

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT  
PROGRAMME



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**Report by the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas  
(ASCOBANS)  
to the 28th Meeting of the Standing Committee to the Convention on the Conservation of Mi-  
gratory Species of Wild Animals,  
Bonn 21 – 22 April 2005**

Since June 2004, UNEP/ASCOBANS has made considerable progress in implementing the Resolutions of MOP 4, held in Esbjerg, Denmark in August 2003 and the decisions of AC 12 (Jastrzębia Góra, Poland, April 2004).

Key issues addressed by these meetings were the UNEP/ASCOBANS Recovery Plan for Baltic Harbour Porpoises (Jastarnia Plan), the elaboration of a recovery plan for harbour porpoises in the North Sea, a new large-scale abundance survey for the extended UNEP/ASCOBANS Agreement area (“SCANS II”) and the needs of UNEP/ASCOBANS in its new, extended Agreement area.

The 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Jastarnia Group, a working group established within the framework of the Jastarnia Plan and tasked with taking stock of progress in implementing the Plan and progressing its further implementation, met in Bonn, Germany, on 3 and 4 March 2005. The Group formulated a considerable number of recommendations for submission to the 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Advisory Committee (Brest, France, 12-14 April 2005).

A preliminary draft of the North Sea Recovery Plan was discussed by the 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the AC. A revised draft, taking into account the comments of AC 11 and, subsequently, of experts from around the North Sea was discussed by a Workshop on the North Sea Recovery Plan held in Hamburg, Germany, from 6-8 December 2004, which in turn led to a further refinement of the draft. The latest version will be discussed by AC 12. The Plan should be finalized in time for adoption by the 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties in 2006.

Preparations for the “SCANS II” survey are nearing completion. A joint SCANS-II/ASCOBANS Workshop on European Cetacean Monitoring and Management will take place on 11 April 2005. The aim of the workshop is to provide an opportunity for interested parties to contribute to how the monitoring and management objectives of SCANS-II will be achieved. The workshop, which will take place immediately prior to the 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Advisory Committee in Brest, France, is timed to enable a maximum number of experts to participate.

The projected new Agreement area will pose new challenges to UNEP/ASCOBANS. Currently, the Secretariat is preparing an overview of abundance and distribution of small cetaceans and the threats they face in that region.

While bycatch remains at the center of attention for UNEP/ASCOBANS, the Agreement also continues to address other threats facing cetaceans in the Agreement Area, including acoustic

disturbance and marine pollution. In close cooperation with other international organizations, UNEP/ASCOBANS is working to reduce the level of hazardous substances in the marine environment. The Agreement Secretariat continues to monitor information on high-speed ferries, which may have adverse effects on whales and dolphins. Annual compilations of information submitted by UNEP/ASCOBANS Parties concerning high-speed ferries are produced by the Secretariat.

As in the past, UNEP/ASCOBANS makes its contribution to much needed research on cetaceans in the Agreement area. A number of research activities are being undertaken within the framework of, in cooperation with or with the support of ASCOBANS. To name one example: the UNEP/ASCOBANS Secretariat is co-funding and participating in a workshop on research related to the bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*), organized by the European Cetacean Society (ECS) in La Rochelle, France, on 7 April 2005.

The Secretariat continued its intensive PR work, much of which is possible only due to the voluntary contributions of UNEP/ASCOBANS Parties. Efforts to translate UNEP/ASCOBANS information material into languages other than German and English continued in 2004/2005. The UNEP/ASCOBANS brochure is meanwhile available in Danish, Dutch, Estonian, Finnish, French, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish and Swedish. A Spanish version will be printed shortly. Portuguese and Russian versions will follow. The poster designed specifically for the Baltic region and UNEP/ASCOBANS Fact Sheet No. 1 (“Jas-tarnia Plan”) are available in all Baltic Sea languages but Russian, with a Russian translation projected for 2005 or 2006. The fact sheet is downloadable from the ASCOBANS website. A further fact sheet, underscoring the compatibility between cetacean conservation and fisheries in the UNEP/ASCOBANS area, will be published this year. The International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise (IDBHP), observed for the first time in 2003, is gaining in popularity in countries around the Baltic Sea. In 2004, events related to the IDBHP were staged successfully by institutions and organizations in Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden. A handbook for IDBHP exhibitors was published by the Secretariat and distributed to relevant institutions in all Baltic Sea states. It is also available on the ASCOBANS website. A totally new initiative is the “ASCOBANS Award” for outstanding educational and/or information initiatives related to cetacean conservation, which will in future be awarded biennially and for the first time at the upcoming 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Advisory Committee. This year’s winner is a scientific institution from the Baltic Sea region.

ASCOBANS currently has eight Parties. The accession of two further Baltic Range States and France is expected before MOP 5.

ASCOBANS continues to build, maintain and enhance links with other relevant International Organizations.