

Agenda Item 9

ASCOBANS Work Plan: Overview of
Implementation

Document 9

**ASCOBANS Work Plan 2021-2024:
Overview of Implementation**

Action Requested

- Take note
- Comment

Submitted by

Secretariat



ASCOBANS WORK PLAN 2021-2024: OVERVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION

This document presents an overview of the progress made in 2022 on implementation of the ASCOBANS Work Plan 2021-2024 adopted at the 9th Meeting of the Parties (2020). Colour codes for the status are:

Done
Partly done or an ongoing activity
No progress
Requires action by AC27
Scheduled or to be undertaken at a later date

WORK PLAN ACTIVITY	LINK TO EXTANT RESOLUTIONS	ACTION BY	TIMING	Status (where applicable)	Related AC27 docs
Habitat Conservation and Management					
Fisheries-related Threats					
1. Review new information on bycatch and associated strandings, bycatch mitigation and monitoring measures, including remote electronic monitoring and any further new techniques as well as local initiatives, and fisheries effort. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	9.2 Baltic Proper Harbour Porpoise 8.3 Jastarnia Plan 8.4 (Rev.MOP9) Common Dolphins 8.5 (Rev.MOP9) Bycatch 8.9 Cumulative Impacts	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2022	Covered by 2021 National Report and AC27. JBWG1 (Feb 2021) partly addressed this; recommendations available. Report on bycatch monitoring methods published Sept 2021.	NR.1-10 Inf.2 Doc.2.1a Doc.2.1b
2. Identify future pilot studies for bycatch mitigation, taking into account the outputs of the review of mitigation measures in fisheries with high bycatch within the ASCOBANS Agreement Area, and in close liaison with other initiatives (e.g. IWC Bycatch Mitigation Initiative).	8.5 (Rev.MOP9) Bycatch	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	As soon as possible	Review of mitigation measures published in December 2021. WPA will be dealt by the JBWG and/or the planned Expert workshop to recommend small cetacean conservation objectives in relation to	

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				anthropogenic removals (AC26/AP50).	
3. First meeting of the Joint Bycatch Working Group to be organized as soon as possible and in partnership with ACCOBAMS and the agreed host country, addressing issues in line with its Terms of Reference.		Secretariat and the Joint Bycatch Working Group	2021	Meeting held in Feb 2021 (online).	
4. Review whether the following remain appropriate, bearing in mind the overall objective of the Agreement to achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for small cetaceans, as well as relevant regulations and work carried out under those, and to make recommendations to Parties as appropriate: (a) the current maximum annual anthropogenic removal rate of 1.7 per cent of the best available estimate of abundance for harbour porpoise; (b) the current intermediate precautionary aim of reducing bycatch to less than 1 per cent of the best available estimate of abundance; (c) the objective of restoring and/or maintaining management units or populations to 80 per cent or more of their carrying capacity; (d) the assessment/management units that have been proposed for regularly occurring species.	8.5 Bycatch (Rev.MOP9) 5.7 Research 5.5 Incidental Take 3.3 Incidental Take	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2022	This activity will be dealt by the JBWG and/or the planned Expert workshop to recommend small cetacean conservation objectives in relation to anthropogenic removals AC26/AP50). Host needed for the Expert workshop.	
5. Make recommendations on appropriate triggers indicating when an environmental limit (the sum of all interactions within the environment that impact animals) is at risk of being reached or exceeded.	8.5 Bycatch (Rev.MOP9)	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2022	As above.	
6. Review new information on resource depletion and its impacts on small cetacean populations. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	9.4 Food Availability and Resource Depletion 8.9 Cumulative Impacts	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2022	Covered by 2021 National Report and AC27.	NR.1-10 Inf.2 Doc.2.2

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Disturbance (incl. potential physical impacts)					
7. Review new information on underwater noise , its impacts on small cetaceans and their prey species, mitigation measures, technological developments, best practices and guidelines. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	8.6 Ocean Energy 8.8 Munitions 8.9 Cumulative Impacts 8.11 (Rev.MOP9) Noise EIA Guidelines 6.2 Offshore Construction 5.4 Adverse Effects	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2021	Covered by 2020 National Report and AC26.	
8. Assess whether national navies' mitigation protocols for use of military sonar are effective. This requires Parties to request the mitigation protocols from the navies.	8.8 Munitions 8.9 Cumulative Impacts 8.11 (Rev.MOP9) Noise EIA Guidelines 5.4 Adverse Effects	AC (incl. relevant Working Group) / Parties	2021	Request sent to Parties in 2021; no protocols received to date. Could be covered in the workshop with NATO and navies (not yet scheduled) (AC26/AP3).	
9. Review new information on ocean energy , its impacts on small cetaceans, mitigation measures, technological developments, best practices and guidelines. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	8.6 Ocean Energy 8.9 Cumulative Impacts 6.2 Offshore Construction 5.4 Adverse Effects	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2021	Covered by 2020 National Report and AC26.	
10. Review new information on the cetacean watching industry , impacts on small cetaceans, best practices and guidelines. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	8.9 Cumulative Impacts	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2023		
11. Review new information on recreational sea use , impacts on small cetaceans, best practices and guidelines. Make	8.9 Cumulative Impacts	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2023		

WORK PLAN ACTIVITY	LINK TO EXTANT RESOLUTIONS	ACTION BY	TIMING	Status (where applicable)	Related AC27 docs
recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.					
12. Review new information on other sources of disturbance , impacts on small cetaceans, best practices and guidelines. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	8.9 Cumulative Impacts 5.4 Adverse Effects	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2023		
Habitat Change and Degradation (incl. potential physical impacts)					
13. Review new information on underwater munitions and, their impacts on small cetaceans and cetacean habitat. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	8.8 Munitions 8.9 Cumulative Impacts	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2021	Covered by 2020 National Report and AC26.	
14. Review new information on marine debris (ingestion and entanglement), including microplastics, and its impacts on small cetaceans. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	9.3 Marine Debris 8.9 Cumulative Impacts	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2022	Covered by 2021 National Report and AC27.	NR.1-10 Inf.2
15. Review new information on other forms of pollution and hazardous substances, and their impacts on small cetaceans and cetacean habitat. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	8.7 PCBs 8.9 Cumulative Impacts 7.4 Chemical Pollution 5.7 Research	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2023		
16. Review new information on ship strikes and their impacts on small cetaceans. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	8.9 Cumulative Impacts 5.4 Adverse Effects	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2023		
17. Review new information on climate change and ocean acidification, and the impacts these have on small cetaceans, as for example distribution, habitat, and prey. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	8.9 Cumulative Impacts	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2023		
18. Review new information on physical habitat change , e.g. from construction, and its impacts on small cetaceans, their prey	8.9 Cumulative Impacts	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2023		

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and their habitat. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.					
19. Review new information on any other issues , including emerging issues posing a potential threat, and the impact they have on small cetaceans, their prey and their habitat. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	8.9 Cumulative Impacts	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2023	This is done annually, based on issues noted in National Reports and as raised at meetings.	NR.1-10 Inf.2
Management of Cumulative Impacts					
20. Review best practice approaches to management of cumulative impacts on small cetaceans and their habitats, such as marine spatial planning. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	8.9 Cumulative Impacts	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2021	MSP was covered by 2020 National Report and AC26.	
21. Contribute to the development or updating of risk maps showing the spatial and temporal (by season) distribution of activities that have an impact on cetaceans, including information provided in National Reports (in the context of marine spatial planning), taking into account the work done by other organizations (funding may be required).	8.1 (Rev.MOP9) National Reporting	AC	2024		
Area-based Conservation / Marine Protected Areas					
22. Review best practice approaches to management of marine protected areas for small cetaceans. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	8.1 (Rev.MOP9) National Reporting 5.7 Research	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2023	MPA management workshop organised in 2021 & 2022.	
23. Contribute to the development or updating of the map of MPAs where cetaceans form part of the selection criteria, for the entire ASCOBANS Area, including information provided in National Reports, taking into account the work done by other organizations (funding may be required).	8.1 (Rev.MOP9) National Reporting	AC	2024		

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Species Action Plans and Regional Initiatives					
24. Evaluate progress in the implementation of the Recovery Plan for Baltic Harbour Porpoises (Jastarnia Plan), establish further implementation priorities, carry out the periodic review of the Plan and promote the implementation of the Plan.	8.3 Jastarnia Plan 7.1 Porpoise Conservation 6.1 Jastarnia and North Sea Plans	Jastarnia Group	At each annual meeting	Done at JG18 (March 2022), JG17 (May 2021)	Inf.3.1b
25. Evaluate progress in the implementation of the Conservation Plan for Harbour Porpoises in the North Sea, establish further implementation priorities, carry out the periodic review of the Plan (following national consultations and any national conservation plans) and promote the implementation of the Plan.	7.1 Porpoise Conservation 6.1 Jastarnia and North Sea Plans	North Sea Group	At each annual meeting	Done at NSG10 (Jan 2022), NSG9 (Jan 2021)	Inf.3.3b
26. Evaluate progress in the implementation of the Conservation Plan for Harbour Porpoises in the Western Baltic, the Belt Seas and the Kattegat, establish further implementation priorities, carry out the periodic review of the Plan and promote the implementation of the Plan.	7.1 Porpoise Conservation	Jastarnia Group	At each annual meeting	Done at JG17 (May 2021)	Inf.3.2 Inf.3.1b
27. Evaluate progress in the implementation of the Species Action Plan for the North-East Atlantic Common Dolphin, promote its ongoing implementation, establish further priorities, carry out the periodic review of the Plan.	8.4 (Rev.MOP9) Common Dolphins	Common Dolphin Group	At each meeting	Meeting planned to take place before end of 2022.	
28. Review progress and actions in the “Extension Area”, maintain or establish collaboration, as appropriate.	8.1 (Rev.MOP9) National Reporting 7.3 Actions in Extension Area 5.3 Extension of Area	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	At each AC meeting	To be discussed at AC27.	
Surveys and Research					
Biological Information					
29. Review new information on population size, distribution, structure, life-history parameters and causes of any changes in the ASCOBANS Area of populations of small cetaceans. Make	8.1 (Rev.MOP9) National Reporting	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2022	Covered by 2021 National Report and AC27.	NR.1-10 Inf.2

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appropriate recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities.	5.7 Research				
Monitoring and Survey Schemes					
30. Review new information on monitoring programmes relevant for small cetaceans, their prey and their habitat. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	8.1 (Rev.MOP9) National Reporting 5.7 Research	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2022	Covered by 2021 National Report and AC27.	NR.1-10 Inf.2
31. Review new information on dedicated surveys and other research relevant for small cetaceans, their prey and their habitat. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	8.1 (Rev.MOP9) National Reporting 5.7 Research 4.7 Populations 3.5 Population Studies	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2022	Covered by 2021 National Report and AC27.	NR.1-10 Inf.2
32. Contribute to preparing for and supporting SAMBAH-II, scheduled to start in 2021, including securing funding accordingly.	5.7 Research 4.7 Populations 3.5 Population Studies	AC / Parties	Throughout the intersessional period	SAMBAH-II LIFE application was submitted in Feb 2021 but was not successful.	
33. Contribute to preparing for a SCANS-IV (MMANA Project or equivalent) survey taking into account scientific and geographical coherence for the good assessment of small cetacean populations (in particular common dolphin and harbour porpoise) and securing funding accordingly. The actual boat and aerial survey should be no later than 2022, noting that the next MSFD assessment is due in 2024.	8.1 (Rev.MOP9) National Reporting 5.7 Research 4.7 Populations 3.5 Population Studies	AC / Parties	2021	SCANS-IV surveys started in summer 2022. Update will be given at AC27.	
34. Contribute to the development or updating of maps of survey effort, including information provided in National Reports, taking into account the work done by other organizations where appropriate (funding may be required).	8.1 (Rev.MOP9) National Reporting	AC	2024		

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Project Funding					
35. Issue call for project proposals when instructed to do so by the Advisory Committee, and conduct consultation on prioritization to the next meeting.		Secretariat	When instructed	Call issued in March 2021; proposals were considered by AC26.	
36. Prepare for each meeting of the Advisory Committee an overview of approved activities requiring funding.		Secretariat	At each AC Meeting	Done.	Doc.19
Use of Bycatches and Strandings					
Stranding Networks and Strandings					
37. Review new information on the establishment and functionality of stranding networks, especially with a view to facilitating liaison and skill-sharing. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	8.10 (Rev.MOP9) Stranding Response	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2022	Covered by 2021 National Report and AC27.	NR.1-10 Inf.2
38. Engage actively in the ongoing work on best practice guidelines for stranding events in the frameworks of the International Whaling Commission and ACCOBAMS.	8.10 (Rev.MOP9) Stranding Response	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups) / Secretariat	Throughout the intersessional period	Sec participated in IWC Strandings Initiative SG meeting in 2021.	
39. Facilitate development of guidelines for responses to individuals or groups of live small cetaceans at risk in dangerous circumstances.	8.10 (Rev.MOP9) Stranding Response	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	Throughout the intersessional period		
40. Review new information provided through the national reports. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	8.1 (Rev.MOP9) National Reporting 8.10 (Rev.MOP9) Stranding Response	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2022	Covered by 2021 National Report and AC27.	NR.1-10 Inf.2
41. Promote the use of joint ASCOBANS/ACCOBAMS best practice on cetacean post-mortem investigation and tissue sampling, and standardize reporting procedures of Post-Mortem Examinations statistics.	8.10 (Rev.MOP9) Stranding Response	AC / Secretariat / Parties	Throughout the intersessional period	Reporting procedures discussed with IWC, ACCOBAMS, HELCOM. Meeting on database planning foreseen.	

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42. Continue monitoring new information on the causes of strandings and mortality of cetaceans, as well as best practice guidance on stranding responses and necropsies, and to make recommendations to Parties as appropriate.	8.10 (Rev.MOP9) Stranding Response 5.7 Research	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2022	Covered by 2021 National Report and AC27.	NR.1-10 Inf.2
43. Contribute to the development or updating of a map showing location and numbers of strandings (both dead and alive), including information provided in National Reports, taking into account the work done by other organizations where appropriate.	8.1 (Rev.MOP9) National Reporting	AC	2024		
Information and Education					
Information, Outreach and Education					
44. Develop the ASCOBANS website and other information material as needed, aiming to meet the needs of a wide range of target audiences in the languages of the Agreement Area.	5.8 Education and Promotion	Secretariat	Throughout the intersessional period	Ongoing. Digital material produced in 2022 (for 30 th anniversary and IDBHP).	Doc.7.1
45. Support annual celebration of the International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise on the 3 rd Sunday in May.	8.3 Jastarnia Plan	Parties / Partners / Secretariat	Every year	Ongoing.	Doc.7.1
46. Facilitate presentation of the ASCOBANS Outreach and Education Award at MOP10.		Secretariat / AC	2023		
47. Take advantage of attendance at other fora to give presentations or make information available on topics related to ASCOBANS.		Secretariat / Parties / Partners	Throughout the intersessional period	Ongoing.	
48. Report on communication and outreach matters to the Advisory Committee.		Secretariat	At each AC Meeting	Reported to AC27, AC26.	Doc.7.1
Stakeholder Involvement					
49. Work towards strengthening or establishing positive relationships with stakeholders, especially the fishing industry and European Fisheries Advisory Councils.		AC / Secretariat	Throughout the intersessional period	BALTFISH Presidency (Latvia) attended JG18.	

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Institutional Issues					
Meetings, Working Groups and Workshops					
50. Undertake a work prioritization exercise, involving ranking the different activities of the Work Plan how the Advisory Committee sees fit.		AC	2021	Requires action by AC27.	
51. Establish an intersessional working group to identify the barriers to understanding and improving conservation status of data deficient taxa. This will include identifying which species and populations are of particular concern and how their status might be best remedied.		AC	2021	Small group established at MOP9. TOR to be established. More members are welcome.	
52. Ensure Advisory Committee Meetings are organized as scheduled, with papers circulated one month in advance of the meetings.		Secretariat	For each AC Meeting	Done for AC26, AC27.	
53. Arrange for a special session dealing with a species selected by the previous meeting at each meeting of the Advisory Committee, covering issues such as population status and structure, distribution, abundance, life history, threats and pressures, the conservation status and recommendations for research and conservation actions.		AC / Secretariat	For each AC Meeting	Bottlenose Dolphin covered at AC26. No species requested for AC27. A species for AC28 to be discussed at AC27.	
54. Organize meetings of regional working groups (Jastarnia Group, North Sea Group, Common Dolphin Group) at intervals defined in each group's TOR.		Secretariat	Throughout the intersessional period	JG17 (May 2021), NSG10 (Jan 2022), JG18 (March 2022). CDG3 planned.	
55. Organize workshops including at the annual conferences of the ECS on topics of priority interest to ASCOBANS, funding permitting.		Secretariat	As instructed	AC25 requested to organise a workshop on common dolphin at ESC, next conference in April 2023. AC27 to consider funding.	Doc.19
56. Support intersessional correspondence working groups as needed.		Secretariat	Throughout the	IWG Beaked Whales supported in 2021. IWG on harbour porpoise listings	

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			intersessional period	supported in 2021-2022.	
57. Seek to secure a host for MOP10 at least a year in advance of the meeting; otherwise arrange for it to be held in Bonn.		Secretariat	2023		
Budgetary and Administrative Matters					
58. Report on budgetary and administrative issues to the Advisory Committee.		Secretariat	At each AC Meeting	Reported to AC27, AC26.	Doc.18.1 Doc.18.2 Doc.18.3
59. Prepare draft budget options and resolutions on budgetary and administrative issues for consideration at the last meeting of the Advisory Committee prior to MOP10.		Secretariat / AC	2023		
60. Encourage Parties and partner organizations to provide voluntary contributions for projects prioritized by the AC or outreach initiatives.		Secretariat	Throughout the intersessional period	Ongoing.	
61. Develop funding arrangements for projects prioritized by the Advisory Committee and Meeting of Parties.		Secretariat	Throughout the intersessional period	Ongoing.	
Cooperation with Other Organizations					
62. Identify priorities and complementarity and improve cooperation between ASCOBANS and institutions of the European Union.		AC / Secretariat	Throughout the intersessional period		
63. Ensure close collaboration with the Secretariats and scientific advisory bodies of the CMS Family on all issues of mutual interest.		Secretariat	Throughout the intersessional period	Ongoing.	
64. Seek to cooperate closely with ECS, HELCOM, ICES, IWC, NAMMCO, OSPAR, UNCLOS, UNEP and other relevant organizations by determining possible win-wins, including those activities that require mapping (21, 23, 34, 43).	9.3 Marine Debris 8.6 Ocean Energy 8.7 PCBs 8.8 Munitions	AC / Secretariat	Throughout the intersessional period	Reports submitted to DOALOS, IWC SC68D. Ongoing discussions with several entities.	

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	8.10 (Rev.MOP9) Stranding Response 5.8 Education and Promotion				
65. Seek to collaborate with the ICES Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species (WGBYC), the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) established by the European Union, the Regional Coordination Groups, the IWC Bycatch Mitigation Initiative, and other relevant organizations addressing bycatch.	8.5 (Rev.MOP9) Bycatch	AC	Throughout the intersessional period	Ongoing.	
66. Convey information on the effects of PCBs on small cetaceans to UNEP, the Stockholm Convention, the CLRTAP Protocol on POPs, HELCOM and OSPAR for further consideration and possible action, and seek to engage with these processes as far as feasible.	8.7 PCBs	Secretariat / AC	Throughout the intersessional period		
67. Seek to strengthen collaboration with civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations.		AC / Partners / Secretariat	Throughout the intersessional period	Ongoing.	
68. Consider the relationship of ASCOBANS to other organizations (e.g. OSPAR, HELCOM, IWC, EU Commission, European Topic Centre for Nature Conservation), in order to identify potential duplication or gaps in efforts. Any observations to be communicated to MOP10 in the form of a draft resolution.		AC	Throughout the intersessional period		
69. Compile a list of Dates of Interest and report back on issues relevant to ASCOBANS to each meeting of the Advisory Committee. This requires participants at meetings identified in the list to confirm their attendance by email to the Secretariat after the meeting.		Secretariat / Parties / Partners	At each AC Meeting	Done.	Doc.6.2 Inf.6.1
70. Insofar as budgetary provisions and guidance by the Advisory Committee allow for it, ensure proper representation at meetings of other relevant organizations.		Secretariat	Throughout the intersessional period	Ongoing.	

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National Reports					
71. Identify and, where possible, address any issues that Parties might encounter regarding the compilation of the National Report.		Secretariat	Throughout the intersessional period	Technical issues addressed.	
72. Make full use of the information submitted in order to assess progress in the implementation of the Agreement and make recommendations to Parties.		AC	Annually	Requires action by AC27.	NR.1-10
73. Tailor the agenda for each of the meetings of the Advisory Committee to reflect the topics selected for the previous year's national reports.		AC	Annually	Done for AC27, AC26.	
Other Matters					
74. Consider output of the informal working group on large cetaceans in the Agreement Area, which summarizes information on the species and addresses aspects of their conservation.		AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	As appropriate during the intersessional period		
75. Promote accession of non-Party Range States and the European Commission to the Agreement.		Secretariat / Parties	Throughout the intersessional period		
76. Present to the Meeting of Parties a summary of, <i>inter alia</i> , progress made and difficulties encountered since the last Meeting of Parties.		Secretariat	At MOP10		
77. Support Parties, Range States and Agreement bodies in implementing this Work Plan, in so far as primary responsibility does not lie with the Secretariat.		Secretariat	Throughout the intersessional period	Ongoing	
78. Present to Parties, each year no later than 30 June, provided all reports have been received sufficiently in advance of that date, a compilation of Annual National Reports.		Secretariat	At each AC Meeting	The Secretariat did not meet the deadline, but compilation posted for AC27.	Inf.2