

Agenda Item 4.1.1

Budgetary Issues

Report of the Secretariat on Finance and
Administrative Issues

Administrative Issues

Document 06

Report on Administrative Issues 2007

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 on Administrative Issues 2007 (submitted by the Secretariat)

Staff Recruitment and Complement

1. In line with the Decision of the 5th Meeting of the Parties to ASCOBANS (The Netherlands, December 2006) as of 1 January 2007 the CMS and ASCOBANS Secretariats were merged for an interim period of three years.
2. The institutional arrangements were designed to ensure long-term security for an independent ASCOBANS Agreement within UNEP. Accordingly, only the organisation of the Secretariat has been changed, not the legal standing of either ASCOBANS or CMS. The UNEP/CMS Secretariat now serves as the UNEP/ASCOBANS Secretariat, and the Executive Secretary of CMS is the acting Executive Secretary of ASCOBANS. ASCOBANS MOP5 estimated and budgeted 3% of his time to be devoted to ASCOBANS matters. In reality, the time the CMS Executive Secretary invested into ASCOBANS in 2007 was calculated to amount to 5% of his total working hours. Time exceeding the budgeted 3% have however not been charged to ASCOBANS, but considered unpaid overtime.
3. Since January 2007, the CMS Scientific and Technical Support Officer has also served as Senior ASCOBANS Advisor, with the main task of supervising the day to day running of the Secretariat. ASCOBANS MOP5 estimated 15% of his time to be devoted to ASCOBANS matters during 2007-2008, and made budgetary provision to cover the related costs. However, on the basis of an assessment of time use during the first months after the merger, and considering the junior level of the ASCOBANS Coordinator, the Secretariat proposed to the 14th Meeting of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee (San Sebastián, April 2007) to rectify the time estimate to 20% at least for the year 2007. The additional costs incurred by this time increase were covered by the sum allocated from the Coordinator's budget line. However, the CMS Scientific and Technical Support Officer has according to conservative estimates exceeded the estimated 20% working time foreseen to be devoted to ASCOBANS by an additional 5-10 %, not including the period January to March 2007.
4. Part of the higher time consumption of CMS staff can certainly be accounted for by the need to become familiar with the new task in the initial transition period, which turned out to be more difficult than expected as a consequence of the lack of proper hand-over. Besides that however, a significant amount of time had to be devoted by senior CMS staff to deal with issues unforeseen when the merger was decided. Such issues include recruitment work, the revision of 2005 ASCOBANS accounts generated by a request from the 14th Meeting of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee, which turned out to be particularly complex and time consuming, and turbulence generated by NGOs and individuals critical of the merger.
5. There are however indications that the difficulties outlined above are gradually being solved, and the Secretariat expects to come closer to the working time estimates for these officers in 2008, with the possible exception of the Senior ASCOBANS advisor, for which a use of 15% of the time appears more realistic at this stage than the 10% foreseen at the time of the 14th Meeting of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee.
6. In order to provide ASCOBANS Parties with a focal point within the joined Secretariat, the new position of ASCOBANS Coordinator, a consultancy for the period 2007-2008, was created. In line with the decisions of ASCOBANS MOP5, the requirements for this consultancy position have been made comparable to those of a P2 post in the UN system. 75% of the consultant's time is scheduled for ASCOBANS matters and is to be covered out of the ASCOBANS budget, while 25% is expected to be dedicated to other CMS marine mammals work in a capacity as CMS Marine Mammals Officer and is to be covered out of the CMS budget. This time share has been assessed to have been generally respected in 2007.

7. The recruitment of the ASCOBANS Coordinator has already been reported to, and discussed at AC14, and described again in detail in the 6-monthly overview of the state of affairs on administrative and budgetary issues.

8. The position of ASCOBANS Administrative Assistant, already existing in the ASCOBANS complement of staff prior to the merger, was confirmed by ASCOBANS MOP5 as a full-time UN post for the year 2007, due to become a 50% consultancy position in 2008. The incumbent, Mrs Patricia Stadié, resigned from the position in early June 2007, with resignation to take effect in July 2007. The recruitment process to replace Mrs Stadié was started immediately after the resignation was notified to the Secretariat. Bearing in mind that from January 2008 on the post would be part-time and on a consultancy basis, the Secretariat decided to advertise it as such already, in order to draw applications of people who would be interested in continuing throughout 2008. A vacancy was posted on the CMS and ASCOBANS websites. By end of June 2007, eight applications had been submitted to the Secretariat. Three applicants had been shortlisted and were invited for interviews on 28 June. The interview panel consisted of the AEWA Executive Secretary, the outgoing ASCOBANS Administrative Assistant and the ASCOBANS Coordinator. Questions were scored and the best candidate, Ms Tine Lindberg (Norway), was recommended for the post. The Acting Executive Secretary to ASCOBANS endorsed the recommendation and Ms Lindberg started her duties in early July 2007.

9. After a brief handover period, Ms Lindberg (Norway) took over office operations from Ms Stadié in mid-July 2007. Ms Lindberg's contract was originally signed for three months and was subsequently renewed until the end of the year.

10. In the course of the year, it became apparent that the net reduction in staff time available to the Secretariat by cutting the post of Administrative Assistant to 50% is not without consequences for the work of the Secretariat. A significant part of the duties formerly handled by the full-time assistant now need to be taken care of by the CMS/ASCOBANS Coordinator, who subsequently has less time to spend on other priority tasks, such as efforts to recruit new Parties to the Agreement, cooperation with other MEAs, IGOs, NGOs and other partners or public relations activities.

11. Further, Parties should be aware that the post of CMS Administrative and Fund Management Officer has been vacant since mid-2007. This is affecting not only the operations of ASCOBANS, but equally of CMS and the other co-located CMS Agreements. CMS hopes to be able to fill the post again before the end of 2008, restoring full service.

Other Issues

12. For the period July to September 2007, the ASCOBANS Secretariat enjoyed the support of the intern Mr Christian Bogen, who has degrees in the fields of Foreign Affairs and biology and moved on to complete his Master studies in Biology after his internship. Mr Bogen's tasks included assistance with the preparations of the ASCOBANS/HELCOM Workshops held in October 2007, especially travel; literature research, collation of data and formulation of proposals for the re-evaluation of the Jastarnia Plan; preparation of correspondence with the World Intellectual Property Organisation and the updating and restructuring of the Handbook for the International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise.

13. Since July 2007, the ASCOBANS Secretariat has been in contact with the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) in order to ensure legal protection for the name, acronym and logos of ASCOBANS. After several communications, a request for communication and a reproduction of the emblems and names to be protected could be finalised and communication to governments through WIPO will accordingly take place early in 2008. A related issue, the unauthorised use of "ASCOBANS" for a controversial German NGO website, has continued despite efforts by the Secretariat to persuade the NGO concerned to respect the

rights of ASCOBANS as a UN organisation based in Germany. The German Government has also been informed of CMS/ASCOBANS concerns in relation to this issue.

14. For 2008, the Secretariat has joined the European Cetacean Society as an institutional member. Apart from the discounted registration fee for the Annual Conference, the Secretariat will also receive the Proceedings and Newsletters published by the ECS, thereby helping to keep abreast of developments in the European cetacean research community.

15. Resolution 2d of MOP 5 requests the Secretariat to submit 6-monthly overview of the state of affairs on administrative and budgetary issues to Parties. Accordingly the Secretariat submitted a report covering the period January to June 2007 to the country coordinators. The document at hand is an update of the first Section in the mid-year report.