

Agenda Item 4.2

Reports

Report of the Secretariat

Document 4.2 Rev.1

Report of the ASCOBANS Secretariat

Action Requested

- Take note
- Give guidance

Submitted by

Secretariat



**NOTE:
DELEGATES ARE KINDLY REMINDED
TO BRING THEIR OWN COPIES OF DOCUMENTS TO THE MEETING**

Report of the ASCOBANS Secretariat

1. Pursuant to Article 4.3 of the Agreement, the Secretariat hereby presents a summary report on progress made and difficulties encountered since the last meeting of Parties. The report takes into account functions of the Secretariat as outlined in Resolution 7.2 on Activities of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee and Work Plan.
2. Issues relating to the Agreement's finances and administration are reported separately in MOP8/Doc.7.1.a.

A. Meetings

3. One of the core functions of the Secretariat is to organize the meetings of the bodies of the Agreement, as well as any working group meetings or workshops as instructed by Parties. The following meetings were prepared and/or serviced by the Secretariat since the 7th Meeting of the Parties:

- ECS/ASCOBANS/ACCOBAMS Workshop on Cetacean Population Structure, 6 April 2013, Setubal, Portugal
- ECS/ASCOBANS/WDC Workshop Towards a Conservation Strategy for White-beaked Dolphins in the Northeast Atlantic, 6 April 2013, Setubal, Portugal
- ECS/ASCOBANS/ACCOBAMS Workshop on The challenge of spatially managing cetaceans – a highly mobile animal group, 7 April 2013, Setubal, Portugal
- 9th Meeting of the Jastarnia Group, 16-18 April 2013, Gothenburg, Sweden
- 3rd Meeting of the North Sea Group, 26 August 2013, Warsaw, Poland
- 20th Meeting of the Advisory Committee, 27-29 August 2013, Warsaw, Poland
- 10th Meeting of the Jastarnia Group, 1-3 April 2014, UN Campus, Bonn, Germany
- 4th Meeting of the North Sea Group, 28 September 2014, Gothenburg, Sweden
- 21st Meeting of the Advisory Committee, 29 September - 1 October 2014, Gothenburg, Sweden
- Expert Workshop on the Requirements of Legislation to Address Monitoring and Mitigation of Small Cetacean Bycatch, 21-23 January 2015, UN Campus, Bonn, Germany
- 11th Meeting of the Jastarnia Group, 10-12 March 2015, Stralsund, Germany
- ECS/ASCOBANS Workshop on Marine Mammals Pathology: Update of the Necropsy Protocol on Dissection Techniques and Tissue Sampling, 22 March 2015, St. Julians, Malta
- Workshop on the Further Development of Management Procedures for Defining the Threshold of 'Unacceptable Interactions' - Part I: Developing a Shared Understanding on the Use of Thresholds / Environmental Limits, 10 July 2015, London, United Kingdom
- 5th Meeting of the North Sea Group, 28 September 2015, The Hague, Netherlands
- 22nd Meeting of the Advisory Committee, 20-22 March 2015, 29 September - 1 October 2015, The Hague, Netherlands
- Workshop on Remote Electronic Monitoring with Regards to Bycatch of Small Cetaceans, 2 October 2015, The Hague, Netherlands

- ECS/ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS Workshop on Conserving Cetaceans in the Seas around Europe through Synergy-building between the Relevant Legislative Frameworks, 12 March 2016, Funchal, Madeira, Portugal
 - 12th Meeting of the Jastarnia Group, 12-14 April 2016, Hel, Poland
 - 8th Meeting of the Parties, 30 August - 1 September 2016, Helsinki, Finland
4. Reports of most meetings and workshops listed above are available from the ASCOBANS website (<http://www.ascobans.org/en/meetings/related-meetings>).

B. Compilation of Annual National Reports

5. Article 4.4 of the Agreement instructs the Secretariat to “*present to the Coordinating Authorities, each year no later than 30 June, a summary of the Party reports submitted in accordance with Article 2.5.*”.
6. In the current triennium, the Secretariat presented the following compilations:
- Compilation of Annual National Reports for the Year 2012 ([17th Compilation](#))
 - Compilation of Annual National Reports for the Year 2013 ([18th Compilation](#))
 - Compilation of Annual National Reports for the Year 2014 ([19th Compilation](#))
7. The 20th Compilation, covering Annual National Reports for the Year 2015, is still under preparation at the time of writing of this document. The Secretariat sent a message to Parties on 8 January 2016, informing them that the questionnaire had been opened, reminding them of the official deadline of 31 March for submission of the report, and reiterating what was discussed at the 22nd Advisory Committee Meeting, namely that in the MOP-year it was especially important that National Reports became available on time. Only one country met the deadline set in the Agreement, with several others following shortly after, and some in the months since. Despite many reminders, to date three reports are still missing, preventing the Secretariat from fulfilling its mandate as stated above.
8. Several of the above Compilations were also finalized with significant delay, due to the late submission to the Secretariat of national reports. All Compilations are available on the Agreement’s website and as information documents for this meeting.

C. Promotional Campaign

9. Public support to the aims of ASCOBANS is critical to the success of the Agreement. Accordingly, Parties identified outreach and education as an important part of the Secretariat’s mandate, as reflected in the Work Plan contained in Resolution 7.2.
10. The Secretariat has produced a detailed report on its outreach activities for each meeting of the Advisory Committee:
- [AC20/Doc.5.2](#)
 - [AC21/Doc.5.2](#)
 - [AC22/Doc.7.1 Rev.1](#)
11. Many of the activities in 2012 were related to the celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the signing of the Agreement. These included the commissioning of a publication giving an overview of the conservation status of the species covered by the Agreement, reflecting on the progress of the Agreement to date and highlighting the challenges ahead. Regrettably, this could not be finalised in the anniversary year and is now foreseen to become available in time for the 25th anniversary to be celebrated in 2017. Also, the Secretariat was able to collaborate with The Whale Workshop (<http://www.whaleworkshop.org/>), a roadshow of life-sized inflatable cetaceans, which was shown in several locations to school groups and the general public.

12. The International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise (IDBHP) was celebrated annually on the third weekend in May. Reports received from participating institutions have been compiled for the information of the AC and for publication on the website.

13. In 2013, the Secretariat was pleased to collaborate with Whale and Dolphin Conservation (WDC), NABU and OceanCare to run a creativity competition “The Last 300” (www.schweinswal.eu), focusing on the Baltic harbour porpoise. The majority of the art and design work submitted was shown in 2015 in an exhibition in the German Oceanographic Museum in Stralsund from January to April 2015, composed of pictures, sculptures, video and sound installations. It had about 35,000 visitors, and continues to be shown in whole or in part at appropriate occasions throughout Germany.

14. The website (www.ascobans.org) is nowadays the most important outreach tool at the disposal of the Secretariat. Following the launch of the new jointly developed websites for CMS, AEWA and ASCOBANS in March 2014, work is still ongoing to improve the look, usability and content of the website. Some sections of the website are still in a provisional state and are being tested, fixed, enhanced and improved as time allows. Suggestions from our users are very welcome in order to assist us in tailoring the website to meet their needs.

15. Details on the production and availability of information and exhibition material, other electronic platforms, public events ASCOBANS was participating in and other outreach-related matters are contained in the above-mentioned reports.

D. Representation of ASCOBANS

16. Since MOP7, the Joint CMS/ASCOBANS Secretariat and its consultants were able to represent the Agreement at the following conferences and meetings:

- World Whale Conference, 25-26 October 2012, Brighton, United Kingdom
- WhaleFest 2012, 27-28 October 2012, Brighton, United Kingdom
- 40th Meeting of the CMS Standing Committee, 7-8 November 2012, Bonn, Germany
- 8th Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee, 13-15 November 2012, Monaco
- SCANS III Start-Up Meeting, 17-18 December 2012, Edinburgh, United Kingdom
- ICES Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species (ICES WGBYC), 4-8 February 2013, Copenhagen, Denmark
- 27th Annual Conference of the European Cetacean Society, incl. Workshops, 6-10 April 2013, Setubal, Portugal
- SAMBAH Stakeholder Workshop: How can the fishing, shipping and offshore construction industries and politics help to protect the Baltic Sea harbour porpoise?, 15 April 2013, Gothenburg, Sweden
- Danish Natura 2000 Dialogue Forum, 27 June 2013, Copenhagen, Denmark
- CMS Scientific Council Strategic and Planning Meeting, 9-11 October 2013, Formia, Italy
- 5th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to ACCOBAMS (MOP5), 5-8 November 2013, Tangier, Morocco
- 41st Meeting of the CMS Standing Committee, 27-28 November 2013, Bonn, Germany
- ICES Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species (ICES WGBYC), 4-7 February 2014, Copenhagen, Denmark
- WhaleFest 2014, 14-16 March 2014, Brighton, United Kingdom

- Danish Natura 2000 Dialogue Forum, 17 March 2014, Copenhagen, Denmark
- 28th Annual Conference of the European Cetacean Society, incl. Workshops, 5-9 April 2014, Liège, Belgium
- 27th Meeting of the CITES Animals Committee, 28 April – 3 May 2014, Veracruz, Mexico
- CMS Scientific Council Workshop on the Conservation Implications of Cetacean Culture, 15-16 April 2014, London, United Kingdom
- ACCOBAMS Expert Workshop on the Impact of Climate Change on Cetaceans of the Mediterranean and Black Seas, 11 June 2014, Monaco
- First United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-1), 23-27 June 2014, Nairobi, Kenya
- 65th Meeting of the CITES Standing Committee, 7-11 July 2014, Geneva, Switzerland
- 42nd Meeting of the CMS Standing Committee, 2 November 2014, Quito, Ecuador
- 11th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species (COP11), 4-9 November 2014, Quito, Ecuador
- 43rd Meeting of the CMS Standing Committee, 9 November 2014, Quito, Ecuador
- CBD Expert Workshop to Prepare Practical Guidance on Preventing and Mitigating the Significant Adverse Impacts of Marine Debris on Marine and Coastal Biodiversity and Habitats, 2-4 December 2014, Baltimore, United States of America
- SAMBAH conference on the abundance and distribution of porpoises in the Baltic Sea, 8-9 December 2014, Kolmården, Sweden
- 29th Annual Conference of the European Cetacean Society (incl. workshops), 21-25 March 2015, St. Julians, Malta
- CMS Strategic Plan Working Group Meeting, 12-13 October 2015, Bonn, Germany
- 44th Meeting of the CMS Standing Committee, 14-15 October 2015, Bonn, Germany
- 10th Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee (SC10), 20-22 October 2015, Nice, France
- 66th Meeting of the CITES Standing Committee, 11-15 January 2016, Geneva, Switzerland
- 30th Annual Conference of the European Cetacean Society (incl. workshops), 12-16 March 2016, Funchal, Portugal
- 1st Meeting of the Sessional Committee of the CMS Scientific Council (ScC-SC1), 18-21 April 2016, Bonn, Germany
- Workshop Exploring Synergies for Addressing Bycatch throughout the CMS Family, 22-23 April 2016, Bonn, Germany
- Second Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-2), 23-27 May 2016, Nairobi, Kenya

17. It should be noted that in many cases, ASCOBANS representation came at no or much reduced cost, since staff members were travelling also on behalf of CMS and no extra charge was made to the Agreement. In addition, AC Members and Observers kindly reported back from many other key meetings and conferences. Reports on key issues of relevance can be found in the summaries submitted to the Advisory Committee Meetings ([AC20/Doc.14.1.a](#), [AC21/Inf.13.1](#), [AC22/Inf.16.1.a](#)).

E. Cooperation with Parties, Non-Party Range States, International Organizations, Non-governmental Organizations

Parties

18. The Secretariat has regular and productive contacts with the coordinating authorities of all Parties, as well as members of the Advisory Committee.

19. The effectiveness and efficiency of intersessional work partly depends on the time the Coordinators and AC members can devote to the Agreement, which generally constitutes only one of many dossiers they deal with. Due to the heavy non-ASCOBANS workload of the persons involved, deadlines for reports or comments to be submitted to the Secretariat are not always observed, causing delays in the work of the Agreement. The Secretariat would like to reiterate its call to Parties to ensure that National Coordinators and Advisory Committee members are able to dedicate the required time in order to progress work intersessionally.

20. The importance of scientific expertise at the meetings of the regional working groups, as well as at the Advisory Committee, cannot be overemphasized. The advice given to Parties through these fora should be of the highest technical quality and scientifically sound, so that it can be a good basis for the decisions to be made by policy-makers. The Secretariat therefore urges all Parties to ensure that scientists are able to participate fully in these meetings and any intersessional work to be carried out.

Non-Party Range States

21. Throughout the intersessional period, the Secretariat has made efforts to keep in touch with non-Party Range States (Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Spain, and the European Union), inviting them to meetings, informing them of meeting outcomes and trying to encourage dialogue and engagement.

22. Resources do not allow personal visits by members of the Secretariat to non-Party Range States in order to encourage accession, but regular efforts are made in the margins of other conferences to speak to delegates from these countries and hand over information material on the Agreement and its activities. Parties' support in the efforts to recruit new Parties for ASCOBANS, for example through their bilateral contacts with neighbouring states or EU fora, remain crucial to the success.

International Organizations

23. Cooperation with relevant International Organizations remains a priority for the Agreement. Representation at their meetings is one important way in order to facilitate close contacts, and as outlined above reports both by the Secretariat and members of the Advisory Committee are presented annually to the AC.

24. The Secretariats of ASCOBANS and ACCOBAMS strive to cooperate as closely as possible and keep each other informed of relevant developments and initiatives. They also encourage coordination and synergies in scientific intersessional work carried out by working groups and regularly hold joint workshops (for details see above). In the cases of CMS, ASCOBANS, the Western African Aquatic Mammal MOU and the Pacific Cetaceans MOU, shared staff ensures maximum synergies. Wherever appropriate, members of the scientific advisory bodies get invited to the meetings of the bodies of the other agreements. This pertains specifically to CMS, ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS. Staff members frequently represent the whole CMS Family at meetings of other MEAs.

25. On 22-23 April 2016, the CMS Secretariat hosted a workshop *Exploring Synergies for Addressing Bycatch throughout the CMS Family*, in which the CMS Family got together to exchange experiences with addressing what is considered the greatest threat to the marine mammals, sea turtles, fish and seabirds that our treaties and Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) were set up to conserve. Representatives of the legally-binding Agreements ACAP, ACCOBAMS, AEW and ASCOBANS, as well as colleagues servicing the MOUs on Sharks, Dugong, IOSEA Turtles, Atlantic Coast of Africa Turtles, Pacific Island Cetaceans, Western

African Aquatic Mammals and Mediterranean Monk Seals, as well as the Pacific Loggerhead Turtle SSAP, gave presentations on the bycatch issues in their frameworks. In lively discussions, the commonalities as well as differences in terms of species of concern and their protection status, relevant fisheries and gear types, availability of mitigation measures and their uptake by fisheries management organizations were explored. On the second day, discussions focused on the potential for synergies between the CMS Family instruments, considering topics such as the development of technical solutions, data collection protocols, mutual support and attendance at meetings of regional fisheries management organizations, sharing of resources such as guidelines and best practice mitigation fact sheets, as well as legislative approaches.

26. The Secretariat submits a joint progress report with CMS and ACCOBAMS to each meeting of the International Whaling Commission. ASCOBANS benefits from cooperation between CMS and the IWC, e.g. through the possibility of occasional representation at the Commission Meetings and the good working relationship between the Secretariats, which since 2000 have had a Memorandum of Understanding. The Secretariats are regularly in touch, and areas for cooperation have been identified, with both sides making efforts to collaborate closely.

27. There is also mutual exchange of information as opportunities and needs arise with the HELCOM Secretariat, the OSPAR Secretariat, the NAMMCO Secretariat and the European Commission. Given the limited time and financial resources available for cooperation, ASCOBANS has especially benefited from the participation of the CMS Secretariat in many conferences and meetings.

Non-governmental Organizations

28. The Secretariat continues to collaborate with a number of NGOs, such as Cetacean Strandings Investigation Programme (CSIP), Coalition Clean Baltic (CCB), Humane Society International (HSI), NABU, OceanCare, Sea Watch Foundation, Whale and Dolphin Conservation (WDC), Wild Migration, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the Zoological Society of London (ZSL). Representatives of other NGOs so far not directly involved with the Agreement have agreed to participate in working groups when approached by the Secretariat.

29. Many NGO representatives play a key role in the implementation of the work plan of the Advisory Committee, chairing and participating in ASCOBANS working groups, taking part in drafting groups, organizing or supporting workshops, developing and submitting reports and papers, and engaging in important outreach and education activities. Without this support, much less progress would have been possible on many tasks assigned to the Advisory Committee and Secretariat.

30. Further, close links with the European Cetacean Society are maintained, including regular attendance at their meetings and organization of joint workshops.

F. Conclusion

31. This report highlights the implementation of the actions requested of the Acting Executive Secretary in Resolution No. 2d of MOP5 (2006) and the Work Plan adopted in Resolution 7.2 (2012). While some aspects of the Secretariat's responsibilities would have benefited if more time could have been dedicated to them, the Secretariat is confident that it has addressed all aspects of its work plan to a satisfactory level, given the scarce financial and staff resources.