 through *Gogetfunding* (as organised by Lisa Banfield). This is because these funds were not received by *FoS* during 2015. I am providing a separate statement regarding this Appeal. However, for the purpose of the *FoS* accounts, these *Gogetfunding* donations will feature in the accounts for the year 2016.

(B<sup>1</sup>) The figure £312.41 relates to the Disabled Children's Project which was sponsored in 2014 but reimbursed in 2015; the second project was for the printing of the leaflets (organised by Julian JvR in March 2015), costing £131; together these give the figure (B<sup>2</sup>) of £443.41.

(C) This represents four years of hosting of the Website Domain (organised by Dana P and reimbursed in August 2015).

(D) This was the figure for the *FoS* insurance for one year from 5<sup>th</sup> November 2014 – the premium was actually paid in 2014 (by HCTM) but wasn't reimbursed by *FoS* until 2015 (the same thing happened with the insurance premium for 2015; i.e. it, too, does not feature in these accounts).

(E) The Auditor's fees in 2015 (for auditing the year 2014) were paid in 2016 - as were the fees for auditing the year 2015. There will, therefore, be two payments of £25 for this in next year's accounts – incidentally, the Auditor has always returned her fees, as a donation, to *FoS*.

HCTM, August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2016

### Appendix 3

*Friends of Soqotra*

*UK Charity Number 1097546*

#### **Report on the fundraising following Cyclones Chapala and Megh**

At the beginning of November 2015, just six weeks after the 14th AGM of *FoS*, Cyclone Chapala struck Soqotra. One week later it was followed by a second, Cyclone Megh, which was equally severe. *FoS* was made aware of the first (and of the second) before they made landfall on Soqotra. Even before the first cyclone had struck, members of the *FoS* Committee (and others) were involved in email discussions about what *FoS* might be able to do to help. The conclusion was that *FoS* should alert its membership to what had happened, that it should collect donations, and that £500 of *FoS*'s own reserves should be made available to help with relief on Soqotra and its archipelago. Discussions followed in which it was further decided that *FoS* should seek help to determine: (a) how to transfer money to the island safely and accountably; (b) how to respond to the most pressing needs (identified in conjunction with local advice); (c) how to monitor the distribution of the money sent by *FoS*; and (d) how to establish mechanisms for ensuring that it was being used wisely and effectively.

The first of many generous donations was received on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November. Individual donations were made either directly or by cheque into the *FoS* bank account with the Royal Bank of Scotland; or via PayPal (using the *FoS* website); or (from the 11<sup>th</sup> of November) to *GoGetFunding* - a special fundraising site set up by Lisa Banfield. The final (net) sums received by *FoS* were: £2142.47 directly into the bank account; £813.44 via PayPal; and £8123.87 from donations to *GoGetFunding*. Together with the pledged £500, from the *FoS* reserves, this raised a total of £11579.78. In all a total of 63 individuals made contributions which ranged from a few dollars to several thousand pounds.

[The whole process involved a significant amount of activity on the part of *FoS*, as reflected in the following figures: the general file relating to the project currently has 334 emails in it; the file of correspondence with donors (acknowledging their donations and sending up-dates) has 252 emails in it; and the file relating to the money transfers has 113 emails in it!].

The first transfer of money to Soqotra was made on the 12<sup>th</sup> of November 2015 and the second on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December 2015 (of £1000 and £1356.75 respectively) – in fact both these sums, which involved *Western Union* - were sent *on behalf of FoS* and were not reimbursed by *FoS* until the beginning of 2016 (hence they do not feature in the 2015 accounts). Subsequent payments to Soqotra were able to be made by direct bank transfers, in January, March and

April 2016. The total that has been sent to Soqotra, at the time of the AGM 2016, amounts to £9661.75 – thus, there is a further £1918.03 still in the *FoS* bank account waiting to be sent. Of the sums that have been sent to Soqotra, approximately £3000 is still to be used.

The mechanism for sending money has depended upon the good offices of Abdullah Ali Ahmed Salman (at the suggestion of Katja Setzkorn, GIZ) who received the money, and recorded doing so (both by a confirming email and through cooperation with the GIZ office on Soqotra), before passing it on to Ismael Mohamed Ahmed Salem. Ismael had kindly agreed to be the person who would distribute the donated money. Ismael confirmed that he had received the money and created receipts which have subsequently been used to record how the money has been ‘spent’. Thus the money has been able to reach Ismael and to be distributed in a manner that was both secure and demonstrative of good practice.

Ismael travelled to the areas which had sustained damage in the cyclones, and also took advice from others, before recommending those projects which should be given priority. This he did through discussions with Kay - involving many telephone conversations - and Kay, in turn, involved the committee (and others) before confirming to Ismael that each project had the approval of *FoS*.

A consequence of this process was that it was Soqotrans themselves who chose which projects should receive *FoS* funding and in what order. The **first project** took place in late November and involved taking a skilled boat-repairer to the island of Samha. In all 18 people – mainly fishermen - were helped (with benefits beyond the individuals concerned). 13 had damaged boats repaired, two had their boats repaired as well as their engines, two had help with damage to housing and one had compensation for the loss of his boat. 300,000 YR was distributed (using the initial £1000). *FoS* was particularly pleased with this project for, not only did it help those in need and provide practical training, but it seems likely that it may serve as a model for an on-going boat repair service funded by GIZ.

The **second project** involved helping rebuild a remote Hagher house in late January and a **third project** helped repair several kareefs (water catchments) in the area of Riyed d-il-Kishin in April and May. Ismael was able to source materials at a favourable rate, to organise a friend to transport them to the project sites, and to find and pay a local skilled builder. Local villagers helped in the work and thus they learned the techniques in much the same manner that the boat repair work had provided an educational experience in Samha. These two projects cost approximately 830,000 YR.

One of our members, who had spent time living in Homhil and who wished to return something for the hospitality received at that time, had donated

the large sum of 1,000,000 YR to the fund-raising. After some discussion as to whether it was indeed appropriate for *FoS* to be accepting money for a single area it was agreed that this was acceptable provided it was made clear that *FoS* was simply acting as the mechanism for the distribution of this sum on behalf of the donor. Ismael reported that he distributed the money, for this **fourth project**, as follows: to each of five families, whose houses had been destroyed by the second cyclone, he gave 130,000 YR (= 650,000 YR); to each of three families, whose houses were partially destroyed, he gave 33,000 YR (= 99,000 YR) and to the people that the donor had especially wished to help he gave 250,000 YR.

Other projects that have been discussed and for which Ismael has been given authorisation are: (1) to use the *FoS* funding for the purchase of mosquito nets, (2) to use it for the replanting of trees in areas where there has been significant damage to stands of *Dracaena* and *Boswellia*, and (3) to use it to assist the African fishing community in Hadibo, who have suffered damage to boats, nets, and houses in the cyclones and who have, hitherto, been partially excluded from relief aid.

Ismael has been tireless in working to assist *FoS* in helping those in need on Soqatra as a result of the two cyclones. He has been giving his time and energy and expertise freely and *FoS* is well aware of how indebted it is to him for his advice, his hard work and his professionalism. It should also be recorded that Kay, Chairman of *Friends of Soqatra*, has spent many, many hours liaising with Ismael and others on Soqatra and in keeping the committee informed and in making sure that decisions were taken with the fullest consultation possible.

The damage caused by the cyclones was extensive and, in response, help has reached Soqatra from other countries and from other organisations much larger than *FoS*. Also Yemen, itself, is a country which is currently facing very significant problems that are not solely the result of natural calamities. The potential for *Friends of Soqatra* to make a big difference is recognised to be limited, despite the understandable wish of its members to help Soqatra as much as possible. The fund-raising project, in response to these two devastating cyclones, is unfinished and we intend to continue to provide help. The committee of *FoS* has been greatly impressed by the generosity of those who have contributed to the fund and has felt a responsibility to take decisions, and to disburse the donated funds, as wisely as possible through the use of local advice and local expertise. Inevitably this has meant that decisions and actions have required time in order for them to be implemented carefully and effectively.

Hugh Morris  
Treasurer, *Friends of Soqatra*

31/08/2016