

Agenda Item 2

Opening Statements

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**Opening Statements:  
Observers**

**Action Requested**

- Take note

Submitted by

Observers



**NOTE:**

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

### **Secretariat's Note**

This document contains opening statements submitted by observers to the 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties in the order and form in which they were received. The Secretariat will not produce paper copies of opening statements for circulation at the meeting.



## NORTH ATLANTIC MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION (NAMMCO)

### STATEMENT TO THE 7<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO ASCOBANS

**NAMMCO** is an international body for cooperation on the conservation, management and study of marine mammals in the North Atlantic. The NAMMCO Agreement was signed in Nuuk, Greenland on 9 April 1992 by Norway, Iceland, Greenland and the Faroe Islands, and focuses on modern approaches to the study of the marine ecosystem as a whole, and to understanding better the role of marine mammals in this system.

**NAMMCO** provides a mechanism for cooperation on conservation and management for all species of cetaceans (whales and dolphins) and pinnipeds (seals and walruses) in the region, many of which had not before been covered by such an international agreement. Through regional cooperation, the member countries of NAMMCO aim to strengthen and further develop effective conservation and management measures for marine mammals. Such measures should be based on the best available scientific evidence, and should take into account both the complexity and vulnerability of the marine ecosystem, and the rights and needs of coastal communities to make a sustainable living from what the sea can provide.

**NAMMCO** seeks to cooperate with other inter-governmental organisations that have related interests in order to further scientific knowledge, avoid duplication of efforts, and promote public knowledge about marine mammals in relation to conservation and management of the ecosystem.

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The North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission held its 21<sup>st</sup> annual Council meeting from 11-13 September 2012, in Svolvær, Lofoten Islands, Norway. The member countries of NAMMCO, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland and Norway again confirmed their commitment to ensuring the sustainable utilisation of marine mammals through active regional cooperation and science-based management decisions.

The Governments of Canada, Denmark, Japan and the Russian Federation are represented by observers at meetings of NAMMCO, as well as other international governmental organizations within the fields of fisheries and whaling.

For the first time, a Ministerial Meeting was held immediately prior to the Council meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> September to discuss the future of NAMMCO after 20 years of existence. In the light of the discussions taking place at the meeting it was decided by the NAMMCO Council to form a working group to look at the possibilities of organising an international event in 2014 where the use of marine mammal products will be examined in the context of global food security. The Ministers concluded that NAMMCO is a fully fledged international organisation well prepared for future challenges.

The keynote speaker at the Council meeting, Professor Richard Caddell of the Department of Law, Swansea University in Wales, United Kingdom, addressed the future challenges and opportunities for NAMMCO, and through his intervention confirmed the status of NAMMCO as an appropriate body for the management of marine mammals.

Key events and conclusions from the meeting included the following:

**1. T-NASS 2015**

Planning for another comprehensive Trans-North Atlantic survey for whales and dolphins in 2015 is in progress, involving cooperation with countries outside of NAMMCO, including Canada, the Russian Federation, the US and the EU countries. Periodic surveys form the corner stone of assessment of stocks, their distribution, sustainability and management.

**2. Manual on Hunting of Marine Mammals**

In 2010 Council approved the go-ahead for a manual on hunting. It will be the first comprehensive manual for hunters that details weaponry and ballistics information with a focus on safety.

**3. Expert Group report on Assessment of Hunting Methods in Small Cetaceans**

An international Expert Group on killing methods in small cetaceans met in November 2011. NAMMCO continues to be considered as an appropriate international forum for scientific advice for hunting methods. Significant reductions in killing times have been recorded in recent years in Faroe Islands, Greenland, Japan and Nunavut Canada, due to development of new equipment and practices. Several recommendations were made regarding further improvement in killing methods, safety and training of hunters. The report can be found at <http://www.nammco.no/webcronize/images/Nammco/970.pdf>

**4. Advice for long-finned pilot whale and small cetaceans**

NAMMCO concluded, following advice from the Scientific Committee, that an abundance of pilot whales in the range of 50 000 – 80 000 will sustain the annual Faroese drive hunt. The most recent scientific estimate of abundance for the pilot whale stock is 128 000 in the Iceland-Faroese survey area. This estimate is based on data from the latest T-NASS in 2007, coordinated by NAMMCO, meaning that the annual Faroese catch of pilot whales is well within sustainable limits.

In addition, the Scientific Committee provided advice for the first time on sustainable catch levels for long-finned pilot whale and white-beaked dolphin in Greenland.

**5. Marine mammal – fisheries interactions**

Based on a NAMMCO initiative, a project has been designed on testing different modelling approaches of interaction between marine mammals and fisheries. The project, which include scientists both from NAMMCO and other relevant countries, will be started on as soon as funding is obtained.

**6. Council chairmanship**

The Present Council chair Ole-David Stenseth, Norway, was thanked for his term of able chairmanship, and the new chair Ásta Einarssdóttir, Iceland, was welcomed.

**In conclusion, NAMMCO congratulates ASCOBANS for its 20 years of existence, and requests a continued scientific cooperation between our organisations on matters of mutual interest regarding surveys, stock status and identity, by-catch, environmental issues and data management.**

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## **International Fund for Animal Welfare Opening Statement to ASCOBANS MOP7 October 2012**

IFAW is grateful for the opportunity to provide some suggestions for future issues that could usefully be addressed by ASCOBANS. IFAW is concerned about threats to cetaceans that affect the welfare of individual animals as well as those that affect the conservation status of populations. IFAW is pleased to have been a collaborator with ASCOBANS on a recent project to examine the distribution and relative abundance of harbour porpoises over Dogger Bank and surrounding waters of the North Sea in 2011 using the IFAW Research vessel *Song of the Whale*. IFAW also funds the ASCOBANS related work of the chair of the working group on bycatch and is represented in the working groups on noise and the newly formed group on marine debris. IFAW is actively involved in work by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to reduce shipping noise, as well as work within the EU to develop indicators of Good Environment Status with respect to underwater noise and work by the IWC and IMO to address ship strikes.

IFAW supports the proposal in the draft Resolution (MOP7\_7-02) to focus on bycatch and underwater noise but also notes that ship strikes are a serious threat within the ASCOBANS agreement area.

Cetacean bycatch remains a conservation threat for many populations and is a serious animal welfare problem wherever it occurs. IFAW supports the work within ASCOBANS to develop better indicators for setting thresholds to determine whether bycatch has serious conservation implications. But we also urge all Parties to adopt measures to reduce current levels of bycatch and demonstrate clear progress towards the ASCOBANS goal of zero bycatch. In view of rather disappointing progress in developing technical measures or gear modifications to reduce bycatch IFAW believes there is now a need for concrete measures to reduce fishing effort, particularly with fisheries which pose a high bycatch risk.

The growing recognition of the threats to marine life from underwater noise has resulted in this becoming a recognised form of pollution that needs to be addressed. While there are considerable research efforts underway to understand the effects of noise on cetaceans this research may take many years. IFAW believes there is sufficient evidence of negative impacts from underwater noise pollution on cetaceans that research efforts should focus on reducing anthropogenic sources of noise. The IMO has recognised the need to reduce underwater noise from commercial shipping and IFAW urges all Parties to contribute through IMO to the development, evaluation and implementation of noise reduction techniques. Similar international initiatives are urgently needed to develop a clear plan of

action to reduce noise inputs to the marine environment from pile driving and seismic surveys. In addition to reducing noise inputs, any additional mitigation measures that are proposed should be accompanied with calculations that show the expected reduction in risk.

IFAW welcomes the proposed further consideration of ship strikes by ASCOBANS in collaboration with ACCOBAMS and the IWC (MOP7\_7-03). In particular IFAW urges all parties to ensure that all strandings are examined and all known ship strikes are reported. ASCOBANS can play an important role in identifying high risk areas and proposing mitigation options for commercial shipping to be considered at IMO but there is also a need to address collision risks in national waters from recreational and other small craft.

IFAW wishes all the participants a productive meeting and success in coordinating and improving efforts to address the pressing conservation and welfare issues facing cetaceans within the waters of the Agreement.

16<sup>th</sup> October 2012

## Opening Statement of WDC, Whale and Dolphin Conservation for the ASCOBANS Meeting of Parties 22 – 24 October 2010

WDC, Whale and Dolphin Conservation, is an international non-governmental organisation working on cetacean conservation and protection activities that span many countries around the world. The work of WDC extends from conservation science, field research and cetacean welfare issues, to the development of habitat protection models and all related spheres of conservation and welfare policy development and implementation.

This year, we are celebrating two significant cetacean conservation anniversaries; it is the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the signing of the ASCOBANS Agreement; and it is the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1982 International Whaling Commission (IWC) meeting in the same building in Brighton where the global moratorium on commercial whaling was historically agreed.

Cetacean conservation and welfare issues in the ASCOBANS Agreement area are very important to WDC and our membership. WDC was there at the beginnings of ASCOBANS and we have remained committed to helping the agreement fulfil its aims and also the building of a wider family of similar cetacean agreements around the world ever since.

As delegates to the Meeting of Parties (MoP) will know well, cetaceans are beset by a range of threats including incidental take in fishing operations, chemical and noise pollution, ship strikes and marine debris. All these matters need to be carefully monitored and mitigation actions taken to prevent further cetacean losses and suffering. Nonetheless, and even despite their undoubtedly popularity with the public across Europe and elsewhere, cetaceans are often forgotten or ignored in human activities in the marine environment. Too often they remain out of sight and out of mind at a time when there is more industrial development in European waters than ever before. It is here that ASCOBANS has made, and will continue to make, a significant contribution to cetacean conservation by bringing together the relevant experts and stakeholders, initiating and receiving reviews, developing action plans and conservation plans and helping in the development of key mitigation actions. To date, ASCOBANS has helped to underpin various important initiatives in terms of research and conservation and as the only body where the relevant experts and stakeholder meet to regularly discuss the issues affecting the cetacean populations of Europe; the Agreement needs to be maintained in a healthy condition.

At this important MoP in Brighton, there are a number of key issues on the table. We encourage ASCOBANS Parties to take the occasion of the MOP to publicly reiterate their strong commitment to supporting the conservation of the relevant species. Equally, we hope that Parties will be seeking to maintain, or indeed increase the ASCOBANS budget so that the Agreement can function effectively.

ASCOBANS should seek to build the best possible liaison and links with other relevant CMS agreements, especially the neighbouring Agreement, ACCOBAMS. We note that ASCOBANS and ACCOBAMS can play a significant role in meeting the requirement of European Law as it relates to cetaceans and that in this context it remains important to seek to build improved liaison with the relevant bodies of the European Commission.

We urge Parties to support the resolutions that have been proposed by the preceding Advisory Committee meeting including the important one which defines the work programme for the Agreement over the coming years. We hope that ASCOBANS and Parties will be able to continue to support key research into European cetacean populations and in particular work to mitigate threats. We note in the Agreement area that in addition to an ongoing focus on the harbour porpoise; orcas, Risso's dolphins and white-beaked dolphins all also urgently deserve focused action to aid their conservation.

WHALE AND  
DOLPHIN  
CONSERVATION



WDC encourages Parties to develop SACs and other MPAs to protect cetaceans and to take action to reduce cetacean bycatch in the Agreement area. Finally, we wish to strongly encourage the ASCOBANS Parties to initiate improved liaison across Europe with respect to both investigations into the causes of mortality and morbidity in cetaceans and also rescue responses. We believe that skill-sharing in this sphere will greatly help conservation and welfare efforts.

WHALE AND  
DOLPHIN  
CONSERVATION



*A world where every whale and dolphin is safe and free*



*Protecting and conserving the  
North-East Atlantic and its resources*

## 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties to ASCOBANS

22-24 October 2012

### **Opening Statement by the OSPAR Commission**

The OSPAR Commission welcomes this opportunity to participate as an Observer to the 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties of ASCOBANS. In particular OSPAR welcomes the emphasis of this meeting on addressing threats to small cetaceans from bycatch, noise, pollution (including marine debris) and ship strikes; progress in the implementation of the Conservation Plan for the Harbour Porpoise in the North Sea and the consideration of a conservation plan that will incorporate the Kattegat.

The OSPAR Commission would like to update this meeting of the following pertinent developments since the last Meeting of Parties, September 2008:

**Publication of the 2010 Quality Status Report:** In September 2010 at a ministerial meeting in Bergen Norway, OSPAR launched the 2010 Quality Status Report, a comprehensive overview of the status of the North-East Atlantic based on 10 years of monitoring and evaluation. The QSR 2010 provides the evidence base for measures to ensure continuing environmental protection of the North-East Atlantic and serves as a resource for national Initial Assessments required by the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). The status of the OSPAR Maritime Area was determined against levels of pollutants covered by OSPAR Strategies (eutrophication, hazardous substances, radioactivity, oil and gas) together with consideration of the pressures of human activities (fisheries, shipping, cables, windfarms, dredging, artificial reefs etc.) and inputs (e.g. underwater sound, marine litter, introduction of non-indigenous species). The QSR 2010 is underpinned by specific assessments of these pressures, which may inform and support the work of ASCOBANS.

**Implementation of the MSFD and development of common indicators:** OSPAR experts and observers have been working hard to develop an initial set of common biodiversity indicators to support the first implementation cycle of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), which requires EU Member States to develop a national marine strategy. The MSFD stipulates that strategies that relate to the same marine region or sub-region need to be coherent, coordinated, and have common approaches. OSPAR is the main platform for coordinating the MSFD implementation process within the North-East Atlantic region. To facilitate the 2012 reporting requirements OSPAR has provided a framework for the development of coordinated environmental targets and indicators and developed 'Advice documents' for a majority of the 11 MSFD Descriptors (D) that should be considered when determining GES. Within the context of the biodiversity descriptors, OSPAR is coordinating a process to develop an initial set of common indicators for consideration by the Biodiversity Committee in 2013. A group of 14 experts from eight OSPAR Contracting Parties are currently working on the development of three indicators with relevance to cetaceans, including how the EcoQO adopted for the reduction of cetacean bycatch in the North Sea could be adapted to other OSPAR Regions. In this respect OSPAR recognises the important role of ASCOBANS to provide scientific and policy advice with respect to cetacean conservation. The three indicators being considered are:

- Distributional range and pattern of cetaceans species regularly present
- Abundance at the relevant temporal scale of cetacean species regularly present
- Numbers of individuals within species being bycaught in relation to population

**Biodiversity protection and conservation of the North-East Atlantic:** Harbour porpoise is included on the OSPAR List of threatened and/or declining species and habitats that was agreed in 2008. The background information setting the context for its protection and setting out existing activities was published in 2009. A Recommendation for actions that should be taken by OSPAR Contracting Parties is in preparation and due to be considered at the 2013 meeting of the OSPAR Biodiversity Committee. This meeting will take place 11-15 February 2013. As an observer to OSPAR, ASCOBANS will have the opportunity to provide comment on the draft Recommendation.

OSPAR continues to develop its network of marine protected areas including seven MPAs that have been established in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction. An assessment of the ecological coherence of the network will be produced in 2013, whilst the process to achieve cooperation and coordination between organisations with competence of management in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction continues to develop, with the text for a collective arrangement that will set out the framework for such cooperation being considered.

In addition to the established work within the OSPAR context on hazardous substances, OSPAR has also committed to addressing the issues of underwater noise and marine litter. These commitments are set out in its North East Atlantic Environment Strategy<sup>1</sup> for the period up to 2020.

For more information on our current activities please visit [www.ospar.org](http://www.ospar.org)

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<sup>1</sup> The OSPAR North East Atlantic Environment Strategy 2010-2020 is available at [http://www.ospar.org/content/content.asp?menu=0149130000000\\_000000\\_000000](http://www.ospar.org/content/content.asp?menu=0149130000000_000000_000000)