



Agreement on the Conservation
of Albatrosses and Petrels

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION OF ALBATROSSES AND PETRELS (ACAP)

2006-2009

This report was compiled by the Agreement's Advisory Committee (AC) and Secretariat pursuant to Article VIII (10), Article X (j) and in fulfilment of Articles VII (1c), IX (6d) of the Agreement. **It was prepared for the Third Session of the Meeting of the Parties (MoP3), held in Bergen, Norway from 27 April – 1 May 2009, to assist Parties in meeting their obligations under Article VIII (12) a) b) & c) to: consider reports from subsidiary bodies; consider actual and potential changes in the conservation status of albatrosses and petrels, and the habitats important to their survival; and to review any difficulties encountered in the implementation of the Agreement.**

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN

All ACAP Parties and one Range State (the United States) submitted progress reports that were used in compiling this document. Information was also provided by BirdLife International detailing its significant achievements in seabird conservation activities. Collectively, this information shows that a substantial amount of work is being done to implement the Agreement.

In an attempt to gauge the progress of Parties in implementing the Agreement, a brief assessment of Parties' reported actions in response to four major threats to seabirds was conducted. In most cases, the Parties that submitted information to the Secretariat are addressing these four threats to some extent. Of these thirteen, all reported taking actions to address fisheries bycatch, eleven reported efforts to minimise IUU fishing, five reported actions addressing non-native species, and eleven reported on efforts to address threats from pollution and marine debris.

Although a great deal is being accomplished by the Parties, Range States and some non-governmental organisations, it is not possible to assess if the actions taken have been successful in achieving the objectives of the Agreement (Article II.1) and whether the

conservation status of albatross and petrels has been improved (or maintained). Such an assessment will require further progress in the development of performance indicators for the Agreement, work to fill data gaps on some species and populations and improvements to national reporting.

Regarding interactions with and achievements in Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs), the most relevant were: (1) the adoption of seabird bycatch mitigation measures in several RFMOs, (2) the signature of an 'arrangement' between the WCPFC and the ACAP Secretariat, (*MoUs have also been signed with the IOTC and OLDEPESCA since MoP3*); and (3) the interest expressed by other RFMOs in entering into similar arrangements with ACAP.

REVIEW OF THE STATUS AND TRENDS OF ACAP SPECIES

There are currently 26 species listed by ACAP, 19 of which are classified at risk of extinction. Four albatross species are listed as *Critically Endangered*, five are *Endangered*, six are *Vulnerable* and four are *Near Threatened* (*29 species listed, 22 at risk of extinction, four albatross species Critically Endangered, six Endangered and eight Vulnerable after the inclusion of three new albatross species during MoP3*). For the seven petrel species, four are currently listed as *Vulnerable* and three as *Near Threatened*.

Population declines, largely driven by interactions with fisheries, are responsible for triggering the unfavourable classification status for eleven species. A total of ten species are currently showing population declines. Restricted range of breeding locations is also a limiting factor for 16 ACAP species.

The analysis of land-based threats to ACAP species clearly indicated that introduced mammals are having the most widespread and deleterious effects at breeding sites, either because of depredation of adults or chicks, or destruction of habitat. The isolated islands on which ACAP species breed are well suited for pest eradication, and the number and scope of restoration programmes continues to increase. A paper submitted to AC4 (AC4 Doc 52) provided recommendations, useful further reading, and a list of online resources to conservation managers when considering, designing and executing pest eradication programmes.

Since MoP2 (2006) there have been changes in the status of seven ACAP species as a result of reviews by BirdLife International, the listing authority for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Specifically, the White-capped albatross and Shy albatross as separate species were listed as *Near threatened*, Southern giant petrel was down listed to *Near Threatened*, Waved albatross was up listed to *Critically Endangered*, Spectacled petrel was down listed to *Vulnerable*, Tristan albatross was up listed to *Critically Endangered*, and Buller's albatross was down listed to *Near Threatened*.

DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREEMENT AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

In terms of experience gained since MoP2 and difficulties found in implementing the Agreement, the low level of information on seabird bycatch in both domestic and high seas fisheries is a serious impediment to tackling the most important (at sea) threat for ACAP species. Information on the distribution of fishing effort, and levels of seabird attendance and bycatch is required from both Parties and RFMOs as a high priority. This will require the development of bycatch observer programmes in many fisheries.

In a broader sense, the development of a framework to identify ACAP priorities for conservation action will be critical to guide actions to fulfil the objectives of the Agreement.

The development of a prioritisation framework was discussed in AC4 and further work has been undertaken intersessionally under the leadership of New Zealand (see MoP3 Doc 20).

Other processes under development and essential for the implementation of the Agreement are (a) the strategy for engagement with RFMOs, (b) a process for the allocation of funds to the Advisory Committee Work Programme and (c) the development of a medium-long term strategy on capacity building. It was noted during AC4 that substantial financial and human resources will be required from the Secretariat to achieve an increasingly complex work programme. In this regard, the AC supported the creation of an additional science support position in the Secretariat, emphasising that without this post it would be impossible for the Advisory Committee to achieve the work necessary to ensure the implementation of the Agreement (AC4 Report, section 15.2).

It is critical that the Secretariat has sufficient resources to support the important initiatives that have been identified by the Working Groups and the Advisory Committee in the Advisory Committee Work Programme. Underpinning these initiatives is the ability to further develop the online ACAP web portal and database. These tools provide the means to efficiently maintain current, accurate and comprehensive information on ACAP populations' trends and threats, both at sea and on land. The ability to access, update and curate this information will be essential for the prioritisation process noted above. The most important outputs from the Advisory Committee Work Programme over the next triennium, with regard to implementation of the Agreement are (a) the completion and implementation of the prioritisation process, (b) the collation of data from many sources, including from national reports of Parties, on distribution of fishing effort and mortality of albatrosses/petrels attending fisheries and its incorporation into the ACAP database, (c) the development of a strategy for engagement with RFMOs, (d) significant progress achieved in regards to the adoption of and compliance with bycatch mitigation measures by Parties and RFMOs, (e) implementation of the Waved albatross plan of action (and consideration/ development of other plans of action), (f) a medium-long term strategy for capacity building developed and implemented, (g) the revision and update of species assessments, (h) consideration of amendments to Annex 1, and (i) the revision and update of best-practice guidelines.

To address the difficulties identified in implementing the Agreement the Advisory Committee recommended that the Meeting of Parties:

- (a) Approves the allocation of funds for an additional science support position in the Secretariat (AC4 Report paragraph 15.2.1);
- (b) Approves a budget sufficient to allow for the effective operation of the Advisory Committee (AC4 Report Annexes 8 and 15 and MoP3 Doc 24);
- (c) Requests Parties and Range States to improve bycatch reporting through the process being developed by the SBWG. Improvements include provision of relevant data on seabird bycatch to the Secretariat, support for the collection and provision of such data by RFMOs and where necessary, establishment of bycatch observer programmes to collect this data (AC4 Report, paragraph 13.17);
- (d) Requests Parties, on the basis of the information provided by the SBWG, to review the efficacy of seabird bycatch mitigation measures used in the fisheries that they manage either directly (i.e. within their EEZ) or indirectly (e.g. via their membership of RFMOs);
- (e) Requests Parties to provide the necessary resources for the priority research activities identified by the Advisory Committee's Working Groups; and
- (f) Requests the Advisory Committee to develop a revised national reporting process to improve i) the provision of data by Parties and ii) the ability to measure progress in implementing the Agreement (AC Report, section 7.1.6).

These recommendations were supported by the Meeting of the Parties and will be progressively implemented over the next triennium.