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Agenda Item 11.5

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

Summary:

The Secretariat is circulating herewith, for the information of the 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CMS, a report provided by the Secretariat of the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP).

The report is provided unedited in the format and language that it was submitted.



Agreement on the Conservation  
of Albatrosses and Petrels

## **Statement by the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) to the CMS COP13**

### **ACAP Secretariat**

The Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) is an intergovernmental conservation agreement and is part of the CMS family. ACAP was established in 2001 and entered into force in 2004. ACAP continues to work towards its objective, which is to achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for albatrosses and petrels. The agreement has 13 Parties and is keen to attract more members. Several countries, entities and NGOs attend our meetings as observers.

Bycatch in pelagic longline fisheries is one of the greatest threats to seabirds, particularly albatrosses and petrels. Through dedicated efforts, ACAP has over the years developed a wide range of advice on how to address the threats to albatrosses and petrels, both on land and at sea. This advice is regularly updated to take account of latest research findings.

A key strength of the agreement is the sharing of expertise and advice amongst Parties and others, in particular in the regular meetings of ACAP's working groups and Advisory Committee.

Over the past two years, ACAP has held the following meetings, attended by Parties and observers:

- The Sixth Meeting of the Parties (MoP6) in Skukuza, South Africa, from 7 to 11 May 2018.
- The 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Advisory Committee (AC11) , in Florianópolis, Brazil, from 13-17 May, preceded by meetings of its Working Groups on Seabird Bycatch and on Population and Conservation Status.

The reports of these meetings are available on the ACAP website ([www.acap.aq](http://www.acap.aq)).

The 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Advisory Committee (AC12) and its working groups will be held in Manta, Ecuador, from 24 August to 4 September 2020. The 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties will be held in Hobart, Tasmania, Australia, in May 2021.

The 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Advisory Committee, in May last year, considered activities undertaken since the last meeting of the Advisory Committee and the Meeting of the Parties, and discussed priorities for ACAP's work programme. What stood out at these meeting was a strong sense of urgency and concern. ACAP Parties declared a continuing conservation crisis for albatrosses and petrels. ACAP Parties highlighted the need for urgent efforts by all to counter this crisis, with a change of focus in some cases and taking advantage of ongoing innovations in, for example, technology.

Some of the particular concerns and points of discussion at the meetings were:

- Disappointment that, despite all the research and attention devoted to the development of best practice bycatch mitigation measures, these have not been used sufficiently extensively to stop the decline in the numbers of many albatross and petrel species.

The meetings spent considerable time discussing why there had been insufficient uptake of best practice or even implementation of required bycatch mitigation measures.

- The discussion acknowledged that many RFMOs and national authorities have put in place at least some measures to reduce seabird bycatch, but that compliance and enforcement were often inadequate.
- The need to develop innovative ways of addressing the crisis, for example by making use of new technologies.

Given these concerns and imperatives, ACAP is working towards new and augmented areas of focus and activities in the immediate and longer term. This includes an emphasis on ways in which we can continue working together with others to enhance implementation of strategies and actions to reduce bycatch of seabirds in fishing operations, acknowledging that this needs to be done at a range of different scales (e.g. RFMO, national, fishery, fleet, fishing operator, vessel and crew).

In this context, ACAP has an ongoing policy of interaction with RFMOs and has now concluded memoranda of understanding with the majority of them. We contribute our expertise on bycatch mitigation to the RFMOs as they work to develop and update their conservation and management measures. We also seek to work in collaboration with organisations focusing on other taxa.

As a result of years of such collaboration, many RFMOs and national authorities have put in place at least some measures to reduce seabird bycatch. The challenge now is to ensure compliance. Arguably the single most important action to reduce bycatch is to increase compliance in the proper use of existing seabird bycatch regulations. We are keen to contribute ideas on how to improve monitoring and compliance, including through the development of innovative methods.

We are encouraged by the fact that with the implementation of mitigation measures, there have been demonstrated reductions in seabird bycatch, sometimes

dramatically so. And without the perceived detrimental consequences arising. This is a clear indication that the crisis can be successfully addressed.

One of ACAP's immediate objectives is to communicate urgently the message that albatrosses and petrels are in a dire conservation state, and that urgent action is required to improve their status. ACAP is keen to work with all role players to support efforts in this regard, to overcome impediments to implementation. Unless the problem is understood and accepted, at all scales, it will not be solved.

ACAP has identified a number of ways in which it can work towards this aim. We will use our existing relationships and programmes to develop these activities, which include outreach to the broader community through an enhanced communication strategy, engagement with relevant fisheries certification schemes, especially as they update their standards, and continuing the updating and dissemination of ACAP's best practice guidelines.

ACAP is pleased to have participated in the first phase of the FAO/GEF ABNJ Common Oceans (tuna) project, which concluded at the end of 2019. We contributed ACAP expertise to the first global assessment of seabird bycatch in pelagic longline fishing in the Southern Hemisphere. In this assessment, a wide range of modelling approaches were used, producing very similar estimates of approximately 30-40,000 birds per annum, highlighting the continued threat faced by ACAP species.

Through the Common Oceans project, ACAP in the second half of 2019 received support from the FAO for the updating, translation and printing of several of our mitigation factsheets and best practice guidelines. In addition, an update of the Seabird Bycatch Identification Guide will be completed soon. These are all available on ACAP's website. In the preparation of these and other products, ACAP cooperates closely with BirdLife International.

ACAP also continues to review current population trends of ACAP species, priorities for land-based conservation actions at their breeding sites, and key gaps in tracking and monitoring data.

As part of our communications effort, and to highlight the seriousness of the crisis facing albatrosses and petrels, World Albatross Day will be celebrated for the first time on 19 June 2020. This is an opportunity for us all to celebrate this iconic migratory species.