

Agenda Item 5.1

Implementation of the Triennium Work Plan  
(2010-2012) – Other Issues  
Review of New Information on Population  
Size, Distribution, Structures and Causes of  
Any Changes

Document 5-06

**Information Request to the Faroe  
Islands and Response Received**

**Action Requested**

- Take note
- Provide guidance on further follow-up

Submitted by

Secretariat



**NOTE:**  
IN THE INTERESTS OF ECONOMY, DELEGATES ARE KINDLY REMINDED TO BRING THEIR  
OWN COPIES OF DOCUMENTS TO THE MEETING

## **Secretariat's Note**

In follow-up of the request of the 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee (Action Point 11), the Secretariat wrote to the Faroe Islands Authorities in early April 2011 to request information on the small cetacean drive hunts. The letter as well as the response received is included in this document.

In their response, the Faroese Authorities provide information only with respect to the recent takes of Risso's dolphins, which were not conducted under permit and are not to continue. They fail to address the more general questions raised about the permissions for other species to be issued in 2011 and the data considered when setting hunting quotas for all affected species.

The Secretariat now seeks the guidance of the Committee whether to contact the Faroese authorities again for further clarification.



**Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species  
Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans  
of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas**  
*Joint Secretariat provided by the United Nations Environment Programme*



Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Tinganes  
FO-110 Tórshavn  
Faeroe Islands / Denmark

### Information Request

Bonn, 11 April 2011

Dear Madam/Sir,

During the last meeting of the Advisory Committee (AC) of the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas (ASCOBANS), Parties discussed the annual whale hunts on the Faeroe Islands and their potential impact on the populations protected under ASCOBANS.

Of particular concern was the take of Risso's dolphins (*Grampus griseus*), which according to the catch statistics provided on <http://whaling.fo/Default.aspx?ID=7125> has started only in 2009 and was expanded considerably in 2010.

This cetacean species is native and locally abundant in the waters of the ASCOBANS area, while your publication "Whales and Whaling in the Faeroe Islands" (Update March 2010) characterises it as a species "very uncommon in Faroese waters". Recent trend analyses of the distribution of this cetacean species, however, suggest a shift of its range further northwards, probably including the Faeroe Islands' waters. In ASCOBANS' understanding, Risso's dolphins had not been subject to the drive hunts in the past and thus are not part of traditional practices.

In many cases, cetaceans from the ASCOBANS area cross national boundaries and might then fall under the jurisdiction of non-ASCOBANS territories, such as the Faeroe Islands. Their status and further trends in population development, along with associated uncertainties, are therefore an issue of direct interest and possible concern to the ASCOBANS Parties.

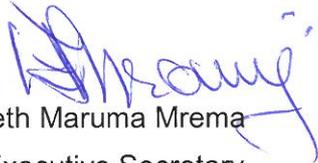
The ASCOBANS Advisory Committee has requested the Secretariat to seek information from the Authorities of the Faeroe Islands on the intentions for future hunts. We would be grateful if you could provide information on the following questions:

- What are the reasons for the expansion of the hunt to include Risso's dolphins, and is this foreseen to continue?
- For how many animals of each species will hunting permissions will be given in 2011?
- What information on population trends, structure and transboundary movements is available to you for setting the catch quotas for each species?

We trust you understand the concern of the ASCOBANS Parties, who within their own national waters undertake efforts for the conservation of all species that are also subject to the drive hunts in the waters of the Faeroe Islands. A clear understanding how this hunt might affect populations within the Agreement Area is therefore crucial.

I would like to close by stating my appreciation for the transparent provision of catch data on the above-mentioned website. This willingness to make available information important for the conservation and management of these shared marine resources is exemplary.

Yours sincerely,



Elizabeth Maruma Mrema  
CMS Executive Secretary  
ASCOBANS Acting Executive Secretary



UTTANRÍKISRÁÐIÐ  
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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CMS Executive Secretary  
ASCOBANS Acting Executive Secretary  
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15 April 2011

Dear Ms Maruma Mrema,

I refer to your letter of 11 April in which you communicate the questions and concerns of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee with regard to the occurrence of Risso dolphins (*Grampus griseus*) in Faroese waters over the last two years.

Risso's dolphin is indeed a hitherto unfamiliar species in Faroese waters. The first known occurrence of this species was on 16 September 2009, when a large group was driven into the bay of Klaksvík. After three animals had stranded and it was confirmed that this was not a familiar species, the local authorities stopped the drive and ordered the rest of the group to be driven out again. A further group of 21 Risso's dolphins, mistakenly thought to be bottlenosed dolphins, was taken in the bay of Hvalba in April 2010.

Risso's dolphins are not one of the species of small whales and dolphins for which Faroese regulations permit hunting. There is no intention of amending the regulations to permit the hunting of this species in Faroese waters, as too little is known about Risso's dolphins in the Faroese area. Since these incidents, all relevant district authorities have been advised by the Ministry of Fisheries that particular precaution should be taken to ensure that no further drive hunts of this species are initiated.

I can assure you, therefore, that there has been no decision to permit directed catches of Risso's dolphins in the Faroes. The impression that there has been some kind of "expansion" in a directed catch is quite erroneous. We welcome that fact that you have taken the time to contact us on this matter in order to ensure that your information is accurate and reliable.

In both cases mentioned above, samples were taken from the stranded animals by the Museum of Natural History for full biological investigation, which will provide new data on a species not previously sampled in this region of the Northeast Atlantic. The results of these analyses will, when complete, be presented to the Scientific Committee of NAMMO, the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission and be subsequently published.

As you will be aware, NAMMCO and ASCOBANS established formal observer relations many years ago. I trust that these relations remain active and that scientific and other relevant information is exchanged between both organisations on a regular basis.

Yours sincerely,

Kate Sanderson, Director  
Fisheries, Trade and Regional Cooperation