
SEVENTH MEETING OF THE
CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
Bonn, 18-24 September 2002

REVIEW OF ARTICLE IV AGREEMENTS ALREADY CONCLUDED

1. The Secretariat is circulating herewith, for the information of participants in the Seventh Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species, the expanded report provided by the Secretariat of the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas (ASCOBANS) to accompany the summary found in UNEP/CMS/Conf.7.9.1.
2. The report is provided unedited in the format and language that it was submitted.

EXAMEN DES ACCORDS DE L'ARTICLE IV DEJA CONCLUS

1. Le Secrétariat diffuse ci-joint, pour l'information des participants à la 7ème session de la Conférence des Parties à la Convention sur les espèces migratrices, le rapport développé fourni par le Secrétariat de l'Accord sur la conservation des petits cétacés de la mer Baltique et de la mer du Nord (ASCOBANS) pour accompagner le résumé qui se trouve dans le document UNEP/CMS/Conf.7.9.1
2. Le rapport est fourni sans avoir été mis au point, dans le format et la langue dans lesquels il a été soumis.

REVISIÓN DE ACUERDOS DEL ARTÍCULO IV YA CONCLUIDOS

1. La Secretaría distribuye, para información de los participantes a la Séptima Reunión de la Conferencia de las Partes a la Convención sobre las Especies Migratorias, el informe completo presentado por la Secretaría del Acuerdo sobre la conservación de los pequeños cetáceos del Mar Báltico y el Mar del Norte (ASCOBANS) en complemento al resumen que figura en el documento UNEP/CMS/Conf.7.9.1
2. El informe se presenta sin modificaciones de carácter editorial, bajo el formato y en la lengua originales.



***Report by the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas
(ASCOBANS)
to the 7th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory
Species of Wild Animals,
Bonn 18 – 24 September 2002***

A. Summary

ASCOBANS currently has eight Parties. The accession of two further Range States is expected for the second half of 2002 or the beginning of 2003. The United Kingdom is in the process of ratifying the Agreement on behalf of Jersey. All Non-Party Range States cooperate with the Agreement to some extent, the majority is regularly represented at ASCOBANS meetings and participates actively in ASCOBANS activities.

An extension of the Agreement area to include Spanish and Irish waters is under discussion. ASCOBANS has continued to build, maintain and enhance links with other relevant International Organizations.

Bycatch, which continues to be the most immediate threat to cetaceans in the Agreement area, remained high on the ASCOBANS agenda in the period covered by this report. In 2000, ASCOBANS commissioned a report on bycatch mitigation in the Baltic and North Sea region, produced by Dr Andrew Read, which was circulated for discussion at the national level and was reviewed by AC 8 and AC 9 and received broad support. In the autumn of this year, the Agreement's future activities on bycatch mitigation will be the subject of an intersessional meeting or an intersessional working group.

ASCOBANS is also addressing other threats facing cetaceans in the Agreement Area, including acoustic disturbance and marine pollution.

Much needed research, too, is being conducted within the framework of, in cooperation with or with the support of ASCOBANS. Preparations for a new, large-scale abundance survey of small cetaceans in the ASCOBANS area (and possibly contiguous areas), SCANS II, have begun.

In addition to activities benefiting small cetaceans in the whole of the Agreement area, the period from 1999 – 2002 has been marked by particular efforts to address the problematic situation of harbour porpoises in the Baltic Sea. Recovery plan for Baltic harbour porpoises (Jastarnia Plan), has been drafted and will be submitted for adoption by the 4th Meeting of the Parties in August of next year.

Considerable efforts have been made to step up the PR work of the Agreement since 1999.

Since January 2001, the ASCOBANS Secretariat, which has been co-located with CMS and other UN institutions at the United Nations Premises in Bonn since 1998, has been integrated into the CMS Agreements Unit.

B. Report

I. Status of the Agreement; Cooperation with Non-Party Range States; Cooperation with other IGOs

ASCOBANS currently has eight Parties. The most recent Party to join the Agreement was Finland, which acceded in 1999. The accession of two further Range States, Estonia and Lithuania, is expected for the second half of 2002 or the beginning of 2003. The United Kingdom is in the process of ratifying the Agreement on behalf of Jersey.

The Secretariat has established a network of contacts in all Non-Party Range States. All of these states cooperate with the Agreement to some extent, the majority is regularly represented at ASCOBANS meetings and participates actively in ASCOBANS activities.

An extension of the Agreement area to include Spanish and Irish waters is under discussion.

ASCOBANS has continued to build, maintain and enhance links with other relevant International Organizations such as the European Community, CMS, ACCOBAMS, HELCOM, IWC, OSPAR.

II. Implementation of the Agreement; Activities of the Secretariat

1. *Meetings*

The following meetings of ASCOBANS bodies took place from 1999 - 2002

- 3rd Meeting of Parties, Bristol, UK, 26-28 July 2000 (MOP 3)
- 7th Meeting of the Advisory Committee, Bruges, Belgium, 13-16. March 2000 (AC 7)
- 8th Meeting of the Advisory Committee, Nymindegab, Denmark, 2 – 5 April 2001 (AC 8)
- 9th Meeting of the Advisory Committee, Hindås, Sweden, 10 –12 June 2002 (AC 9)

2. *Bycatch Mitigation*

As in the past, the issue of bycatch, which continues to be the most immediate threat to cetaceans in the Agreement area, was high on the ASCOBANS agenda. In 2000, ASCOBANS commissioned a report on bycatch mitigation in the Baltic and North Sea region. This report, produced by Dr Andrew Read (Nicholas School of the Environment, Duke University) was circulated to Parties for discussion at the national level and discussed by the 8th and 9th Meetings of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee. It was also considered by the workshop aimed at drafting a recovery plan for Baltic harbour porpoises, held in Jastarnia, Poland in January 2002.

The bycatch working group established by AC 9 expressed broad support for the Read review and agreed that either a small intersessional meeting on bycatch should be held in the fall of 2002 or that an intersessional email group should be established to further develop work on bycatch mitigation. It also identified major points to be covered by a projected report on bycatch in the Agreement area, to be considered at the 10th meeting of the Advisory Committee (Bonn, Germany, April 2003) and submitted to the 4th Meeting of Parties (Esbjerg, Denmark, August 2003) along with other recommendations.

3. *Other Threats*

ASCOBANS is also addressing other threats facing cetaceans in the Agreement Area, including acoustic disturbance and marine pollution.

In close cooperation with other international organizations, ASCOBANS is working to reduce the level of hazardous substances in the marine environment.

The Agreement Secretariat is monitoring information on high-speed ferries, which may have adverse effects on whales and dolphins. A shipping working group established by AC 9 drafted terms of reference

for a report on the effects of shipping on cetaceans, requested by the Third Meeting of the Parties.

The Advisory Committee will aim to produce a report on seismic disturbance in time for the Fourth Meeting of Parties in 2003.

4. Research

Much needed research, too, is being conducted within the framework of, in cooperation with or with the support of ASCOBANS. Thus, the Agreement lent its support to a survey of harbour porpoises in Polish waters conducted in the summer of 2001 by a team led by Dr. Per Berggren with funding from the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and to harbour porpoise distribution and abundance surveys undertaken this year, covering the area representing the currently known distribution range of the Baltic Sea harbour porpoise population, for which Dr. Berggren and IFAW once again cooperated.

Preparations for a new, large-scale abundance survey of small cetaceans in the ASCOBANS area (and possibly contiguous areas), SCANS II, have also begun, with the participation of ASCOBANS. Preparations are still in an early stage. AC 9 strongly supported this endeavour, for which ASCOBANS has already received a voluntary contribution from the United Kingdom, and urged all Parties to name focal points for this project as soon as possible in order to speed up the process.

5. Recovery Plan for Baltic Harbour Porpoises

In addition to activities benefiting small cetaceans in the whole of the Agreement area, the period 1999 – 2002 has been marked by particular efforts to address the problematic situation of harbour porpoises in the Baltic Sea. The ASCOBANS Baltic discussion group (ABDG) was able to bring its work to fruition at a final meeting held in Charlottenlund, Denmark, in January 2001. The outcome of its deliberations, laid down in a report that was discussed by AC 8, provided valuable input for the process of developing a recovery plan for Baltic harbour porpoises. A workshop, held in Jastarnia, Poland in January of this year, organized by ASCOBANS in cooperation with Hel Marine Station and the Foundation for the Development of the University of Gdańsk (Fundacja Roswoju Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, FRUG), was able to lay the groundwork for the recovery plan. After three days of intensive, constructive and fruitful discussions it produced a number of recommendations. Based on this work, the chairman, Dr. Randall R. Reeves, produced a draft recovery plan (Jastarnia Plan), which was finalized by Parties and Range States at AC 9. The Advisory Committee agreed to the Jastarnia Plan, and strongly commended it to the Parties, with a view to having it adopted by the 4th Meeting of the Parties in August of next year.

6. Promotional Campaign

ASCOBANS AC 7 and AC 8 as well as MOP 3 acknowledged that more intensive PR work was needed to increase public awareness of the Agreement and the issues it deals with. Consequently, considerable efforts have been made in this field.

PR work has been steadily stepped up since 1999. This has been possible, among other reasons, due to the German voluntary contributions for the years 1999 - 2002, which have been allocated to a large extent to public relations. The following projects were realized:

- A new ASCOBANS poster, available in Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, German, Swedish and Polish was produced and has been distributed widely;
- A mobile exhibition, “Harbour Porpoise in Distress”, was produced in 1999. It has been displayed in numerous Parties and Range States (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland) since early 2000. It is currently on display in Finland. In October of this year it will be shown in St Petersburg and Moscow, before it will be displayed at the Estonian Museum of Natural History in Tallinn starting in November.

- The ASCOBANS website was revamped and is now being updated regularly.
- Information brochures in German and English and postcards were produced.

- On the occasion of the Agreement's 10th anniversary, a commemorative volume, entitled *From Idea to Implementation – ASCOBANS Ten Years On* was published and an exhibition of Polish art organized in Bonn.
- The Secretariat cooperated with the well-known British illustrator Martin Camm, Hel Marine Station and *Telekomunikacja Polska* to produce a telephone card commemorating the ASCOBANS Baltic Workshop in January of this year.

The Executive Secretary actively seeks and maintains contacts with German Members of Parliament and the local press. In addition, the ASCOBANS Secretariat regularly participates in the annual UN Day celebrations, staged in Bonn's market square, and the "Festival of Nations" taking place annually in Bonn's Rheinaue Park

7. *Other Activities of the Secretariat*

The Secretariat produces compilations of annual national reports of the Parties, in accordance with Article 2.5 of the Agreement. The Sixth Compilation of Annual National Reports was published this year.

In response to request by the Advisory Committee, the Secretariat is collates fisheries statistics, data on seismic disturbance and information on post-mortem and stranding schemes submitted by the Parties. The information received in response to these inquiries by the Secretariat is kept for reference by the Secretariat.

The Secretariat maintains a small reference library and an extensive collection of scientific papers (currently over 600 articles) relevant to the work of the Agreement. All papers available at the Secretariat have been catalogued and entered into a database.

III. Secretariat Arrangements

Since January 2001, the ASCOBANS Secretariat, which has been co-located with CMS and other UN institutions at the United Nations Premises in Bonn since 1998, has been integrated into the CMS Agreements Unit.