

Agenda Item 5.2

Review of Implementation of the ASCOBANS  
Triennial Work Plan (2010-2012)

Report of the Secretariat

Document 5-02 rev.1

**Triennial Report of the  
ASCOBANS Secretariat 2010-2012**

**Action Requested**

- Take note

Submitted by

Secretariat



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



## Triennial Report of the Secretariat 2010-2012

1. Pursuant to Article 4.3 of the Agreement, the Secretariat hereby presents a summary report on, *inter alia*, progress made and difficulties encountered since the last meeting of Parties.

2. Issues relating to the Agreement's finances and administration are reported separately in MOP7/Doc.8-02.

### A. Meetings

3. One of the core functions of the Secretariat is to organize the meetings of the bodies of the Agreement, as well as any working group meetings or workshops as instructed by Parties. The following meetings were prepared and/or serviced by the Secretariat during the triennium:

- 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Jastarnia Group, 23-24 February 2010, Hel Marine Station, Poland
- ASCOBANS/ECS Cetacean By-catch Mitigation Workshop 20 March 2010, Stralsund, Germany
- 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Advisory Committee, 4-6 October 2010, UN Campus, Bonn, Germany
- 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Jastarnia Group, 14-16 February 2011, Copenhagen, Denmark
- ECS/ASCOBANS/ACCOBAMS Workshop on Chemical Pollution and Marine Mammals, 20 March 2011, Cadiz, Spain
- 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the North Sea Group, 4 May 2011, Bonn, Germany
- 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Advisory Committee, 4-6 May 2011, UN Campus, Bonn, Germany
- 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Jastarnia Group, 31 January - 2 February 2012, UN Campus, Bonn, Germany
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the North Sea Group, 19 March 2012, Galway, Ireland
- 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Advisory Committee, 20-22 March 2012, Galway, Ireland
- ECS/ASCOBANS/ACCOBAMS Workshop on the EU Habitats Directive & its Implementation in Relation to Cetaceans, 24 March 2012, Galway, Ireland
- 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties, 22-25 October 2012, Brighton, United Kingdom

4. At the time this document is being finalized, reports of all meetings and most workshops listed above are available from the ASCOBANS website and upon request in hardcopy from the Secretariat, obviously with the exception of the 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties.

### B. Compilation of Annual National Reports

5. Article 4.4 of the Agreement instructs the Secretariat to "*present to the Coordinating Authorities, each year no later than 30 June, a summary of the Party reports submitted in accordance with Article 2.5.*"

6. In the current triennium, the Secretariat presented the following compilations:
- Compilation of Annual National Reports for the Year 2009 (14<sup>th</sup> Compilation)
  - Compilation of Annual National Reports for the Year 2010 (15<sup>th</sup> Compilation)
  - Compilation of Annual National Reports for the Year 2011 (16<sup>th</sup> Compilation)
7. The 16<sup>th</sup> Compilation has been finalized with some delay, due to the late submission to the Secretariat of one national report. All Compilations are available on the Agreement's website.

### **C. Promotional Campaign**

8. Public support to the aims of ASCOBANS is critical to the success of the Agreement. Accordingly, Parties identified outreach and education as an important part of the Secretariat's mandate, as reflected in Resolution No. 3 of the 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties (2009) and in the Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) Plan adopted by Parties at the 17<sup>th</sup> Advisory Committee Meeting in 2010.

#### Production of Information Material

9. A variety of material was produced for educational and promotional purposes:
- Newsletter: Three editions have been published in the reporting period. In total the mailing list for the electronic newsletter contains several hundred addresses.
  - ASCOBANS Leaflets: During 2009 and 2010, all 15 language versions (Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Latvian, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swedish) were revised and updated. Printed copies have been in high demand throughout the ASCOBANS region. These activities have been paid for with the help of the annual German voluntary contribution. The Secretariat continues to reprint modest quantities as required. Since regular large print runs are not possible due to budgetary constraints, the Secretariat offers to provide a print quality PDF of each language version free of charge to governments or institutions that want to produce leaflets locally for their own use.
  - ASCOBANS Exhibition: The English language version of the 10-banner exhibition developed in 2008 is available in three sets, which have been in frequent use since their production. A German language version was produced in 2010 and is available in two sets, which have also been used on various occasions by a variety of institutions. The exhibition can be requested from the Secretariat and is shipped out and returned at the expense of the requesting institution. Interest has been expressed in producing translations of the exhibition also into Finnish, French, Lithuanian and Swedish, and some texts have already been prepared. Voluntary contributions for finalizing and producing these language versions for use in the respective countries would be greatly appreciated.
  - Species Postcards: The ASCOBANS species postcards (four editions available, showing the harbour porpoise, common dolphin, striped dolphin and killer whale) have been reprinted to ensure these materials remain available for outreach activities. Slight modifications to the colour scheme and reverse of the postcards were made in order to ensure a more contemporary design.
  - Brochure "The Baltic Harbour Porpoise Needs Protection": This brochure was originally produced in English by Coalition Clean Baltic. Reprints of the German

version produced in 2008 with translations provided by the Secretariat were made in 2011.

- On the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with related outreach initiatives, as well as the 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties, some promotional material was prepared, including pens, pencils, memo notes, writing pads and USB cards. The ASCOBANS cotton bags have also been reproduced.

10. In order to help capture the attention of visitors to our information booths during outreach events, the Secretariat purchased three life-sized porpoises made from cloth. These two-dimensional models have been painted to convey a realistic impression of the animals and can be taped to walls or pinned to boards. They are lightweight and easy to transport. In addition, in November 2011 The Whale Workshop kindly produced an inflatable life-sized porpoise for the Secretariat free of charge. Having such a lightweight three-dimensional model has great potential as an eye catcher for the public and as an educational tool.

### Website

11. The further development of the ASCOBANS website is another activity identified in the Triennium Work Plans for both the previous and the current triennia. Besides the regular maintenance, which includes the updating and correcting of texts and links, posting of documents and publications and checking of functionality, the main development was the finalization of the revised website. The design, structure and all texts have been revised, updated and enhanced as necessary.

12. The construction of the new website also implied moving the website from its current location on the server of UN Volunteers to an external server. Various hosting options were considered and the company Host Europe chosen, which besides excellent conditions is also certified as a climate-neutral enterprise.

13. Details on activities relating to the website and new features introduced in 2011 can be accessed in the reports submitted to the Advisory Committee. The further enhancement of the website as the key communication tool of the Agreement is planned, such as adding new pages on the Jastarnia and North Sea Plans, information on appropriate live stranding response for the general public, the International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise, a section for children, and an information portal for bycatch-related issues in the ASCOBANS area. For information relating to planned changes to the technical back-end and closer collaboration with the co-located Secretariats of the CMS Family, please refer to MOP7/Doc.7-05.

### The International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise

14. The International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise (IDBHP) is celebrated each year on or around the third Sunday in May. Each year, the Secretariat sent calls out encouraging the organization of events throughout the region, and assisted the organizers by shipping out information and exhibition material. Events announced to the Secretariat in advance were advertised in the news section on the website, along with the Secretariat's own events.

15. In 2010, the Secretariat set up an information booth at the Sealife Center in Königswinter, Germany, for the entire weekend around the IDBHP. In 2011, a lecture tour to three universities on the German Baltic coast – Greifswald, Rostock and Kiel – was made. On the occasion of the International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise in May 2012, the Secretariat brought the whale and dolphin roadshow to the Museum Koenig in Bonn, Germany for a five-day exhibition which included activities for children and educational shows for school classes.

16. The IDBHP Handbook, a report on IDBHP activities of the last celebration and outstanding examples from previous years, was produced annually to assist event organizers. It is available on the ASCOBANS website and also includes suggestions for outreach events on that occasion, as well as information on the materials the Secretariat can make available to organizers.

#### 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Signing of the Agreement

17. Peter Evans has been commissioned to prepare a publication on the Agreement and its species. This book, which we hope will be sold through normal bookshops, aims to be the most authoritative review of northern European cetaceans and the threats they face, whilst also giving insights into how an international Agreement is created, can function and also meet obstacles to progress. The launch of this book was originally foreseen for October 2012, but due to unforeseen circumstances completion of the script was delayed.

18. Through a collaboration with The Whale Workshop, the Secretariat was able to offer to Parties and other interested institutions a tailor-made roadshow featuring life-sized inflatable models of the majority of the species covered by ASCOBANS. An email with information on the offer was first sent in September 2011 and reminders and offers to assist have since been sent bilaterally. A first “anniversary roadshow” featuring also the ASCOBANS exhibition was shown on the weekend between AC19 and the ECS conference in March 2012 in Galway, Ireland. The Whale Workshop then featured the ASCOBANS exhibition on all shows held in Europe.

#### Other Outreach Opportunities

19. Wikipedia pages on the Agreement are available in five languages: English, French, Spanish, Russian and German. Wikipedia is seen as a useful tool especially because of its potential for outreach to the public in non-Party Range States. More language versions will follow as the opportunity arises. In order to ensure inaccurate information added by others is not retained, the Secretariat continues to monitor the pages.

20. The Secretariat made arrangements for two publications to be distributed via the Conference Bags for participants in the 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the European Cetacean Society in Stralsund (22-24 March 2010), namely the proceedings of the ASCOBANS/HELCOM Workshops on Small Cetacean Population Structure and a poster on the IUCN Red List status of all toothed whales, the production of which was co-financed by CMS, ASCOBANS, ACCOBAMS, WWF and Loro Parque Foundation. It can be viewed [online](#) and limited copies are still available from the Secretariat.

21. A hardcopy version of the review on distribution, behaviour, migration and threats of toothed whales (Odontocetes: the toothed whales), which had been published as an online version on the CMS [website](#) in February 2010, was produced in October 2011 with co-funding from CMS, ASCOBANS, ACCOBAMS, Loro Parque Foundation, WWF, Greenpeace and IFAW. It contains a summary article on cetacean conservation under CMS, prepared by the Secretariat, and features IUCN distribution maps for all toothed whale species. The publication was announced through relevant email listservers and by means of a UNEP press-release, which was picked up by some major news agencies. Hardcopies can be ordered from [Earthprint](#) and limited free copies have been made available to the joint CMS/ASCOBANS Secretariat to supply the CMS Scientific Council, ASCOBANS Advisory Committee and other key contacts such as those supporting the two cetacean-related MOUs of CMS in the Pacific and western Africa.

22. In cooperation with the project team, the Secretariat has financed and contributed in-kind to the production of a leaflet on the SAMBAH project (Static Acoustic Monitoring of the Baltic Sea Harbour Porpoise – [www.sambah.org](http://www.sambah.org)) in all nine project languages. This leaflet

designed to inform marine users throughout the study area about the project, contains information on ASCOBANS, the Jastarnia Plan and the Jastarnia Group and points readers to the Agreement's website.

23. Following a visit of the Secretariat to the Dolphinarium Harderwijk (Netherlands) to discuss options of cooperation in outreach in early May 2010, the educational department of the Dolphinarium has produced an amended version of the ASCOBANS exhibition in Dutch, which is now on permanent display near the rehabilitation centre, where the "SOS dolfijn" foundation treats stranded porpoises and dolphins and also has non-releasable animals on public display. The facility is thus aiming to inform the public about the harbour porpoise and gain support for conservation and rehabilitation activities.

24. The Secretariat also made use of other outreach opportunities to the general public, such as through participation in the annual celebration of the UN Day in October, at which all UN agencies in Bonn present their work to visitors on a central square in the city. Several visitor groups to the UN Campus have also been informed about the Agreement. In early 2011, the ten-banner German language ASCOBANS exhibition was shown for six weeks in the "Stadthaus" of the city of Bonn, where citizens need to go for all public administrative services. Information material was also offered. The exhibition was announced via the official website of the City of Bonn and through their newsletter.

25. Conferences and symposia at which the Secretariat represented the Agreement were also used as opportunities to display exhibition material and offer information material as appropriate.

#### **D. Representation of ASCOBANS**

26. Since MOP6, the Secretariat was able to represent the Agreement at the following conferences and meetings:

- 36<sup>th</sup> CMS Standing Committee Meeting, 2-3 December 2009, Bonn, Germany
- 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the European Cetacean Society, 22-24 March 2010, Stralsund, Germany
- 10<sup>th</sup> OSPAR Biodiversity Committee Meeting, 15-18 June 2010, Bonn, Germany
- 16<sup>th</sup> CMS Scientific Council Meeting, 28-30 June 2010, Bonn, Germany
- IWC/ACCOBAMS Workshop on Ship Strikes, 20-24 September 2010, Beaulieu-sur-Mer, France
- 37<sup>th</sup> CMS Standing Committee Meeting, 23-24 October 2010, Bonn, Germany
- 4<sup>th</sup> ACCOBAMS Meeting of the Contracting Parties, 9-12 November 2010, Monaco
- IWC Workshop on Small Cetaceans and Climate Change, 29 November -1 December 2010, Vienna, Austria
- 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the European Cetacean Society, 22-23 March 2011, Cadiz, Spain
- 7<sup>th</sup> ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee Meeting, 29-31 March 2011, Monaco
- Climate Investment Fund (CIF) Partnership Forum Wind Energy Development Workshop, 24-25 June 2011, Cape Town, South Africa
- European Parliament Workshop "Protecting Cetaceans in the EU: Bridging the Gap between Research, Policy and Implementation", 21 September 2011, Brussels, Belgium
- 17<sup>th</sup> CMS Scientific Council Meeting, 17-18 November 2011, Bergen, Norway

- 10<sup>th</sup> CMS Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP10), 20-25 November 2011, Bergen, Norway
- NABU-Dialogforum “Müllkippe Meer – Mehr Verantwortung für Produzenten!” (Workshop on Marine Litter), 29 February 2012, Berlin, Germany
- 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the European Cetacean Society, 26-28 March 2012, Galway, Ireland
- New England Whale Watch Naturalist Workshop, 13-15 April 2012, Provincetown, USA
- 3rd International Conference on Progress in Marine Conservation in Europe 2012, 18-22 June 2012, Stralsund, Germany
- OSPAR Commission Meeting, 25-29 June 2012, Bonn, Germany

27. It should be noted that in many cases, ASCOBANS representation came as a benefit at no or much reduced cost, since staff members were travelling also on behalf of CMS and no extra charge was made to the Agreement. Reports on key issues of relevance can be found in the summaries submitted to the Advisory Committee Meetings. These documents also contain reports of meetings where representation was ensured through participation of a member of the Advisory Committee.

## **E. Cooperation with Parties, Non-Party Range States, International Organizations, Non-governmental Organizations**

### Parties

28. The Secretariat has regular and productive contacts with the coordinating authorities of all Parties, as well as members of the Advisory Committee.

29. The effectiveness and efficiency of intersessional work partly depends on the time the Coordinators and AC members can devote to the Agreement, which generally constitutes only one of many dossiers they deal with. Due to the heavy non-ASCOBANS workload of the persons involved, deadlines for papers or comments to be submitted to the Secretariat are not always observed, causing delays in the work of the Agreement. In the case of the Intersessional Working Group established to finalize the draft conservation plan for harbour porpoises in the western Baltic, no chair could be found from among Parties and the Secretariat had to assume a coordinating role. The Secretariat would like to reiterate its call to Parties to ensure that National Coordinators and Advisory Committee members are able to dedicate the required time in order to progress work intersessionally.

30. The importance of scientific expertise at the meetings of the regional working groups, as well as at the Advisory Committee, cannot be overemphasized. The advice given to Parties through these fora should be of the highest technical quality and scientifically sound, so that it can be a good basis for the decisions to be made by policy-makers. The Secretariat therefore urges all Parties to ensure that scientists are able to participate fully in these meetings and any intersessional work to be carried out.

31. In the evaluation of the secretariat arrangements carried out by the Advisory Committee in 2011, ASCOBANS Parties indicated that they were content with the level of service they receive from what they described as a hard-working Secretariat providing value for money. The Secretariat strives to maintain that level of satisfaction.

### Non-Party Range States

32. An overview of contacts with non-Party Range States and recruitment efforts undertaken since the 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties is contained in MOP7/Doc.4-01 on Status of Accessions and Ratification.

33. Besides bilateral contacts, the Secretariat also facilitated that ASCOBANS was one of the featured treaties at the United Nations “2010 Treaty Event: Towards Universal Participation and Implementation”, which was held in the Treaty Signing area in the General Assembly Building in New York. This occasion provides a distinct opportunity for States to demonstrate their continuing commitment to the central role of the rule of law at the international and national levels. Heads of State and Governments were invited to make use of the event by signing and depositing instruments of ratification, acceptance or accession to those treaties deposited with the Secretary General to which the country was not party already. In 2010, the International Year of Biodiversity, the Secretary General highlighted this theme.

### International Organizations

34. Cooperation with relevant International Organizations remains a priority for the Agreement, as confirmed through Resolution No. 6.3 and repeatedly by the Advisory Committee. Representation at their meetings is one important way in order to facilitate close contacts, and as outlined above reports both by the Secretariat and members of the Advisory Committee are presented annually to the AC.

35. The Secretariats of ASCOBANS and ACCOBAMS strive to cooperate as closely as possible and keep each other informed of relevant developments and initiatives. They also encourage coordination and synergies in scientific intersessional work carried out by working groups and regularly hold joint workshops (for details see above). In the cases of CMS, ASCOBANS, the Western African Aquatic Mammal MoU and the Pacific Cetaceans MoU, shared staff ensures maximum synergies. Wherever appropriate, members of the scientific advisory bodies get invited to the meetings of the bodies of the other agreements. This pertains specifically to CMS, ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS. Staff members frequently represent the whole CMS Family at meetings of other MEAs.

36. The Secretariat has also strived to strengthen relations with the European Commission. Besides contacts maintained through the CMS Secretariat, when the Coordinator attended the European Parliament Workshop “Protecting Cetaceans in the EU: Bridging the Gap between Research, Policy and Implementation” on 21 September 2011 in Brussels, Belgium, she used the opportunity to meet officials of DG Environment and DG Mare to discuss ASCOBANS-related issues. The Commission was represented at the AC18 Meeting.

37. Through the chair and members of the Advisory Committee, ASCOBANS has participated in several meetings of the Marine Strategy Coordination Group of the European Commission and the Working Group on Good Environmental Status (WG GES).

38. The Secretariat submits an annual joint progress report with CMS and ACCOBAMS to the International Whaling Commission. ASCOBANS benefits from cooperation between CMS and the IWC, e.g. through the possibility of occasional representation at the Commission Meetings and the good working relationship between the Secretariats, which since 2000 have had a Memorandum of Understanding. The Secretariat staff also participated, on behalf of both CMS and ASCOBANS, in the IWC Ship Strikes Working Group (operating under the IWC Conservation Committee), and on behalf of CMS, ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS in a Correspondence Group on Noise from Commercial Shipping and its Adverse Impacts on Marine Life, set up by the Marine Environment Protection Committee of the International Maritime Organisation.

39. The HELCOM Secretariat received funding from ASCOBANS for integrating the database on harbour porpoise sightings, strandings and bycatch into the HELCOM map service. This work was completed and announced through a press release in September 2010. Regular mutual representation at meetings is kindly ensured by the Finnish Coordinator. Upon request by the Parties at AC19, the Secretariat is representing ASCOBANS as a member of the Reference Group for the Managing Fisheries in Baltic Marine Protected Areas (BALTFIMPA) project.

40. The Secretariat was able to attend the two relevant meetings of OSPAR held in Bonn during the reporting period. This served to remain abreast of relevant activities within this body and to establish personal contact with key staff in the OSPAR Secretariat.

41. There were regular contacts with the NAMMCO Secretariat during the triennium, mainly in relation to the concerns the Advisory Committee had voiced regarding the pilot whale hunt in the Faroe Islands. The representation of NAMMCO at the AC19 Meeting was appreciated. The AC endorsed NAMMCO's plans for a T-NASS II survey to obtain further information on species abundance.

42. All in all, cooperation with other intergovernmental organizations is one of the areas to which the Secretariat would have liked to be able to give more attention. Unfortunately, the very limited staff resources have not been sufficient to cover these important activities. Nevertheless, some progress was made and the Agreement specifically benefited from the participation of the CMS Secretariat in many conferences and meetings.

#### Non-governmental Organizations

43. The Secretariat continues to collaborate with a number of NGOs, such as the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS), International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), Sea Watch Foundation, the North Sea Foundation, the Society for the Conservation of Marine Mammals (GSM), Coalition Clean Baltic, the Baltic Fund for Nature, the Coastal and Marine Union (EUCC), the Migratory Wildlife Network, WWF Poland and the Zoological Society of London. Representatives of other NGOs so far not directly involved with the Agreement, such as KIMO and the German NGO NABU have agreed to participate in working groups when approached by the Secretariat.

44. Further, close links with the European Cetacean Society are maintained, including regular attendance at their meetings and organization of joint workshops.

#### **F. Conclusion**

45. This report highlights the implementation of the actions requested of the Acting Executive Secretary in Resolution No. 2d of MOP5 (2006) and the Triennium Work Plan adopted in Resolution No. 3 of MOP6 (2009). While some aspects of the Secretariat's responsibilities would have benefited if more time could have been dedicated to them, the Secretariat is confident that it has addressed all aspects of its work plan to a satisfactory level, given the scarce financial and staff resources.