



30th MEETING OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Bonn, Germany, 1–3 September 2026
Agenda Item 4.3

**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE
JOINT ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS WORKING GROUP ON THE MARINE STRATEGY
FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE (MSFD)**

(Prepared by the Co-Chairs of the Working Group)

1. The Terms of Reference (TOR) of the Joint ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS Working Group on the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) have not been updated since 2013. Therefore, the proposed amendments reflect necessary updates, including suggestions from the Co-Chairs.
2. The current Co-Chairs of the WG are:
 - Sinéad Murphy and Eunice Pinn (ASCOBANS); and
 - Joan Giménez Verdugo and Giacarlo Lauriano (ACCOBAMS).

Action requested:

3. The Advisory Committee is requested to review and adopt the proposed amendments to the TOR, available in Annex 1.

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE JOINT ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS WORKING GROUP ON THE MARINE STRATEGY FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE (MSFD)

NB. Proposed new text is underlined. Text to be deleted is ~~crossed out~~.

This working group will operate by correspondence. It should coordinate and cooperate closely with other relevant scientific bodies and working groups within both Agreements, in particular the sub-regional working groups. It should also liaise with relevant working groups or regional initiatives established by other international bodies, such as HELCOM, OSPAR₁ and ICES₁ and UNEP/MAP as well as national processes.

With a view to ensuring that cetacean conservation issues are adequately taken account of in the framework of ongoing work related to the MSFD, the joint ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS working group on the MSFD will:

1. Collect information on how ~~the MSFD implementation of the MSFD is furthered in the various~~ being advanced for cetaceans within relevant regional fora with regard to (small) cetaceans (e.g. OSPAR, HELCOM, ICES, UNEP/MAP IMAP...) and by Member States. This should include an overview of the indicators being used, and those under development, for assessing the Good Environmental Status (GES) of cetaceans under relevant MSFD descriptors: D1 Biodiversity, D4 Foodwebs, D8 Contaminants, D10 Marine litter and D11 Energy and Noise;
2. In close cooperation with other scientific bodies and working groups within both Agreements, ~~ensure evaluate the consistency and identify gaps in the implementation of the MSFD with regard to (small) cetaceans in these~~ comparability of indicators, targets, species coverage and assessment methodologies used by Member States and regional fora;
- 3) ~~Liaise with scientific bodies and working groups within ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS that work on matters relevant to the implementation of the~~ including the integration of indicators across MSFD criteria and descriptors to support GES assessments for cetacean species;
3. ~~Review and assess monitoring programmes, programmes of measures and other assessment frameworks relevant to cetaceans under the MSFD, including the consideration of cumulative effects in the assessment of GES;~~
4. Identify gaps, inconsistencies and opportunities for harmonisation and improvement across Member States and regional fora; and
- 5.4) ~~Report back on the conclusions of and recommendations arising from its work to the relevant working groups of ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS, and to its~~ their relevant scientific and technical bodies;
- 5) ~~Ensure that the conclusions of its work are brought to the attention of the relevant groups working on the implementation of the MSFD~~
- 6) ~~Prepare draft ToR for work within ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS related to the further implementation of the MSFD after 2014~~