



Report of the joint CMS/ASCOBANS Secretariat to the 44th Meeting of the CMS Standing Committee

1. This document contains a report on recent progress made by the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas (ASCOBANS) since reporting to CMS COP11 ([UNEP/CMS/COP11/Inf.12.3](#)).

A. Institutional Bodies

2. Preparations are underway for the 8th Meeting of the Parties (MOP8), which will be held in Helsinki, Finland, from 30 August until 1 September 2016. Information related to the meeting will be made available in due course on www.ascobans.org/en/meeting/MOP8.
3. The 22nd Meeting of the Advisory Committee was held in The Hague, Netherlands, from 29 September to 1 October 2015. The report is currently under preparation. A list of action points and decisions of AC22 can be accessed on the [ASCOBANS website](#).
4. As the last Advisory Committee Meeting before MOP8, focus was on the decisions to be prepared for consideration and adoption at this meeting. Besides the regular resolutions such as the ones adopting the work plan and budget, several topics were agreed upon that drafting groups will now elaborate on: PCBs, underwater unexploded ordnance, managing cumulative impacts on small cetaceans, best practice regarding necropsy and rescue of small cetaceans, and marine renewables. Work would also be carried out in order to update the Recovery Plan for Baltic Harbour Porpoises (Jastarnia Plan), and to advance the development of a Conservation Plan for Common Dolphins, both of which might lead to draft resolutions to be tabled at MOP8.
5. The Advisory Committee also considered the detail, format and frequency of National Reports to be prepared by Parties, which should allow a meaningful review of the progress in the implementation of the Agreement without overburdening Parties with excessive reporting requirements. After considering the wide range of topics on which information should be gathered, the AC recommended that one comprehensive national report should be submitted each MOP-cycle, supplemented by briefer, topic-specific annual reports as determined in advance by the Advisory Committee. This issue will also be brought to the attention of MOP8 for a final decision.

B. Implementation of the Work Programme 2013-16

6. The Work Plan adopted by MOP7 for 2013-2016) covers all areas of the Agreement's work, as laid out in the Conservation and Management Plan: a) Habitat conservation and management; b) Surveys and research; c) Use of bycatches and strandings; d) Legislation; c) Information and education.
7. A progress report on implementation of the Work Plan and related Action Points agreed by the 21st Advisory Committee Meeting can be accessed as [AC22/Doc.1.3 rev.1](#). Details on activities relating to these topics can be found in the documentation of the [22nd Advisory Committee Meetings](#).

Workshops

8. In the last year, ASCOBANS organized or co-hosted the following workshops:
- [Expert Workshop on the Requirements of Legislation to Address Monitoring and Mitigation of Small Cetacean Bycatch](#) (January 2015)
 - ECS Workshop on Marine Mammals Pathology: Update of the Necropsy Protocol on Dissection Techniques and Tissue Sampling (March 2015)
 - [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](#) (July 2015)
 - [Workshop on Remote Electronic Monitoring with Regards to Bycatch of Small Cetaceans](#) (October 2015)
9. Two workshops are planned for 2016, one on Conserving Europe's cetaceans through synergy-building between the relevant legislative frameworks to be proposed as a joint ECS/ASCOBANS/ACCOBAMS workshop to be held at the 2016 European Cetacean Society Conference, and one carrying forward the Agreement's work on management procedures relating to anthropogenic removal of small cetaceans.

Working Groups

10. The following working groups currently operate under the Advisory Committee:
- Jastarnia Group (Steering Group for the Recovery Plan for Baltic Harbour Porpoises, as well as the Conservation Plan for the Harbour Porpoise Population in the Western Baltic, the Belt Sea and the Kattegat): Reports of the Group's annual meetings can be accessed at www.ascobans.org/en/workinggroup/jastarnia-group. Eleven meetings have been held to date.
 - North Sea Group (Steering Group for the Conservation Plan for Harbour Porpoises in the North Sea): Reports of the Group's annual meetings can be accessed at www.ascobans.org/en/workinggroup/north-sea-group. Five meetings have been held to date. The report of the last one is still under preparation.
 - Bycatch Working Group: Reports produced by the Group can be accessed at www.ascobans.org/en/workinggroup/bycatch-working-group.
 - Joint CMS/ASCOBANS/ACCOBAMS Noise Working Group: Reports produced by the Group can be accessed at www.ascobans.org/en/workinggroup/underwater-noise-working-group.
 - Pollution Working Group: Reports are published as Annexes to the reports of the Advisory Committee Meetings, which can be accessed at www.ascobans.org/en/meetings/advisory-committee.
 - Joint ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS Marine Strategy Framework Directive Working Group: Reports produced by the Group can be accessed at www.ascobans.org/en/workinggroup/marine-strategy-framework-directive-working-group.
 - Extension Area Working Group and Informal Working Group on Large Cetaceans: Joint reports produced by the Groups can be accessed at www.ascobans.org/en/workinggroup/extension-area-working-group.