

Agenda Item 8.2

Administrative and Budgetary Issues

Financial and Administrative Matters 2010-  
2012

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(restricted)

**Report of the Secretariat on  
Financial and Administrative Matters  
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**



## Report of the Secretariat on Financial and Administrative Matters 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 the Parties.
2. This paper focuses exclusively on the Agreement's finances and administration. Other aspects are reported separately in MOP7/Doc.5-02.

### Location and Status of the Secretariat

3. In line with MOP3 Resolution No. 1, the ASCOBANS Secretariat has been formally integrated with the CMS Agreements Unit since 1 January 2001. The Secretariat receives support from the Administrative and Fund Management Unit (AFMU) of CMS. Since June 2006, all Bonn-based UNEP Secretariats have been located in the new UN Campus, a fully refurbished historical high-rise building. Office space is provided free of charge by the German government. The building also includes in-house conference rooms suitable for up to 180 participants and equipped for simultaneous interpretation, which are available to the Secretariat at no cost.

4. At the 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties to ASCOBANS (2006) it had been decided that "*from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2007 the UNEP/CMS Secretariat shall serve as the secretariat pursuant to provision No.4 of the ASCOBANS Agreement; and the Executive Secretary of UNEP/CMS shall be the acting Executive Secretary of ASCOBANS*". A corresponding change in the staffing structure provides for 3 per cent of the UNEP/CMS Executive Secretary's time, 15 per cent of the CMS Scientific Officer's time, who also serves as Senior ASCOBANS Advisor, and 75 per cent of the time of a Coordinator at P2 level. The ASCOBANS team is further supported by a part-time administrative assistant at GS5 level.

5. It had also been decided that these arrangements were to be implemented for a provisional three-year period and were to be reviewed in mid-2008, when the Executive Director through his UNEP Evaluation and Oversight Unit undertook the evaluation (available as ASCOBANS/MOP6/Doc.8-01). The overall conclusion was that in 2008 it was too early to assess the expected benefits of the new secretariat arrangements and that there was strong indication of a discrepancy between the expectations of the Parties and the number and level of staff they were prepared to fund.

6. Attempting to strike a balance between the resources required by the Secretariat to be able to do its work and the financial restraints to which they were subject, Parties at the 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties to ASCOBANS (2009) extended the interim arrangements for a further three-year period until the end of 2012. Arrangements with the same staff complement were to be evaluated again at the next MOP in 2012, taking into account also the Future Shape process of CMS. The Advisory Committee was required to carry out the review in the course of 2011.

7. The results of this second evaluation, again led by the Netherlands, were discussed at the 18<sup>th</sup> ASCOBANS Advisory Committee Meeting (AC18/Doc.15-01) and were subsequently made available to CMS COP10 as document Inf.10.32 with a view to informing the decision regarding the Future Shape of CMS. The key conclusion of the working group producing this report was that drastic organizational change such as the one the ASCOBANS Secretariat underwent takes time until any expected benefits can be realized. The Advisory Committee agreed with the overall conclusions and recommendations of the working group and Parties felt that their needs could be met with the current arrangements.

8. CMS Parties in CMS Resolution 10.1 on Financial and Administrative Matters and Terms of Reference for the Administration of the Trust Fund confirmed their willingness to continue providing Secretariat services to ASCOBANS if ASCOBANS Parties so wish. Anticipating their confirmation, budgetary provisions for shared CMS staff have been made based on the current Secretariat arrangement.

#### Personnel/Staff Arrangements

9. The ASCOBANS Secretariat has undergone several staffing changes since the 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties.

10. Following the departure of the CMS Executive Secretary Robert Hepworth in August 2009, UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner appointed Elizabeth Maruma Mrema first on an interim basis, and then as the new Executive Secretary of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) with effect from 1 December 2009, a function that includes serving as Acting Executive Secretary to ASCOBANS. For personal reasons, she decided to return to Nairobi in January 2012 to take up the position of Deputy Director at the UNEP-Division of Environmental Policy Implementation (DEPI). In a UNEP Memorandum dated 21 December 2011, the UNEP Deputy Executive Director appointed Ms Mrema to continue managing the UNEP/CMS Secretariat in an acting capacity from Nairobi, together with her new functions, until her successor is appointed. This arrangement applies equally to the management of the ASCOBANS Secretariat. The Deputy Executive Secretary of CMS, Bert Lenten, manages day-to-day operations of both Secretariats in addition to his regular responsibilities. In keeping with CMS Resolution 10.29, this interim arrangement ensures continuity of the management of the Secretariats after Ms Mrema's departure. Since then, the recruitment process for the CMS Executive Secretary and Acting Executive Secretary for ASCOBANS has been ongoing. The Secretariat hopes to receive an indication soon of the candidate selected by UNEP following both telephone and face-to-face interviews conducted in August 2012.

11. Marco Barbieri, who had been serving as CMS Scientific and Technical Support Officer (STSO), was appointed as CMS Agreement Development and Servicing Officer in June 2008. Mr Barbieri continued his services as Senior Advisor to ASCOBANS until the arrival of the new STSO, Borja Heredia, in January 2010.

12. The position of Coordinator, which had first been recruited as a consultancy and in 2008 been transferred into a short-term position in UNEP, was advertised following the confirmation of the Secretariat arrangements by MOP6. Heidrun Frisch, who had been serving in that function since April 2007, was selected for the fixed-term position starting from August 2010.

13. For family reasons, the Administrative Assistant Tine Lindberg-Roncari had to leave Bonn on short notice at the end of February 2010. Her successor, Bettina Reinartz took office on 1 April 2010.

14. The CMS Administrative and Fund Management Unit (AFMU) also has undergone a number of staffing changes. Details can be accessed in the reports submitted to the Advisory Committee as well as the annual mid-year reports. The CMS Administrative and Fund Management Officer, Sergey Kurdjukov, retired at the end of June 2012. His successor, Bruce Noronha, arrived in Bonn on 1 June 2012 and is providing administrative and financial services to the Agreement Secretariat's co-located with CMS in Bonn with support from the Financial Assistant Hillary Sang and the Administrative Assistant Henning Lilge.

15. The Secretariat team enjoyed the support of several interns in the reporting period, 11 of whom were university students or recent graduates, and three were high school students. Internships with ASCOBANS are coordinated through the joint internship programme with CMS and the other co-located Agreement Secretariats in Bonn. More information can be found on the [CMS website](#).

#### Service Function of the Secretariat: Administration

16. The tasks of Secretariat staff include ensuring the smooth operation of administrative and staff-related matters and the administration of the ASCOBANS budget. This includes tasks such as the implementation and management of projects short-listed for support from the ASCOBANS budget. Since MOP6, the Secretariat has concluded funding agreements for sixteen projects:

- Effects of Contaminants on Reproduction in Small Cetaceans (SSFA/2008/01 with St. Andrews University, UK, final project report: AC17/Doc.6-05)
- Risk Assessment of Potential Conflicts between Shipping and Cetaceans in the ASCOBANS Region (SSFA/2009/01 and SSFA/2011/01 with Sea Watch Foundation, final project report has been published as AC18/Doc.6-04)
- Review of Trend Analyses in the ASCOBANS Area (Contract with Peter Evans, final report: AC18/Doc.6-05)
- Historic and present harbour porpoise populations in the Baltic region – geometric morphometrics analysis (SSFA/2009/02 with Aarhus University, Denmark, final project report: AC18/Doc.6-03)
- Genetic structure of white-sided dolphin (*Lagenorhynchus acutus*) in the Eastern North Atlantic (SSFA/2009/03 with Durham University, UK, final project report: AC17/Doc.6-07)
- Development of a co-ordinated reporting system and HELCOM/ASCOBANS database on Baltic Sea harbour porpoise sightings, by-catches and strandings (SSFA/2009/04 with HELCOM, final project report: AC17/Doc.6-09)
- Inventories of harbour porpoise *Phocaena phocaena phocaena* presence in Russian territorial waters of the Baltic Sea (SSFA/2010/01 with Biologists for Nature Conservation, final project report: AC19/Doc.6-03)
- Feasibility study on the creation of a web-accessed strandings database covering Agreement Party and Range States within the ASCOBANS region (SSFA/2010/02 with Zoological Society of London, final project report: AC19/Doc.6-05)
- Pollutant exposure in coastal top predators: assessing current levels of exposure and toxic effects (SSFA/2010/03 with Zoological Society of London, final project report to AC20)
- Understanding harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) and fisheries interactions in the north-west Iberian Peninsula (SSFA/2010/04 with University of Aberdeen, UK, interim report: AC19/Doc.6-06, final report to AC20)
- Effects of contaminants on reproduction, Phase II (SSFA/2010/05 with University of St. Andrews, UK, final project report: AC19/Doc.6-04)
- Approaches to an Impact Indicator in the Light of Descriptor 11 (MSFD) (SSFA/2011/02 with the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDACS Germany), final project report to AC20)

- Preparation of a Draft Paper containing background information and proposed objectives and measures for the porpoise population residing in the “gap area” currently not covered by the Jastarnia Plan (SSFA/2011/04 with University of Aarhus, Denmark, final product of the project is the Draft Conservation Plan for Harbour Porpoises in the Western Baltic, Belt Seas and Kattegat produced for the Advisory Committee’s consideration as AC19/Doc.4-03)
- Distribution and relative abundance of harbour porpoises (*Phocoena phocoena*) over Dogger Bank and surrounding waters, Southern North Sea (SSFA/2011/05 with Marine Conservation Research International, interim report: AC19/Doc.5-03, final report to AC20)
- Examine habitat exclusion and long-term effect of pingers (SSFA/2012/01 with Aarhus University, Denmark)
- Enhanced detection of harbour porpoises prior to ramming, seismic blasts and ammunition clearance: design and construction of a PAL-porpoise detector (PPD) (Contract with F<sup>3</sup>)

17. The Secretariat further undertakes the selection of consultants for tasks requiring specific expertise or additional staff capacity and supervises their work, and also prepares reports on administrative and financial issues to Parties and prepares and services meetings of the MOP, the AC and its working groups, and workshops as required. In addition to this regular day-to-day work, the Secretariat also conducted the recruitment procedures outlined above.

18. The Secretariat receives support from the Administrative and Fund Management Unit (AFMU) of CMS and UNEP’s Office for Operations and UNON

#### Service Function of the Secretariat: Budget

19. During the triennium, the Agreement’s finances have been maintained at a healthy state.

20. In addition to the Operating Reserve of US\$87,542, the General Trust Fund at the end of 2009, 2010 and 2011 had positive balances, which in line with the Parties’ wishes were rephased to the following year’s budget and made available for conservation projects. The vast majority of these savings are from the personnel budget lines, for which budget allocations must be made using standard UN budget estimates for this duty station. However, throughout the triennium the actual expenditure relating to some of the posts was significantly lower than standard estimates as the present incumbents’ entitlements (depending e.g. on family situation and country of origin) are significantly lower than the average. The operational budget lines had no significant leftovers, and in many cases had to be supplemented from other lines or through rephasals in order to cover the needs in a given year.

21. A total amount of €143,570 was spent from 2009 to date for projects selected by the Advisory Committee (for details see list above). The balance on the budget line for conservation projects currently stands at an estimated €4,971.

22. Details on expenditures, balances, rephasals and their use have been provided in the annual reports to the Advisory Committee on the end-of-year status of the previous year’s budget, as well as the mid-year reports sent to Parties on the status as at 30 June of each year.

23. At the 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Advisory Committee the Secretariat informed Parties about a problem with the ASCOBANS Trust Fund balance, caused by the method which UNON/UNEP had been using to compute and apportion exchange rate fluctuations. As a result, only part of the fund balance for the year 2010 was available for rephasal (for details please refer to paragraphs 128-133 of the AC18 Report). This had been due to a balance adjustment on the UNEP Euro account relating to the Euro-US Dollar exchange rate. The calculation method for the share of the losses of about 6 per cent in total for each MEA were calculated in such a way as to be highly unfavourable towards CMS and the co-located Agreements AEWA, ASCOBANS and EUROBATS, resulting in losses of around 50 per cent of their assets (48.2 per cent / US\$57,725 in the case of ASCOBANS). The Acting Executive Secretary had brought the matter to the attention to UNEP and UNON and had requested an urgent and more realistic recalculation of the shares and release of the balance. Upon repeated interventions from the Secretariats of the CMS Family in Bonn, this problem was solved and the Trust Fund balance was restored to the expected level. UNON/UNEP also changed the method applied for computing and apportioning exchange rate fluctuations on the UNEP Euro account to avoid similar problems in future.