

**Agenda Item 5.3.2.2: Secretariat paper on direction and scope of future PR work**

**Future Scope and Direction of ASCOBANS PR Activities**

**Submitted by: Secretariat**



**ASCOBANS**

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## **Future Scope and Direction of ASCOBANS PR Activities**

### **1. Background**

The issue of ASCOBANS PR work has repeatedly been on the agenda of ASCOBANS meetings in recent years. MOP 3 (Bristol, 2000), as well as AC 7 (Bruges, 2000) and AC 8 (Nymindegab, 2001) acknowledged that there was a continued need for more intensive PR work to increase public awareness of the Agreement and the issues it deals with. AC 9 (Hindås, 2002) asked the Secretariat to submit a proposal concerning the direction and scope of future PR work to the 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Advisory Committee. The present document was drafted in response to the 10<sup>th</sup> Advisory Committee's request request.

### **2. ASCOBANS promotional and educational Activities 1999 - 2003**

Recognizing the need to increase PR work, the ASCOBANS Secretariat has continuously stepped up its educational and promotional activities since late 1999<sup>1</sup>.

Much of the Secretariat's activities in this domain during the past four years were devoted to equipping the Secretariat with the basic tools needed for PR work of any kind, as these were either non-existent or somewhat insufficient. In addition to this, the Secretariat engaged in special activities related to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Parties in 2000 and the Agreement's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2001.

The following projects have been realized since 1999 or are currently in preparation:

- Information brochures in English and German were printed;
- On the occasion of the Agreement's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, a commemorative volume, entitled *From Idea to Implementation – ASCOBANS Ten Years On* was published;
- While ASCOBANS does not publish a newsletter of its own, the Secretariat regularly contributes to the CMS Bulletin published twice a year;
- The Secretariat disseminates press releases on the occasion of ASCOBANS meetings and other events;
- An "ASCOBANS Guide to Accession" has been produced and distributed to environment ministries in Non-Party Range States. It is obtainable from the ASCOBANS Secretariat and can also be downloaded from the ASCOBANS website;

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<sup>1</sup> Since the sum allocated to the ASCOBANS budget line for "information material" is relatively modest (2,000 USD), this was largely possible due to the German voluntary contributions for the years 1999 - 2003, which were allocated to some extent to public relations. Moreover, the Secretariat received support from the noted British illustrator Martin Camm, who has repeatedly granted the Secretariat the use of his artwork free of charge, and from the Society for the Conservation of Marine Mammals, Hamburg (GSM), which permits ASCOBANS to use some of its photo material at no cost to the Secretariat. The Secretariat would like to express its sincere appreciation and thanks for these valuable contributions.

- The first of what should eventually develop into a series of "ASCOBANS Fact Sheets" has been published. This "Fact Sheet No. 1", dedicated to the Jastarnia Plan, is also available on the ASCOBANS website. A Polish version is in preparation;
- The ASCOBANS website was revamped and is now being updated and improved regularly;
- An ASCOBANS poster, available in Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, German, Swedish and Polish was printed and distributed widely;
- ASCOBANS postcards, stickers and a variety of other "freebies" were produced;
- The Secretariat cooperated with Martin Camm, Hel Marine Station and *Telekomunikacja Polska* to produce a telephone card commemorating the ASCOBANS Baltic Workshop held in Jastarnia, Poland, in January 2002;
- The ASCOBANS Secretariat has developed a new ASCOBANS logo;
- A mobile exhibition, "Harbour Porpoise in Distress" (based on a German-language exhibition produced by the GSM and the German Oceanographic Museum, Stralsund), was produced in 1999. It has been displayed at various locations in Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland since early 2000;
- In 2002, a joint exhibition on the Bonn Convention and its regional agreements was produced in cooperation with the Secretariats of CMS and the other CMS-related agreements. Due to the modular design of the exhibition, the ASCOBANS panels can be displayed both jointly with those of CMS and other agreements or separately, as needed. A second copy of the exhibition is currently being produced to enable the agreements to display their panels independently of CMS;
- An exhibition of Polish art was organized in Bonn on the occasion of the Agreement's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2001;
- Preparations for an "International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise", as suggested by the public awareness working group of the Jastarnia workshop, have begun;
- Plans for a capacity-building workshop for decision-makers from Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs), to be organized jointly with ACCOBAMS, AEWA and EUROBATS in late 2003 or early 2004 are currently being discussed;

In addition to these activities, the Secretariat actively seeks and maintains contacts with relevant governmental and non-governmental institutions and organizations throughout the Agreement area. As the Secretariat is based in Germany, the Executive Secretary meets with Members of Parliament, representatives of governmental and non-governmental institutions, the media and representatives of international organizations and the diplomatic corps in Germany. The ASCOBANS Secretariat also seeks to establish and maintain a dialogue with the general public in the Bonn region in particular by participating in the annual UN Day celebrations, and the "Festival of Nations" taking place annually in Bonn's largest park.

As a general rule it can be said that contacts with governmental and non-governmental national and international institutions in the whole of the ASCOBANS area are greatly facilitated by the integration of ASCOBANS into the UNEP family, as a UN-related institution automatically carries greater weight and receives more attention than an independent secretariat of a largely unknown international agreement.

### **3. Scope and direction of ASCOBANS PR work in the coming triennium**

Without doubt, enhanced information and involvement of stakeholders and the general public can lead to greater understanding and a greater sense of ownership and responsibility with respect to nature conservation. Unfortunately, despite an increase in promotional and educational activities in recent years, public awareness of the existence of small cetaceans and their conservation status and of ASCOBANS is not entirely satisfactory in any of the ASCOBANS Parties and Range States. Interestingly, the general public in the ASCOBANS area often seems more aware of issues related to “exotic“, non-native species than to the cetaceans in their own “backyard“. There are, however, marked differences between countries and also within individual countries. For obvious reasons, the degree of public awareness is generally greater in the coastal areas than in other parts of the ASCOBANS states. This applies not only to the larger countries such as, for instance, Germany or Poland but also to smaller ones such as Latvia and Lithuania.

Large-scale public awareness campaigns launched in a number of member states in recent years have demonstrated, however, that the degree of public awareness can be influenced and increased substantially by coordinated information campaigns. This in turn can lead to an increase in information, for instance on cetacean distribution. However, increasing public awareness demands a continuous effort. Short-lived campaigns with no follow-up are of limited use only.

Clearly, therefore, ASCOBANS should continue its campaign to raise awareness of issues related to cetacean conservation in the Agreement area and to promote the Agreement itself. However, whereas during the past three to four years the Secretariat had to concentrate to a large extent on laying the groundwork for enhanced PR work by producing the necessary information material, there should be a certain shift in emphasis in the coming triennium. The development of new and additional material will remain necessary. However, the Secretariat should now increasingly focus on implementing a coherent PR strategy for the coming years, the contours of which already became visible in the current triennium. In doing so, it should be borne in mind that public awareness programs should, if possible, be geared to specific target groups. Moreover, the Secretariat will need to ensure that it does not overstretch its limited resources. Therefore, while future PR activities will of course still need to cover the whole of the Agreement area and all relevant target groups, particular attention should be devoted to certain key countries and regions and to reaching out to specific target groups. Concerning regional coverage, PR work should be stepped up in particular in the "new" ASCOBANS Member States expected to come on board in the foreseeable future and in Non-Party Range States. Moreover, the Baltic region as a whole will continue to be a principal

focus of attention as considerable promotional and educational work will need to accompany the implementation of the Jastarnia Plan.

The public awareness working group of the Jastarnia Workshop, held in January 2002, identified four target groups for educational and promotional activities. These target groups are relevant not only for Baltic Sea Parties and Range States but for the whole of the Agreement area. ASCOBANS, therefore, needs to reach the following groups:

- administrators, i.e. staff of relevant international institutions, ministries, government agencies and local authorities;
- persons working aboard vessels navigating the Baltic: fishermen, crews of commercial, navy and coastguard vessels, yachtsmen;
- persons working at or near the seaside or doing work related to the marine environment: scientists (including bird watchers), museums and other scientific institutions, lighthouse keepers, rescue services, blue flag stations;
- the general public: institutions such as libraries, universities, zoos, staff of tourist industry, shipping companies, educators, amateur biologists, children.

Ideally, information material and public awareness campaigns should differentiate between the target groups listed above (though, inevitably, there will be some overlap between these groups), with media and messages geared to individual groups. This will, however, not always be possible for lack of financial and staff resources. The following information and messages should therefore be contained in all publications produced and campaigns launched:

- The existence of small cetaceans in the Baltic and North Seas;
- Threats faced by small cetaceans in the Agreement area;
- Descriptions or illustrations at least of the more relevant species;
- Information on ASCOBANS and its role in conserving cetaceans in the Agreement area.

Material intended specifically for the use of relevant professional groups such as administrators, fishermen, educators etc. should, moreover, contain information on some or all of the following:

- The value of the harbour porpoise as both an indicator species and a flagship species;
- Potential commercial benefits of healthy cetacean populations in a healthy marine environment;
- Relevant research;
- Methods to mitigate threats;
- Other international bodies and legal instruments related to marine conservation in general and porpoises in particular;
- Added value to Range States of accession to ASCOBANS.

While in principle all the target groups mentioned above need to be addressed, ASCOBANS will need to differentiate. In some Range States, in particular Non-Party Range States or new Parties, representatives of all target groups may need to be familiarized with ASCOBANS and cetacean-related issues, whereas in others, notably "old" Parties, it may be possible to devote particular attention to specific groups. Two target groups that ASCOBANS should make considerable efforts to reach all across the Agreement area are fishermen on the one hand, children and young people on the other.

In carrying out its PR activities, the Secretariat feels it would be well advised to continue to make use of a broad array of methods and media, many of which are now already at the disposal of the Secretariat:

a) Publications, electronic media etc.:

- The brochures and leaflets currently used by the Secretariat should remain in use and be reprinted as necessary. Stocks of the ASCOBANS poster first produced in 1999 are now exhausted. The poster, which is extremely popular, should therefore also be reprinted, the reference to "Flipper" in the English and German versions should, however, be deleted. The production of Estonian, French, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish and Russian versions of the brochures and posters appears recommendable.

Target groups: all target groups.

- Specialized publications for specific professional groups, such as the "ASCOBANS Guide to Accession", the "ASCOBANS Fact Sheets" or a reader on the regional Agreements concluded within the framework of CMS, to be used in capacity-building events, should be produced and disseminated. In this connection, cooperation with ACCOBAMS and the Swiss Cetacean Society in producing a joint educational tool based on the "ACCOBAMS Educational Kit" (cf. AC 9 report, p. 16) might also be reconsidered.

Target groups: Various relevant professional groups, in particular decision-makers, administrators, scientists, fishermen.

- The ASCOBANS website should be maintained and continuously updated and improved.

Target groups: all target groups.

- Videos/DVDs would be a useful addition to the ASCOBANS PR "arsenal". For budgetary reasons the production of such material would, however, likely be impossible for ASCOBANS. Rather than reinvent the wheel, ASCOBANS should therefore be allowed to make use of existing material produced by other institutions or to co-fund the production of such material, which would then bear the logos of both ASCOBANS and the institution (or institutions) the Agreement cooperates with. Similarly, TV commercials would be highly useful in reaching a broad audience, but prohibitively expensive to produce and broadcast. The production could only be funded through a voluntary contribution by a Party or Parties, and

Parties would need to provide for broadcasting in their national media. The dissemination of information material on cetacean conservation not produced by ASCOBANS by the Secretariat would be facilitated considerably if the Secretariat were kept informed of and possibly provided with copies of publications etc. produced and available at the national level.

Target groups: general public, possibly certain professional groups.

- Increased coverage of ASCOBANS-related issues by television, radio and newspapers should be encouraged. The Secretariat should continue to produce press releases.

Target group: general public.

b) Exhibitions and events:

- ASCOBANS is currently using two exhibitions: the 18 panel exhibition "Harbour Porpoise in Distress", which deals only with harbour porpoises but contains no information about ASCOBANS, and the four ASCOBANS modules of the joint CMS/Agreements exhibition. A large exhibition combining both elements does not currently exist. A number of the panels of "Harbour Porpoise in Distress", are no longer in optimum condition and will presumably need to be replaced in the foreseeable future. The option of slightly modifying that exhibition to encompass both information on the Agreement and harbour porpoises could be envisioned.

Target groups: general public, decision-makers, administrators, fishermen.

- Capacity-building measures for "new" Parties, in particular CEECs should be envisioned. A capacity building workshop for decision-makers from CEECs, to be organized jointly with ACCOBAMS, AEWA and EUROBATS would be extremely useful. The Executive Secretaries of the four Agreements concerned have discussed the possibility of staging such a workshop in a CEEC in late 2003 or early 2004. Contacts with the environment ministry of a possible host country have been established. A reader produced in conjunction with this could be disseminated to a wider circle of decision-makers and administrators in the countries concerned. If successful, a similar workshop could be organized for a comparable target group in western-European Non-Party-Range States.

Target groups: Decision-makers, administrators, scientists in CEECs.

- The idea of an Annual "Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise", was suggested by the public awareness working group of the Jastarnia workshop. Preparations for this event, which will take place for the first time on the third Saturday of May 2003, have commenced. One or (if feasible) several institutions such as museums or dolphinariums should launch special educational programs on this day, seeking to attract and inform the general public. If the "Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise"



should prove to be successful, an extension to the whole of the ASCOBANS Agreement area would be worth considering in coming years.

Target group: general public.

- Possible other events aimed at attracting a wide public should be considered. The participation of ASCOBANS in events such as UN Day celebrations, festivals and meetings of various kinds should continue and, if possible, be stepped up.

Target group: general public.

- Representation of ASCOBANS at relevant national and international conferences, meetings and other events should be ensured. At the minimum, this requires the availability of ASCOBANS advertising material at such events, ideally, however, a representative of the Agreement should attend.

Target groups: potentially all target groups.

- Advertising material ("freebies" for various events such as conferences, festivals, celebrations) should be produced as needed.

Target groups: general public, participants in conferences, meetings and similar events.

As in the past, the Secretariat will have a dual role, organizing and carrying out promotional activities of its own on the one hand, and supporting related work by national governmental and non-governmental institutions on the other. Even when doing the former, however, the Secretariat will frequently depend on the support of relevant players on the ground. The Secretariat can produce promotional material, initiate campaigns, participate in events organized by other relevant actors and, on a relatively small scale, organize events itself. A sufficiently broad dissemination of material produced will, however, be difficult to achieve without the help of coordinating authorities and NGOs in the Range States concerned. The Secretariat will, in many cases, depend on coordinators/contact points and NGOs in Parties and Range States to identify institutions to be involved and to facilitate contacts where necessary. The distribution of the Secretariat's press releases provides a further pertinent example, as the press units of national coordinating authorities will usually be in a better position to effectively mobilize their national media than the Secretariat. Furthermore, it would be helpful if national governmental and non-governmental institutions kept the media in their countries abreast of any relevant ASCOBANS-related developments and encouraged them to report. The representation of ASCOBANS at relevant meetings and conferences, but also at events intended to mobilize a broader public, would also be facilitated considerably if the Secretariat was informed and, if needed, invited in good time. The Secretariat would also be most obliged to individuals or institutions for granting the use of their intellectual property for use in non-profit information campaigns to ASCOBANS and informing the ASCOBANS Secretariat accordingly.

#### **4. Conclusions and recommendations**

In the current triennium, considerable headway was made with respect to the Agreement's educational and promotional work, but only a continuous effort will produce the necessary results and a considerable stretch of road still lies ahead.

The Secretariat feels, therefore, that it should continue and expand its information campaign. With much of the necessary material now available, the Secretariat will increasingly be able to concentrate on putting this to use within the framework of a coherent PR strategy for the coming years, while developing additional products and projects specifically geared to this strategy. The contours of the ASCOBANS PR strategy have already emerged in the current triennium, as the Secretariat made considerable efforts to step up PR work in the Baltic region. This ties in with the aim of encouraging all countries bordering on the Baltic to accede to ASCOBANS and with the need to promote the Jastarnia Plan. In the coming triennium, the Baltic region will remain a focus of attention as the implementation of the Jastarnia Plan will gain additional momentum following its endorsement by the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties and, moreover, new Parties from that region are expected to come on board, hopefully by the end of this year. In addition, capacity-building and awareness-raising in other Non-Party Range States will be on the agenda, while continued efforts in the "old" Parties will of course also need to be undertaken.

In working to promote the Agreement and its cause, the Secretariat and national mutual support between governmental and non-governmental organizations is of the essence. The Secretariat will be able to provide support to the PR activities launched at the national level. It will, however, not be able to accomplish its PR mission without the practical help of coordinators/contact points, NGOs and other institutions "on the ground". Enhanced cooperation between the Secretariat and these national contacts in exchanging information, disseminating (and possibly also producing) PR material and launching educational and promotional events would be useful. Moreover, it is self-evident that a substantive, sustained and successful promotional and educational campaign requires considerable funding and a concerted effort. Parties are therefore requested to continue to support the PR work of the ASCOBANS Secretariat through adequate funding.