

AC24: List of Action Points

Scientific Session

1. Approve and finalize the Species Action Plan for the North-East Atlantic Common Dolphin and agree to circulate it to the Parties for adoption in line with Resolution 8.4.
2. Reconfirm the Steering Group to support the implementation of the new Species Action Plan for the North-East Atlantic Common Dolphin in close liaison with the Secretariat, with emphasis on the activities outlined in section 1.5 of the Action Plan.
3. The Secretariat will write to the Faeroese authorities on behalf of the Advisory Committee, requesting further information about the opportunistic hunt of Atlantic White-sided Dolphins in the Faeroe Islands. The draft letter will be shared with Parties and AC24 observers and sent in November at the latest.
4. ASCOBANS Parties are encouraged to address the following six research questions presented in the review of the Conservation Status of White-beaked Dolphin at AC23, updated at AC24:
 - a. Studies of life history parameters (ages, lengths, at sexual maturity, reproductive rates, life spans) from stranded and bycaught animals;
 - b. Better abundance estimates in the northern North Atlantic;
 - c. Further investigations of population structure;
 - d. Studies of diet through stomach contents, stable isotope and fatty acid analyses;
 - e. More contaminant studies;
 - f. Studies of likely effects of climate change.

To facilitate joint analyses, a high priority should be an inventory of necropsy and other samples held by each country. Andrew Brownlow is tasked to intersessionally liaise with other stranding networks regarding samples and to report back to AC25.

5. Hold special species sessions on Beaked Whales and Bottlenose Dolphins at AC25.
6. Encourage Parties and ASCOBANS stakeholders to submit EU Life project and other relevant applications targeting ASCOBANS species. The Secretariat shall explore opportunities for such proposals.
7. Encourage Parties to submit species proposals for CMS COP13 in line with the paper on "Readdressing the CMS listing of species in the ASCOBANS region" (AC24/Inf.9.3.b).

Bycatch

8. Parties to work nationally (e.g. through EU data collection work plans) and regionally (through DCF Regional Coordination Groups) to improve quality and availability of fishing effort data (e.g. by region, gear-type, net length, vessel size category, season, and country).
9. Agree to commission a cost-benefit analysis of available and potential monitoring tools aboard fishing vessels (e.g. observers, mobile REM) that will investigate options for more robust and cost-effective bycatch monitoring in the ASCOBANS region, in liaison with Parties and other relevant stakeholders (e.g. EC, HELCOM, ICES, IWC, OSPAR). The method needs to also be suitable for vessels of less than 15 metres length.

10. Parties should draw on fisheries funding from the EU (e.g. EMFF) to jointly implement better bycatch monitoring and mitigation, with assistance from the European Commission.
11. Parties to make sure that their financial needs for ASCOBANS' species conservation actions are properly reflected in the Prioritized Action Frameworks (PAFs) under the Habitats Directive for the next EU multi-annual financial framework by the end of 2018 at the latest.
12. Agree to commission a review of available mitigation methods applicable to high-risk fisheries within the ASCOBANS Agreement Area, to investigate gear- and area-specific solutions to mitigate bycatch, including alternative fishing methods. Throughout this process those engaged in the review are to closely liaise with Parties and other stakeholders, including the IWC Bycatch Mitigation Initiative (BMI).
13. Identify pilot studies for bycatch mitigation, taking into account the outputs of the review, in close liaison with the IWC BMI.
14. Parties to address the challenges for monitoring cetacean bycatch as a consequence of working under the EU-MAP. These include an appropriate sampling design (e.g. taking account of areas, métiers, number of vessels to be sampled, amount of sampling days/hauls), and ensuring that trained and dedicated observers are deployed in sufficient numbers and adequately engaged in monitoring cetaceans, drawing upon knowledge of high-risk areas and fisheries. Noting that additional dedicated monitoring may be required. The Secretariat to address these issues through participation in RCGs as observers, if feasible.
15. Parties to influence the discussion on EU Fishing Regulations (e.g. control regulation) in order to include monitoring requirements to be used for monitoring of small cetacean bycatch.
16. Parties to pass on recommendations for bycatch monitoring and mitigation within their own country to the appropriate persons, to facilitate engagement internationally, particularly in discussions with the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) and the European Commission.
17. Parties to continue supporting the international strandings database aiming to provide supplementary information on causes of death, to assess the scale of bycatch and its potential impacts.
18. Parties to decide a management procedure approach to ensure that ASCOBANS objectives (e.g. minimising bycatch whilst working towards a zero bycatch target) are met. Quantitative triggers for action may need to be established [in line with requirements under EU environmental legislation].
19. Parties to take mitigation action as soon as possible where it is already known that particular fisheries are resulting in notable bycatch.
20. The Secretariat to ask the European Commission for advice on how to classify semi-drift nets at métier level IV so that EU Member States can be clear on their usage in particular regions.

Resource depletion

21. Establish a Working Group on Resource Depletion to review new information on resource depletion and its impacts on small cetacean populations and to make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action, to follow-up on Work Plan Activity 5 (2017-2020). The WG membership should include veterinary and fishery science expertise as well as cetacean ecology and conservation expertise. Additional members may be added, notably from HELCOM and ICES.

22. The Secretariat is to finalise the Terms of References for the new Working Group to be approved intersessionally with the Co-Chairs of the AC and then to establish the Group. The Working Group shall continue its work and report to MOP9 in 2020.

Marine debris

23. Requests Mark Simmonds to report to MOP9 on the outcomes of the marine debris workshop at the 2nd World Marine Mammal Science Conference in Barcelona in December 2019.
24. Convene AC members and experts interested in the impact of marine debris on small cetaceans to prepare draft Recommendations on marine debris for AC25.

Surveys and research

25. Parties are encouraged to commence preparatory work for a SCANS-IV survey in 2020 and to secure funding accordingly. The actual boat and aerial survey should be no later than 2022, noting that the next MSFD assessment is due in 2024.
26. Requests Parties to support an increase in frequency of international SCANS-type surveys to six years instead of every decade. The increased frequency will improve the power to detect trends for more species and within shorter time periods which will better support assessments for the reporting cycles of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and Habitat's Directive.
27. Requests Parties to actively pursue the coordination of national surveillance programs of small cetaceans between countries throughout the species' ranges, with regards to the methodology used and timing of the programs. This will allow improved assessment of abundance and distribution at meaningful scales.

Use of Bycatches and Strandings

28. Recommends that Parties support a workshop in early 2019, which will bring together relevant experts from nations across the ASCOBANS and ACCOBAMS region. This workshop shall contribute to harmonizing best practice guidelines for stranding events and necropsy methodologies to ultimately facilitate the comparison of national results.
29. Recommends that Parties assist progress of the ASCOBANS strandings database initiative with additional support and provision of appropriate data during its implementation phase.
30. The Secretariat will send a letter on the behalf of the Advisory Committee to the relevant Ministries of Defense (copying in NATO, EC and International Organization of Oil and Gas Producers) regarding the possible role of noise-generating activities in the recent (i.e. 80+) and historical Unusual Mortality Events affecting beaked whales in the North Atlantic region. Before the end of September 2018, Mark Simmonds will prepare a first draft of the letter expressing concerns about the scale of the mortalities and urging collective investigations of possible causes.

Institutional Session

31. Request the Secretariat to prepare an options paper for AC25 looking at the periodicity and content of AC meetings and other approaches to working (e.g. Working Groups), in order to determine if annual meetings covering both scientific and institutional issues are the most effective way to proceed.

32. Agree that the presentations at AC25 summarizing the national reporting data for the individual sections reviewing new information on threats to small cetaceans (e.g. whale watching, pollution) are prepared in the same format.
33. Establish the Intersessional Working Group on National Reporting in line with the process outlined in Annex x. Agree that the Group will be chaired by Meike Scheidat and assisted by Peter Evans, Sara Königson, Kelly Macleod, Graham Pierce, Anne-Marie Svoboda and the Secretariat. The Group may choose to invite others to join at a later stage.
34. Parties agree to actively participate in the test session of the new draft national report format for 2019 in January 2019 (see Annex x).

Note: Annex x will be uploaded online ASAP.