

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT
PROGRAMME



PROGRAMME DES NATIONS UNIES
POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT

*Progress Report by the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas
(ASCOBANS)
to the 23rd Meeting of the CMS Standing Committee,
Bonn 13 – 14 December 2001*

The course for ASCOBANS in the year 2001 was charted by the Agreement's 3rd Meeting of Parties (MoP 3), held in Bristol in July 2000 and the 8th Meeting of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee (AC8), which took place in Nymindégab, Denmark from 2 - 5 April 2001. AC 8 focussed on implementing the triennial workplan and resolutions adopted at MoP 3.

As in the past, the issue of **by-catch**, which continues to be the most immediate threat to cetaceans in the Agreement area, was high on the ASCOBANS agenda. AC8 considered the report on bycatch mitigation in the Baltic and North Sea region produced for ASCOBANS by Dr Andy Read. There was general agreement that this report was a highly useful document that will need further consideration and discussion at the national level.

First steps towards organising a new large-scale survey of cetaceans in the Agreement area ("**SCANS II**") were also taken.

Moreover, a number of measures specifically geared to the **Baltic Sea** area are being taken. The ASCOBANS Baltic Discussion Group had its final meeting in Charlottenlund, Denmark, in January 2001. The outcome of its deliberations, laid down in a report that was discussed by the 8th meeting of the Advisory Committee, will provide valuable input for the process of developing a recovery plan for Baltic harbour porpoise populations. A workshop aimed at preparing a draft recovery plan is currently being prepared. It will take place in Jastarnia, Poland, from 9 – 11 January 2002 and should unite a broad range of experts and stakeholders from all Baltic Parties and Range States. Participants will work towards the elaboration of a prioritized recovery plan ("**Jastarnia Plan**") with a view to achieving the long-term objective of restoring and/or maintaining a viable population of harbour porpoises in the Baltic.

ASCOBANS is also addressing other problems facing cetaceans in the Agreement Area, including **acoustic disturbance** and marine **pollution**. In close cooperation with other international organisations, ASCOBANS is working to reduce the level of hazardous substances in the marine environment and is monitoring information on high-speed ferries which may have adverse effects on whales and dolphins.

ASCOBANS AC 7 (Bruges, Belgium, March 2000) and AC 8 (Nymindégab, Denmark, April 2001) as well as the Third Meeting of Parties (Bristol, UK, July 2000) acknowledged that **PR work** needed to be stepped up to increase public awareness of the Agreement and the issues it deals with. Consequently, considerable efforts have been made in this field. The ASCOBANS website was updated and revamped, an information brochure 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. It will be shown again shortly at Hel Marine Station, Hel, Poland. The ASCOBANS exhibition *Harbour Porpoise in Distress* was displayed in numerous Parties and Range States since early 2000 and is scheduled to be shown in Poland, Latvia and Finland in the first half of 2002. The Secretariat is cooperating with *Telekomunikacja Polska* to produce a telephone card commemorating the ASCOBANS Baltic Workshop in January 2002.