

Agenda Item 15.2, 15.3

Publicity and Outreach

Report of the Secretariat, Extension of the Year
of the Dolphin

Document 26

**Report of the Secretariat on Publicity
and Outreach Activities, including Year
of the Dolphin**

Action Requested

- take note of the information submitted
- comment

Submitted by

Secretariat



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

Report of the Secretariat on Publicity and Outreach Activities, including Year of the Dolphin



1. In September 2006, at the 5th Meeting of the Parties to ASCOBANS, Resolution No. 8 on educational and promotional activities was adopted. This resolution recommends that the Secretariat should continue and step up its activities to raise awareness of issues related to cetacean conservation in the Agreement Area and to promote the Agreement itself with non-Party Range States. It further particularly proposes the production of targeted information materials on conservation issues concerning small cetaceans in the region.
2. This document highlights key publicity and outreach activities of the Secretariat since the 14th Meeting of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee.

Information Material

3. In line with the Triennium Work Plan 2007-2009, which instructs the Secretariat to continue translating information material and stepping up its awareness raising activities, a variety of material has been produced or is under production.
4. Following a request by the Advisory Committee, the ASCOBANS Secretariat has started publishing a newsletter, reporting on current activities and events and highlighting upcoming ones of interest to the Parties. Two editions have so far been published and widely circulated, with the next foreseen shortly after the Advisory Committee Meeting.
5. The Entry into Force of the Extension to the Agreement Area means that the ASCOBANS leaflets need updating. Using part of the German voluntary contribution for 2007, the Secretariat has had an updated text translated and has circulated it to our contacts in the various countries. For the North Sea and Atlantic riparian states, a different concluding paragraph should be considered, since the current one highlights the situation in the Baltic Sea. Since we have now with the Extension a considerable number of countries with no direct interest in the Baltic Sea, it seems fitting to have two “master versions” of the brochure, with the French, English, Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese versions referring to another example, applying to the western Agreement area. Suggestions for an example to be used in the “western edition” of the leaflet are highly welcome.
With both in-kind and financial support from Germany through their voluntary contribution, a Russian version of the leaflet was produced. To date, it is only available as a PDF file and will be launched on the ASCOBANS website after an announcement in the next Newsletter.
Germany has agreed to using part of the voluntary contribution for 2008 to produce the updated versions of the leaflets in all 15 languages foreseen (English, Danish, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Swedish) as PDF for download as well as in sufficient quantity in print. This support is highly appreciated.
In order to minimise costs and streamline efforts to keep the leaflets updated, the Secretariat would like to propose not including country specific contacts on the back of the leaflet, but instead keeping a blank space on which contact information can be printed or stamped as needed by each institution. Not only would the dissemination of outdated information be avoided, this way one version per language would also suffice, thereby halving production costs for the Dutch and French leaflets.
6. The Secretariat has provided a translation of the Coalition Clean Baltic brochure “The Baltic Harbour Porpoise Needs Protection!” into German as in-kind support. In return, two

thousand copies of the publication were made available to the Secretariat free of charge for use in local outreach events.

7. Also making use of the German voluntary contribution for 2008, an updated and modernised exhibition for ASCOBANS is planned. This will be produced in a format compatible with a new multi-media exhibition CMS is producing and can be used in conjunction or on its own. Further, a stand-up banner for the International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise will be produced, which will first be used on the margins of the CBD Conference of Parties in May 2008 in Bonn.

8. The Secretariat has also shipped information material on ASCOBANS (leaflets and postcards) to over ten institutions for their activities.

Website

9. The Triennium Work Plan 2007-2009 also instructs the Secretariat to continue to develop the ASCOBANS website, the following changes have been introduced or are planned.

10. Besides the regular maintenance of the website, eighteen news articles have been published since AC 14. These cover a wide variety of issues and link to further information where appropriate. The starting page to which one is directed after the intro has been changed – visitors now arrive at the News and Events page, helping them to keep abreast of any developments.

11. The website contains a number of new features now. Upon request from one Party, all electronically available AC documents of previous meetings were posted on the website for the first time. In order to ease handling of the page, an overview of the meetings with links to the reports and meeting documents has been added. Reports of the first five AC meetings are at present still only available as hardcopies from the Secretariat, but will be scanned and made available on the website in due course. The same applies to any documents currently not found online.

Linked from the News and Events page the ASCOBANS Newsletters can also be downloaded. Further, an option to sign up for the Newsletter was added and has already attracted a few subscriptions from the public.

12. The contact form, which has been a long-standing feature on the website, enjoys frequent use by the public. Almost 30 relevant contacts were made since AC 14 on a wide range of issues. The Secretariat endeavours to answer queries promptly and frequently refers interested people to sources of further information.

13. In order to follow up the instruction in the Work Plan to develop the website with a view to meeting the needs of a wide range of target audiences, a contract has been made with our website company using parts of the German voluntary contribution, with the main objective of modernising the look of the website and adding new pages. The Secretariat will ensure continuity in design and content throughout the process and that the distinctive institutional status of ASCOBANS is retained, alongside its connections with UNEP and the CMS Family of Agreements.

The International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise

14. On Sunday, 20 May 2007, for the fifth year running, museums and aquaria in countries around the Baltic Sea celebrated the International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise (IDBHP). Various institutions in Finland, Lithuania and Germany took part in the event. An updated report on IDBHP activities and suggestions for outreach events on that occasion, the "IDBHP Handbook", is available on the ASCOBANS website.

15. Also in 2008, the Secretariat will make an advance notification of all planned activities for relevant events around 18 May that have been reported on the website and produce the

updated "IDBHP Handbook" for future reference. Furthermore, preparations for the Secretariat's own outreach event on the occasion of the IDBHP are in full swing. Making use of the unique outreach opportunity presented by the 9th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (19-30 May), which will take place in Bonn, ASCOBANS will share a large tent with CMS and the other Agreements along the Plaza of Diversity outside the conference venue. During the first few days, special room will be given to drawing attention to the Baltic Harbour porpoise. The new IDBHP banner will be used as an eye-catcher and matching postcards will be distributed to the visitors.

Other Outreach Opportunities

16. Following the 14th Advisory Committee Meeting, the ASCOBANS Coordinator stayed on in San Sebastián, Spain, to attend the 21st Annual Conference of the European Cetacean Society. This opportunity was also used to promote ASCOBANS and the Year of the Dolphin at the conference venue and in the San Sebastián Aquarium, a highly popular destination both among locals and holidaymakers. More than two thousand leaflets, calendars and posters and hundreds of postcards were distributed to the public and marine scientists alike. Also, two large exhibition panels were displayed prominently at the venue.

17. The second ASCOBANS Award was given to the German NGO "Gesellschaft zum Schutz der Meeressäuger" (GSM – Society for the Conservation of Marine Mammals) for its outstanding role in raising awareness, educating as well as engaging the public and facilitating data gathering on cetaceans and other marine mammals. The handover of the glass reproduction of the ASCOBANS logo with the name of the Award winner engraved took place on the fifth Harbour Porpoise Day.

18. Upon a suggestion by the Finnish Coordinator, the Secretariat made efforts to be involved in the Baltic Sea Day in St. Petersburg, taking place in March 2008. Unfortunately, contacts could not be established, but efforts will be renewed in time for the event in 2009. Many Russian scientists take part in this event and hopes are that by informing them about the work and mandate of ASCOBANS, informal collaboration will be strengthened significantly.

19. In addition to these activities, the Secretariat continues to actively seek and maintain contacts with relevant governmental and non-governmental institutions and organisations throughout the Agreement area. The Executive Secretary meets with Members of Parliament, representatives of governmental and non-governmental institutions, the media and representatives of international organisations and the diplomatic corps in the host country. The ASCOBANS Secretariat also maintains a dialogue with the general public in the Bonn region.

Recruitment Efforts

20. On 17 August 2007 a delegation of the Russian Environment Ministry visited the CMS Family at the premises in Bonn. The Secretariat made good use of this opportunity and presented the Agreement and its activities, with special emphasis on the Jastarnia Plan. Procedures for accession were also explained in this very cordial meeting.

21. In early 2008, targeted letters were sent to the governments of Estonia and Ireland to inform them of the Entry into Force of the Extension of the Agreement Area and encourage accession to the Agreement. Similar letters, adapted to the specific situation in and relationship with the respective country, will be sent to the other non-Parties bordering the ASCOBANS Area in due course.

22. Also the Environment Ministers of those Parties that have not yet formally accepted the Amendment received letters from the Secretariat, encouraging the finalisation of the process.

The Year of the Dolphin

23. ASCOBANS has played an increasingly active role in the Year of the Dolphin campaign. Worldwide, the official Partners CMS, ACCOBAMS, ASCOBANS, TUI and WDCCS have accepted more than 40 official supporters. These supporters are active in the development of YoD partnerships and cooperation with a focus on research and conservation projects, awareness raising, fundraising, public events, publications, media and lectures.

24. Some Governments in the ASCOBANS Area have supported the YoD in form of voluntary contributions and other funding, distribution of information material or provision of dedicated websites: Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and Spain. Activities such as public awareness raising among local communities and tourists, publications on the YoD, educational activities in schools, public events, research and dolphin conservation or launches were initiated in the following countries in the ASCOBANS Area: France, Poland, Portugal, Spain and the UK.

25. A bilateral agreement of CMS with the Dolphin Fund, which has been established by the Coastal Union (EUCC) and the European Cetacean Society with support from Ministries in Belgium and the Netherlands, ensured that five per cent of financial contributions raised by the Dolphin Fund were made available for the YoD campaign in 2007. Further collaboration will take place in 2008. TUI presented a Cheque over more than € 17,000 raised through YoD merchandise in 2007 to CMS. Of this sum, € 5000 was awarded to the Baltic Harbour Porpoise sightings project carried out by the German NGO Gesellschaft zum Schutz der Meeressäugetiere (GSM – Society for the Conservation of Marine Mammals).

26. The Year of the Dolphin website (www.yod2007.org) in English and German received more than 6 Million website hits by the end of 2007. The Dolphin Manual in nine languages and the Dolphin Diploma as an online award were developed with strong support from WDCCS. A YoD exhibition in English and German, YoD banners, posters, leaflets, a calendar and postcards were created to better publicize the campaign. All the publications are available on the YoD website. Numerous articles on the Year of the Dolphin have been published online and in various magazines and newspapers globally, as well as some books produced. A further initiative of WDCCS has been the exhibition of big posters with the slogan “They can’t afford to wait for evolution”. These posters were displayed in Berlin, Potsdam, Cottbus and Göttingen in Germany.

27. Facilitated through the ASCOBANS Secretariat, a Portuguese translation and online edition of the Dolphin Manual was produced. The translation was done as free support by the Portuguese NGO CETUS and TUI sponsored the production of a PDF online version (launched in March 2008). Currently, the YoD partners are locating the funds necessary for print production.

28. The IMAX movie “Whales and Dolphins 3D” will be released in Germany and other European countries starting in March 2008, supported by CMS and WDCCS. In many European countries, especially in Germany, there have been information-, photo- and art exhibitions in connection with the Year of the Dolphin. On 25 September 2007, CMS organized a lecture in cooperation with the Academy for International Education in Bonn: “In defence of dolphins” on Dolphin intelligence and abilities, highlighting the remarkable feats these marine mammals are capable of, held in Bonn by Prof. Thomas White from Loyola Marymount University.

29. Furthermore, the Children’s Day, Nature Conservation Day and the World Animal Day were celebrated in Portugal to mark the Year of the Dolphin. The Netherlands, Belgium and Germany (City of Bonn) had a Dolphin week at schools in October, where children were informed about dolphins. Throughout the whole year, children and young people all over the world are being awarded a Dolphin Diploma by the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCCS) for their active contribution to dolphin protection, a part of the official “Year of the Dolphin 2007” initiative. In February 2008, YoD Awards were presented to numerous children all over the world by WDCCS and CMS for their special initiatives to raise funds and awareness or contribute in another way to the YoD campaign’s success. Furthermore, various educational activities took place at Belgian and German schools in order to raise awareness among kids

and teenagers. Portugal dedicated the Animal Day on 4 October 2007 to the Year of the Dolphin and on the German island of Sylt, there has been a workshop in a new hotel where children as well as adults learned about animal conservation. During the Bonn Open Day in August 2007, which was held for the first time at the UN Campus, and during the UN Day in October 2007 YoD, CMS and ASCOBANS materials were distributed to the public and questions answered.

30. Germany convened a Conference entitled “Year of the Dolphin in Europe – Conservation of Small Cetaceans and Marine Protected Areas” in Stralsund from 29 October - 1 November 2007. Representing both CMS and ASCOBANS, the CMS/ASCOBANS Coordinator provided an overview of the ongoing Year of the Dolphin campaign and explained the aims and elements of the campaign to the audience.

31. Still receiving new offers to support the campaign and publicise it around the world, the Partners decided to continue the campaign into 2008 to give more individuals, organisations and countries the chance to participate in the Year of the Dolphin and to continue to make use of the materials developed and produced as part of the campaign. While the campaign in 2007 was mainly focused on education and awareness raising, the Partners agreed to aim efforts in 2008 at the support of concrete on-the-ground action targeting exclusively the conservation of wild dolphins in their natural habitat through funds raised for the YoD.

32. The ASCOBANS Coordinator and representatives of ACCOBAMS and WDCCS have gathered proposals for projects to be co-funded through the Year of the Dolphin. For this, Parties and partner organisations were contacted and a number of very good suggestions were received. In early March 2008, the Partners met and agreed to enlist the help of the Cetacean Liaison Group, an expert working group advising CMS on cetacean conservation issues, in order to prioritise the projects. Apart from a geographical balance, taking into account actual or emerging cetacean conservation agreements under CMS, the Projects will be chosen on the basis of their usefulness for achieving conservation aims set out in the various agreements.