

Agenda Item 7.1

Publicity and Outreach

Reports by the Secretariat, Parties and
Partners

Document 7.1

**Report of the Secretariat on
Outreach Activities**

Action Requested

Take note

Submitted by

Secretariat



REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT ON OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

1. This report has been developed in response to [Resolution 9.1](#) *Work Plan for the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee and Secretariat 2021-2024* > Work Plan Activity 48, which requests the Secretariat to report on outreach and communication matters at each meeting of the Advisory Committee. This document reports on activities by the Secretariat since the 26th Meeting of Advisory Committee (AC26), noting also the updated Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) Plan that was endorsed by MOP9 ([ASCOBANS/MOP9/Doc.5.3](#)), and [Resolution 5.8](#) *Educational and Promotional Activities* (2006).

ASCOBANS 30th Anniversary

2. The 30th anniversary of ASCOBANS was officially marked on 17 March 2022 - the date when the Agreement was concluded and opened for signature at the United Nations Headquarter in New York. As requested by AC26, an Intersessional Working Group was established to support the Secretariat with the anniversary communications activities. The group convened in January 2022.
3. The Secretariat produced the following communications items to celebrate the anniversary:
 - Letters to the Parties from the Executive Secretary
 - [Anniversary video](#)
 - [Press release](#)
 - [Video message](#) and a [statement](#) from the Executive Secretary
 - [Article](#) on the ASCOBANS webpage
 - Anniversary visuals to accompany the articles and social media messaging.
4. The Secretariat also launched the ASCOBANS [Twitter account](#) in March 2022, and posted several social media messages for both Twitter and [Facebook](#). The anniversary messaging continues throughout the year.
5. In addition, the Secretariat built a dedicated anniversary [webpage](#) including a snapshot timeline, a brief history of ASCOBANS, and messages and videos received from Parties and Partners.
 - Steffi Lemke, Minister of the Environment, Germany
 - Penina Blankett, Ministry of the Environment, Finland
 - Anne-Marie Svoboda, Ministry of the Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, the Netherlands
 - Katarzyna Kaminska, Vice-Chair of the AC, Poland
 - Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management
 - Rüdiger Stempel, HELCOM
 - Jörn Schmidt, ICES
 - Rebecca Lent, IWC
 - Geneviève Desportes, NAMMCO
 - Mark Simmonds, OceanCare
 - Dominic Pattinson, OSPAR
 - Chris Butler-Stroud, WDC
 - Chris Johnson, WWF
 - Prof. Krzysztof Skóra Hel Marine Station, Poland

Further submissions are welcome to celebrate the anniversary year.

6. Inger Andersen, UNEP Executive Director, issued the following message on the occasion, also available via the [ASCOBANS website](#):

“As UNEP commemorates its 50th anniversary, ASCOBANS – the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North-East Atlantic Irish and North Seas – an important specialized environmental treaty that we are so proud is part of the UNEP family – marks 30 years of its existence. 30 years of fostering effective international collaboration for the conservation of small cetaceans in European seas. 30 years of supporting international action grounded in science. 30 years of protecting species from the onslaught of human activity. 30 years of demonstrating that transboundary action for the environment can unify governments and people.

But as with all milestones, the 30th anniversary of the ASCOBANS, is an important opportunity to reflect on how we must move full speed ahead to tackle the impacts of the triple planetary crisis of climate change, of biodiversity loss, of pollution and waste. And move full speed ahead we must, because as the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recently made clear, at only 1.1 degrees Celsius of global warming we are seeing dangerous disruptions across the natural world. Anthropogenic pressures such as bycatch, noise pollution, chemical pollution, and overfishing threaten many small cetacean populations. At the recently concluded fifth session of the UN Environment Assembly, Member States agreed to begin negotiations towards a legally-binding global agreement to end plastic pollution. Such a historic agreement could undoubtedly have a positive impact on marine mammals including small cetaceans- Whales, dolphins, and porpoises – who are in turn, key sentinel species, telling us about the state of the environment and our oceans.

So, bravo to ASCOBANS on this important milestone! We at UNEP and under the auspices of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), look forward to supporting ASCOBANS in demonstrating that international cooperation to protect the natural world is indeed possible, and is a powerful tool to improve the lives of people and the planet we call home.”

Public Events

7. The 20th International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise (IDBHP) was on 15 May 2022. The IDBHP aims to promote public support through (national) institutions staging various events and exhibitions at museums and scientific institutions around the Baltic Sea. The aim is that the IDBHP would be observed by at least one notable institution in every country around the Baltic Sea. Parties’ support to ensure this continues is encouraged.
8. The Secretariat invited ASCOBANS Range States and relevant institutions around the Baltic Sea to participate, offering information and materials to support events. Organisers were invited to register their events via the ASCOBANS Facebook page to share reports and pictures. Event notifications were received from Professor Krzysztof Skora Marine Station, and Coalition Clean Baltic. In addition, there were several #IDBHP posts in social media, for example from WWF. The Secretariat also promoted IDBHP via the [ASCOBANS website](#), Twitter, and Facebook, and published an [infographic](#).

Meetings and Scientific Conferences

9. The Secretariat attended a number of online meetings and conferences on cetacean conservation, including the 33rd Conference of the European Cetacean Society (April 2022) and EU Marine Expert Group meeting (June 2022).
10. The Secretariat participated to the 15th International Scientific Wadden Sea Symposium (ISWSS15), which took place in a virtual platform from 30 November to 2 December 2021. The Secretariat presented a [poster](#) exploring potential synergies between ASCOBANS and the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation regarding the work on conserving the harbour porpoise.
11. The Secretariat co-organised a side-event at the UNFCCC Bonn Climate Week in June 2022.

The side-event, *How Ocean life and fisheries management impact the ocean's capacity to mitigate climate change*, had speakers from Our Fish, REV Ocean, CMS, Whale and Dolphin Conservation, Marine Conservation Society, and WWF. The recording is available [here](#).

Electronic Media

12. Website:
 - The Secretariat continued to maintain the ASCOBANS [website](#), with approximately 10-20 news items posted per year and other content updates regarding publications, projects, etc. occurring as required, while also dependent on staff capacity.
 - Due to technological requirements, a major upgrade of CMS Family-wide websites is necessary to improve functionality and to enhance security. The upgrade started in 2021, with the latest content management technology (Drupal 9) and is expected to be delivered by the end of 2022.
13. Social media:
 - Posts on activities have also been shared on the ASCOBANS [Facebook page](#). The Secretariat has shared, for example, updates from relevant meetings, general news stories of relevance to small cetaceans in the Agreement area, news items related to threats to cetaceans, and 30th anniversary posts. Thirty-five posts were shared in 2021. The post with most reach in 2021 was the internship ad (over 800 people), closely followed by news on the first meeting of the Joint Bycatch Working Group. In 2022, over 70 Facebook posts have been published to date, and so far, the video on the harbour porpoise, produced by the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management for the 30th Anniversary of ASCOBANS, has had the most reach (over 5,200 people) in 2022.
 - The ASCOBANS [Twitter account](#) was launched in March 2022 and has had relatively good engagement rates. Fifty-five posts have been published since. To date, the Tweet with the most impressions, i.e. total number of times a Tweet has been seen, is the ASCOBANS 30th anniversary post accompanied by the anniversary video (2,000 impressions).
14. Newsletter: The ASCOBANS Newsletter, which compiles leading news items from the ASCOBANS website from the past year, was circulated in December 2021. The [Newsletter](#) was sent to all contacts in the ASCOBANS database, including Parties, non-Party Range States, Approved Observer Organisations, and other observers.

Publications and Information Material

15. Publications: In December 2021, the Secretariat published a report [Cost-benefit Analysis for Mitigation Measures in Fisheries with High Bycatch](#), commissioned by the Secretariat as requested by AC24. The report, authored by Fiona L. Read, reviews different mitigation measures (acoustic deterrent devices, porpoise alerting devices, reflective nets, acrylic echo enhancers, lights and various technical modifications and changes to fishing practices) that have been trialled in the ASCOBANS region. The cost of implementation and pros and cons of each method are discussed in detail in the relevant sections. The report also reviews alternative fishing methods to replace static nets (i.e. gillnets and entangling nets). The cost of implementation, and pros and cons of the different gears, are discussed in depth in the relevant sections. The publication link was shared with Parties and Observers via email.
16. Information Material: As in the past, and in line with Parties' instructions through the Work Plan, the Secretariat has continued to distribute information material upon request. The material – such as brochures, postcards, leaflets, pens, bags – is being used throughout the Agreement Area during ASCOBANS events and those by other institutions. Most of these can be found in pdf-version on the [ASCOBANS website](#). The Secretariat did not receive any requests for materials during this reporting period.
17. Exhibition Material:
 - ASCOBANS Exhibition and Threat banners: [The Whale Workshop](#) continues presenting

inflatable, life-sized models of cetaceans and other marine life in the Agreement Area in all its shows, also showing an English version of the ten-banner exhibition about the Secretariat and its functions. Another English version of the ASCOBANS exhibition and all five threat banners are on display in the Lithuanian Sea Museum in Vilnius.

- 'Die Letzten 300': '[The Last 300](#)' -exhibition comprises art and design work submitted for a creativity competition organised by Whale and Dolphin Conservation (WDC), NABU, and OceanCare in partnership with ASCOBANS Secretariat in 2013, targeting German-speaking areas. The Secretariat currently stores this exhibition in the UN building in Bonn, Germany. The majority of exhibits is available for interested institutions and organisations to display.

18. Season's Greetings card: In 2021, the Secretariat reached out to the Independent Bonn International School (IBIS) which organised the Season's Greetings card competition within the school. The winner artwork (see below) was announced on the ASCOBANS website and Facebook page in December 2021.

