

Agenda Item 18

Relations with other Bodies

Document 36

Reports of Representation of ASCOBANS at Meetings

Action Requested

- take note of the information submitted
- comment
- encourage all chosen to represent ASCOBANS at future meetings to give a short written report of key points to the Secretariat, which will also be tabled at the next AC meeting

Submitted by

Secretariat



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

Secretariat's Note

Attached are reports of meetings attended on behalf of ASCOBANS by the joint CMS/ASCOBANS Secretariat or by AC members or observers.

In order to increase the benefit the AC can derive from meetings attended by its members on behalf of ASCOBANS and be informed about relevant points raised at such meetings, the Advisory Committee might wish to request all those chosen for representation of ASCOBANS at meetings during 2008/09 to submit a short written report on key points to the Secretariat.

This should preferably be done shortly after each meeting in order to allow appropriate follow-up. The Secretariat would also appreciate being notified if an agreed meeting could not be attended, did not touch on any points to be reported to the AC, or if any other relevant meetings were attended and produced important reporting points.

All reports received by the Secretariat in time for the next AC meeting will be submitted to the meeting.

Reports of Representation of ASCOBANS at Meetings

22-25 April 2007

21st Annual Conference of the European Cetacean Society, San Sebastián, Spain

Attendance on behalf of ASCOBANS: Heidrun Frisch

Two workshops were jointly convened by ASCOBANS and ECS on 21 and 22 April. The Secretariat served as rapporteur for the one on Wind Farms and Marine Mammals. The second one dealt with Selection Criteria for Marine Protected Areas for Cetaceans. Proceedings of both workshops are available in hardcopy to the AC delegates and will be made available on the ASCOBANS website following the meeting. Another workshop on Marine Interpretation, organised by WDCS, was held on 26 April, at which copies of the CMS Wildlife Watching and Tourism brochure were handed out to the participants.

Besides attending most sessions of the ECS Conference in order to identify issues and approaches relevant to conservation efforts, two Year of the Dolphin exhibition panels were set up in a prominent position and hundreds of YoD calendars; leaflets in English, Spanish, French and German; posters and postcards, ASCOBANS leaflets as well as some copies of the Coalition Clean Baltic Harbour Porpoise brochure were distributed. Leftover YoD calendars and leaflets were taken to the San Sebastián Aquarium after close of the conference to be distributed to visitors there.

27 April 2007

Year of the Dolphin Meeting, Bonn, Germany

Attendance on behalf of CMS & ASCOBANS: Robert Hepworth, Heidrun Frisch

Present at the meeting of the Year of the Dolphin Founding Partners were representatives of CMS, ACCOBAMS, ASCOBANS, WDCS and TUI. Items discussed include reports of the Partners' YoD achievements and further plans, the impact of captivity issues on the YoD founding partners, criteria for the acceptance of supporters and the further development of the YoD Website. In the follow-up of the meeting, the supporter criteria were revised with direct involvement of the ASCOBANS Secretariat.

7-11 May 2007

9th Meeting of the HELCOM Nature Conservation and Biodiversity Group (HABITAT), Vilnius, Lithuania

Attendance on behalf of ASCOBANS: Penina Blankett

Harbour porpoise related issues were taken up under item Nature conservation and biodiversity; endangered species and habitats. The Meeting was informed that the ASCOBANS Secretariat has been merged with the Secretariat of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS). Finland, informed on the outcome of the 14th ASCOBANS Advisory Committee Meeting.

After this information countries informed of their activities.

Poland, the Lead Country for HELCOM Recommendation 17/2 on protection of harbour porpoise in the Baltic Sea, informed on the reporting on new activities by Latvia and Estonia to HELCOM and ASCOBANS concerning research and by-catch of harbour porpoise. No information has been submitted from Russia and the Meeting urged also Russia to submit the requested data to Poland. Poland informed the Meeting also about the EU Life Project "Marine Protected Areas" in the Eastern Baltic (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) where investigations on harbour porpoise are included.

Sweden informed about the new arrangement of the joint ASCOBANS/HELCOM workshops on genetics of the Baltic Sea harbour porpoises and on small cetacean population structure, which probably will take place in September 2007. Sweden informed also on their national investigations concerning identification of areas of special importance for harbour porpoise. Sweden is relying on the new technique of acoustic detectors (PCL, T-PODs) in further identification of important areas for harbour porpoises.

Poland informed about her national management plan for harbour porpoise, which is currently being prepared and consulted with significant involvement of stakeholders.

Also Finland informed on the implementation of her national harbour porpoise action plan. Germany demonstrated the results of a national project to detect harbour porpoises.

It was also discussed of the technical difficulties to assess the population size of the Baltic harbour porpoises, especially in the areas where the species is very rare. ICES informed that they have an expert group (Marine Mammals Ecology) dealing with seals and harbour porpoises.

Concerning the co-operation between HELCOM and ASCOBANS, Finland proposed HELCOM to seek co-operation especially with the Jastarnia Group.

30 August 2007

20th Anniversary of the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat / Conference: The Wadden Sea and Climate Change, Wilhelmshaven, Germany

Attendance on behalf of CMS & ASCOBANS: Heidrun Frisch

Talks focused mainly on impacts of sea level rise on coastal morphology and adaptation strategies to deal with these changes. Key issues of concern for CMS and Agreements that were mentioned include:

- the loss of salt marshes in some areas due to erosion and/or “coastal squeeze” (the artificial barriers to natural inshore movements through dykes) – this means the loss of important breeding grounds for many bird species
- greater damage to benthic and marsh habitats through increase in extreme weather events
- the decrease of pH of the sea water – affecting the marine food chain through disturbed calcification
- greater risk of hypoxia through increased temperatures
- changes in species composition and competition, shift from marine to brackish species, introduction and/or establishment of new species

In the discussion following the presentations, the importance of engaging the public in the affected areas and of starting early with the children in school was stressed repeatedly. Ways have to be found to communicate to the public more effectively not only problems, but also suggested mitigation measures and ways to take part.

Copies of the CMS Climate Change brochure, the Washington Seminar Proceedings, AEWA information material, YoD leaflets in English and German and ASCOBANS leaflets were taken up with great interest by the conference participants.

22-25 October 2007

3rd Meeting of the Contracting Parties to ACCOBAMS, Dubrovnik, Croatia

Attendance on behalf of CMS & ASCOBANS: Heidrun Frisch

The full report of the Meeting, including its Annexes, can be downloaded from <http://www.accobams.org/2006.php/parties/documents/5>.

29 October-1 November 2007

Year of the Dolphin in Europe – Conservation of Small Cetaceans and Marine Protected Areas, Stralsund, Germany

Attendance on behalf of CMS & ASCOBANS: Heidrun Frisch

The conference was organised by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment and the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation and hosted by the German Oceanographic Museum. On the morning of the first day, a welcome address explaining the aims and elements of the YoD campaign and some highlights of the progress made during the year was delivered to the around 100 participants. The extension of the YoD was announced and all were invited to join in the campaign.

A number of points for potential follow up by the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee and Secretariat were discussed during the meeting:

- Transmit issues of concern to the European Commission, improve relations with DG Fisheries and other “non-environmental” DGs
- Assist in finding funding for the continuation of the Baltic database
- For the North Sea Plan:
 - a) Facilitate international collaboration in surveillance and monitoring
 - b) Develop a “best practice” manual for a consistent approach
 - c) Involve other areas of research, such as on seasonal variation, subpopulation structure, foraging ecology and health status

The meeting concluded with the decision to send a message to the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee, ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee, HELCOM, OSPAR and European Commission to give consideration to a number of issues. Specifically for the Baltic region, a message to DG Fisheries was extensively discussed on the afternoon of the third day, which urges an improvement of Regulation 812/2004 with respect to several points.

Bilateral discussions on the margins of the meeting were held with several AC members and contact persons from Ireland and Estonia.

26-28 February 2008

Bilaterals with EC DG Environment and DG Fisheries, Brussels, Belgium

Attendance on behalf of CMS & ASCOBANS: Robert Hepworth

The Acting Executive Secretary will report on his mission to Brussels orally during the 15th Meeting of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee.

4 March 2008

Year of the Dolphin Meeting, Bonn, Germany

Attendance on behalf of CMS & ASCOBANS: Robert Hepworth, Marco Barbieri, Heidrun Frisch

The main purpose of the meeting was to agree on the priorities and plans for the remaining time of the Year of the Dolphin campaign. Upcoming events were discussed and a consolidated list of potential projects for support was approved. This list had been compiled by WDCCS based on consultations done by CMS, ACCOBAMS, ASCOBANS and WDCCS with their partners and other contacts. It contains several projects for each region in which CMS cetacean initiatives are ongoing, including the ASCOBANS area. The list will now be reviewed and prioritised by the Cetacean Liaison Group and then used for targeted fundraising efforts. Selected high priority projects will also be presented in detail on the YoD website, asking visitors to donate funds for them.

8-12 March 2008

22nd Annual Conference of the European Cetacean Society, Egmond aan Zee, Netherlands

Attendance on behalf of ASCOBANS: Heidrun Frisch

Workshops on underwater noise, research methods in marine mammal science and protection of sociable, solitary dolphins were attended, as well as most sessions of the ECS Conference: Breaks provided the opportunity to meet cetacean researchers and conservationists, thereby establishing or refreshing useful contacts for ASCOBANS in Party and non-Party Range States.

On 9 March, an informal meeting of the main stakeholders for the Dolphin Fund (EUCC, ECS, CMS, ACCOBAMS, ASCOBANS) was held. The Dolphin Fund was established as an initiative of EUCC as a continuation of the Year of the Dolphin Campaign and its objective is to raise funds and awareness for specific conservation projects for whales and dolphins. For CMS and cetacean-related Agreements, it would be of primary importance that the projects chosen are in line with their conservation agenda and focus on real conservation, not on research for the sake of research. The mechanism for project selection and prioritisation that the YoD Partners agreed was explained and the role of the Cetacean Liaison Group highlighted. The Secretariat stressed that any review process set up within the Dolphin Fund should not conflict with the review and selection process set up for projects to be supported during the Year of the Dolphin 2008. The group agreed that an Advisory Board should be set up for the Dolphin Fund. This body, in contrast to the YoD mechanism, will have to stay operational beyond 2008. CMS and Agreements should also be represented on this Board and WDCCS and other international partners should be invited to join as well.