

Agenda Item 14.1

Relations with Other Bodies

Reports by the Secretariat, Parties and
Partners

Document 14.1.a

**Reports of Representation of
ASCOBANS at Meetings**

Action Requested

- Take note
- Comment

Submitted by

Secretariat



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

Secretariat's Note

This document contains reports on all meetings at which ASCOBANS was represented by members of the Advisory Committee or the Secretariat. A list of meetings for which representation was requested by AC19 is contained in the Report of the 19th Meeting of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee, Annex 10.

Reports of Representation of ASCOBANS at Meetings

24-28 March 2012

26th Annual Conference of the European Cetacean Society, incl. Workshops

Participation for CMS & ASCOBANS: Heidrun Frisch (Secretariat)

On 24 March, the ECS/ASCOBANS/ACCOBAMS Workshop on the Implementation of the Habitats Directive in Relation to Cetaceans took place. The Agenda started with three talks on the EU framework – HD & its relationship to other Directives & Regional Treaties, during which session Heidrun presented on the relationship between ACCOBAMS, ASCOBANS and the Habitats Directive. The next session explored the challenge of Assessing Favourable Conservation Status, followed by one on Achievements and Limitations of the Implementation of Natura 2000, and finally one on the implementation of Strict Protection Measures: Achievements and Limitations. The workshop was attended by close to 100 people, including a speaker of the European Commission.

On 25 March over 40 people attended the Planet Whale Workshop on Linking Science and Whale Watching. Based on concerns raised by whale watch operators, the participants developed concrete ideas how to improve this link for the benefit of both sides and conservation. The proposed actions and recommendations were: 1) Development of simple 'Rules of engagement' advice sheet to help researchers and operators working together for first time, to be posted on Planet Whale website; 2) Offering a course for operators on scientific research and its benefits, to be discussed further at the World Whale & Dolphin Watch Operators Conference in October in Brighton, UK; 3) Certification for operators that have received training and identified as 'Research Friendly'; 4) Development of international data protocol, to be discussed further at a workshop at ECS 2013; 5) Responsibility of local Universities and NGO's to build long-term and mutually beneficial relationships with operators.

The Annual Conference of the European Cetacean Society took place from 26-28 March. During the conference CMS/ASCOBANS had a small stand on which the Odontocetes book co-produced by CMS, ASCOBANS and others was advertised. The book can be ordered through Earthprint, and a sample copy was displayed along with promotional flyers.

In the margins of the conference, the ASCOBANS Secretariat also met several times with Dylan Walker of Planet Whale to flesh out plans for the Brighton WhaleFest, back to back with MOP7. For details on the event, please refer to [AC20/Doc.5.2](#).

As always, the attendance at the ECS meeting has proven extremely useful, as it allows personally meeting the researchers and conservationists doing the field work, increasing their understanding of what ASCOBANS is doing and enhancing the Coordinator's knowledge of developments in conservation science.

25 March 2012

5th Meeting of the Chairs of the Scientific Advisory Bodies of Biodiversity-related Conventions (CSAB)

Participation for CMS & ASCOBANS: Borja Heredia (Secretariat) & Fernando Spina (CMS Scientific Council Chair)

The Chairs of the Scientific Advisory Bodies (CSAB) group was established in 2007 in order to provide a forum for the scientific bodies of the biodiversity-related Conventions to share information and promote coordination and collaboration with respect to the strategic plans and the various programmes of work and priority concerns.

CSAB5 met at Dublin Castle on the 25 March 2012 and was co-hosted by the CITES Secretariat and the Irish Government through the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Irish speaking regions). The meeting was co-chaired by Senka Barudanovic, Chair of CBD's SBSTTA, Margarita Clemente, Chair of CITES Plants Committee and Carlos Ibero, Chair of CITES Animals Committee.

IPBES

A plenary meeting to determine modalities and institutional arrangements for IPBES is taking place in Panama 16-21 April 2012. The work programme and the structure of the platform will be discussed including options for one chair and 4 vice chairs, a buro, regional representation, membership and observers. Decisions will be taken by the plenary. MEAs will be represented and there will be a vote on the location of the Secretariat. The estimated budget is 4.5 million dollars/year. UNEP, UNDP, UNESCO and FAO are co-sponsoring the platform under UNEP's leadership. Talks with UNCCD are ongoing for closer involvement. Another plenary before end 2012 is expected. IPBES will respond to multiple needs but should not duplicate the work of MEAs. As an example, CBD is leading on invasive species information management with funding from the EU and this work should not be replicated.

There is an opportunity to reinforce the science-policy interphase at national level and it should not be missed. IPBES will start with regional and sub-regional thematic assessments and MEAs can help to identify priorities. A conceptual framework will be needed prioritizing capacity building needs. Decisions will have to be taken on what is going to be funded/what is going to be catalyzed and what indicators are going to be used. CSAB will need more intersessional work to perform these duties.

The meeting agreed that the biodiversity related conventions should speak with only one voice at the Panama plenary and a joint statement was drafted to that effect. This statement is appended to this mission report.

CMS and IPBES

COP10 of CMS adopted Resolution 10.8 which requests the Scientific Council, resources permitting, to undertake a review of needs and opportunities for improving the interphase between science and policy in relation to migratory species, including the role of migratory species as indicators of wider ecological change.

The Resolution also asks for more coordination at national level. Not all the science is relevant for policy makers and the focus should be on applied science. CMS can be useful to IPBES as a platform to deliver their functions, eg funds for capacity building could be funneled through CMS or other MEAs to reach objectives in a more effective way.

Cross mapping of strategic plans

Dena Cator of IUCN presented this issue that had been recommended by the previous CSAB meeting in 2011 in Gland. Her presentation is appended to this report. The meeting acknowledged the work done by IUCN and thought it was useful. As a following step it was agreed to increase the focus and include activities that the Conventions are carrying out as part of the implementation of the strategic plans and cross reference to the Aichi targets. Again IUCN was asked to undertake this exercise.

Harmonization of species nomenclature

For mammals it has been achieved between CMS and CITES but for birds it proves to be more difficult. Fernando Spina suggested to involve the highest scientific body which is the International Ornithology Union whose President is now Franz Bairlein from the Institute for Avian Research in Wilhelmshaven (Germany). They are ready to interact and support MEAs in an advisory capacity but they should not impose their views since it is up to the Governing Bodies of the Conventions to adopt these decisions. It is important to get databases to talk to each other. Organizations such as UNEP/WCMC, IUCN, BirdLife International, Wetlands

International, etc should participate in the process. Ramsar is willing to join CMS and CITES in their efforts to harmonize taxonomy.

Emerging issues and horizon scanning

UNEP has undertaken a foresight process exercise that can be useful to CSAB. It will be explained in more detail at the next meeting. It includes 21 items. A new publication on noble ecosystems will see the light later this year. Should there be representatives of the Bureau's/Standing Committee's in the CSAB? This is a proposal by SBSTTA Chair, but CBD Secretariat is reticent due to limited resources. It was suggested that the Biodiversity Liaison Group (BLG) should work more closely with CSAB, have joint meetings, etc. CSAB is a creature of BLG without TOR, mandate, etc. Now it operates as a volunteer, informal group. BLG was established by the CBD COP but there is a systematic lack of funding. An opportunity to review this situation will be the CBD WG on review of implementation, where a mention to CSAB will be included in terms of: "Welcoming the initiative of CSAB ..." CBD Secretariat will work out some wording to be included in MEA's Resolutions.

Next meeting

CMS offered to host the next meeting in spring 2013 in a venue still to be determined. Fallback position would be Bonn.

30 April-5 May 2012

Sixteenth meeting of the CBD Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-16)

Participation for CMS & ASCOBANS: Monika Thiele (Secretariat)

The sixteenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA 16) was held from 30 April to 5 May 2012 at the headquarters of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in Montreal, Canada. See: (<http://www.cbd.int/sbstta16/>). CMS Officer for North America (Ms. Monika Thiele) attended jointly on behalf of CMS and ASCOBANS.

Side Event on: "Impacts of Underwater Noise on Marine & Coastal Biodiversity"

The sixteenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA 16) was held from 30 April to 5 May 2012 at the headquarters of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in Montreal, Canada. See: (<http://www.cbd.int/sbstta16/>). CMS Officer for North America (Ms. Monika Thiele) attended on behalf of CMS and ASCOBANS to participate in a panel event on underwater noise that was convened jointly by CBD Secretariat and CMS Secretariat, in collaboration with UNEP, OSPAR Secretariat, ASCOBANS Secretariat, ACCOBAMS Secretariat (Célia Le Ravallec) and the Ocean Noise Coalition. The event title was: "Impacts of Underwater Noise on Marine & Coastal Biodiversity". Panel Co-Chairs were Kristina Gjerde (IUCN) and David Johnson (OSPAR). Panel participants represented academia, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. The objective of the panel was to enhance the understanding of the participants at SBSTTA 16 on the important issue of underwater noise and to facilitate international and regional cooperation to address it within the overall context of marine biodiversity conservation and sustainable use—the theme of SBSTTA 16.

Major points presented by CMS/ASCOBANS representative included highlights of CMS Resolution 10.24, building on Resolutions 9.19 and 6.2 and the application of the precautionary principle in addressing underwater noise. In particular, discussion centered on impacts from new or emerging sources of underwater noise (such as construction of offshore renewable energy production). ASCOBANS representative urged participants to apply Best Available Techniques (BAT) and Best Environmental Practice (BEP) approaches when addressing underwater noise issues. (See: <http://www.ascobans.org/noise.html>). Further,

ASCOBANS representative recommended integration of noise related issues into the management plans of relevant marine protected areas. Reference was also made to the joint ASCOBANS & ACCOBAMS working group on noise and joint efforts to provide concrete mitigation advice for different industries (renewable energy, seismic surveys, high power sonar).

In the end, the draft recommendation [UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/16/L.16] submitted by SBSTTA 16 Working Group II to the CBD COP11 included direct reference to CMS Convention Migratory Species Resolution 10.24 as well as specific recommendations within it, and a request to CBD Parties as follows: (Document available at: <http://www.cbd.int/sbstta16/documents/>)

15. *Takes note* of resolution 10.24 adopted by the *Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species* at its tenth meeting, which provides guidance on further steps to abate underwater noise pollution, where necessary, for the protection of cetaceans and other migratory species; and

17. *Encourages* Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations, according to their priorities, to:

(c) Take measures, as appropriate, to minimize the significant adverse impacts of anthropogenic underwater noise on marine biodiversity, including best available technologies (BAT) and best environmental practices (BEP), drawing upon existing guidance; and

19. *Noting* the gaps and limitations in existing guidance, including the need to update it in the light of improving scientific knowledge, and recognizing a range of complementary initiatives under way, *requests* the Executive Secretary to collaborate with Parties, other Governments, and competent organizations, including the International Maritime Organization, the *Convention on Migratory Species*, the International Whaling Commission, as well as indigenous and local communities and other relevant stakeholders, to organize, subject to availability of financial resources, an expert workshop with a view to improving and sharing knowledge on underwater noise and its impacts on marine and coastal biodiversity, and developing practical guidance and toolkits for minimizing and mitigating the significant adverse impacts of anthropogenic underwater noise on marine and coastal biodiversity, which can assist Parties and other Governments in applying necessary management measures. The workshop should cover issues such as, among others, the development of acoustic mapping of areas of interest;

The event was well attended and garnered positive collaboration between participants and panellists. For more details contact: [monika.thiele@unep.org].

Side Event on: "Impacts of Marine Debris on Marine and Coastal Biodiversity: From Evidence to Solutions"

The side event was organized by The GEF's Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel Secretariat (GEF/STAP) to present outcomes of a synthesis report they produced called "Impacts of Marine Debris on Marine and Coastal Biodiversity" ([CBD Technical Series No. 76](#)). The report was commissioned by the CBD Executive Secretary, in response to a request made at CBD/COP10 and builds upon results of the 5th International Conference on Marine Debris (www.5imdc.org, Honolulu, March 2011). The report was made available to all SBSTTA 16 participants via an information document (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/16/INF/15). CMS & ASCOBANS participated in a technical review of the report offering considerations specific to migratory species and opportunities for application of CMS legal framework.

Panel speakers included: Lev Neretin, Ph.D (Panel Chair, GEF/STAP), Sarah Gall (Researcher, University of Plymouth, UK), Duncan Bury (Consultant, Canada), Takehiro Nakamura (UNEP/GPA), Leila Monroe (NDRC, USA), and Monika Thiele

(CMS/ASCOBANS). Panellists highlighted results of the synthesis report including up-to-date cumulative evidence on the numbers of species and populations affected by marine debris in general and plastic debris particularly. Marine debris represents a substantial additional anthropogenic factor affecting habitats and biodiversity. Effects on biodiversity are difficult to quantify, but include impacts to populations and distribution of species, increased risk of local extinctions, and in some cases potential for species level extinction where rare species are implicated. The following key themes were presented and discussed:

1. Review of the current knowledge about the impacts of marine debris on marine and coastal biodiversity and the marine environment in general. The role of plastics as a predominant material type in debris globally;
2. Review of the existing global governance framework and soft law instruments for marine debris and identification of legal, institutional and management gaps including marine debris coverage under several multilateral environmental agreements;
3. Successes and challenges in addressing impacts of marine debris on marine and coastal biodiversity: cross-sectoral perspective; and
4. Role of businesses (shipping, tourism, fisheries) in solving the problem.

A particularly interesting discussion ensued about the role of the shipping industry in applying on board recycling programs and improving waste management techniques on board, thereby reducing waste being dumped at sea. The event was well attended and ultimately draft recommendations to the CBD COP went forth as follows, resulting ultimately in a decision by the COP that acknowledged CBD should pursue work to address marine debris impacts on marine biodiversity:

Addressing impacts of marine debris on marine and coastal biodiversity

24. *Welcomes* the preparation by the GEF-STAP of a report on the impacts of marine debris on marine and coastal biodiversity (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/16/INF/15) and *takes note* of the key messages contained in annex IV to document UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/16/6;

25. *Requests* the Executive Secretary in collaboration with Parties, other Governments, competent organizations, and indigenous and local communities, subject to the availability of financial resources, to:

(a) Invite Parties, other Governments and competent organizations to submit information on the impacts of marine debris on marine and coastal biodiversity and habitats;

(b) Compile and synthesize the submissions by Parties, other Governments and competent organizations as well as additional scientific and technical information as inputs to an expert workshop;

(c) Organize an expert workshop to prepare practical guidance on preventing and mitigating the significant adverse impacts of marine debris on marine and coastal biodiversity and habitats, which can be applied by Parties and other Governments in their implementation of the programme of work on marine and coastal biodiversity;

(d) Submit the compilation/synthesis, referred to in subparagraph (b) above, and the practical guidance, referred to in subparagraph (c) above, for consideration by a meeting of the Subsidiary Body prior to the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties;

26. *Requests* the Executive Secretary, subject to availability of financial resources, to include in regional capacity-building workshops the issue of marine debris in order to discuss ways to prevent and reduce their impacts on biodiversity and strengthen research on the reduction and management of marine debris.

22-25 May 2012

14th Meeting of the Nature Protection and Biodiversity Group (HELCOM HABITAT 14/2012)

Participation for ASCOBANS: Penina Blankett (Finland)

The following harbour porpoise-related issues were taken up under the item Nature conservation and biodiversity; endangered species and habitats.

Reports from Countries

Poland: Management plans for grey seal and harbour porpoise are being prepared by WWF and should be completed by the end of 2012.

Germany: Germany informed the Meeting that a regular monitoring on harbour porpoises and water birds is now in place for the German North and Baltic Seas. For Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, recent monitoring reports for harbour porpoise strandings and seals are available as downloads (in German language only; www.lung.mv-regierung/insite/cms/umwelt/natur/artenschutz/artberichte_saeuger-htm).

The Meeting took note of the information by Mr. Christof Herrmann, Germany, that a recent survey had indicated a decline as large as 60% of harbour porpoises in the western Baltic and that due to the large confidence limits the information has uncertainty and points not only towards the need of immediate measures to improve the state of the species but also to the need of frequent monitoring in all areas which is also proposed in the draft conservation plan.

Russia: The Meeting took note of document 4/17 "Inventories of harbour porpoise (*Phocaena phocaena phocaena*) presence in Russian territorial waters of the Baltic Sea" sent to the Meeting by Russia. The Meeting thanked Russia for the information and encouraged them to carry out further investigations and also to contribute to the SAMBAH project.

ASCOBANS Draft Conservation Plan for the Harbour Porpoise Population in the Western Baltic, the Belt Sea and the Kattegat

The Meeting took note of the ASCOBANS Draft Conservation Plan for the Harbour Porpoise Population in the Western Baltic, the Belt Sea and the Kattegat which has been prepared and discussed in the 8th ASCOBANS Jastarnia Group meeting and 19th meeting of the Advisory Committee of ASCOBANS (document 4/3).

Ghost nets

The Meeting took note of the WWF report and presentation on Ecological effects of ghost net retrieval in the Baltic Sea (document 4/4 and presentation 3).

Poland informed that the work has been an good cooperation project between fishermen, NGOs and the fisheries administration and it will be continued by Polish WWF together with Lithuanian Fund for Nature and the next phase will last until 2013 with plans to remove another 22 tons of marine litter/ghost nets and a final conference will be organised in March 2013.

The Meeting recalled the HELCOM Recommendation 28E/10 "Application of no-special-fee system to ship generated wastes and marine litter caught in fishing nets in the Baltic Sea area" and Recommendation 29/2 "Marine litter within the Baltic Sea region".

The Meeting took note of the information by the EU on the Fishing for litter initiative, which is focused on e.g. collecting plastic waste from the marine environment. The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) is currently being discussed for the years 2014-2020 and will probably address these issues with funding activities targeted to decreasing litter from fisheries. The Meeting invited the HELCOM Baltic Fisheries and

Environmental forum to consider the problem of ghost nets, their impacts on the Baltic marine environment and possible activities for their removal.

Updating HELCOM Recommendation 17/2 (Protection of harbor porpoise in the Baltic Sea Area)

The Meeting considered proposals for updates to Recommendation 17/2 concerning protection of harbour porpoise in the Baltic Sea Area to take into account e.g. the Jastarnia Plan of ASCOBANS (document 6/2) as was discussed already during HELCOM HABITAT 13/2011. The proposal for changes had been reviewed also by HELCOM SEAL 5/2011 as well as by the Eight Meeting of ASCOBANS Jastarnia Group held in Bonn, Germany on 31 January to 2 February 2012. The Meeting agreed on the proposals as contained in document 6/2 and invited the Secretariat to forward the Recommendation for adoption to HELCOM HOD 37/2012 and the Helsinki Commission.

9-23 June 2012

64th Meeting of the Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission (IWC SC)

Participation for ASCOBANS: Mark Simmonds (WDCS)

The full 2012 SC meeting report can be found here:

<http://iwc.int/cache/downloads/3v5a930vw6ww0o080wswckwo0/pp001-086-SC-Report-2012.pdf>

Ziiphid whale review.

The primary focus of the Small Cetacean Subcommittee (SCS) in 2012 was its ongoing global review of ziiphid whales, which focused this year on the North Pacific and northern Indian Ocean populations (outstanding now is the review in the Southern Hemisphere). Two particular concerns were identified for these species – loud noise and marine debris.

Further to its review of these issues, the SC made a series of recommendations. In the context of loud noise exposure, it recommended that groups working on mass strandings make all reasonable efforts to examine dead animals within 12 hours (or at most 24 hours) after death. Response teams should, if at all possible, include a veterinarian, a veterinary pathologist or a responder with experience in necropsy and sample collection. Routine necropsy protocols should include examination of bubbles present in tissues, scoring relative prevalence and sampling for gas composition analysis, particularly to detect and describe intravascular and peri-renal subcapsular emphysema bubbles. The SC also strongly recommended that military exercises and seismic surveys should avoid areas of important habitat for beaked whales; that further effort should be made to mitigate their impacts; and that further efforts should be made to identify such areas

In the context of marine debris, the 2012 SC recommended that this issue should be further investigated via the collection, collation and analyses of relevant data from around the world concerning ingestion rates, debris types and associated pathology. It also recommended that standardised protocols are developed for pathological investigations. Consideration should also be given to investigating marine debris accumulation and associated processes in areas of important habitat for small cetaceans.

The SC also agreed to support a workshop on this topic.

Harbour Porpoise.

The Subcommittee also makes a regular review of its previous recommendations and these include those relating to the harbour porpoise. In 2012, the SC noted that it remains concerned about the status of harbour porpoises in the western Baltic, the Belt Seas and the Kattegat 'Gap' area. It also recommended that in the Gap area efforts should be made to:

- (1) assess porpoise bycatch levels;
- (2) monitor porpoise abundance on a regular basis;
- (3) introduce measures to mitigate bycatch and other anthropogenic mortality;
- (4) monitor the health status of the porpoises;
- (5) ensure all bycaught and stranded animals are reported and delivered to qualified institutions for necropsy and sampling; and
- (6) implement the recovery plan for harbour porpoises which is currently being developed by ASCOBANS for the Gap area.

The SC also repeated its 'longstanding concern' regarding the critically endangered harbour porpoise population in the inner Baltic ('Baltic proper') and noted that it encouraged all possible efforts to eliminate the bycatch there and address other factors that may be preventing this very small population's recovery.

Marine Renewables

The 2012 SC received the report of the IWC's workshop on marine renewable energy devices. The full report is in SC/64/Rep6 and it can be found here: <http://iwc.int/index.php?cID=2816&cType=document>

In particular the SC endorsed the Workshop's conclusions and recommendations (see especially SC/64/Rep6, item 5) and these are briefly summarised below:

"1. Strategy to minimise risk

Risks from both lethal and sub-lethal effects can be minimised via a series of actions; the collection, collation and analysis of appropriate baseline cetacean data and appropriate industrial data will allow the identification and quantification of threats and their potential implications for conservation objectives. All stakeholders need to be involved from the outset such that impacts from all factors are considered, ensuring that appropriate mitigation measures and associated monitoring programmes are developed. Suitable scientific evaluation and compliance mechanisms are needed to ensure that mitigation and monitoring are adequate.

2. Broad management

Governments, managers and other stakeholders need to cooperate in strategic planning for MREDs taking into account the trans-boundary nature of cetaceans. Uncertainties over the level of impacts require a staged approach to developments taking into account lessons learned from other developments and other human activities that affect cetaceans, in order to be adequately precautionary. IWC member governments can assist in encouraging the development of international collaboration in this regard, and in particular, they can assist in emphasising the importance of incorporating consideration of cetaceans from an early stage and the value of following the broad strategy and principles outlined in the Workshop report and summarised in [its] Fig. 3.

3. 'Fundamental' research

International collaboration will be required to determine population structure, status, distribution and procedures for assessing impacts. The Committee can assist with design and evaluation of population and impact assessments. While there are established methods for assessing lethal takes, data on the effects of (sub-lethal) stressors on cetaceans are also needed.

4. Evaluation of threats

All lethal and non-lethal impacts of human activities should be considered in an integrated manner, e.g. using modelling approaches that take into account the cumulative impacts from all threats when evaluating whether conservation objectives are likely to be met. The

Committee has considerable expertise in developing management frameworks and testing their performance

5. Monitoring

Monitoring should be designed carefully, to assess impacts against pre-determined conservation objectives and to measure the efficacy of any mitigation measures that are implemented.

6. Data sharing and the future role of the IWC Scientific Committee in the consideration of MREDS

Improved information and data-sharing were identified as key and the Workshop encouraged the Committee to continue to act as a forum to review the development of MREDS and their implications for cetaceans, including promoting the sharing of data. Countries were encouraged to help in this by providing appropriate information.”

Other Environmental Topics

The SC has a number of other long term work programmes that may be of relevance to ASCOBANS and this includes its work on emergent diseases and chemical pollution.

18-22 June 2012

3rd International Conference on Progress in Marine Conservation in Europe 2012

Participation for ASCOBANS: Heidrun Frisch (Secretariat)

The conference had a highly relevant and very diverse programme and presented an excellent opportunity for networking and publicising CMS and ASCOBANS activities. The abstract compilation can be accessed at <http://www.bfn.de/habitatmare/de/tagungen-progress-in-marine-conservation-in-europe-2012-abstracts.php>. Proceedings are under preparation.

The programme was divided into several distinct thematic sessions, dealing with 1) Marine Biodiversity and Networks of Marine Protected Areas, 2) Management and Monitoring of Marine Protected Areas, 3) Management of Anthropogenic Impacts on Marine Ecosystems, 4) Marine Nature Conservation and Fisheries in Europe, 5) European Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), and 6) Protection of Endangered Marine Species.

The presentations provided insights into the practicalities of national implementation of EU legislation, such as the Habitats Directive and the MSFD. Countries developed very different methodologies for the needed public consultations and marine spatial planning, and gaining an overview of the effort required in order to fulfil obligations was enlightening.

The broad set-up of the programme provided an excellent opportunity for knowledge gains in wider marine conservation issues and the challenges of national implementation of decisions, including those for area-based marine conservation and associated planning.

Key points of corridor talk:

- Lindy Weilgart (Okeanos Foundation), one of the top experts on underwater noise impacts and who gave a presentation on alternatives to seismic airguns, agreed to participate in the Joint ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS Noise Working Group.
- Kim Detloff (NABU), who had been seconded to us for 10 months in 2009 when still with IFAW, now leads the marine portfolio of NABU, who currently focus mainly on marine litter and unexploded underwater ordnance. He described the latter as a problem of huge proportions, due to safety issues, chemical pollution from corroded munition and noise/energy emission into the marine environment when detonated.

He suggested that the NGOs already working on the matter assist the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee in developing guidelines for dealing with munition in a cetacean-friendly way. Subsequently, a point on this topic was added to the ASCOBANS work plan for the period 2013-2016.

- Jens Koblitz (German Oceanographic Museum) showed data from Germany's porpoise monitoring programme in the Baltic Sea, which indicates further declines since the Jastarnia Plan was first developed. Following his presentation during discussion I was able to highlight ongoing processes such as the development of the Gap Area Plan (WBBK Plan), which is relevant for the majority of the German Baltic Sea area and seeks to address the threats mentioned in his talk.

2-6 July 2012

64th Annual Commission Meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC)

Participation for ASCOBANS: United Kingdom

The 64th Annual Meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) took place in Panama City, Panama from the 2-6 July 2012.

A full report of the meeting and its decisions, including a EU led resolution on the importance of reducing contaminants into the marine environment and the possible effects from contaminated whale meat consumption, can be found at: <http://iwc.int/home>

Of particular interest to ASCOBANS Parties:

Small cetaceans

- The main focus was a review of the ten species of ziphiids in the North Pacific Ocean and the northern Indian Ocean, believed especially vulnerable to military sonar and seismic surveys.
- Concern over the fears for the extinction of the vaquita and the need for immediate action. Concern was also expressed over: unsustainable bycatches of some populations of harbour porpoises in Europe and franciscana in Brazil; the deliberate killing for bait in the Amazon of botu and tucuxi; and bycatches of the Hector's dolphin in New Zealand. Several governments reported on national actions being taken.
- Progress reports were received on the nine proposals funded last year under the voluntary fund for Small Cetacean Conservation Research. Additional donations to the fund were announced by Italy (€15,000), the Netherlands (€15,000), the UK (£10,000) and a consortium of NGOs (£11,000).

Scientific Work & Research

- IWC will hold three joint workshops on disentanglement and ship strikes in the wider Caribbean with UNEP and SPAW-RAC in 2012-13. The Secretariat will formalise an agreement with UNEP and SPAW-RAC for collaborative engagement. One of the workshops was held in La Paz, Mexico in November 2012 and focused on entanglement response. Preparations are being made for the other two workshops to be held in late 2013 or early 2014.
- A ship strike data co-ordinator will be appointed to increase outreach and use of the IWC ship strike database. A strategic plan will also be developed for addressing ship strikes. Frédéric Chemay (Belgium) was appointed as Chair of the Ship Strikes Working Group of the Conservation Committee.

- The Commission reviewed progress on the Scientific Committee's on-going work on environmental concerns including: Phase II of its POLLUTION 2000+ research programme; emerging and resurgent diseases (CERD); anthropogenic sound; climate change; and the State of the Cetacean Environment Report (that focussed on the Indian Ocean).
- The importance of improved capacity building and guidelines on oil spill response and prevention were stressed, especially in light of new information received on the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.
- Consideration of oils spills will form an important component of a spring 2013 Commission workshop on Anthropogenic Impacts of Cetaceans in the Arctic.
- The Commission noted the potential and actual threats to cetaceans from marine debris and endorsed a joint Scientific Committee and Conservation Committee work programme. A workshop to review scientific evidence of effects of marine debris on cetaceans was, held in the USA, May 2013 and attended by a representative from CMS. A second workshop focusing on applied conservation actions will be held in first quarter of 2014.
- The Scientific Committee was requested to develop a list of priority candidates for future Conservation Management Plans and the Conservation Committee will undertake an inventory of cetacean conservation measures in jurisdictions, on a regional basis. The Scientific Committee's list was developed at its meeting in Korea in 2013 and is available through the Committee's report.
- The IWC's work on Whale-watching progressed, including agreement to hold an operators workshop in Australia, May 2013.
- On Welfare, the IWC agreed to support a workshop to examine euthanasia techniques for stranded cetaceans in the UK, September 2013.

25-29 June 2012

OSPAR Commission (OSPAR 2012)

Participation for ASCOBANS: Heidrun Frisch (Secretariat)

Participation was mainly for taking the opportunity to speak with participants and the OSPAR Secretariat in the margins of the meeting, making use of it taking place in Bonn, Germany. A report of main outcomes of the meeting is contained in the [OSPAR Annual Report 2011-2012](#). A list of decisions and recommendations of the meeting, several of which are relating to biodiversity conservation, can be accessed on the [OSPAR website](#) under "Programmes and Measures".

11-12 September 2012

Sixth Meeting of *ad hoc* HELCOM Seal Expert Group (HELCOM SEAL 6/2012)

Participation for ASCOBANS: Penina Blankett (Finland) & Baltic Fund for Nature

Country reports:

Poland: National management plans for the seal species and the harbour porpoise are under development with the involvement of different ministries and stakeholders, including fishermen.

The Meeting welcomed the information that there will be a museum for harbour porpoises established as part of the Hel Marine Station in Poland.

Denmark: Grey seal and harbour porpoise have been added to the national monitoring program although the management plan was adopted in 2005. Surveys of seals and mammals are being carried out, including SCANS surveys. Fishermen have experienced problems with grey seals and applied for permission to regulate grey seals from the Nature Board, most of the nets in the inner waters have been subjected to pinger use to avoid bycatch of harbour porpoise

By-catch issue

The Meeting noted the information by Mr. Michael Andersen, Danish Fishermen's Association, that the current Common Fisheries Policy obliges the fishermen to report on by-catches. In Denmark this has been done by asking the fishermen to fill reporting sheets. Mr. Andersen explained that at least Danish fishermen are not opposing such reporting and the reporting is becoming more common and that all MSC certified fisheries for Baltic cod are obliged to report on by-catch. The Meeting stressed the importance to enhance the enforcement of the legislation to increase and systematize the reporting of by-catches by fishermen.

HELCOM Red List work

The Meeting discussed the assessment results for the marine mammals (document 5/6), containing the categorisation of the grey seal (by Mr. Olle Karlsson, Sweden) as "Least Concern", ringed seal for the whole Baltic Sea (by Mr. Ivar Jüssi, Estonia) as "Vulnerable", harbour seal (by Tero Härkönen, Sweden) "Vulnerable" for Kalmarsund "Least Concern" for southern Baltic and, harbour porpoise (by Mr. Anders Galatius, Denmark) as "Critically Endangered" in the Baltic Sea east of the Danish Straits and "Least Concern" for the Danish Straits and Kattegat population and the otter as "Near Threatened".

Harbour porpoise surveys

The Meeting took note of the information by Sweden that in spring 2013 there will be data from the SAMBAH project which has so far been carried out successfully.

Denmark has in cooperation with Germany carried out a combined visual and acoustic survey of western population of porpoises and a new estimate of abundance will be available. In addition, a habitat exclusion study in relation to pingers is underway in the Great Belt and will continue during the 2013 season.

Harbour porpoise related projects

The Meeting took note of the information by Poland on two planned projects for testing alternative fishing gears for protection of harbour porpoises, seals and birds: the other is a joint application of Environment and Fisheries ministries to national fund for nature protection with a plan to employ a research vessel, to cooperate with fishermen will be part of the project and the project will be verified according to its effectiveness. The other project is meant for funding the Polish participation in the BALTFIMPA project.

Harbour porpoise fact sheet

The Meeting welcomed the information by Chair Mr. Anders Galatius on the updates to the Fact Sheet on harbour porpoise done since HELCOM SEAL 5/2011 and invited Chair to stress in the text that "different studies" refer genetic and morphological studies.

HELCOM-ASCOBANS harbour porpoise database

The Meeting recalled that HELCOM SEAL 4/2010 agreed to review the status of the harbour porpoise database in each future meeting of HELCOM SEAL and also agreed to include static acoustic monitoring data and other observations of harbour porpoises as that data is made available to the Secretariat.

The Meeting took note of the information that the Secretariat has not received any updates to the database during the recent year. The Meeting agreed that any updates to the harbour porpoise database should be reported to the Secretariat by informing Ms. Petra Kääriä (petra.kaaria@helcom.fi) and also asked the Secretariat to contact the ASCOBANS Secretariat to find out about possible updates that have been reported to ASCOBANS.

The Meeting discussed the acoustic data on porpoises and invited the Contracting Parties to send data to the Secretariat to start clarifying the formats and insertion of those data to the database.

The Meeting pointed out that the fisheries effort data on the use of fishing nets presented on the HELCOM Map and Data webpage has not been updated since the release of the HELCOM Initial Holistic Assessment and it is appearing to be outdated. The Meeting took note that the data were compiled on a project basis and emphasized the importance for the Secretariat to initiate activities to update the data

Revision to HELCOM Recommendation 17/2 "Protection of harbour porpoise in the Baltic Sea Area"

The Meeting noted that HELCOM HOD 37/2012 considered the draft revised Recommendation 17/2 on protection of harbour porpoise in the Baltic Sea Area, noted the study reservations by Germany and Denmark and, pending the clarification of the study reservations by 31 of August 2012, endorsed the Recommendation and invited the Secretariat to forward the Recommendation for adoption by the 34th Meeting of the Helsinki Commission. The Meeting took note of the information by the Secretariat that the status of the Danish study reservation is still to be clarified.

HELCOM CORESET project

The Meeting considered the proposal for a core indicator for the population growth rates of the three seal species and harbour porpoise (document 5/2 and 5/2, Rev.1) and supported the approval of the core indicator for finalisation by HELCOM MONAS 17/2012. The Meeting considered the proposal for a core indicator for the pregnancy rates of marine mammals (document 5/3) and noted that it focuses currently on the grey seal and ringed seal, as the data for harbour seal and harbour porpoise are not available. The Meeting supported the approval of the proposed core indicator on pregnancy rates for finalisation by HELCOM MONAS 17/2012.

The Meeting discussed whether harbour porpoises should be included into the core indicator on nutritional status and pointed out that their nutritional status may be different from that of seals due to different feeding habits but that at this point the knowledge is not at a state that would enable including harbour porpoise but that it should be reconsidered when the knowledge increases especially for the Baltic Sea Proper population.

Report from ASCOBANS work

The Meeting took note of the information by Ms. Penina Blankett, Finland, on activities related to Baltic Sea harbour porpoises under ASCOBANS (**Annex 3**) and welcomed the information that Ms. Blankett had reported to ASCOBANS the outcome of HELCOM SEAL 5/2011 meeting with the draft core indicators on marine mammals and the proposed revised HELCOM Recommendation 17/2 on conservation of harbour porpoises in the Baltic Sea. The Meeting took note of the information that ASCOBANS had also considered the Gap Area Plan and the three (or four) year plan for the next working period of ASCOBANS as well as a new project RUMBAH which may start already in January 2013.

8-19 October 2012

11th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Participation for ASCOBANS: Penina Blankett (Finland)

This report focuses only on the matters discussed in the marine and coastal biodiversity part. The official report of the meeting can be accessed on the [CBD website](#).

Ecologically or biologically significant marine areas — EBSA (ecologically and biologically significant areas)

The meeting discussed the results of the regional EBSA workshops, where national researchers and international experts have been describing ecologically and biologically significant areas. The information contained in these regional workshop reports has been evaluated by the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA). The following regional workshops have been organized: One describing areas in the western part of the South Pacific region, one in the wider Caribbean and western mid-Atlantic region, and one in the Mediterranean region. In the North-East Atlantic region the work is ongoing. Concerning the Mediterranean region, there will be a workshop to finalise the work.

The meeting decided to include the summary reports on the description of areas that meet the criteria for ecologically or biologically significant marine areas in the repository. The list of areas that meet the EBSA criteria were prepared by the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice at its sixteenth meeting and are contained in the annex to the COP 11 XI/17 decision.

Many of these EBSAs are also important areas for cetaceans. The list of these areas can be found from the CBD COP 11 decisions, Decision XI/17 (<http://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-11/cop-11-dec-17-en.doc>).

COP also agreed to transmit the results of this work to the UNGA so that they can be considered by relevant UN processes linked to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

The meeting also decided to organize additional regional or sub-regional workshops for the remaining regions or sub-regions where Parties would like to hold workshops. The tentative schedule for regional workshops to facilitate the description of areas meeting the criteria for ecologically or biologically significant marine areas is in an annex to the document.

Addressing biodiversity considerations in sustainable fisheries

There was also a call to fisheries management bodies to play a stronger role in addressing the impacts of fisheries on biodiversity.

Progress made in the implementation of the specific work plan on coral bleaching

The meeting recognized also the growing challenge of climate change impacts on coral reefs, which, parties agreed, will require significant investment to overcome.

Impacts of anthropogenic underwater noise on marine and coastal biodiversity

The meeting decided to: (a) Promote research with a view to further improving understanding of the issue; (b) Promote awareness of the issue among relevant stakeholders, both nationally and regionally; (c) Take measures, as appropriate, to minimize the significant adverse impacts of anthropogenic underwater noise on marine biodiversity, including the full range of best available technologies and best environmental practices where appropriate and needed, drawing upon existing guidance; and (d) Develop indicators and explore frameworks for monitoring underwater noise for the conservation and

sustainable use of marine biodiversity, and report on progress to a meeting of the Subsidiary Body prior to the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

The meeting also took note of the need for consistent terminology to describe underwater noise and decided to prepare, subject to the availability of financial resources, a draft set of consistent terminology for consideration by a meeting of the Subsidiary Body prior to the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

The meeting noted the gaps and limitations in the existing guidance, including the need to update it in light of improvements in scientific knowledge, and recognizing a range of complementary initiatives under way, *requests* the Executive Secretary to collaborate with Parties, other Governments, and competent organizations, including the International Maritime Organization, the Convention on Migratory Species, the International Whaling Commission, indigenous and local communities and other relevant stakeholders, to organize, subject to the availability of financial resources, an expert workshop with a view to improving and sharing knowledge on underwater noise and its impacts on marine and coastal biodiversity, and to develop practical guidance and toolkits to minimize and mitigate the significant adverse impacts of anthropogenic underwater noise on marine and coastal biodiversity, including marine mammals, in order to assist Parties and other Governments in applying management measures, as appropriate, and *also requests* the Executive Secretary to make the report of the workshop available for consideration by a meeting of the Subsidiary Body prior to the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The workshop should cover issues such as the development of acoustic mapping of areas of interest, among other things.

Progress made in the joint expert review process to monitor and assess the impacts of ocean acidification on marine and coastal biodiversity

A systematic review document on the impacts of ocean acidification on biodiversity and ecosystem functions is under preparation. It will provide a targeted synthesis of the biodiversity implications of ocean acidification for marine and coastal systems.

Addressing impacts of marine debris on marine and coastal biodiversity

Concerning the impact of marine debris, the meeting a) Invited Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations, including the Convention on Migratory Species, to submit information on the impacts of marine debris on marine and coastal biodiversity and habitats; (b) Compile and synthesize submissions by Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations, along with additional scientific and technical information, as input to an expert workshop; (c) Organize an expert workshop to prepare practical guidance on preventing and mitigating the significant adverse impacts of marine debris on marine and coastal biodiversity and habitats that can be applied by Parties and other Governments in their implementation of the programme of work on marine and coastal biodiversity; (d) Submit the compilation/synthesis referred to in subparagraph 26(b) above, and the practical guidance referred to in subparagraph 26(c) above, for consideration by a meeting of the Subsidiary Body prior to the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

The meeting also *requests* the Executive Secretary, subject to the availability of financial resources, to include the issue of marine debris in regional capacity-building workshops in order to discuss ways to prevent and reduce the impact of marine debris on biodiversity and strengthen research on the reduction and management of marine debris, with a focus on addressing sources.

Voluntary guidelines for the consideration of biodiversity in environmental impact assessments and strategic environmental assessments in marine and coastal areas

The meeting took note of the voluntary guidelines for the consideration of biodiversity in environmental impact assessments and strategic environmental assessments annotated specifically for biodiversity in marine and coastal areas, including in areas beyond national

jurisdiction, and encourage, as appropriate, the Parties and others to use the voluntary guidelines and to adapt and apply them as may be considered necessary in accordance with their national circumstances and priorities.

Marine spatial planning

The meeting decided inter alia on the development of a web-based information-sharing system linking existing information sources on marine spatial planning on the web, and to continue to compile information on experiences in marine spatial planning and the use of marine spatial planning practices and make the compiled information available.

Additionally, the meeting decided to convene an expert workshop to provide consolidated practical guidance and a toolkit for marine spatial planning, The expert workshop should: (i) Review existing guidance and toolkits on marine spatial planning; (ii) Identify gaps; (iii) Develop proposals to fill these gaps; and (iv) If considered necessary, prepare consolidated practical guidance and a toolkit on marine spatial planning.

18 October 2012

Harbour Porpoise Symposium “Protecting the ‘Dutch whale’ *Phocoena phocoena* – Crossing Boundaries”

Participation for ASCOBANS: Geneviève Desportes (ASCOBANS North Sea Plan Coordinator)

On the 18th of October, the North Sea Foundation organized an international harbour porpoise symposium in Amsterdam. The aim of the symposium was to share up to date information on harbour porpoises, to discuss problems & policies and to come up with a list of recommendations to improve harbour porpoise conservation. The symposium focused on two specific problems: strandings and the impact of impulsive noise like pile driving. It was attended by 60 scientists and stakeholders from the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Denmark and the UK. There were 10 presentations grouped under three themes - Policy, Strandings and Pile Driving, a summary workshop under each themes and a wrap-up session. Desportes contributed with a presentation “International Harbour Porpoise Conservation”, giving the legal background of harbor porpoise conservation in Europe, a presentation of the ASCOBANS North Sea Conservation Plan and an update on its implementation.

The main overall conclusions of the workshop were the need for - a more coherent international approach within policy and research, - a good surveillance and monitoring program in the EU regarding bycatch and fisheries and - an evaluation of trends in harbour porpoises distribution and abundance. The International cooperation and sharing of data and knowledge was necessary, to avoid duplication of research efforts, especially when funds were limited. Although bycatch was still perceived as one of the (or the) biggest threats to harbour porpoises, there were other important threats as well, of which we still had limited knowledge. Learning by doing was necessary and it should be acted now on known threats (or probability), while gathering knowledge. Information on the symposium, the programme, the report and the presentations can be accessed here: <http://www.noordzee.nl/dutch-whale/>.

Overall, the participants were very satisfied by the symposium and there was a request to continue organizing these kinds of meetings. The North Sea Foundation was hoping to be able to organize a follow up symposium next year, possibly in an even more international setting.

25-26 October 2012

World Whale Conference

Participation for CMS & ASCOBANS: Heidrun Frisch (Secretariat)

The Conference, at which CMS/ASCOBANS was an observer, provided an excellent opportunity to network with relevant NGOs, including some so far not yet involved in CMS and ASCOBANS processes. The "Save the Whales Reloaded" campaign, to which Planet Whale is inviting all whale and dolphin charities, seeks to get the cetacean NGOs to work together in a manner similar to Birdlife International. Over 70 NGOs and related businesses had signed up at the time of the conference. Three areas deserving of immediate support were identified: New Zealand for the endangered Maui's Dolphin, the Southern Ocean as a non-whaling sanctuary, and Loro Parque, Tenerife, as the site where orca Morgan is currently held captive.

Delegates agreed that a new coalition should be formed to effectively protect the world's cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises) from the many and varied threats that they face. This coalition would be a partnership of NGOs, whale and dolphin watching businesses, and passionate individuals, all prepared to work together on behalf of cetaceans.

POST-CONFERENCE UPDATE:

On 8th June 2013, on World Oceans Day, 22 partners from 10 countries launched the World Cetacean Alliance, a global community willing to work together to protect whales, dolphins, and porpoises, and their habitats.

According to <http://www.worldcetaceanalliance.org>, the World Cetacean Alliance stands by the following principles:

- The Alliance will actively seek recognition and influence as the largest international network of experts and advocates for cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises).
- Our emphasis will be to involve the widest possible stakeholder community, and especially the general public, in all of our agreed strategies, policies and programmes; globally, regionally, and locally. We believe everybody deserves a say in the important decisions that affect whales and dolphins.
- We will seek innovative and positive solutions to the issues affecting cetaceans by adopting an inclusive, solutions-driven approach at all times.
- As the global Partnership empowered to speak with one voice to protect cetaceans and their habitats, we recognise the value of collaboration and respect the ideas and principles of all of the Partners as equals.

The World Cetacean Alliance, which is aiming to grow into a role similar to that of Birdlife International, could in future significantly change the way CMS and ASCOBANS interact, and the intensity of interaction, with marine conservation organizations.

27-28 October 2012

WhaleFest 2012

Participation for CMS & ASCOBANS: Heidrun Frisch (Secretariat)

Information on the WhaleFest 2012 can be found in the Secretariat's Outreach and Education Report ([AC20/Doc.5.2](#)).

7-8 November 2012

40th Meeting of the CMS Standing Committee

Participation for CMS & ASCOBANS: Borja Heredia (Secretariat)

The following is an extract from the Draft Report of the 40th CMS Standing Committee Meeting. The full report of the meeting can be accessed on the [CMS website](#).

21. CMS Instruments

ASCOBANS

178. Mr Heredia (Secretariat) reported that ASCOBANS MOP7 had recently taken place in Brighton, UK where a budget increase of 3.45 per cent had been agreed, an action plan for Harbour Porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) in the Western Baltic, the Belt Sea and the Kattegat had been adopted and the cycle between Meetings of the Parties provisionally changed from three to four years, pending written approval from two Parties not present in Brighton (Belgium and Lithuania). It was also the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Agreement.

13-15 November 2012

8th Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee

Participation for CMS & ASCOBANS: Heidrun Frisch (Secretariat)

The ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee discusses a significant number of items relevant either in the wider CMS context or specifically for the shared area of ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS (Atlantic Spain and Portugal). The ACCOBAMS Secretariat had also tabled several ASCOBANS AC documents as information documents for SC8, and requested the CMS/ASCOBANS Secretariat to present them. As a result, CMS/ASCOBANS was fully involved in discussions of many of the agenda items and participated in most of the sessional working groups. Key interventions, as summarised upon request of the ACCOBAMS Secretariat for the meeting report, are copied below. The full report of this productive meeting can be accessed on the [ACCOBAMS website](#). Meeting documents can be requested from the ACCOBAMS Secretariat.

Item 3.2 Population Structure

Heidrun Frisch (UNEP/CMS and UNEP/ASCOBANS) referred to Inf.3, which contained the proceedings of an ASCOBANS workshop held in 2007. At the workshop and in follow-up, an overview of methods for population structure studies and their applicability for different questions had been compiled, and management units for several species in the ASCOBANS Area proposed. She recommended that in planning the joint workshop for 2013, the results of this initiative be taken into account.

Item 3.3.7 Other Species and Populations

Heidrun Frisch (UNEP/CMS and UNEP/ASCOBANS) encouraged that for any work on small cetacean species in the Contiguous Atlantic Area, experts of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee should be involved and any products should be joint initiatives of the two Agreements.

Item 3.5 Anthropogenic Noise

Heidrun Frisch (UNEP/CMS and UNEP/ASCOBANS) confirmed that ASCOBANS was very pleased that collaboration with ACCOBAMS on noise was now formalised through a joint working group. ASCOBANS also shared the view that it would be good to have a consultant able to invest the time needed to bring this work forward.

She was pleased to announce that CMS also wanted to join this initiative, making this a global review and also joining in the fundraising efforts to finance the consultant. CMS had

passed several resolutions on underwater noise, most recently at COP10 in 2011, which called for application of Best Environmental Practice (BEP) and Best Available Technique (BAT), so interest in progressing work on this issue was high.

Further, CMS Resolution 10.15: *Global Programme of Work for Cetaceans* requests the CMS Secretariat to increase linkages and synergies within the CMS Family by promoting joint priorities and the sharing of technical expertise and resources. It also established the Scientific Council's Aquatic Mammals Working Group as a standing intersessional working group, and one of its mandates was to provide support to the regional agreements, including ACCOBAMS. The Committee should therefore consider involving the CMS Aquatic Mammals Working Group in the work of the Joint ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS Working Group on Noise. Having the backing of the Convention would give additional emphasis to its calls for information and activities.

Item 3.6 Ship Strikes

Heidrun Frisch (UNEP/CMS and UNEP/ASCOBANS) summarized the contents of Inf.11, which contained a risk analysis that had been presented to the IWC/ACCOBAMS Ship Strikes Workshop in 2010 in Beaulieu-sur-Mer as well as the 18th Meeting of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee. Peter Evans (Sea Watch Foundation) had used both shipping data stemming from AIS and World Meteorological Organization VOS schemes and effort-related cetacean sightings data for a GIS-based grid cell analysis of respective densities. In this way, the main areas and seasons for potential conflicts between shipping and cetaceans were identified. While the study area was restricted to ASCOBANS and was therefore only partly relevant for ACCOBAMS, the methodology applied might be interesting for application in the ACCOBAMS area and could thus help the Committee to fulfil the mandate received through Res. 4.10.

Item 3.9 Marine Protected Areas

Heidrun Frisch (UNEP/CMS and UNEP/ASCOBANS) expressed her gratitude to Erich Hoyt and Giuseppe Notarbartolo di Sciara for developing these terms of reference. The ASCOBANS Advisory Committee had proposed organizing the workshop at the 2013 ECS conference, but had not elaborated on the content. Without having had the opportunity to consult the Advisory Committee, she believed that the proposals made would be fully supported by ASCOBANS.

Item 3.10 Chemical pollution and marine litter

(on chemical pollution:)

Heidrun Frisch (UNEP/CMS and UNEP/ASCOBANS) presented Inf.17, a brief summary report of the joint ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS workshop on chemical pollution and marine mammals held at the 2012 ECS Conference. The workshop had reviewed current levels of pollutants across the Agreement Areas, long-term trends, and biological effects upon marine mammals at the individual and population level. It also made recommendations for priority research areas, which had then been taken up in ASCOBANS Resolution No. 4 of the 7th Meeting of the Parties (October 2012) on *Impacts of Chemical Pollution on Small Cetaceans*.

(on marine litter:)

Heidrun Frisch (UNEP/CMS and UNEP/ASCOBANS) said that the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee had established a correspondence working group on marine debris at its last meeting. Its tasks included establishing recommendations for research methodologies to assess debris as seen during cetacean surveys conducted at sea, aiming for a standardised approach to recording types of debris, and advising on a standardized protocol for necropsies. She saw opportunities for information exchange between both Agreements' activities and collaboration regarding marine debris.

Item 4.1 Contribution to the Marine Strategy Framework Directive

Heidrun Frisch (UNEP/CMS and UNEP/ASCOBANS) noted that based on the document presented as Doc.18, and following further consultations with ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS contacts, the working group's terms of reference had been officially adopted by the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee. The list of group members was still open and volunteers were encouraged to indicate their wish to participate to one of the Secretariats. If this meeting wished to make any amendments, these would need endorsement from the ASCOBANS Parties, which she proposed to obtain by means of a written consultation in order to avoid further delays and allow the group to start its activities as soon as possible.

Since no changes to the terms of reference were requested by the Committee, the two Secretariats would now jointly communicate the agreed terms of reference to all group members and focal points and make a call for nomination of a working group convener.

Item 4.3 Proposal to include Cuvier's beaked whales in Appendix I of CMS

Heidrun Frisch (UNEP/CMS and UNEP/ASCOBANS) explained that to qualify for Appendix I listing, a species or population needed to be endangered, but the CMS Scientific Council did not require corresponding red list status. She confirmed that the CMS Appointed Councillor for Aquatic Mammals, Bill Perrin, had looked at the draft proposal and found it sound and well-reasoned. He had also expressed his gratitude for its production, which had been encouraged by the 17th Scientific Council Meeting. He expected that it would be well received by the Council.

Heidrun Frisch (UNEP/CMS and UNEP/ASCOBANS) outlined the process for the listing under CMS. Once endorsed by the Committee, the proposal should be submitted for consideration by the next CMS Scientific Council Meeting, which was foreseen to take place in autumn 2013. After endorsement or comments from the Council, a CMS Party or several Parties would be needed to formally sponsor the listing proposal and submit it to the CMS Secretariat at least 150 days before the next meeting of the CMS Conference of the Parties in 2014.

Item 8 Any Other Business

(on project funding:)

Heidrun Frisch (UNEP/CMS and UNEP/ASCOBANS) suggested that ACCOBAMS look at the practice in other organizations such as CMS, who recently renewed the eligibility criteria and evaluation process for the Small Grants Programme, or ASCOBANS, who were also financing projects on a regular basis. Both organizations handled matters differently depending on the needs of each one, but both had worked well in their specific contexts and might have applicability for ACCOBAMS.

17-18 December 2012

SCANS III Start-Up Meeting

Participation for ASCOBANS: Geneviève Desportes (ASCOBANS North Sea Plan Coordinator)

The SCANS III Start up meeting took place in Edinburgh, at the City Chambers on 17 and 18 December 2012. The meeting was chaired by Phil Hammond (SMRU, UK), seconded by Claire Lacey (SMRU, UK, SCANS III coordinator) and attended by representatives of all the countries having participating in SCANS II and CODA (North Sea states - except Sweden and Norway, as well as Ireland, Spain and Portugal), and survey experts.

The context/background of SCANS III was introduced and discussed:

- 1) In relation to reporting requirements from MSFD and HD, when trans-boundary reporting is possible: to which extent can a SCANS-type project answers the international reporting needs & which requirements should be met to optimize this possibility (e.g. in term of frequency)
- 2) Success and failure of SCANS II and CODA regarding shipboard, aerial and acoustic surveys as well as the general logistics: what did we learn, what can we improve.
- 3) Recent and/or current and/or near future related projects, both visual and acoustic surveys: what can be learned from them.

The group discussed what should be the overall aim of SCANS III and its scope in terms of survey areas, cooperation with other surveys, distribution of survey effort between shelf and offshore waters, weighing the plus and minus of different options.

Additional elements to the project, which could increase its chance of funding, were also discussed, e.g. concurrent fish, bird and oceanographic surveys, possible elements of capacity building, potential for collecting bycatch data, estimation of an index of vulnerability by investigating the overlap between cetacean and gear distribution, biopsy sampling for clarifying population structure, collection of JCP-type data, evaluation of different monitoring methods in answering the monitoring needs under MSFD and HD, establishing a "risk matrix² relevant to anthropogenic activities, continuing developing a robust framework for setting limits to cetacean bycatch, creating a database of cetacean abundance data collected since SCANS II for facilitating risk assessments.

Possible funding sources were discussed: LIFE Nature programme, military sources, ASCOBANS, national funding, commercial funding (e.g. offshore renewable Joint Industry Program). Finally a general schedule and a list of immediate actions and responsibilities were established.

SCANS III was originally planned for 2015. However, since then plans have changed and the survey is now planned for 2016, with subsequent changes in the application schedule.

Document [AC20/Doc.4.1.a](#) relates the present state of the project as it stands now presenting the overall aim of the project, the 4 project objectives, the 16 project actions, the project area, the target species and the expected results, the expected participant organisations and the expected cost.

4-8 February 2013

ICES Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species (ICES WGBYC)

Participation for ASCOBANS: Kelly Macleod (United Kingdom) & Geneviève Desportes (ASCOBANS North Sea Plan Coordinator)

The Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species (WGBYC) met in Copenhagen at ICES headquarters between 4 and 9 February 2013. The meeting was chaired by Bram Couperus (Netherlands) and was attended by 18 members from ten nations a representative from the European Commission, as well as the coordinator of the ASCOBANS Conservation Plan for Harbour Porpoises in the North Sea. The ToR for WGBYC 2013 and the final report of the meeting are available here:

http://www.ices.dk/sites/pub/Publication%20Reports/Expert%20Group%20Report/acom/2013/WGBYC/wgbyc_2013.pdf

Since 2008, one of the main tasks of the WGBYC has been to review the annual reports from EU Member States on their implementation of the EU Regulation 812/2004. However, since 2012, this task is no longer requested of the group by the Commission. Although this

task now has less emphasis within WGBYC, the WG continues to review and summarise the reports as a means of assessing ongoing and new monitoring and implementation of mitigation measures for protected species bycatch. Unfortunately, monitoring under this regulation by some MS is inadequate. Also very little monitoring is carried out in segments not required to be monitored under the regulation¹ but known to present significant bycatch risk - e.g. gillnet fisheries in area IV, both for vessels over and below 15m. Consequently estimates of bycatch at the EU level remain patchy. As a result, extrapolated figures need to be interpreted with caution. Similarly, information on the implementation of pingers, such as information on enforcement, compliance and the reliability of pinger in use, is lacking.

WGBYC continue to populate and refine a central database of information on European bycatch monitoring and fishing effort data for those fishing sectors where bycatch monitoring is mandated under Regulations 812/2004, although information other sectors is included when available. However, Regulation 812/2004 will eventually be repealed (see WKRev812 final report for a review - ICES, 2010) and monitoring of protected species bycatch will be incorporated into existing and future data collection frameworks (DCF and DC-MAP). How protected species bycatch monitoring will be incorporated into these frameworks became the focus of the WG in 2013. To facilitate this, a database was created that would allow comparisons to be made between existing levels of DCF monitoring with those under the Reg812/2004 that would allow the group to identify overlaps in monitoring but importantly gaps that would need to be captured in future. This work provided the basis of a response to the European Commission's "Request from EU concerning monitoring bycatch of cetaceans and other protected species" (DGMARE, 14 December 2012 – request is detailed in WGBYC 2013). This work was further elaborated at a workshop held at ICES Headquarters in March 2013. The final report of the workshop is available here: http://www.ices.dk/sites/pub/Publication%20Reports/Expert%20Group%20Report/acom/2013/WKBYC/wkbyc_2013.pdf

Work continued on assessing population level impacts of bycatch. The Working Group attempted to assess the likely conservation threat to the four most frequently sighted cetacean species (harbour porpoise, common dolphin, white-beaked dolphins and minke whales) with the specific aim of identifying fisheries and areas of highest potential risk rather than providing an assessment of bycatch levels. However, due to a number of issues (see WGBYC 2013) it was impossible to match up animal density with fishing effort density by any common sampling unit of area. Further work on this will be progressed in the 2014 meeting.

Assessment of population level impacts of bycatch relies on comparison with a threshold value that defines a level of unacceptable interaction that will result in adverse impacts on populations. WGBYC currently uses the IWC/ASCOBANS (2010) 1.7% threshold as the limit against which levels of bycatch are assessed. However, a review of alternative means of setting thresholds formed part of the request from the Commission (DGMARE, 14 December 2012) and was considered at the March workshop. The advice from this workshop (http://www.ices.dk/sites/pub/Publication%20Reports/Advice/2013/Special%20requests/EU_bycatch%20of%20cetaceans%20and%20other%20protected%20species.pdf) recommends a Bycatch Risk Approach for identifying areas and fisheries that pose the greatest conservation threat to cetaceans. The severity of the threat needs to be considered against an agreed threshold which has been derived based on conservation objectives. The decisions that need to be made in regard to one such approach for setting threshold limits are discussed in ASCOBANS AC 20 document 3.1.2a (http://www.ascobans.org/pdf/ac20/AC20_3.1.2.a_DecisionsBycatchLimits.pdf)

¹ Monitoring should be carried as part of MS obligations to the Habitats Directive.

4-7 February 2013

ICES Working Group on Marine Mammal Ecology (ICES WGMME)

Participation for ASCOBANS: Eunice Pinn (United Kingdom)

WGMME annually reviews new information on abundance and distribution of marine mammals and in recent years such work has been linked to the development of targets and indicators for the Marine Strategy Framework Directive through specific requests from the European Commission and OSPAR. To date such work has focused on the availability of data for each species and the spatial scale at which assessments may be appropriate. Building on work undertaken in 2012, management units were further reviewed and delineated for cetaceans in 2013. Boundaries were specified so that the management units can be populated with abundance and bycatch estimates. As previously agreed, these boundaries coincide with ICES Area/Division boundaries where possible. It was not possible to provide a similar consideration of seal management units.

Linked with this, further consideration was given to ICG-COBAM's common indicators for marine mammals as described by the ICG-COBAM EXPERT Group for marine mammals and reptiles. The proposals were accepted in principal but it was noted that some changes would be required to make them operational. Inevitably with such work, a number of issues were identified in the current proposals. WGMME took care not to change the most important messages relating to the indicators (name, metrics and targets), although there were some minor editorial changes. The further development of the seal data base was also linked with these indicators.

Following work on work over the last three years on the impacts of renewable energy developments on marine mammals, in 2013, monitoring needs were considered. Current monitoring efforts to determine the distribution and habitat use of marine mammals, in relation to environmental impact assessments, e.g. for marine renewable energy developments, typically take place at much smaller spatial scales than are ecologically relevant for marine mammals, and are often undertaken independently without broader coordination. This results in numerous disparate datasets that are difficult to integrate when assessing overall impacts of marine renewable energy developments. Case studies were provided for Germany, The Netherlands, Belgium, and UK. A need for strategic decision making in the early stages was identified. In the initial monitoring design stages, regulators and developers must develop clear, achievable monitoring objectives, and design realistic ways to achieve them, so that robust scientific data with sufficient statistical power can be gathered given available resources. There is also a critical need to improve integration of data collection efforts throughout the lifetime of a project, thereby ensuring that data gathered during pre-consenting *site characterisation* stages can act as the "before" dataset for later studies of *magnitude of impact*. This requires that BACI / BAGI or other suitable approaches be adequately considered and evaluated with respect to statistical power at, or near, the outset of site characterisation data gathering. Too often, monitoring programs in adjacent marine renewable energy developments occur independently without broader coordination. Regulators and seabed owners need to acknowledge the need for data pooling, require it as an integral part for marine renewable consenting and develop internationally standardised comparable data formats for easy access and analysis. The Joint Cetacean Protocol (JCP) may serve as such an example.

The official report of the meeting has been made available as [AC20/Doc.4.1.b](#).

6-10 April 2013

27th Annual Conference of the European Cetacean Society, incl. Workshops

Participation for CMS & ASCOBANS: Heidrun Frisch (Secretariat)

On 6 April, the CMS/ASCOBANS representative attended the joint WDC/ASCOBANS Workshop “Towards a Conservation Strategy for White-beaked Dolphins *Lagenorhynchus albirostris* in the Northeast Atlantic” and gave a short presentation on the information regarding white-beaked dolphins that ASCOBANS Parties had so far been made aware of, and how CMS and ASCOBANS might fit into any hopes for more focused conservation efforts. A full report of the workshop has been published as [AC20/Doc.4.1.c](#), and several follow-up actions were agreed. Among other things, the expert group will consider whether they want to propose a geographic extension of the current CMS Appendix II listing of the species to cover their entire range.

Heidrun also paid a quick visit to the Students Workshop “So you want to be a marine mammalogist?”, at which she had been asked to give some information on how she got into this job and what skills and experience were needed from her viewpoint for a career in international policy work. She also used this opportunity to advertise the internship programme.

The joint ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS Workshop on Cetacean Population Structure also took place on this day. The ACCOBAMS Secretariat took the lead in organizing and supporting this workshop. A summary report has been made available as [AC20/Doc.4.1.1](#).

Peter Evans had taken the lead in organizing the joint ASCOBANS/ACCOBAMS Workshop on “The Challenge of Spatially Managing Cetaceans – A Highly Mobile Animal Group”, which took place on 7 April. Heidrun had stepped in on short notice as speaker for the first talk, giving an overview of the most relevant regional conservation instruments related to marine protected areas in Europe. The summary report of the workshop is available as [AC20/Doc.4.2.1](#). The workshop explored various aspects of spatial management relevant for cetaceans, including MPAs in national waters and ABNJs, management of threats through spatial measures, such as movements of shipping lanes, and challenges particular to dealing with wide-ranging species.

The Annual Conference of the European Cetacean Society took place from 8-10 April 2013. The theme for this year was “Interdisciplinary Approaches in the Study of Marine Mammals”. Presentations covered research on a wide range of subjects, divided into sessions on human interactions (e.g. ship strikes, sonar, pile driving and other marine construction, seismic surveys, bycatch and pinger use, whaling), abundance and distribution, genetics, ecology, acoustics, behaviour and conservation (with project examples from Zanzibar, the Mediterranean (monk seal) and Mexico (vaquita)).

The coffee breaks, lunches and dinners were used for networking with the scientists as well as a variety of meetings, such as a planning session for the SAMBAH Stakeholder Workshop held on 15 April, and meetings with project partners and partner organizations such as Whale and Dolphin Conservation (WDC).

15 April 2013

SAMBAH Stakeholder Workshop: How can the fishing, shipping and offshore construction industries and politics help to protect the Baltic Sea harbour porpoise?

Participation for ASCOBANS: Heidrun Frisch (Secretariat)

The report of this workshop has been made available to the Advisory Committee as [AC20/Doc.14.4](#).

14-17 May 2013

15th Meeting of the Nature Protection and Biodiversity Group (HELCOM HABITAT 15/2013)

Participation for ASCOBANS: Penina Blankett (Finland)

Reports from Countries

Germany: There are several projects running in order to implement the biodiversity part of MSFD and BSAP. Germany is also likely to have a draft management plan for harbour porpoise ready by the end of the year and is working in order to finalise Management plans for MPAs in the EEZ. For more information on ongoing activities and projects view: www.habitatmare.de.

Poland: The drafts of national management programmes for grey seal and the harbour porpoise were prepared in February 2013 by WWF Poland. The plans have not yet been approved by the government and they are currently in the process of consultation. Poland has actively taken part in HELCOM Red List and BALTFIMPA projects.

Ghost nets

Poland also presented a ghost net retrieval project by WWF and BalticSea 2020 (Presentation 4). The project removed more than 27 tonnes of ghost nets, prepared interactive maps of hooks showing obstacles where it is likely to lose fishing gear. The magnitude of the problem with lost gear was emphasised as for example every year 1500 set nets are lost in the Polish economic zone.

Baltic harbour porpoise day

The Meeting welcomed the information by the Secretariat that the Secretariat is preparing a compilation of information on harbour porpoise to be placed on the HELCOM website to celebrate the Harbour porpoise Day promoted by ASCOBANS on 19 May 2013. The Meeting appreciated that this activity allows informing about the activities of HELCOM on harbor porpoises.

Work Programme of HELCOM HABITAT 2013-2015

The Meeting agreed on the Work Programme of HELCOM HABITAT 2013-2015. Concerning harbor porpoise the aim is to safeguard long term viability of Baltic seal species and harbour porpoises by continuing co-operation with ASCOBANS and updating of the coordinated reporting system and database on Baltic harbour porpoise sightings, by-catches and strandings. The progress on these actions will be considered in HELCOM HABITAT meetings each year and by annual reporting on the implementation of Recommendation 17/2 to HELCOM HABITAT.

3-15 June 2013

65th Meeting of the Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission (IWC SC)

Participation for ASCOBANS: Mark Simmonds (HSI)

The full SC report for this year can be found here:

<http://iwc.int/cache/downloads/1lwj9m9sehus40kswskggk8cw/2013%20IWC%20SC%20report.pdf>

Asian Cetaceans Review

The primary topic for the SCS in 2013 was the 'Review of the current status of selected populations of small cetaceans in East Asian Waters [China (including Taiwan), Korea, Japan and Russia (white whales only)]'.

Small Cetaceans Voluntary Fund

The IWC has a Small Cetaceans Voluntary Fund to which projects can apply for support. Of the nine projects awarded in 2011, four were completed in 2012, two projects will be completed in 2013 and a further three will end at the beginning of 2014. Five new projects were approved in 2013. The Secretariat is now preparing a dedicated section for the IWC website about these projects.

A review of the projects grant aided to date by the fund will form the main focus for the review of the subcommittee next year.

Harbour Porpoise

In 2013, the SC received paper SC/65a/SM21 which reported on a ship board double-platform line-transect survey to assess harbour porpoise abundance in the 'GAP area' between the North Sea and the Baltic Proper. The abundance of harbour porpoises within the survey area was estimated at 40,475 animals (95% CI: 25,614–65,041, CV=0.235). Large areas of the northern part of the study region were not surveyed due to poor weather. The Committee welcomed this work and formally accepted the abundance estimate.

Marine Debris

The full report of the IWC Marine Debris workshop which was held in May in Woodshole can be found in SC/65a/Rep06. The workshop participants recognized the potential significant impacts that marine debris has on both cetacean habitat and cetaceans through both macrodebris (such as fishing gear, plastic bags and sheeting) entanglement and ingestion and through microplastics and their associated chemical burden through ingestion or inhalation. The workshop encouraged debris sampling when conducting observational cetacean research at sea (i.e. water sampling and visual observations during cetacean sightings surveys) and recommended that industry partners be involved in marine debris prevention, research and response to ensure success in reducing marine debris impacts on cetaceans. Finally, the workshop agreed that ingestion and inhalation of marine debris may sometimes be lethal, that sub-lethal impacts may also occur with long term negative consequences, and that intake of debris is a problem, both as an individual welfare concern and potentially for some populations and species. Therefore more research was encouraged.

The workshop recommended that the IWC Scientific Committee should evaluate the risks of ingestion and inhalation based upon (1) the spatial distribution of microplastics and macro debris and (2) the feeding strategies and location of feeding areas of cetaceans, and that the Scientific Committee prioritize studies of those cetacean that are likely at greatest risk of ingesting or inhaling macro- and micro-debris and associated pollutants (Fossi *et al.*, 2012). The workshop thus recommended that the initial focus of research be on three species of filter-feeding whales: the North Atlantic right whale, the fin whale in the Mediterranean Sea, and the gray whale in the eastern North Pacific. The workshop noted that none of its recommendations required the lethal collection of cetaceans.

The workshop then identified the following priority mitigation measures:

(i) Entanglement:

Since both active and derelict gear are responsible for cetacean entanglements, focus should be on the prevention of entanglement from both of these sources on cetaceans. The workshop recommended a consideration of how different managerial regimes affect (i.e., facilitate or hinder) the feasibility of implementing actions, regulatory or otherwise, intended to reduce the risk of entanglement to cetaceans, maximize the return of lost viable gear to fishers, and avoid the introduction of derelict fishing gear into aquatic environments. These actions include: (1) targeting reduction of fishing effort; (2) modifying of fishing gear; (3) developing a response system to respond to and retrieve lost gear; and (4) implementing time-area closures and marine spatial planning.

(ii) Ingested debris:

As known impacts are largely dependent on species group, the workshop strongly recommended research that allows prioritization of relevant cetacean populations, as data does not exist at this time to allow this. The group encouraged modelling approaches that examined the relationship between marine debris “hot spots” and information on distributions, feeding strategies and mortality rate data already collected by the IWC and other organisations. The workshop also recommended the determination of hazard function of specific debris with subsequent connection with the modelling data.

In discussion of this report, the SWG also recognized the potential importance of increased understanding of microplastic uptake by prey as increasing numbers of papers have reported detecting microplastic particles in fish, crustaceans and krill. The SWG noted that additional research studies, including modeling efforts, are needed to determine how microplastic particles are transported through marine food webs and their potential impacts to whales and their prey. In terms of estimating death rates due to entanglement, obtaining information from each fisher on use rate vs. loss rate would be valuable to help determine if active gear poses a greater risk than lost fishing gear to whales.

After review of the workshop report and other scientific papers, the SC endorsed all the recommendations of the workshop (see SC65a/Rep06 for full details), including its recommended pathology protocol and agreed that:

- Legacy and contemporary marine debris have the potential to be persistent, bioaccumulative and lethal to cetacean populations and represent a global management challenge; and
- Entanglement in and intake of active and derelict fishing gear and other marine debris have lethal and sub-lethal effects on cetaceans.

Other Environmental Matters

The SC received updates on studies on the effects of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico; the CERD (Cetacean Emerging and Resurging Disease) work programme; and agreed a refocused programme of work on pollution studies. ‘Pollution 2010’ will focus on assessing the toxicity of microplastics (see Annex K, Item 11.2) and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons and dispersants in cetaceans

To note: The IWC has changed its meeting cycle such that the Commission now meets every second year whilst the SC continues to meet annually.

27 June 2013

Danish Dialogforum

Participation for ASCOBANS: Geneviève Desportes (ASCOBANS North Sea Plan Coordinator)

The 7th meeting of the Danish Natura 2000 Dialogforum meeting took place in Copenhagen, at the Danish Agrifish Agency, Danish Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries on 27 June 2012. The meeting was chaired by Jakob Munkhøj Nielsen (Center for Fisheries) and was attended by representatives from the AgriFish Agency, the Danish Nature Agency (Ministry of Environment), DTU Aqua, DCE/Institut for Bioscience, Greenpeace, WWF, Oceana, ASCOBANS, the Society for the Protection of Marine Mammals, the two Danish associations for recreational fishermen and the Danish Fishermen’s Association.

The Dialogforum provides a platform for a professional dialog about fisheries and the protection of the Natura 2000 marine areas between the Ministries of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries and Environment, the scientific institutions and the environmental NGOs and the fisheries organisations, both professional and recreational, with the aim of involving these

organisations in the work carried out in the framework of Natura 2000 and concerning fisheries management.

The meeting had different points on its agenda, all related to Natura 2000 areas and including among others the cooperation with other countries regarding Natura 2000 marine areas (especially Sweden), presentation of different projects in Natura 2000 areas and update on the status of the work of the ministries concerning Natura 2000 marine areas.

The point directly of interest to the work of ASCOBANS was the presentation of a trend analysis in harbor population in the Gap area. A ship board double-platform line-transect sightings survey Mini SCANS was conducted in the Kattegat, Belt Seas and the Western Baltic in July 2012 for assessing harbour porpoise abundance in the so called 'GAP area' between the North Sea and the Baltic Proper (Viquerat et al. 2013). A trends analysis (Sveegaard et al. 2013) was performed using the largest possible area (30,130 km²) with survey coverage in the three surveys: 1994 (SCANS), 2005 (SCANS II) and 2012 (Mini SCANS). The probability distribution for the change in abundance between the years was estimated using a Bayesian approach. The highest abundance estimate was found in 1994 which was 62% higher than in 2005 and 34% higher than in 2012, suggesting an overall decreasing trend from 1994 to 2005 encompassing a decrease from 1994 to 2005 and an increase from 2005 to 2012. The apparent 43% increase between 2005 and 2012, corresponding to ca. 8.000 porpoises, leads to a population of 18.494 (cv=0.27) in the area compared to 27,923 (cv=0.46) in 1994 and 10,614 (cv=0.28) in 2005. The population decline seen in 2005 seems to have stopped and the situation may even be improving.

The discussion concerned the reliability of such population estimates and trend analyses, the Fisheries organizations rising doubts on the reliability both of the method used for assessing cetacean abundance and for conducting the trend analysis. They argued that fishermen had not observed the dramatic changes in population that the results suggest and that the results are associated to a large uncertainty.

Sveegaard, S., Teilmann, J. and Galatius, A. 2013. Abundance survey of harbour porpoises in Kattegat, Belt Seas and the Western Baltic, July 2012. http://dce.au.dk/fileadmin/dce.au.dk/Udgivelser/Abundance_survey_of_harbour_porpoises_2012_20130612.pdf

Viquera, S., Feindt-Herr, H., Gilles, A., Peschk, V., Sieber, U., Sveegaard, S. and Teilmann, J. 2013. Survey for the abundance of harbour porpoises (*Phocoena phocoena*) in the Western Baltic, Belt Sea and Kattegat ('Gap-Area'). IWC SC/65a/SM21.