

REPORT OF THE 25th MEETING OF THE ASCOBANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Stralsund, Germany

17-19 September 2019



**Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans
of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas**



Most of the AC25 participants at the meeting venue, Ozeaneum, on Day 3.

Table of Contents

| | | |
|------|---|----|
| 1. | Opening of the Meeting | 3 |
| 1.1. | Welcoming Remarks | 3 |
| 1.2. | Adoption of the Agenda | 3 |
| 1.3. | Opening of the Scientific Session | 4 |
| 2. | Review of New Information on Threats to Small Cetaceans | 4 |
| 2.1. | Cetacean Watching Industry | 4 |
| 2.2. | Recreational Sea Use | 5 |
| 2.3. | Pollution and Hazardous Substances | 6 |
| 2.4. | Ship Strikes | 7 |
| 2.5. | Climate Change | 8 |
| 2.6. | Physical Habitat Change | 8 |
| 2.7. | Marine Protected Areas | 9 |
| 2.8. | Other sources of disturbance | 11 |
| 3. | Follow-up from AC24 on Threats to Small Cetaceans | 11 |
| 3.1. | Bycatch | 11 |
| | OSPAR-HELCOM Workshop on Indicators for Seabird and Marine Mammal Bycatch | 12 |
| | Safe and Humane Handling and Release of Bycaught Small Cetaceans from Fishing Gear | 12 |
| | Porpoise Alert Devices Application as an Antibycatch Measure | 12 |
| | ICES Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species | 13 |
| 3.2. | Use of Bycatches and Strandings | 13 |
| 3.3. | Marine Debris | 14 |
| 3.4. | Resource Depletion | 14 |
| 4. | Species Action Plans | 15 |
| 4.1. | Recovery Plan for Baltic Harbour Porpoises (Jastarnia Plan) | 15 |
| | Polish Strandings | 16 |
| 4.2. | Conservation Plan for the Harbour Porpoises Population in the Western Baltic, the Belt Sea and the Kattegat (WBBK Plan) | 17 |
| 4.3. | Conservation Plan for Harbour Porpoises in the North Sea (North Sea Plan) | 17 |
| 5. | Special Species Sessions | 19 |
| 5.1. | Beaked Whales | 19 |
| 5.2. | Bottlenose Dolphin | 21 |
| 5.3. | White-beaked Dolphin – follow-up from AC24 Special Species Sessions | 21 |
| 5.4. | Atlantic White-sided Dolphin – follow-up from AC24 Special Species Sessions | 21 |
| 6. | Relevant EU Policy Matters | 21 |
| | Habitats Directive | 21 |
| | Common Fisheries Policy | 22 |
| | Marine Strategy Framework Directive | 24 |
| 7. | Cooperation with other Bodies | 26 |

| | |
|--|----|
| 7.1. Reports by the Secretariat, Parties and Partners..... | 26 |
| 7.2. Dates of Interest 2019/2020 | 27 |
| 8. Publicity and Outreach | 27 |
| 8.1. Reports by the Secretariat, Parties and Partners..... | 27 |
| 8.2. ASCOBANS Outreach and Education Award 2020 | 28 |
| 9. Funded of Projects and Activities | 28 |
| 9.1. Progress of Projects/Activities Supported by ASCOBANS..... | 28 |
| 9.2. Coordination of Harbour Porpoise Action Plans..... | 28 |
| 9.3. Prioritization of Activities Requiring Funding..... | 29 |
| 10. ASCOBANS Work Plan: Overview of Implementation | 31 |
| 11. Draft Resolutions for 9 th Meeting of the Parties | 32 |
| 12. Any other business..... | 33 |
| Mine Detonations in Fehmarnbelt..... | 33 |
| Stock vs Population..... | 34 |
| 13. Adoption of the List of Action Points of the Scientific Session..... | 34 |
| 14. Close of the Scientific Session | 34 |
| 15. Opening of the Institutional Session | 34 |
| 16. Accession and Agreement Amendment..... | 35 |
| 17. National Reporting Form | 35 |
| 17.1. Report back from the Intersessional Working Group on National Reporting | 35 |
| 17.2. Development of the National Reporting Form for 9 th Meeting of the Parties..... | 35 |
| 18. Financial and Administrative Issues | 36 |
| 18.1. Administrative Issues | 36 |
| 18.2. Accounts for 2018 and 2019..... | 36 |
| 19. Assignment of Funds to Prioritized Activities | 36 |
| 20. Options for future meetings of the Advisory Committee..... | 36 |
| 21. Any other Institutional Issues..... | 37 |
| 22. Date and Venue of the 9 th Meeting of the Parties and the 26 th Meeting of the Advisory Committee..... | 37 |
| 23. Adoption of the List of Action Points of the Institutional Session..... | 38 |
| 24. Close of the Meeting | 38 |
| Annex 1: List of Action Points from AC25 | 39 |
| Annex 2: List of Recommendations from AC25 | 42 |
| Annex 3: Action Points from the 15 th Meeting of the Jastarnia Group regarding Jastarnia and WBBK Plans..... | 44 |
| Annex 4: Priority Recommendations from the 8 th Meeting of the North Sea Group..... | 48 |
| Annex 5: Recommendations from the 1 st Meeting of the Common Dolphin Group..... | 49 |
| Annex 6: Terms of Reference for the Common Dolphin Group..... | 50 |
| Annex 7: Terms of Reference for the Resource Depletion Working Group | 52 |
| Annex 8: List of Dates of Interest to ASCOBANS in 2019/2020..... | 53 |
| Annex 9: List of Participants | 56 |

REPORT OF THE 25TH MEETING OF THE ASCOBANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

1. Opening of the Meeting

1.1. Welcoming Remarks

1. Melanie Virtue (Secretariat) opened the meeting by introducing herself as Head of the CMS Aquatic Species Team and Jenny Renell as the new ASCOBANS Coordinator. She conveyed the good wishes of the Acting Executive Secretary of CMS, Amy Fraenkel, whose appointment would extend beyond the CMS Conference of Parties in February 2020. The process of recruiting a permanent Executive Secretary was progressing. Having thanked the Government of Germany for hosting the meeting, Ms Virtue called upon Oliver Schall to address the participants.
2. Oliver Schall (Germany) welcomed participants to Stralsund and to the Ozeaneum, an institution which had a long association with the conservation of Harbour Porpoises and whose director was a specialist in the subject. Mr Schall explained some of the history of Stralsund, pointing out how the city had changed since German reunification, not least through the construction of the Ozeaneum. A tour of the Ozeaneum for delegates formed part of the meeting schedule.
3. Dr Harald Benke, the Director of the Ozeaneum, noted that several ASCOBANS meetings had been held in Stralsund and he was pleased to welcome delegates back to the Ozeaneum. The city had also hosted the exhibition, “the Last 300” about Baltic Harbour Porpoises in partnership with the NGOs, OceanCare and Whale and Dolphin Conservation (WDC). Dr Benke had personally been involved in the negotiation of ASCOBANS, and the Ozeaneum engaged in research into Harbour Porpoises by undertaking passive acoustic monitoring and running an incidental sighting programme. Stralsund had many historic sites and had UNESCO World Heritage status, while the Ozeaneum had been chosen as German museum of the year in 2010 and could boast having German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, as a supporter and fan of the resident penguins.
4. A great deal had been achieved in terms of conservation, but more had to be done in respect of the management of Natura 2000 sites and regulating the use of gillnets. Increased efforts were needed to raise public awareness of conservation issues, as many people did not know that cetaceans were present in German waters and what threats they faced. Cooperation across a wide range of sectors was required, if conservation actions were to be successful.
5. The Chair, Sami Hassani (France) expressed his thanks to the Ozeaneum for hosting the meeting, mentioning that he worked at a similar institution in Brest.

1.2. Adoption of the Agenda

6. The Chair introduced the agenda and the schedule ([AC25/Doc.1.2a/Rev.1](#) and [AC25/Doc.1.2b](#)) and drew the meeting’s attention to the rules of procedure ([AC25/Doc.1.2c](#)). He invited comments on the agenda and suggestions for items for Any Other Business (agenda item 12).
7. Monika Lesz (Poland) gave notice that she wanted to raise the issue of increasing incidents of Harbour Porpoise strandings and suggested that this should be discussed under agenda item 4.1 (Jastarnia Plan).

8. Ida Carlén (Coalition Clean Baltic – CCB) wished to raise the issue of the disposal of munitions in the Baltic and said that Sven Koschinski (Meereszoologie) was ready to give a presentation remotely on a recent incident off Fehmarn, Germany. It was agreed that the topic be discussed under agenda item 12, Any Other Business.
9. Fabian Ritter (Whale and Dolphin Conservation – WDC) wished to discuss the possible listing of the Baltic and Iberian populations of the Harbour Porpoise on Appendix I of the Convention on Migratory Species and asked when the most appropriate time would be.
10. Mr Schall (Germany) said that a presentation would be made by Dr Andreas Ruser on acoustic deterrent devices (“pingers”). It was agreed that the presentation would be given under agenda item 3.1, Bycatch.
11. The Secretariat announced that the International Whaling Commission (IWC) had had to cancel its participation in the present meeting at short notice and wished to convey its apologies. Mark Simmonds (Humane Society International – HSI) had been instructed to speak for the IWC.
12. The Chair suggested that after discussion with the Secretariat agenda item 19, Assignment of Funds to Prioritized Activities, would be considered together with agenda item 9.3, Prioritization of Activities Requiring Funding. There were no objections. Subject to those changes, the agenda and schedule were adopted.

1.3. Opening of the Scientific Session

13. The Chair opened the Scientific Session.

2. Review of New Information on Threats to Small Cetaceans

14. Information in the presentations under agenda item 2 was based on the national reports from Parties, available on the [AC25 webpage](#).

2.1. Cetacean Watching Industry

15. Based on material prepared by Peter Evans, Graham Pierce (Invited Expert, Instituto de Investigaciones Marinas) gave a [presentation](#) on the cetacean watching industry. He outlined the possible threats posed by wildlife watching operations to the target animals and how guidelines could help with mitigation. He reported on the responses received from Parties on the number of whale watching operations, the number of ports in which they were based and the species affected.
16. Mr Pierce said that the United Kingdom (UK) had the most operations, but the guidelines and codes of conduct used did not have an agreed definition of ‘harassment’. The UK was also the only country to report any incidents of harassment. There were no records of any ‘swim-with’ operations within the Agreement Area, with the UK discouraging such activities and Germany prohibiting them. The UK and France recorded an increase in whale watching operations, with other countries reporting stable levels.
17. Anne-Marie Svoboda (Netherlands) said that the [IWC/CMS Whale Watching Handbook](#) provided useful advice and Mr Ritter (WDC) drew attention to a brochure on responsible whale watching, produced by WDC. He added that there was a semi-commercial whale watching operation in Flensburg.
18. Mr Simmonds (HSI) said that the IWC Scientific Committee was looking at the sustainability of whale watching and noted that there was an IWC sub-committee focusing on whale watching, which provided a regular review of studies on impacts and related matters. Suggestions for inclusion of case studies were welcome. He also raised the issue of solitary, sociable dolphins, pointing out that he and Laetitia Nunny had recently published a [paper](#) on this issue.

19. Vedran Nikolic (European Commission) said that there was no clear picture emerging on Parties' regulations from their National Reports, and he stressed that proper implementation was important, as the European Court of Justice highlighted that measures for strict protection of species under the EU Habitats Directive should be effective and well enforced. Clarity was therefore required on what constituted 'disturbance'.
20. Julia Carlström (Sweden) reported that one operator conducted tours to see Harbour Porpoises in the Kattegat, but there were no guidelines nor a definition of 'harassment'.
21. The Chair speaking for France said that a cordon sanitaire was placed around cetaceans forcing operators to keep at a certain distance. Vincent Ridoux (France) added that the 2011 decree on marine mammals in marine protected areas (MPAs) and Marine Parks says that intentional disturbance including pursuit or harassment of animals in the natural environment is prohibited in all waters under French jurisdiction. Various local codes of conduct existed and included a minimal distance of 100 meters.
22. Mr. Ritter draw attention to the fact that WDC, in collaboration with the Federal Agency for Nature Protection (Bundesamt für den Naturschutz, BfN) and the NGO GRD were working on the first whale watching guidelines for German waters.
23. Mr Schall (Germany) said that commercial whale watching was not an issue in Germany and that there was a well-developed legal framework for nature conservation in Germany with respective federal laws of the German *Länder* for avoiding risks of whale watching.
24. The Secretariat stressed that as well as the Handbook, which had been a cooperative effort with the IWC, CMS Parties had adopted guidelines on boat-based wildlife watching at COP12 and further guidelines on 'swim-with' operations would be presented at COP13.

2.2. Recreational Sea Use

25. Mr Pierce (Invited Expert) gave a [presentation](#) on the recreational use of the sea, which was based on material prepared by Peter Evans drawing on responses from Parties to questions in the National Reports. The presentation covered the use of inflatable craft, fast boats, yachts and jet-propelled craft, and any activities that caused animals to move away or were likely to cause injury but excluded recreational fishing.
26. Mr Pierce summarized the information provided by Parties. France had some information on the use of the sea, and there were extensive maps covering Scotland. The Sea Watch Foundation was conducting a mapping project covering the west coast of Wales and the Hebrides, which included plotting areas where wildlife watching, speed boating, use of personal watercraft (jet skis, kayaks, etc), sailing, and sea angling took place.
27. Only the UK had reported incidents of disturbance, where people on jet-propelled craft had harassed an animal near the Tyne Estuary and in the Moray Firth. Five countries had codes of conduct, but these tended to be quite general, and the UK reported that some PhD research projects were being carried out. The assessment of trends of pressures indicated that they varied across the region, with the UK reporting increases for all species except Orca, where the trend was unknown.
28. Parties were urged to conduct mapping exercises and to keep records of cases of harassment. The Chair reminded Parties that they were obliged to assess impacts under EU directives. Mr Nikolic (European Commission) said that the Habitats Directive's species protection provisions required establishment of a "system of strict protection", which should include risk assessments of threats from activities such as whale watching or leisure boating and, if necessary, undertaking preventive measure.
29. Meike Scheidat (Netherlands) asked whether there was any significant difference between codes of conduct and national guidelines and what legal weight these had. Mr Simmonds (HSI) said that his understanding was that codes of conduct tended to be

aimed at the local level. He also asked whether this subject merited a resolution and how that might be progressed.

30. Mr Ritter (WDC) asked whether recreational fishing would be discussed elsewhere on the agenda, given that it had been excluded from this report and yet could have major impacts. He highlighted the fact that recreational fishing can have indirect effects on cetaceans (including habitat degradation) as well, and that recreational use was just one of many impacts that might act cumulatively and synergistically. Jan Haelters (Belgium) said that Belgium had legislation but no codes of conduct.

2.3. Pollution and Hazardous Substances

31. Mr Pierce (Invited Expert) made a [presentation](#) on pollution and hazardous substances including microplastics. Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) were linked to poor calf survival rates and immune system suppression in Orcas.
32. The questions in the National Report covered monitoring of pollutants, the institutions involved in monitoring, the source of data (which was mainly necropsies from stranded animals), the species most affected and the sea areas covered. Responses showed that there was no evidence of reduced risks from pollutants and that the trends of pressures were unknown. Mr Pierce concluded that some pollutants and pathogens (e.g. PCBs, morbillivirus) represented important threats to cetaceans. Monitoring differed between countries: PCBs were best covered, Germany appeared to cover more substances. Some countries reported no routine monitoring of pollutants in cetaceans, and monitoring was mainly based on samples from necropsies (mostly in Harbour Porpoise). In addition, several questions in the national reporting form were not capturing useful information.
33. Mr Simmonds on behalf of IWC reported that their Scientific Committee (SC) had conducted three comprehensive research programmes on pollution, one of which (Pollution 2020) aimed to assess risks to cetaceans from microplastics and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons PAHs. A detailed report will be presented to the IWC SC in May 2020. At its 2019 meeting the SC agreed to develop a new, multidisciplinary pollution initiative, Pollution 2025, building on previous work, and with a potential focus on cumulative impacts. A Steering Group had been established to develop options, to be submitted to the 2020 SC meeting. The SC had stressed the importance of collaboration with other organizations on this issue. Pollution was also highlighted as a key threat in the IWC's Conservation Committee (CC) Strategic Plan. The IWC was currently considering how a CC work programme, potentially focused on mitigation options, could build on the scientific work. A paper on this would be put to the SC in May 2020. The IWC very much welcomed further collaboration with ASCOBANS on this issue and, in particular, ASCOBANS participation in the two aforementioned areas of work.
34. Mr Simmonds (HSI) speaking for the IWC, mentioned the forthcoming workshop on marine debris, which would consider protocols for classifying plastic pollution and pathology protocols. The workshop was scheduled to take place before the World Marine Mammal Conference in Barcelona in December 2019, and participation is by invitation only. He asked why the focus at ASCOBANS was on microplastics when larger items of debris were also posing a threat and he suggested that attention be given to affected populations.
35. Sinéad Murphy (Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology - GMIT) said that an OSPAR common mammal MSFD (Marine Strategy Framework Directive) indicator was being developed for PCBs and other persistent pollutants by OSPAR's Marine Mammal Expert Group. Further, the Irish Government was looking at microplastics in freshwater, including trophic transfer, and the question had arisen on how best to report on microplastics, i.e. a unit of measure, for comparison among studies. Based on other published work, microplastics, while ubiquitous, were being found in small quantities in small cetaceans, but macroplastics were probably more of an issue.

36. Catherine Bell (UK) said that there was evidence that many pollutants were a problem and she asked what mitigation measures had been taken and which had proved to be effective. Mr Simmonds said that there were different solutions and approaches, one being banning the use of plastic bags and stopping plastic from reaching the sea. PCBs were more complex, as they were now established in the environment. ASCOBANS had a correspondence group working on a resolution on marine debris, and input from the IWC workshop could be expected. Consideration of the issues should continue intersessionally and he offered to lead an in-session drafting group.
37. Andrew Brownlow (Invited Expert, Cetacean Stranding Investigation Programme) said that the effects of contaminants already in the environment should be assessed and this required detailed necropsies. Ms Scheidat (Netherlands) said that necropsies needed to be based on good specimens and a comprehensive coverage of the coasts by strandings networks would help. There were gaps on the German coast, particularly in Lower Saxony.
38. Mr Nikolic (European Commission) said that single-use plastics had been recently banned by EU legislation as part of the EU plastics strategy and circular economy action plans, with the focus in the coming years being on microplastics.

2.4. Ship Strikes

39. Ms Scheidat (Netherlands) [presented](#) this agenda item and said that ship strikes were a relatively new issue for ASCOBANS, and the problem affected large cetaceans too. The threats included direct death and serious injury, leaving scars and reducing the animals' chances of survival. Evidence of collisions with ships could be obtained from necropsies and photographs of injured animals.
40. Mitigation actions included regulation of shipping in MPAs, such as those applied in Germany in the Wadden Sea and in France. The IWC had devised a reporting form for incidents, but this aimed mainly at large cetaceans. However, there were increasing reports of Harbour Porpoises being sighted in German rivers (the Ems, Elbe and Weser), where the risk of collisions was high.
41. Mr Ritter, now speaking as the IWC ship strike data coordinator, said that as part of its 5-year strategic plan the IWC had set up a ship strike working group, which was trying to ascertain the number of incidents and identify hotspots, some of which were in European waters. The IWC global database had details of ca. 1,200 incidents. The project to review all reports and classify them according to agreed criteria, was under way, although the budget had been reduced. He stressed that some of the solutions to reduce ship strikes with large and small cetaceans were straightforward, namely reducing speed and re-routing vessel traffic where possible.
42. Mr Nikolic (European Commission) said that there were obligations under the Habitats Directive to collate data on incidental killing such as ship strikes and to take appropriate measures. EU Member States wishing to take measures regulating shipping, such as rerouting shipping traffic, needed to make a proposal to the IMO and this needed to be done through the European Commission. Consideration had to be given to how mitigation measures would affect shipping and consultation with other Member States and the industry representatives would have to take place. Any measures needed to be validated to ensure their effectiveness. Further guidance on the procedure to propose such measures would be provided by the Commission.
43. Kelly Macleod (UK) asked whether bycatch was considered to be incidental or deliberate, noting parallels with ship strikes. Mr Nikolic responded that under the Habitats Directive, an action was considered deliberate even if a person or a body did not act with an intention but knew or consciously accepted the consequences of such action. Where knowledge existed about the impact, it was therefore important to take all necessary preventive measures, and in that context, accidental killing with no conservation impact would be

considered non-deliberate. For example, if necessary, protocols requiring vessels to slow down in the presence of cetaceans were observed, accidents could still occur, but all reasonable steps had to be taken to avoid them happening and this would render such ship strikes non-deliberate.

2.5. Climate Change

44. Mr Pierce (Invited Expert) made a [presentation](#) highlighting the effects of climate change on small cetacean habitats and prey distribution. Climate change caused warming seas, more severe storms, loss of sea ice and variations to the North Atlantic Oscillation, which could all affect cetaceans. Greater vigilance and more monitoring were required as climate change affected cetaceans and their prey.
45. In the National Reports, the UK specifically mentioned climate change as a key threat to small cetaceans. It was also noted that some species not usually found in the UK were appearing in small numbers.
46. Ms Murphy (GMIT) said that differences were being observed between coastal and oceanic populations and the ASCOBANS Area was seeing large distributional changes that required further investigation. Cetaceans were top predators and changes in abundance could have implications for ecosystem dynamics.
47. Mr Simmonds (HSI) said that responses to the changes would have to be made faster, as even stable populations could be affected abruptly, as new factors and threats emerged, requiring greater vigilance. He also referred to an excellent and relevant new publication¹ by Russel Leaper, which examined the relationships between vessel speeds, ship strikes, noise and emissions contributing to climate change.
48. Mr Ritter (WDC) said that the IWC had a workstream on ecosystem function and cetaceans had a role in carbon sequestration. A joint IWC-CMS workshop on ecosystem functions of cetaceans was planned for 2020. WDC was further developing a campaign focused on the ecosystem functions of cetaceans. Ms Bell (UK) said that an ecosystem approach was required to deal with the effects of climate change. ASCOBANS Parties had to decide how they could contribute to addressing the problems and identify actions with focus on a small cetacean.

2.6. Physical Habitat Change

49. Mr Pierce (Invited Expert) [presented](#) information on physical habitat change arising from sand extraction, bridge construction and wind turbine installations, based on material provided by Peter Evans. The report examined cases affecting small cetaceans and included maps of wind farms; oil, gas and renewable energy installations and pipelines. Four countries reported having mitigation measures, including Germany, which had dedicated legislation and the Netherlands which ran a public awareness programme.
50. Mr Nikolic (European Commission) said that these impacts together can have important in-combination or cumulative effects and that they are best addressed at strategic planning level. Under the EU Directive on maritime spatial planning Member States were due to establish maritime spatial plans by 2021, and deadlines were looming. The process of maritime spatial planning and its ecosystem-based approach should be used to also address the impacts of these activities on small cetaceans. ASCOBANS could contribute to this process by providing valuable data
51. Ms Svoboda (Netherlands) said that ASCOBANS Parties should emphasize the specific links to Harbour Porpoises and highlight the vast amount of work already done on noise.

¹ https://www.researchgate.net/scientific-contributions/12780528_Russell_Leaper

- Ms Scheidat (Netherlands) noted that noise should be handled as a discrete issue and many of the mitigation measures recorded in the National Reports were noise-specific.
52. Mr Simmonds (HSI) suggested identifying the relevant processes under ASCOBANS which could provide information required by the European Commission, such as the cumulative effects on habitat.
 53. Mr Nikolic (European Commission) suggested that ASCOBANS consider organizing workshops to assist Parties and proposed the following wording for a recommendation from the meeting: "Encourage Parties to ensure that in the process of drafting maritime spatial plans, the cumulative effects of various physical habitats changes, together with other pressures, on the small cetaceans are duly taken into account in the early phases of the drafting of plans in order to effectively contribute to their ecosystem-based approach."
 54. Mr Haelters (Belgium) recalled an OSPAR group which had looked at cumulative effects taking Harbour Porpoises as an example.
 55. Mr Simmonds suggested establishing a working group to draft a resolution and Ms Bell, Ms Macleod, Mr Nikolic and Ms Scheidat volunteered to serve on it alongside Mr Simmonds. The terms of reference could possibly be broadened if cumulative effects on habitat was considered too narrow a subject for a resolution. It could also endorse the ecosystem approach and address the threats posed by climate change and refer to other recommendations on streamlining data collection.

2.7. Marine Protected Areas

56. Ms Macleod (UK) referred to [Resolution 5.7](#) adopted in 2006 and to activities 20 and 21 in the [Work Plan](#) (relating to area-based conservation and MPAs). Her [presentation](#) was based on responses from Parties to the questions in the National Reports relating to MPAs. She noted that Belgium and Finland had not completed this section.
57. The primary focus was on those MPAs where Harbour Porpoises were part of the selection criteria, but the Netherlands had also reported those where fisheries measures may have benefited to cetaceans. The UK referred to nine MPAs designated for Harbour Porpoises and Bottlenose Dolphins, whereas there were in fact 11 such areas (Grades A-C). She also pointed out that Belgium had not completed this section of the national report suggesting they had no MPAs for cetaceans; Belgium did have SACs for Harbour Porpoise. Ms Macleod used these examples to highlight ongoing problems with how Parties interpret questions in national reports and how reliable the information within them was.
58. The Habitats Directive had been the main driver in the designation of MPAs for both Harbour Porpoise and Bottlenose Dolphin, but so far management measures had been implemented in only a minority of sites. Some Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) had been designated for other features, but cetaceans did frequent them. The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) in the UK had a portal on its website which could produce maps of MPAs using filters. France has a similar feature allowing interrogation using various criteria.
59. Several countries reported on the conservation objectives and management measures, such as reducing noise, introducing restrictions on fisheries and regulating recreational vessels and wildlife watching operations.
60. Monitoring and survey work within MPAs was being undertaken in Denmark (aerial surveys), Germany (acoustic monitoring) and long-term observations of Bottlenose Dolphins in Scotland and Wales. Other work related to the UK's Harbour Porpoise SACs was highlighted and included creation of "calorific maps" of porpoise prey species ([AC25/Inf.2.7a](#)), consideration of how best to monitor SACs ([AC25/Inf.2.7b](#)); and bycatch mitigation (restrictions on fishing and use of pingers in SACs). A report from the

UNEP regional seas programme with case studies on the selection and subsequent management of MPAs for OSPAR and a national plan in the UK for dolphin and porpoise conservation ([AC25/Inf.2.7d](#)) were also highlighted.

61. Mr Nikolic (European Commission) explained that SACs under the Habitats Directive were classified in accordance with the proportion of the population of a species in the site. The requirements on the management and protection of SACs applied only for the so-called A-C sites that host significant proportion of the whole population (which was not the case for “D sites”). This should be kept in mind when reporting on Natura 2000 sites for protection of these species and the official database with the online viewer was the most reliable source of information on Natura 2000 that could be used instead of the information from the national reports. Due to the general lack of management measures in SACs, infraction procedures would be considered against Belgium, Germany and the UK, while several other countries were under investigation. Each site had to have clear conservation objectives and effective measures, e.g. the measures such as ‘pingers’ had to be assessed in terms of their effectiveness.
62. Mr Ritter (WDC) noted that six years after the deadline there were still no management plans in place in German SACs. He did not think that conservation and fisheries management could be separated. A recent report comparing fisheries efforts showed that they were 40 per cent higher in European MPAs than elsewhere. The European Court of Justice (ECJ) had recently ruled that obligations under the Common Fisheries Policy were given greater weight than those under the Habitats Directive. The option of making ‘pinger’ use obligatory in SACs, i.e. scaring cetaceans away from places where they ought to be protected, had not been pursued further in Germany.
63. Ms Carlström (Sweden) said that the three coastal county administrative boards at the Swedish west coast had agreed upon a joint plan for protection and management of marine habitats and species, including the Harbour Porpoise. The protection plan was rather focused on measures than management plans. Ms Svoboda (Netherlands) said that in a Special Protection Area designated under the Birds Directive some measures restricting the use of gillnets had been proposed in the Netherlands.
64. Mr Nikolic (European Commission) reminded that the aforementioned ECJ preliminary ruling actually just highlighted that Germany couldn’t take the measures required by the Habitats Directive in its Natura 2000 sites unilaterally if there were fishing interests of other Member States, but this had to be done through the “joint recommendations” under the common fisheries policy (Article 11 CFP basic regulation). This was the current legal framework for the implementation of the legal obligations under the Habitats Directive concerning regulating fisheries which is exclusive EU competence under the common fisheries policy. He again stressed the importance of ASCOBANS Parties working together. Ms Svoboda said that the Netherlands and Belgium were collaborating with regard to windfarms close to the border. Ms Blankett (Finland) said that a network for MPA managers had been set up under HELCOM to help them exchange views and experiences.
65. Mr Simmonds (HSI) suggested that the lack of knowledge about best practice regarding management of small cetaceans in MPAs could be addressed through a workshop, held jointly with ACCOBAMS and the European Commission. A workshop with 25 participants might cost something in the region of €40,000. Mr Ritter said that a four-page document produced by the IUCN on MPAs entitled “Applying IUCN’s Global Conservation Standards to Marine Protected Areas” would be a good starting point. Ms Blankett (Finland) said that HELCOM might also be interested in participating. Mr Nikolic suggested contacting MedPAN², the network of managers of MPAs in the Mediterranean, as it was dealing with similar issues and would organise a workshop on wide ranging species in November 2019 that would include a session on MPAs.

² Network of Marine Protected Areas managers in the Mediterranean, <http://medpan.org/>.

66. Ms Macleod (UK) pointed out that there were different legal drivers for the various site designations, which might mean that the information was not compatible. Mr Simmonds said that the legal basis might be different, but the threats and other issues were likely to be similar.

2.8. Other sources of disturbance

67. Mr Pierce (Invited Expert) made a final [presentation](#) with the 'catch-all' title dealing with other sources of disturbance except for noise. Only two countries reported undertaking studies and there were some publications recorded by the UK. The most recent national reports had brought little to light but retaining this section in the reporting format might still prove useful, although defining its parameters was difficult.
68. Mr Haelters (Belgium) said that some high-speed off-shore races had been held in Belgian waters. The potential impact on cetaceans had been assessed and measures had been taken, such as a suspension of racing, in case marine mammals were present.

3. Follow-up from AC24 on Threats to Small Cetaceans

3.1. Bycatch

69. The Secretariat summarized the report ([AC25/Inf.3.1a](#)) of the Joint Bycatch Working Group, which was co-chaired by Peter Evans and Ayaka Amaha Oztürk. The main activities included participation in various meetings and two consultancies, and major developments were the New Technical Measures Regulation 2019/1241 entering in to force replacing Regulation 812/2004 and the publication by WWF of guidelines on releasing netted cetaceans. France had agreed to host a workshop or a meeting of the Joint Bycatch Working Group, potentially in the spring of 2020.
70. Célia Le Ravallec (ACCOBAMS) said that the cooperation between the ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS Secretariats and Parties on bycatch was proving to be very fruitful.
71. Ms Svoboda (Netherlands) said that the IWC had asked her to mention its Bycatch Mitigation Initiative (BMI). The BMI was focusing on bycatch in gillnet fisheries and was looking to explore and develop partnerships with other projects dealing with bycatch (particularly in small- and medium-scale fisheries). These partnerships would help the BMI learn what approaches (e.g. in bycatch assessment, monitoring, mitigation, engagement and incentives) were proving effective and which could be transposed to other fisheries (e.g. in developing countries/pilot project locations). IWC was seeking synergies with the work on REM being done by ASCOBANS and wanted to know whether there were any low-cost options that could be trialled by the BMI in other locations.
72. The BMI was working to identify and develop pilot projects where multi-disciplinary and experimental approaches to bycatch reduction could be trialled within specific fisheries. Suggestions for locations/fisheries that would be particularly suited for a pilot project would be welcome. ASCOBANS Parties were asked whether the 'culinary conservation' approach as described by Sarah Mesnick at the workshop – working with chefs and the supply chain to promote low-bycatch fisheries – would be something that the Joint Bycatch Working Group and the BMI could work on.
73. The BMI workshop on bycatch opportunities in the Western Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea (held in Nairobi in May 2019) represented a first attempt at bringing together stakeholders to discuss cetacean bycatch across a region where little was known about the subject. In the case of the Indian Ocean, European fleets were fishing in the region, and it would be interesting to explore any possible collaborations on understanding levels of cetacean bycatch in distant water fleets.
74. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) was currently developing draft technical guidelines to reduce bycatch of marine mammals in capture fisheries. Unfortunately, the

dates of the Expert Meeting clashed exactly with the dates of AC25, and thus the Secretariat could not attend. The CMS Family was represented. The draft would be considered by the FAO Committee on Fisheries in 2020.

OSPAR-HELCOM Workshop on Indicators for Seabird and Marine Mammal Bycatch

75. Katarzyna Kaminska (Poland) made a [presentation](#) on the joint OSPAR-HELCOM workshop to examine possibilities for developing indicators for incidental bycatch of birds and marine mammals, held 3-5 September 2019 in Copenhagen. The workshop had aimed to review how best to, assess bycatch of birds and mammals and, evaluate the risk of bycatch by mapping fisheries effort. She showed a flow chart that had been devised showing management and conservation objectives and an approach for setting threshold values/limits for bycatch mortality rates.
76. The workshop was divided into three subgroups, one dealing with data needs, barriers and proposals on how to address the barriers, another dealing with areas with a high risk of bycatch, and a third dealing with conservation and management objectives, assessment units and proposals for an approach towards setting threshold values/limits for bycatch mortality rates.
77. A step-wise approach for threshold values/limits was proposed based on data availability. For species with poor data, it was concluded that a rule of thumb approach to setting threshold values should be used, such as the 1 per cent set by ASCOBANS (although a 0.5 per cent threshold was also discussed), to be used in the short term, i.e. the 2-3 years of the next Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) reporting cycle. For the longer term, if more data on species abundance, bycatch rates and fisheries intensity became available, more complex approaches could be used, such as a removal limit algorithm (RLA).
78. Lastly, in the end only the conservation objective developed by the workshop was adopted, the management objective needing further refinement.
79. Ms Svoboda (Netherlands) said that the workshop was a great example of joining forces on a topic that should be tackled regionally and globally. Much discussions focused on data gaps, threshold values and conservation objectives. One of the largest data gaps in this region related to small-scale gillnet fisheries and more effort should be undertaken to address this (e.g. through harmonized monitoring approaches and improved reporting, preferably through the Regional Coordination Groups).
80. Ms Svoboda therefore suggested that to move this work forward very short and concrete policy recommendations should be drafted arising from the workshop and a communication strategy involving regional fisheries organizations and coordination groups should be developed.

Safe and Humane Handling and Release of Bycaught Small Cetaceans from Fishing Gear

81. The Secretariat referred the meeting to information document [AC25/Inf.3.1b](#) by WWF on the draft guidelines on safe release, explaining their evolution and the consultation process involving the IWC, CMS and ASCOBANS among others, which should lead to the guidelines being adopted at the next IWC biennial meeting (IWC68) in September-October 2020. The AC was invited to make comments.

Porpoise Alert Devices Application as an Antibycatch Measure

82. Mr Schall (Germany) introduced Dr Andreas Ruser of the Stiftung Tierärztliche Hochschule Hannover (Veterinary Institute of the University of Hanover), who gave a [presentation](#) on porpoise alerting devices (PALs).

83. Mr Ruser explained that the policy options included banning certain types of gear, using 'pingers' or PALs, and closing fisheries. He highlighted the voluntary agreement reached in Schleswig-Holstein, in which 219 of 280 fishermen took part. To be effective PALs had to serve as an alert rather than a deterrent, lead to no reduction in catch of target species (and therefore have no detrimental financial effect) and should reduce porpoise bycatch.
84. The PALs emitted sounds similar to the alert calls made by some captive Harbour Porpoises, and it had been established that use of PALs led to a 10 per cent increase in the animals' echolocation. However, the PALs did not reduce bycatch in the North Sea and even made it worse in Icelandic waters, where males seemed to be attracted to the nets. A total of 1,680 PALs had been used by 83 participating fishermen, but no positive effect had been recorded. Having an accurate picture of fishing effort was needed. The project was examining how animals reacted to the signals and establish the optimal spacing of devices along the net.
85. Ms Macleod (UK) said that similar relevant work was being done in the UK to find out how Harbour Porpoises behaved around gillnets with devices being fixed to fishing gear. Michael Dähne (Germany) and Mr. Ritter (WDC) said that it was important to monitor and enforce measures adopted for spatial management. It was not yet known how effective PALs were, as it was not clear whether they were reducing bycatch or not, whereas it was known that 'pingers' acted as a deterrent. More clarity was needed before wider deployment of PALs could be recommended.
86. Ms Murphy (GMIT) asked where the captive porpoises, whose alarm calls had been used, had come from, wondering whether they had a different dialect to animals in the North Sea and Icelandic waters. Ms Kaminska (Poland) asked how the cooperation of the fishermen had been secured and what was expected of them. Mr Ruser said that day-to-day contact with the fishermen was done by staff of the Baltic Information Centre, who checked the nets and the PALs. This was a considerable task given the length of the coast of Schleswig-Holstein.
87. Mr Schall (Germany) explained that the cooperation was based on the links between local fishermen and the responsible minister in the Schleswig-Holstein government. There was no similar project in neighbouring Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

ICES Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species

88. Ms Macleod (UK) reported back on the meeting of the ICES Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species (ICES WGBYC), which had reviewed the national reports submitted regarding Regulation 812/2004 to monitor bycatch and fisheries efforts. Some Member States had failed to submit a report and some responses had irregularities. There were very few dedicated observer programmes and the UK was the only country with a long-term scheme. Denmark and the Netherlands were conducting some remote electronic monitoring (REM). For mitigation, 'pingers' were deployed in the UK in accordance with the Regulation, but use was patchy in other countries. With regards to cetaceans, the group had assessed bycatch of Harbour Porpoises in the Celtic Seas. ICES WGBYC worked closely with the working group responsible for commercial catch on fisheries efforts (ICES WGCATCH).
89. Ms Murphy (GMIT) said a specific conservation plan might be considered for the harbour porpoise Celtic & Irish Seas Management/Assessment Unit in the future as bycatch rates seemed high. The SCANS and ObSERVE surveys suggested the abundance in the region numbered around 89,000 in 2005 and 35,000 in 2016.

3.2. Use of Bycatches and Strandings

90. Andrew Brownlow (Invited Expert) gave a [presentation](#) and highlighted that 25-year-old necropsy protocols were still being used although diagnostic techniques had developed

during this period. Two updated protocols had been presented at AC24 and a joint workshop of ASCOBANS and ACCOBAMS had been held in June 2019 in Padua, Italy led by Sandro Mazzariol, Lonneke IJsseldijk and Mr Brownlow. The terms of reference for the workshop were to develop a unified ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS necropsy protocol, a diagnostic framework and to compile a list of experts. Representatives of IWC, MARCET (the Macaronesian Network for Cross-border Knowledge and Technology Transfer) and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) also took part.

91. Determining the cause of death of stranded animals and assessing antemortem health was a veterinary diagnosis ideally involving experienced veterinary pathologists. Teams without such expertise had, however, worked well. The protocols developed in the updated protocol have a tiered structure, working from basic measurements to a detailed investigation and comprehensive post mortem examination. The Chair invited AC to endorse the harmonization process. There were no objections.
92. Mr Dähne (Germany) welcomed the report and suggested having it published in the Newsletter of the European Cetacean Society. Ms Svoboda (Netherlands) said that Lonneke IJsseldijk would liaise with OSPAR. Ms Murphy (GMIT) said that it was important that all countries conducted diagnoses in the same way in respect of stranding peaks, including diagnosis of bycatch, and that Ireland had reinstated its strandings programme in 2017, funded by the Marine Institute/EMFF. There were other best practice information in literature with regard to more thorough pathological examinations, but (online) photographs of typical injuries would be helpful.
93. Mr Brownlow wanted to avoid giving the impression that there was a quick way of always determining whether bycatch was the cause of death. The protocols could give advice on what to do when a stranded animal was found and what to photograph or record.
94. Mr Simmonds (HSI) said that the AC should prepare the ground for the possible adoption or endorsement of the protocols at the MOP. The protocols, however, needed to be a living document, adapting as scientific knowledge improved. Mr Brownlow said that the core principles for data collection had not changed in 20 years. As new techniques emerged regarding subsequent on ancillary analysis, the electronic document could be readily updated. This raised the question of which organization should be responsible for it. It would be preferable for it to be placed under the aegis of an institution or organization rather than leaving it in the 'cloud'.
95. The Secretariat read out the draft recommendation and invited volunteers to join the MOP resolution drafting group, which would be led by Mr Brownlow. Ms Murphy volunteered to join the group, and presumably Lonneke IJsseldijk would join as well.

3.3. Marine Debris

96. Mr Simmonds (HSI) gave a brief report on the work of the group drafting a resolution in advance of the next MOP. The drafts would take account of developments at the IWC workshop taking place in December. Many other fora were also dealing with this issue. Anyone interested in learning the current status of the draft was invited to approach Mr Simmonds.

3.4. Resource Depletion

97. Mr Pierce (Invited Expert) [presented](#) this agenda item and said that the depletion of Sand Eels had been a concern for some time, but now North Sea Cod, one of the best managed stocks, was suffering a severe decline.
98. Mr Pierce described the terms of reference ([AC25/Inf.3.4](#)) of the working group dealing with resource depletion and the range of expertise available to it. In line with Action Point 21 from AC24, the TOR were approved intersessionally by the Chair and Vice-chair of the

AC. Mr Pierce expressed the desire to work with other fora dealing with prey abundance and related emerging technologies. Anyone interested in serving on the working group should inform Mr Pierce. The terms of reference for the Working Group are also available in Annex 7 of this report.

4. Species Action Plans

4.1. Recovery Plan for Baltic Harbour Porpoises (Jastarnia Plan)

99. At the start of Day 2 of the meeting, Ms Carlén (CCB – Chair of the Jastarnia Group) [presented](#) two progress reports, one concerning the Jastarnia Plan ([AC25/Doc.4.1/Rev.1](#)) and the other concerning the Plan for the Western Baltic, Belt and Kattegat (WBBK) ([AC25/Doc.4.2](#)). She reported that a rare case of bycatch of Harbour Porpoise in a gillnet in Finnish waters in December 2018 has resulted in the animal being released alive. The Harbour Porpoise had gone from “regionally extinct” to “not assessed” in the Finnish Red List. The request that the Harbour Porpoise be included in the assessment was sent too late.
100. Ms Carlén briefed that it now seemed unlikely that the proposed amendment to the CMS Appendices concerning the Baltic (and Iberian) populations of the Harbour Porpoise would be submitted in time for the upcoming COP. Bycatch risk maps were being developed and Regulation 812/2004 had been repealed having been superseded by Technical Measures Regulation 2019/1241. The definition of drift nets would be determined regionally. A concept paper regarding SAMBAH II had been submitted to the European Commission and the organizers were now awaiting the invitation to submit a fully worked up proposal.
101. The Action Points arising from the latest Jastarnia Group meeting (held in Turku, Finland in March 2019), which inter alia concerned the inter-SCANS survey in the WBBK, bycatch monitoring, underwater noise and the treatment as separate populations of Harbour Porpoises in the areas of the two plans, were presented and adopted by the AC as is. The Action Points are available in Annex 3.
102. Mr Nikolic (European Commission) said that it was vital for the Parties involved to support the SAMBAH application. The project proposal addressed some important issues and needed a wide range of partners including authorities.
103. Mr Ritter (WDC) raised the issue of the proposed inclusion of the Baltic and Iberian populations of the Harbour Porpoise on Appendix I of CMS. WDC had written up the proposals and sent them to the German Government (the Federal Environment Ministry – the BMU, and the Federal Nature Conservation Agency – BfN). WDC understood that the German Agriculture Ministry, which was responsible for fisheries, then raised objections, which according to a Ministry press release was justified by the proposal relating to a population rather than a species, apparently positive population trends in the Baltic Sea and the repercussions for gillnet fisheries in German waters. The issue also was raised at the recent IWC Scientific Committee meeting in Nairobi and sought other countries to submit the proposal. IWC then wrote to both ministries, asking them to reconsider their position. Bearing in mind the length of time needed to complete the EU’s internal consultation processes, non-EU governments were approached.
104. Mr Schall (Germany) preferred not to comment on the contents of the Agriculture Ministry’s press release. Coverage of the issue in an article in Der Spiegel news magazine had not been helpful as it had further complicated relations between the German ministries. He stressed that the deadline for submission of the proposal was not September 2019 as required by CMS but much earlier to allow consultations within the EU.
105. Ms Murphy (GMIT) asked for an indication of the lead times, so that lessons could be learned, and that future proposals could be submitted in time. The Secretariat pointed

out that COP13 was taking place slightly out of the usual cycle, being held in February rather than the fourth quarter. It was not known when COP14 would take place. The deadline for submission of COP documents was 150 days before the start of the meeting, but EU internal consultation requirements also had to be taken into account. Mr Nikolic (European Commission) estimated that the minimum amount of time needed for proposals to clear internal EU consultation was six months, even where the scientific case was good.

106. Mr Simmonds (HSI) said that strong feelings had been expressed at the IWC Scientific Committee meeting in May, and the Baltic Harbour Porpoise was described as 'Europe's Vaquita'. Under the principle of 'joined up government' all ministries should be aware of the seriousness of the situation. Listing the most threatened populations of Harbour Porpoise on Appendix I of CMS would serve to draw attention to the species' plight. He suggested that the AC should discuss further steps.
107. Ms Blankett (Finland) said that, when it held the EU Presidency, Finland was not in the position to take the lead in this matter and asked Sweden to try to take the listing forward. Finland supported Appendix I listing and wanted the proposal to be submitted to COP14 with the support of other Baltic countries. Ms Carlström (Sweden) said that when Sweden had been approached, time was already short.
108. Ms Lesz (Poland) said that there seemed to be a strong case for Appendix I-listing, but with elections pending she could not commit Poland's support at this stage. Mr Schall (Germany) said that from a nature protection point of view the listing appeared sound and justified, but was uncertain whether political agreement could be reached within the German Government.
109. Mr Simmonds said that the meeting report should record that all those intervening in the discussion supported Appendix I-listing under CMS, although in some cases the support was conditional pending consultations with other Ministries. Mr Ritter said that WDC would continue to promote the listing with Parties and non-Parties and was determined to persist.
110. In response to a question from Ms Bell (UK) about the possibility of the proposal being submitted by another Party, the Secretariat said that any CMS Party, not necessarily but ideally a Range State could make a proposal to amend the Appendices. Time, however, was running short with deadlines approaching and no prospect of a proposal clearing the EU consultation process. Ms Bell suggested that if the Appendix I-listing was not going to proceed, some further action by ASCOBANS should be considered.
111. Mr Ritter said that a second proposal dealt with the Iberian Harbour Porpoise which also was to be added to both CMS Appendices. The Secretariat undertook to mention listing under CMS in the report from ASCOBANS to the CMS COP which could present a pretext to raise the issue from the floor. Mr Schall suggested that any future proposal for a CMS Annex I listing of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise should be submitted first to the AC.
112. Ms Blankett noted that the maps attached to the Progress Report on Jastarnia Group ([AC25/Doc 4.1/Rev.1](#)) did not include the Gulf of Bothnia or the Gulf of Finland. In addition, the reference to Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs) was inaccurate in that EBSAs were not established. Application of the EBSA criteria was a scientific and technical exercise, that areas found to meet the criteria may require enhanced conservation and management measures, and that this can be achieved through a variety of means, including marine protected areas and impact assessments. Ms Carlén undertook to amend the report.

Polish Strandings

113. Ms Lesz (Poland) [presented](#) figures on the number of Harbour Porpoises found stranded on the Polish coast over recent years. It was notable that the figures for 2017, 2018 and

2019 (to September) at 11, 15 and so far, 9 were much higher than previous years (which ranged from 1 to 8).

114. Mr Dähne (Germany) said that the number of strandings on Germany's Baltic coast had also increased and it was not clear what the reason was. He added, supported by Ms Carlström (Sweden), that stranding schemes were vital to improve genetic sampling to help differentiate Belt and Baltic Harbour Porpoises.
115. Ms Carlén (CCB) asked for more details of dates and locations and agreed to raise the issue at the next meeting of the Jastarnia Group. All Baltic countries should aim to obtain genetic samples even if the cadavers were decomposed. Mr Dähne noted that a gene bank had been established in Potsdam by Ralph Tiedemann, who was always interested in larger collaborations and had decoded the genome of porpoises. This was potentially the prime address to conduct future work.

4.2. Conservation Plan for the Harbour Porpoises Population in the Western Baltic, the Belt Sea and the Kattegat (WBBK Plan)

(See above.)

4.3. Conservation Plan for Harbour Porpoises in the North Sea (North Sea Plan)

116. Ms Carlén (CCB) [summarized](#) the meeting of the North Sea Group held on 15 September 2019, chaired by Peter Evans, who was unable to attend the present AC meeting. Priority recommendations arising from the meeting were to improve the availability of fishing effort data, to write to Regional Coordination Groups and the North Sea Regional Advisory Council, to seek to access EU funding, undertake more analysis of risk and secure greater involvement from the fisheries sector.
117. Ms Bell (UK) noted that several of the recommendations were similar with the ones from the Jastarnia Group meeting (March 2019) and Common Dolphin Group meeting (16 September 2019) and could be merged. She also questioned whether recommendations yet to be endorsed by the AC should be publicly posted. Eunice Pinn (Seafish) confirmed that Action Points were normally published after endorsement by the AC and not before. Mr Simmonds (HSI) said that a clear process was needed if recommendations were to be merged. Ms Bell undertook to produce a proposal but said that she did not think that the process needed to be complicated.
118. The Secretariat said that the Action Points arising from the Jastarnia Group had been posted online because the meeting took place several months before AC meeting. For the recommendations from NSG meetings, the Secretariat would follow whatever instruction the AC gave, but part of the challenge was that the meetings of the North Sea and Jastarnia Groups were not synchronized. The priority recommendations from the NSG meeting were adopted as is, and are available in Annex 4.
119. Ms Macleod (UK) undertook to submit some suggestions to Ms Carlén on amending the scoreboard recording progress on implementation of the North Sea Plan (see [AC25/Doc.4.3/Rev.1](#)).

4.4. Species Action Plan for the North-East Atlantic Common Dolphin

120. The Secretariat explained that the draft Species Action Plan (SAP) discussed at AC24 had been adopted intersessionally, in line with Resolution 8.4. and following further feedback from France, which had resulted in some amendments proposed by the SAP Steering Group. The ASCOBANS Secretariat would be attending the forthcoming ACCOBAMS MOP (Istanbul, Turkey, 5-8 November 2019) and would promote collaboration on implementing the Action Plan.

121. The Common Dolphin Group (Steering Group for the SAP) had met on Monday, 16 September, the day before the start of the AC. At the beginning of the meeting Vincent Ridoux (France) formally announced that, owing to shift in his research activities, he would be stepping down from the Steering Group Co-chair position. He had nominated Florence Caurant (France) to replace him, and there were no objections.
122. Ms Murphy (GMIT), who co-chaired the group, described the terms of reference of the Steering Group included in [AC25/Doc.4.4](#) (available in Annex 6), which had members representing Parties, non-Parties as well as NGOs, fisheries interests and scientists. A list of ten actions had been identified ranging from essential to low priority. A great deal of information had been exchanged at the Group's meeting including unpublished data on bycatch in the Bay of Biscay, as well as data collated by WGBYC and summaries of work undertaken on UK fisheries in both monitoring and mitigation. Population estimates were presented, although some off Ireland combined Common and Striped Dolphins, which were hard to distinguish at a distance. Population size in continental shelf and adjacent waters had increased, more than likely resulting from distributional shifts in the wider area, and this has resulted in increased numbers facing human pressures.
123. Ms Caurant (France) described the response in France to the mass stranding incidents which had occurred in February and March 2019. There seemed to be a linkage between fishing effort and certain types of fishing gear to mass stranding events.
124. Among the recommendations of the Common Dolphin Group was adoption of an amended 'traffic light' scoreboard once the North Sea and Jastarnia Groups had refined theirs. The next meeting of these action plan Steering Groups could be virtual and face-to-face meetings with the North Sea and Jastarnia Groups would be considered.
125. Mr Ridoux (France) said that the [presentation](#) had provided a useful overview of the Common Dolphin Group's work. He raised a procedural question about how the SAP had been adopted. The Secretariat explained that Resolution 8.4 contained a provision allowing the SAP to be adopted intersessionally rather than at MOP. The Secretariat had been in contact with the French National Focal Point to clear the text. The SAP was however a living document and could be revised when deemed necessary, in the same way that the Harbour Porpoise plans were revised. The current version would be tabled at MOP as an information document and referred to in the updated Resolution on the Conservation of Common Dolphins.
126. Ms Murphy (GMIT) asked whether there were any plans to encourage the involvement of non-Party Range States.
127. Mr Simmonds (HSI) said that the general public was not aware of the threats faced by these species and some publicity materials were needed. Parties should promote the SAP and the plight of the species.
128. Looking at the recommendations from the 1st Meeting of the Common Dolphin Group, Ms Le Ravallec (ACCOBAMS) said that the amendment to the ACCOBAMS Agreement Area had not yet entered into force and so the Spanish and Portugal Exclusive Economic Zones were still not covered. She then suggested some modifications on recommendation 3, which was agreed to by the meeting. With this change, and more refined wording on point 8 regarding awareness-raising, the recommendations were adopted by AC. These are available in Annex 5.
129. Mr Ridoux said that there were some observer efforts in addition to those from the fisheries programme. The new decree on marine mammal conservation required fishers to report bycatch but it was not clear how this would be enforced and validated. In one winter season, 1,000 strandings had been recorded but only four incidents had been mentioned in the fishers' self-reporting. The text of the provisions had been drafted in consultation with fishers.
130. Ms Macleod (UK) said that the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) was funding work on a self-reporting scheme through a mobile app with fishers

in the south-west. The UK's Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) had also partnered a recently submitted proposal to develop and test a mobile REM kit. She undertook to report back to the next meeting if the project received funding and went ahead.

5. Special Species Sessions

5.1. Beaked Whales

131. Prof Sascha Hooker (University of St Andrews) gave a [presentation](#) remotely on three beaked whale species, the Northern Bottlenose Whale, Sowerby's Beaked Whale and Cuvier's Beaked Whale.
132. Northern Bottlenose Whales are found in temperate and Arctic waters of the North Atlantic (there is also a Southern Bottlenose Whale). Sowerby's Beaked Whale has a similar range while Cuvier's Beaked Whale has a more cosmopolitan global distribution. The IUCN status of the three species was respectively Data Deficient, Data Deficient and Least Concern. All three species make deep dives at sea, are usually shy and avoid contact with vessels. Being of similar appearance they can be hard to distinguish to species level in the field. There is potential to identify them from their clicks when they are acoustically active.
133. Until the 1980s most data came from whaling records and from necropsies of stranded specimens. 64,000 Northern Bottlenose Whales were caught in the period 1850-1967. Over this time, the hunting grounds for this species shifted from east to west suggesting population depletion. The 1980s saw the origination of a small number of studies of live animals found in specific population hotspots. Today, genetic evidence also supports small local populations with little genetic interchange. Northern bottlenose whales appear to be very philopatric, with populations in the Gully, the Scotian shelf and Baffin-Labrador showing different calving seasons, length measurements, contaminant levels, and a lack of matches between identified animals.
134. There may have been 100,000 northern bottlenose whales before whaling began. Today estimates are few. The Scotian shelf population has been estimated at approximately 163 animals and the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) has declared it endangered. The Baffin-Labrador population was more rarely encountered than the Gully population off Nova Scotia. Twelve sightings around the Faroes led to an estimated population of 16,000. There were 26 sightings off Iceland and 12 off Svalbard, but no estimate for these populations. There have been very few sightings off Norway questioning recovery of this population. In terms of strandings, long-term records have shown a recent spike, either because of greater awareness and better reporting and/or because of increased human pressures.
135. Regarding Sowerby's Beaked Whales, the Gully study area has shown a 21 per cent increase in sightings. The species is listed as Special Concern by COSEWIC. Creation of the MPA might have contributed in terms of improved prey availability and reduced ship traffic.
136. The global population of Cuvier's Beaked Whales is possibly in excess of 100,000 with little idea of trends. There was also little evidence of populations moving across ocean basins. Life history data for all beaked whales (e.g., regarding pregnancy, length at birth, age of weaning etc.) are largely guesses.
137. The main threats to beaked whales are contaminants, ship strikes, bycatch and noise. PCB levels were similar to those found in other species, so while the contaminant levels were not good, they were not a specific problem. Ship strikes and entanglements in debris have been recorded. Chronic noise is likely to be a problem for all whales – as highlighted by the stress hormone increase observed in Right Whales when ship traffic

- was suspended at the time of the 9/11 attack. MPAs have been created for beaked whales based on high-use areas and prohibition of activities likely to cause stress.
138. The most pertinent threat is that of acute noise from military exercises. Multiple publications have documented the coincidence of stranded beaked whales with such exercises. When confronted with noise, diving behaviour changes lead to problems with decompression sickness. Experiments showed that whales swam away from noise sources and ceased echolocation. Atypical strandings have ceased in the Canary Islands since the anti-sonar moratorium established in 2004. In the summer of 2018, mass strandings occurred in Iceland, Ireland and the west of Scotland, the largest stranding event of beaked whales to date. There were also some cases in 2019 in Sweden. Active sonar activity was highly likely to have been the cause, suggesting that current protocols or mitigation measures were not effective.
 139. Future research imperatives for beaked whales include continued long-term monitoring, development of better survey detection methods, improved methodology for monitoring individual energetics, body condition and health, physiological tools, genetic advances to examine relationships between species and populations, and quantification of anthropogenic impacts. However, most crucially given 2018 strandings, is the need to develop improved and more effective mitigation against anthropogenic impacts.
 140. Mr Simmonds (HSI) said that military activities had been discussed at ASCOBANS in the past and there was an understandable reluctance in the Agreement Area to disclose certain sensitive information. In such circumstances it was difficult to piece together what had happened when the stranding incident or mortality occurred.
 141. Mr Brownlow (Invited Expert) gave an update on the Scottish and Irish strandings which had left 118 animals dead. From the limited necropsy data available, it appeared that the animals were in good condition prior to death, however there was limited indication for fat emboli in the lungs of some cases which could be indicative of hypobaric trauma (decompression sickness (DCS)). The UK Ministry of Defence was approached, which admitted that activities had been taking place but would not elucidate further.
 142. Mr Nikolic (European Commission) said that effective measures such as robust protocols were needed for military activities such as using active sonars, as under the Habitats Directive military activities were not excepted.
 143. Ms Le Ravallec (ACCOBAMS) said that following the discussion on sonar at the previous ACCOBAMS MOP, a workshop on sonars and cetacean interactions was being organized with National Navies on 8-9 October 2019 in Toulon, France. Participants would include representatives from national navies, the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee, the CMS/ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS Joint Noise Working Group and the EU Task Group on Noise. ASCOBANS Secretariat was asked whether anyone from the Secretariat would attend this workshop. Ms Renell (Secretariat) confirmed she would be attending.
 144. Ms Hooker said that suitable places for practice exercises (e.g., areas of low beaked whale density) could be suggested to the military so that interactions with cetaceans could be avoided.
 145. Mr Ritter (WDC) said that AC24 had mandated the Secretariat to write to NATO, which it had done. The precautionary principle should be applied to beaked whales. The Secretariat had also written to all national navies of Parties and had received a reply from the British Royal Navy in April 2019 which stated that all non-sensitive data were released to the noise register maintained by the JNCC. It was also suggested that future enquires be channelled through the National Focal Point at Defra.
 146. It was suggested that navies could be asked for a copy of their protocols and how often they were reviewed. The UK's fora dealing with noise included representatives of the military, who were willing to share information that was not classified.

147. Ms Hooker referred to published work which stated that a portion of meat bought in a South Korean market had been tested and found to be Cuvier's Beaked Whale with a North Atlantic-type haplotype (suggesting a North Atlantic animal found its way to market).

5.2. Bottlenose Dolphin

(Discussion of this item was postponed to AC26.)

5.3. White-beaked Dolphin – follow-up from AC24 Special Species Sessions

148. Mr Brownlow (Invited Expert) [presented](#) this agenda item, as requested by AC24. He said that at AC24 Peter Evans had presented data on distribution including seasonal changes and strandings patterns (more occurred in the summer). The species' range was shifting with animals appearing further north with many seen off Scotland. When strandings occurred, samples were often taken. There had been 359 cases and there were 175 stored samples, and records from the Netherlands dated back over many years. A great deal of genetic material had been stored. Marine debris and their effects had only recently become of interest. In the UK, there was a great deal of tissue awaiting examination, but with limited financial resources, this was not a priority.
149. The preliminary results of tests for the contaminant load showed that 75 per cent of cases were above the 11mg/kg threshold. The White-beaked Dolphin was a good indicator species, lying in size between the Orca and the Harbour Porpoise.
150. Mr Haelters apologized for not being able to respond on the query on time, and asked Mr Brownlow if data could still be submitted. Mr Brownlow welcomed any further data. Ms Kamińska inquired about any trends in contaminants in the samples.

5.4. Atlantic White-sided Dolphin – follow-up from AC24 Special Species Sessions

151. The Secretariat explained that the research questions arising from this item when it had been discussed at AC24 had been omitted from the report. The meeting agreed these would now be included in the Action Points from AC25.

6. Relevant EU Policy Matters

Habitats Directive

152. Two speakers from the European Commission, Katarzyna Janiak (DG Mare) and Vedran Nikolic (DG Environment) gave a [presentation](#) regarding update on the implementation of EU nature, marine and fisheries policies relevant to ASCOBANS activities ([AC25/Inf.6c](#)).
153. The new Commission would assume office on 1 November 2019 facing the task of delivering the European Green Deal and Blue Economy and elaborating the new biodiversity strategy to 2030. Other focuses would be the Common Fisheries Policy and improving enforcement of environment regulations.
154. Under the Habitats Directive, Member States had so far designated 27,000 Natura 2000 sites of which 3,200 were marine, covering 9.5 per cent of European seas (500,000 km²), many chosen to protect the Harbour Purposes and Bottlenose Dolphins. Aware of the low level of implementation of the conservation measures in many sites, the Commission started infringement proceedings against many Member States for failure to designate sites and to put in place proper management measures. The Commission was

- supporting management of Natura 2000 sites by holding seminars with stakeholders (e.g. in Mallorca in November 2018³) and providing guidance and funding.
155. The Habitats Directive also required strict protection of species outside Natura 2000 sites, including prohibiting certain activities and monitoring incidental capture and killing with a view to adopting mitigation measures. A revised guidance on strict protection of species⁴ was being drawn up and should be ready at the end of 2019; further inputs were welcome. The new draft reports on the conservation status of habitats and species under the Directive for the period 2013-2019 are now available [online](#). With regard to addressing bycatch, it seemed that no Member State was fully in compliance.
156. Mr Nikolic urged Member States to encourage cooperation at a national level among stakeholders and agencies and among countries at an international level regarding data collection on bycatch. More efforts are needed also to implement the necessary measures through submitting joint recommendations under the CFP, for example in the area of Bay of Biscay.

Common Fisheries Policy

157. Ms Janiak (DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries) described new developments concerning EU fisheries policy relevant to ASCOBANS including requirements under the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) to collect data to support fisheries management. CFP should implement an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management to ensure that negative impacts of fishing activities were minimised. Article 25 of the CFP requires Member States to collect biological, environmental, technical and socio-economic data necessary for fisheries management.
158. Regulation 812/2004 on cetaceans' bycatch had now been repealed having been replaced by the Technical Measures Regulation 2019/1241⁵. Its objectives were to ensure that incidental catches of sensitive marine species that result from fishing are minimised, and where possible eliminated, so that they do not represent a threat to the conservation status of these species; to ensure that the negative environmental impacts of fishing on marine habitats are minimised; and to have in place fisheries management measures to comply with obligations under the environmental legislation⁶. The measures taken should reduce bycatch to levels that did not represent a threat to the conservation status of these species and do not exceed levels provided for in Union legislation and international agreements (e.g. ASCOBANS).
159. Annex XIII of the New Technical Measures was applicable to cetaceans, and instructed Member States to take the necessary steps to collect scientific data on incidental catches of sensitive species. Based on this evidence (validated by ICES, STECF or in the framework of GFCM), of negative impacts of fishing gears on sensitive species, Member States should submit joint recommendations on regional basis for additional mitigation measures. Member States should also monitor and assess the effectiveness of the mitigation measures. Member States were now obliged to report every three years instead of annually. First Commission's report on implementation of the new Technical Measures was due by 31 December 2020.

³https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/platform/knowledge_exchange/28_document_library_en.htm#Marine

⁴[Guidance document on the strict protection of animal species of Community interest under the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.](#)

⁵ New framework for the conservation of fishery resources and the protection of marine ecosystems through technical measures.

⁶ Under Directives 92/43/EEC, 2000/60/EC, 2008/56/EC.

160. The EU Data Collection Framework⁷ required Member States to collect data on incidental bycatch of all protected birds, mammals, reptiles and fish to assess the impact of EU fisheries on marine ecosystems, and covered all vessels and fishery types.
161. Multiannual plans (MAPs) for fisheries management had been agreed in the Baltic (for cod, herring, sprat) and North Sea (demersal species), as well as for demersal species in the western waters and the Western Mediterranean. MAP for pelagic stocks of the Adriatic was under negotiation. Another tool available under the CFP is Article 11 joint recommendation by Member States for establishing fisheries management measures in protected areas for complying with environmental obligations that so far was used in the Baltic and North Seas.
162. The European Commission had put forward a proposal for a revised control system aiming to improve EU fisheries control system that would also have a positive impact on the protection of the marine environment (e.g. improved control of the small-scale fisheries and dealing with lost gear).
163. Under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) for a period 2014-2020 EU Member States had allocated €647 million for nature protection. This fund was underused by countries for reasons not clear to the Commission – apart from slow start of the EMFF implementation by Member States.
164. Ms Kaminska (Poland) asked whether Member States had been engaged in preparation of the EC triennial report, and regarding the ongoing work on the new EU control regulation, she asked EC if there were any plans to put an obligation also on smaller vessels (under 12 m) to use VMS or similar vessel tracking system. The European Commission would base its report under the new Technical Measures Regulation on the information provided by the Member States. While the Commission proposal for revision of the Fisheries Control System included all vessels under monitoring/tracking system, it was not clear yet how the negotiations with co-legislators, the European Parliament and the Council, would be finalised.
165. Mr Schall (Germany) thanked the two representatives of the European Commission for attending the meeting, the first time that it had participated in the AC in all the time that he had been involved in ASCOBANS. As the next MOP would be held in Belgium, he hoped that the European Commission would be able to attend, and greater efforts should be made to recruit the European Union as a Party to the Agreement. The EU was a Party to CMS and AEWA and a signatory to the Sharks MOU.
166. Mr Nikolic (European Commission) said that the Commission would be happy to continue participating in AC meetings which was a valuable expert forum, but concerning possibly becoming a Party to the agreement, also it would be important to first explore the accession of other EU Member States that were Range States of the Agreement but were currently not a Party.
167. Ms Macleod (UK) noted that the new Technical Measures Regulation 2019/1241 referred to targets and thresholds to minimize and eliminate bycatch and to comply with other international obligations. At OSPAR there had been long discussions over thresholds, and she questioned whether setting an agreed level to meet other international obligations (e.g. Habitats Directive) really meant minimizing or eliminating bycatch. Mr Nikolic admitted that the meaning of the target in the Technical Measures Regulation indeed needed to be better explained in relation to other obligations (for example Birds Directive being stricter than the Habitats Directive).
168. Mr Pierce (Invited Expert) said that Annex XIII of the Technical Measures Regulation seemed only to apply to larger vessels and not all. Ms Janiak (European Commission) said that Member States had to feed into the process, and it was not the intention that operators of some vessels would have to take no action. In fact, in case of the scientific

⁷ Regulation (EU) 2017/1004 and Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2016/1251.

- evidence of negative impacts of fisheries, Member States must come up with joint recommendations for additional mitigation measures.
169. Mr Ritter (WDC) said that the WDC had analysed how Member States had implemented the now repealed Regulation 812/2004. In some cases, Member States had done well, but generally performance had been moderate to poor, with 15 countries failing to protect cetaceans sufficiently. A formal complaint from 21 European NGOs, led by WDC, had been lodged in front of the EU Commission earlier this year. Additionally, emergency measures needed for the Common Dolphin in the Bay of Biscay and the Harbour Porpoise in the Baltic had been demanded from the Commission by WDC and CCB. WDC was sceptical about the new Technical Measures Regulation (TMR) 2019/1241 and in a paper submitted to the IWC Science Committee had raised concerns about setting thresholds. WDC was also sceptical about Member States' joint recommendations requested within the TMR (as under Article 11 of Regulation 1380/2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy this procedure had turned out to be lengthy and ineffective) would go far enough. He also noted that ASCOBANS Parties' input to the European Commission regarding the TMR had been largely ignored.
170. Mr Nikolic said that the Commission services would analyse the complaint and stressed that the priority of the Commission was to make the Article 11 process work.
171. Ms Murphy (GMIT) welcomed the European Commission's participation but added that Member States had been slow in dealing with bycatch. The European Commission had finally recognized the shortcomings of Regulation 812/2004 after eleven years, but had replaced a dedicated piece of legislation with a more general one, largely transposed most of the detail of the flawed and unenforced 812 Regulation into the CFP Technical Measures Regulation though removed the key element of dedicated marine mammal observers which had provoked disquiet among conservationists. It remained to be seen whether the new legislation would work better in conjunction with the Habitats Directive than the old Regulation had.
172. Mr Nikolic explained that the aim was to reduce the number of regulations and not to weaken the rules, and that the Habitats Directive which had been in force for more than 25 years now provided for key obligations of Member States to collect the data and take the necessary measures to ensure that incidental catch did not have a significant impact on the protected species. Ms Murphy agreed that the Habitats Directive was a specific law, but in key areas it was not explicit enough.

Marine Strategy Framework Directive

173. Mr Nikolic reported that Member States had made considerable efforts to develop their programmes of measures, but not all pressures of the marine environment were covered properly. There was a lack of regional or EU coordination which led to a fragmented approach for certain transboundary pressures.⁸ The second cycle of MSFD implementation reports required Member States to review and update the initial assessment of their marine environments, determining 'good environmental status' (GES) and set of environmental targets. Only 13 Member States had provided reports. Regarding GES criteria, data on bycatch and habitats condition were lacking. None of the reported assessments for small toothed cetaceans has resulted in an achievement of the GES, and in 80% of the cases the GES would be achieved later than 2020. Top three reported pressures were extraction of, or mortality/injury, disturbance of species due to human presence, and input of anthropogenic sound.
174. Ms Blankett (Finland) said that Finland had no transboundary sites but there was a requirement to report bycatch in the new national fisheries regulation. Patricia Brtnik (Germany) said that a Natura 2000 site had been designated in Germany's EEZ in the

⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/marine/eu-coast-and-marine-policy/implementation/reports_en.htm

- North Sea and there were proposals to change the fisheries regulations to help achieve the conservation objectives. A similar process was also starting in the Baltic, where gillnets would be regulated.
175. Ms Bell (UK) said that consultation on the MSFD had been completed and the report was now with ministers. A conservation strategy for dolphins and porpoises was being led by Scotland. Bycatch mitigation in SACs was being considered, but the process had only just begun and some larger English sites had only been designated earlier this year.
 176. Mr Ridoux (France) said that the new Natura 2000 sites (FR5302015 – mers celtiques - talus du golfe de Gascogne) had been designated in the Bay of Biscay and Celtic Seas in particular for Bottlenose Dolphins and Harbour Porpoises. Under the MSFD a national definition of Good Environmental Status (GES) had been agreed with thresholds of 1 per cent bycatch mortality for Common Dolphins and Harbour Porpoises. A cetacean conservation plan was being developed by the Environment Ministry aiming *inter alia* to reduce the risk of collisions and noise levels.
 177. Ms Lesz (Poland) reported on new legislation to tackle plastic waste. Further new initiatives had been put on hold given the proximity of elections. Ms Kamińska (Poland) said that a preparation of a management plan for Natura 2000 “Słupsk Bank” has been initiated, and cooperation with Germany on preparation of fisheries management measures for German Natura 2000 sites in the EEZ in the Baltic Sea, had been initiated on German request. Additionally, she informed that a draft HELCOM Roadmap on fisheries data needs, including information on requirements concerning, among others, sea mammals’ bycatch data, has been prepared jointly through HELCOM Contracting Parties (DE, SE, DK, PL and FI).
 178. Ms Svoboda (Netherlands) said that the Netherlands had submitted the MFSD update in October 2018. Article 11 joint recommendations had been prepared for five protected areas in June including the Dogger Bank (shared with Germany and the UK). An area in Friesland designated under the Birds Directive had new restrictions on the use of gill nets which would reduce cetacean bycatch. The weakness of a regional, multinational approach was that one country could block measures reducing the agreement to lowest common denominator.
 179. Belgium had reported under the MSFD in October 2018. Due to the setting of new indicators and targets under the MSFD, new conservation objectives were being developed for the Habitats Directive. The 1.7 per cent bycatch threshold was being held in abeyance pending the outcomes of discussions in other fora. Some queries about fisheries regulations were awaiting answers.
 180. Mr Nikolic (European Commission) said that at the current rate of adoption of fisheries management measures it could take 150 years to have all measures in place in all sites. He again stressed that it was essential that all Member States worked together. The Commission was providing advice and support, but it was for Member States to decide what measures to adopt to meet their legal obligations.
 181. Ms Murphy (GMIT) reported on progress in developing national and common mammal indicators in the OSPAR region summarised in the report of the joint ACCOBAMS-ASCOBANS working group on the MSFD ([AC25/Inf.6b/Rev.1](#)). The report is divided into five sections including (1) a summary of the common mammal indicators employed by OSPAR to date for Descriptors 1 (biodiversity) and D4 (Food webs). (2) A review of national indicators currently employed by OSPAR contracting parties, (3) an update on common indicators being (further) developed by OSPAR including the mammal pollutant indicator (under Descriptor 8), (4) information on the re-delineation of porpoise AU boundaries in the North-east Atlantic and (5) further information on projects progressing the implementation of the MSFD in the ACCOBAMS region.
 182. A number of Contracting Parties in the OSPAR region are employing OSPAR’s common marine mammal indicators, including Denmark, France, the Netherlands and the UK.

Separate national cetacean indicators (though some are variants of the common indicators) are being employed by other countries (Belgium, France, Germany, the Macaronesian region (of Portugal and Spain), Spain, and Sweden). Indicators are currently in consultation in both Ireland and mainland Portugal. Countries are mainly employing indicators related to population size, distribution, and population condition (effects from bycatch). Some countries are employing additional indicators focused on population demographic characteristics, habitat condition, and recurrence of unusual mortality events - some of which are using data from strandings. In many cases targets/assessment values/thresholds have yet to be determined for indicators being employed by Contracting Parties, and thus these indicators are still in development.

183. Ms Murphy also noted a presentation given by Nathan Merchant of Cefas at the North Sea Group on the development of an OSPAR noise impact indicator under Descriptor 11 (Energy & Noise). The candidate indicator is currently employing the harbour porpoise in the North Sea using data on porpoise density and noise pressure maps. OSPAR and HELCOM are progressing a common mammal bycatch indicator as presented earlier at the AC meeting.
184. Ms Carlström (Sweden) said that the HELCOM Working Group was working on an indicator for abundance and distribution.
185. Ms Le Ravallec (ACCOBAMS) promoted the MSFD workshop 'Towards coordinated marine mammal monitoring programme for MSFD second cycle 2020-2026', to be held at WMMC in Barcelona on 8 December 2019.

7. Cooperation with other Bodies

7.1. Reports by the Secretariat, Parties and Partners

186. The Secretariat explained that there was no document after all ('Reports from Relevant Meetings Back to ASCOBANS') as there had not been much feedback and no written reports, and sought guidance on how to proceed in future. Information documents could be provided from each meeting, where the Parties, NGOs, IGOs and Secretariat attended, or a consolidated report could be prepared. The report had last been produced for AC23.
187. Mr Simmonds (HSI) said that two separate issues arose, first, the involvement of ASCOBANS in other fora and second the involvement of other fora in the work of ASCOBANS. A process was required to ensure proper cross-membership with other organizations. This had worked in the past when, for example, NAMMCO and the IWC had sent representatives to ASCOBANS meetings. Mr Simmonds noted he was currently the liaison between ASCOBANS and the IWC Scientific Committee.
188. The Secretariat put on screen a list of meetings attended by the Secretariat, Ms Carlén and Mr Evans in representative roles, and meetings to which reports had been submitted. Upcoming meetings included the Marine Regions Forum, 21st Meeting of the Regional Seas Programme, the Sessional Committee of the CMS Scientific Council, the CMS Standing Committee, the ACCOBAMS MOP and the World Marine Mammal Conference in December 2019. Reports had been presented to the CMS Standing Committee in 2018, UN Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in June 2019, and to OSPAR/HELCOM Bycatch workshop in September 2019. Peter Evans and Ida Carlén had attended some meetings officially representing ASCOBANS.
189. The Secretariat pointed out that HELCOM had submitted two documents to the latest Jastarnia Group meeting in March 2019, namely 'Recent HELCOM Activities Related to Small Cetaceans' ([JG15/Inf.3.1](#)) and 'Extractions from HELCOM Meeting Outcomes relevant to ASCOBANS' ([JG15/Inf.3.1b](#)).

190. Mr Simmonds mentioned the forthcoming World Marine Mammal Conference in Barcelona, where a workshop led by IWC on common strandings protocols would be held and for which there was a registration fee.
191. The Secretariat outlined some of the highlights of the forthcoming CMS COP ([COP13](#), Gandhinagar, India, 17-22 February 2020) and announced that the deadline for submitting documents was the following day (19 September). It was unlikely that a listing proposal to place certain populations of Harbour Porpoise on Appendix I of the Convention would be submitted, owing to imminent deadline. Agenda items and documents of relevance to ASCOBANS concerned Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs), marine noise, bycatch, aquatic wild meat (a concern in West Africa rather than the ASCOBANS Area), marine wildlife watching (combining boat-based wildlife watching and 'swim-with' operations), live capture and animal culture.

7.2. Dates of Interest 2019/2020

192. The Secretariat presented a draft list of forthcoming events of interest to ASCOBANS ([AC25/Doc7.2](#)) and asked whether any participants were intending to attend. Participants were also invited to suggest any meetings to be added, or deleted from the list if the events were deemed to be of insufficient relevance to ASCOBANS.
193. Ms Macleod (UK) asked that the ICES WGBYC meeting to be held in the Netherlands on 10-13 March 2020 be added. The ICES Working Group on Marine Mammal Ecology (ICES WGMME) was scheduled for February 2020 with precise dates to be confirmed.
194. A series of meetings related to CBD were also added, including the 23rd meeting of the CBD SBSTTA (25-29 November 2019), the 24th meeting of the CBD SBSSTA on 18-23 May 2020 and the CBD COP at the end of 2020. The OSPAR Biodiversity Committee would take place in spring 2020.
195. Ms Bell (UK) pointed out that, based on discussions had at the North Sea Group meeting, it was her understanding that the North Sea Group would now not meet back to back with the Jastarnia Group but adjacent to MOP9 instead. The Secretariat noted that this had not been decided, but was for the Chairs of the North Sea and Jastarnia Groups to discuss further and inform the Secretariat. The dates for the next meeting of the Jastarnia Group had not yet been set. Ms Murphy (GMIT) said that the Common Dolphin Group could still meet in conjunction with the North Sea Group at some time around the MOP.
196. Mr Ritter (WDC) said that the joint IWC/CMS workshop on ecosystem functioning was likely to be held in April or May 2020.
197. It was agreed the Secretariat would circulate a revised list of dates, for everyone to indicate any planned participation to the listed meetings (see Annex 8).

8. Publicity and Outreach

8.1. Reports by the Secretariat, Parties and Partners

198. The Secretariat reported that ASCOBANS had a Facebook account and a conscious effort was being made to post more news items on the ASCOBANS website. The long-awaited book on the cetaceans of North-west Europe and the history of the Agreement would soon be printed and should be available by December. Mr Simmonds (HSI) suggested that the Ozeaneum shop might be interested in stocking the book.
199. A Party was being sought to lead on the competition to design the 2019 Christmas card – the Secretariat would follow up with Parties over email sometime after AC25.

200. Ms Svoboda (Netherlands) said that a board game featuring Harbour Porpoises was being developed and an event had been held to thank volunteers who had helped with conservation work.
201. Mr Ritter (WDC) said that on the island of Sylt near the first Harbour Porpoise sanctuary, a trail had been established called 'the Path of the Whale', and with a new project by WDC, 'geo-caches' ('digital treasure hunt') had been placed near the path to foster public education around Harbour Porpoises. The island's visitor information centres were participating, and fliers were available.
202. Ms Carlström (Sweden) said that the Swedish Museum of Natural History had prepared as part of a strategy to be more accessible digital study materials related to sustainable development for high school students to download.
203. Mr Haelters (Belgium) drew attention to a temporary exhibit during summer 2019 at De Haan ('Kijk, een walvis'), the coastal community where in 2018 a Fin Whale washed ashore. The event drew more than 14,000 visitors over two months. He also mentioned the permanent exhibit 'Sea Change' at De Panne⁹ that opened in August 2019. Both exhibits focus on threats to cetaceans. Belgium further highlighted the yearly marine mammal report that is produced as a feedback to the many people, institutes and authorities that cooperate and are interested in the subject.
204. Ms Lesz (Poland) said that a symposium on marine mammals had been held at Hel, attended by 200 teachers in March 2019. Staff at the Hel Marine Station had undertaken a lecture tour of schools along the Polish coast (56 schools, 4000 pupils).
205. Ms Babey (Orca) said that every October was whale education month and each year lesson material had been produced for teachers of pupils of Key Stage 2 in UK to support science and maths. This year the materials had been sent to 23 countries and it was estimated that over 100,000 pupils had benefited. The theme this year was marine litter.

8.2. ASCOBANS Outreach and Education Award 2020

206. The Secretariat presented document [AC25/Doc.8.2](#) and explained that the Outreach and Education Award was presented at each MOP and that a jury had to be formed to choose and evaluate nominees. The Secretariat sought volunteers to serve on the jury. Mr Simmonds (HSI), Ms Babey (Orca), Ms Blankett (Finland), Ms Brtnik (Germany) and Mr Hassani (France) volunteered. Deadline for nominations was January 2020.

9. Funded of Projects and Activities

9.1. Progress of Projects/Activities Supported by ASCOBANS

207. The report ([AC25/Inf.9.1](#)) prepared and submitted by the Zoological Society of London regarding a progress report on the project concerning the development of a web-accessed database for marine mammals stranding and necropsy data was noted without comment.

9.2. Coordination of Harbour Porpoise Action Plans

208. Ms Carlén (CCB) gave a [presentation](#), setting out what had been done and what was proposed to be done in the remaining contract time. She outlined the terms of reference of the groups and how the action plans were coordinated; explained the reporting mechanisms of the Jastarnia and WBBK Plans and reports; mentioned a letter sent to the European Commission about the definition of drift nets; participation in the HELCOM Working Group on core indicator for Harbour Porpoise abundance and distribution; and planning for the SAMBAH II project.

⁹ <https://www.west-vlaanderen.be/domeinen/duinpanne>

209. There were many meetings in the pipeline and the main challenges had been the late finalization of the formalities to sign the contract and lack of sufficient financial resources compared to the workload, which meant that work had to be prioritized. The main tasks were improving and updating the progress reports, reviewing and clarifying the tables to record progress, communicating with Baltic and North Sea RCGs, and contributing to SAMBAH II full project proposal. The current contract would expire in February 2020.
210. Mr Schall (Germany) considered the potential helpfulness of a particular EU single species action plan (SSAP) for the Baltic Harbour Porpoise (based on the Jastarnia Plan). He explained that Species Action Plans existed in the EU context, and with regard to birds many had been developed in conjunction with AEWA (e.g. for the Lesser White-fronted Goose). These action plans were 'soft law' as opposed to directives and regulations which were 'hard law'. Such an SSAP would be drawing more attention and weight in the European Commission and the Directorates General e.g. those in charge of fisheries, environment, and energy issues to the conservation needs of this highly endangered population.
211. Ms Macleod (UK) said that there was an EU plan of action to reduce seabird bycatch, but it was voluntary and consequently carried little weight. The data requested were not being provided, the actions were not being driven forward and there was insufficient follow-up. The process was not entirely satisfactory. Ms Svoboda (Netherlands) said that a workshop was being considered in connection with the national Harbour Porpoise conservation plan. Mr Simmonds welcomed ideas for ways to make progress but noted Ms Macleod's reservations.
212. Ms Murphy (GMIT) suggested that recruiting the European Union as a Party should be a priority, as it would provide some international commitments to reinforce European legislation such as the Technical Measures Regulation 2019/1241 (see also Agenda Item 6).
213. Ms Bell (UK) suggested that the burden on Ms Carlén could be reduced if other members of the AC attended meetings and avoid duplication of effort and unnecessary use of limited resource by liaising. Ms Blankett (Finland) said that she would attend various meetings of HELCOM, and the Secretariat would be attending the meetings of the Sessional Committee of the CMS Scientific Council and the CMS Standing Committee in November, so there would be no need for Ms Carlén to attend. Mr Simmonds (HSI) pointed out that not everyone is interchangeable, and there might be a case for several people to attend.
214. Ms Murphy (GMIT) said that the harbour porpoise NAMMCO and IMR workshop helped to build regional networking, and noted that the harbour porpoise area status reports produced as an output of that workshop could form the basis of future reviews for the ASCOBANS porpoise conservation plans. There were limits to the number of organizations that individuals could represent at a meeting, but it would be left to Ms Carlén's discretion to notify colleagues of upcoming meetings. Considerations to be taken into account were the budget and excessive travel, which increased the carbon footprint of ASCOBANS and took a toll on the individuals concerned. Ms Scheidat pointed out that the Secretariat routinely circulated a list of dates of interest with meetings where it would be possible for someone to deputize for Ms Carlén. Ms Murphy noted however it was important that an advocate for the ASCOBANS Harbour Porpoise conservation plans was present at key meetings, reminding Parties of their obligations under those plans.

9.3. Prioritization of Activities Requiring Funding (and 19. Assignment of Funds to Prioritised Activities)

215. The Secretariat sought the meeting's views on the proposed prioritization ([AC25/Doc.9.3](#)) for allocating the available funds on the conservation projects budget

- line¹⁰ and any further voluntary contributions, such as those made by Finland, Germany, Poland and Sweden, which the Secretariat was very thankful for. The Secretariat highlighted that one more activity was added to the list from a session on Day 1, namely the 'International workshop on Cetacean MPA Management' discussed under agenda item 2.7.
216. Mr Haelters (Belgium) said that he found the national reporting project expensive as this could be done by the Secretariat, and questioned the need for and feasibility of a statistical analysis Ms Macleod (UK) agreed saying that ASCOBANS could use the online tool developed by CMS. The Secretariat said that all members of the CMS Family were struggling with national reporting and the online tool being used by CMS had some faults and there was little expertise or capacity in-house to deal with the problems. The Secretariat further clarified that ASCOBANS had its own online tool (same format as the one of CMS) and the cost allocated for online form in the document were simply to pay for someone to type the questions online, as this was a time-consuming task.
217. Ms Lesz (Poland) agreed with the priorities as identified by the Secretariat, especially the coordination of the Harbour Porpoise Action Plans. Ms Lesz also supported for the national reporting form to be online.
218. Ms Svoboda (Netherlands) agreed with Belgium saying the costs under National Reporting Questionnaire seemed too high. Comparisons should be made with OSPAR, which had to deal with similar issues. Her view was that the form didn't need to be too complex. She pledged a voluntary contribution of €5,000 towards finalizing the national reporting format for the coming years. This news was welcomed with applause. Ms Scheidat (Netherlands) as Chair of the intersessional WG asked that a presentation of the national reports, their content and how the responses were analysed be made to the MOP before the discussion, so the MOP would be more informed.
219. Mr Schall (Germany) pointed out that ASCOBANS had an annual cycle for national reports, whereas other instruments of the CMS Family operated on three- or four-year cycles. However, it was unlikely to reach major changes of the reporting rhythm given that annual reports were part of ASCOBANS Agreement text.
220. The Secretariat presented a list of projects with their estimated costs. The Parties' top priority was the coordination of the Harbour Porpoise Action Plans, for which €17,000 would be required for 2020 (the rest of the cost would be covered by voluntary contributions already received). A coordinator for the NE Atlantic Common Dolphin Species Action Plan would be a major commitment and guidance from the Parties was required.
221. Ms Bell (UK) said that it would help the case for requesting funds within Ministries if there was a clear conservation benefit or scientific justification for a project. She was asked recently by her senior management team how many dolphins had been saved through activities under ASCOBANS and she had not been able to provide a figure. If funds were available under the EMMF, projects should be developed for submission there.
222. Mr Schall (Germany) said that the German voluntary contribution of €25,600 had been allocated to three activities: the AC meeting, an analysis of the current EU legislation regarding small cetaceans, and the coordination of the Harbour Porpoise Action Plans. The Secretariat thanked Germany for this generous contribution.
223. Ms Lesz (Poland) said that if the largest share of the available funds was allocated to the Action Plan coordinator, the remainder could be used for the consultant for developing online reporting. Ms Scheidat (Netherlands) said that it would be better to have the draft reporting format as close as possible to completion, as late changes could be expensive. If the new format were to be introduced in stages, it might be better to retain a paper system.

¹⁰ In June 2019, available funds were ca. €25,000. However, ca. €8,000 had been obligated by September 2019.

224. The Secretariat said that some of the projects would still be viable if scaled down to save costs and others, such as the workshop on strandings databases, had found other funding sources to cover some of the costs.
225. Ms Murphy (GMIT) said that the members of the Common Dolphin Steering Group gave their time free of charge but some funding for activities would be appreciated. A potential coordinator would serve as the face of cetacean conservation and could help influence policy changes. On the question of online reporting, the benefits of saving staff time should be highlighted.
226. Mr Pierce (Invited Expert) generally liked online reporting systems but warned against having an online system that was likely to undergo changes to the questions. He was aware of online reporting systems that were suboptimal.
227. Ms Macleod (UK) also supported online reporting systems which were easier to use in the long term. She was, however, reluctant to spend all of the Agreement's available resources on this item. She recalled that ASCOBANS used to have small amounts of money to allocate to projects and this generated good work and scientific kudos.
228. Mr Simmonds (HSI) commented that this intense discussion revolved around relatively small sums of money. He endorsed Ms Murphy's observations on the role of the coordinator being far more than an administrator. He urged the AC to avoid entering a "spiral of decline".
229. Ms Blankett (Finland) supported the prioritization of activities for funding, especially the coordination of the Harbour Porpoise Action Plans, and suggested looking to the EU for funding as HELCOM did. She would also explore the possibility of Finland making a voluntary contribution. She recalled that the AC used to make calls for projects, but the practice had been discontinued when there was insufficient money available to make the calls worthwhile. Ms Bell (UK) said that expectations should be managed and if funds became available, a clear indication of the amounts to be awarded and for what purpose should be made.
230. Ms Murphy (GMIT) noted that previously all applications had been published and questioned this practice on the grounds of commercial confidentiality as project organizers might be applying for funds from other sources.
231. The Secretariat stated that if funds were available, a call for projects would be circulated. In summary, the AC agreed with the prioritization of activities as listed in Document 9.3, top three being: 1. Coordination of Harbour Porpoise Action Plans, 2. Coordination of the Common Dolphin SAP, 3. Development of the 2020 National Reporting form; and 4. the International Workshop on Cetacean MPA management (new entry). However, specific funding was only assigned for the coordination of Harbour Porpoise Action Plans (Germany) and National Reporting form (the Netherlands).

10. ASCOBANS Work Plan: Overview of Implementation

232. The Secretariat presented document ([AC25/Doc.10](#)) showing progress in implementing the ASCOBANS Work Plan 2017-2020 in a form of a 'traffic light' assessment to rate progress on activities. Key elements of the report were highlighted. The Secretariat sought feedback from Parties.
233. It was noted that a compilation of National Reports was not available (Activity 75). This year the report form was not available until June, with deadline for responses on 1 August 2019. In addition, the late receipt of the reports from Denmark and Sweden and no report being submitted by Lithuania meant that data from these reports were not included in the presentations under agenda item 2.
234. Mr Simmonds (HSI) asked what action was required to secure progress regarding the adoption of the extended Agreement area. The Secretariat said that there was a Working Group dedicated to the extension area, and it was requested the WG report to MOP9.

Ms Murphy (GMIT) said that the extension area could be used as a way to engage the European Commission and other non-Party Range States (i.e. Ireland, Portugal and Spain), as participants in species work if not as Parties.

235. Mr Simmonds recalled that efforts had been made to recruit Ireland, which would fill an important gap in the Agreement's membership, were it to accede. The Secretariat stated that the recruitment of Parties to the Convention and its Agreements had been raised with the Acting Executive Secretary. Ms Virtue noted that Ireland was engaging in CMS Activities regarding the European Eel (*Anguilla anguilla*). Mr Simmonds said that the proposed IWC workshop on strandings response, to be held at the WMMC in December 2019, could be a prelude to making greater progress.
236. Ms Bell (UK) asked about progress on reviewing the Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) Plan (Activity 41). The Secretariat explained that no resources had been available to make any real progress. However, the Secretariat said that the review of the CEPA Plan could be done for MOP. In any case, CEPA was not an area well-suited to a UN agency, where Parties and NGOs could respond better to local circumstances. Mr Simmonds was concerned that a vicious circle was arising where no funds led to no action and suggested that CEPA was an ideal area for fund-raising.

11. Draft Resolutions for 9th Meeting of the Parties

237. The Secretariat explained that three Resolutions were always presented to the MOP, namely the work plan, the fulfilment of the budget for the past period, and the budget for the next period. Some existing Resolutions would need to be revised, and some repealed, while some new Resolutions might be tabled.
238. The following potential Resolutions were identified (together with the person to take the lead in developing them, and more members could be added later):
- Conservation of the Common Dolphin (Sinéad Murphy, Florence Caurant; update existing Resolution 8.4. to include adoption of the SAP)
 - Small Cetacean Stranding Response (Andrew Brownlow; potentially update Resolution 8.10 to include and adopt 'Best Practice on Cetacean Post Mortem Investigation and Tissue Sampling')
 - CMS Family Marine Noise Guidelines (Secretariat/Joint Noise Working Group; update Resolution 8.11 to adopt the guidelines that are now ready)
 - Marine Debris (Mark Simmonds)
 - Bycatch (Joint Bycatch WG; to update Resolution 8.5 for example to include the fact that EU Regulation 812/2004 has now been replaced, and to consider referring to the WWF 'Guidelines for the Safe and Humane Handling and Release of Bycaught Small Cetaceans from Fishing Gear')
 - National Reporting (the Secretariat; consider updating Resolution 8.1)
 - Ecosystem Approach to Addressing Pressures on Small Cetaceans (UK/Netherlands),
 - Resource Depletion (Graham Pierce/Resource Depletion WG) and
 - The Baltic Harbour Porpoise (Jastarnia Group).
239. With regard to the draft resolution on ecosystems, Mr Simmonds suggested having a scoping discussion to help frame the terms of reference, content and definition of 'ecosystem'. Ms Bell (UK) suggested that the draft resolution on resource depletion could possibly be merged with the one on the ecosystem approach. As the Baltic Harbour Porpoise was being referred to as 'Europe's vaquita', urgent action was necessary, and the Jastarnia Group would be consulted on the draft resolution.
240. The dates of the MOP had not been set but the third quarter of 2020 was likely. If the MOP were to start on 1 September 2020, the deadline for sending draft Resolutions to

the Secretariat would be 29 May 2020 (95 days prior MOP; draft Resolutions should be online 90 days prior MOP). Other meeting documents should be online at least 30 days before MOP.

241. Mr Schall (Germany) reminded that Germany was in charge of the EU Presidency in the latter half of 2020 and that this gave an opportunity to encourage greater involvement by the European Commission in the work of ASCOBANS.

12. Any other business

Mine Detonations in Fehmarnbelt

242. The one notified item of any other business was the clearance of munitions by NATO in waters north-west of Fehmarn in August-September 2019. Sven Koschinski (Meereszoologie, here representing CCB) speaking remotely gave a [presentation](#) explaining events that had begun in August and had drawn to a close the previous day. It was thought that the allied air forces had dropped 4,000 mines in Kiel Bight during the Second World War, of which an estimated 800 were still in the water and 64 had recently been discovered, which were considered a hazard to shipping. The location to the north and north-west of Fehmarn was within two SACs, and at least 42 detonations had taken place. Neither the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation nor the conservation authorities of the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein had been involved, and the detonations had been conducted by NATO forces at a sensitive time for Harbour Porpoises, it being the calving and nursing season. No bubble curtains or other mitigation measures had been used.
243. The ASCOBANS MOP in 2016 had passed [Resolution 8.8](#) on munitions, where Parties were asked to request that NATO and national navies share information of munition clearance exercises and any guidelines that were supposed to be followed or to draft guidelines if none existed.
244. Mr Schall (Germany) welcomed that CCB had raised the issue. The German Federal Environment Ministry and the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation were analyzing the case, but so far had only seen the press release. It appeared that the explosions had not been conducted in conformity with either German or European law. Repetitions should be as far as possible avoided.
245. Mr Ritter (WDC) said that WDC saw this as a scandal, and was willing to join a common campaign with other NGOs. He was aware of two press releases issued by NABU, one about Harbour Porpoises and the other about contamination of the water.
246. Mr Simmonds (HSI) raised the similar issue of the removal of decommissioned oilrigs, the dismantling of which sometimes required explosives. Mr Koschinski was aware of this being an issue in the Gulf of Mexico but not in the North Sea. Mr Haelters (Belgium) said that OSPAR was also concerned by these issues and Ms Blankett (Finland) said that HELCOM had an Expert Group, 'Submerged', which had been working on environmental risks of hazardous submerged objects. Mr Koschinski was a member of the working group and was going to undertake to raise the issue there as well.
247. Following Resolution 8.8, the Secretariat had written as instructed to UNEP because of the global nature of the problem. The response had been subdued possibly because UNEP focused more on developing countries. The Secretariat would raise the issue again as the new management in UNEP might react more positively. Mr Koschinski said that the problem of munitions would occur anywhere in the world where there were conflicts.
248. The Chair reminded the meeting of the ACCOBAMS workshop in Toulon (8-9 October) at which NATO was expected to be present. Ms Le Ravallec (ACCOBAMS) said that the national navies of Parties were welcome to attend.

249. Ms Carlén (CCB) said that similar documents had been submitted to the HELCOM MAMA Working Group and undertook to report back.

Stock vs Population

250. Mr Ritter (WDC) said that he thought that the use of the term 'stock' with its fisheries and consumption connotations was inappropriate and suggested using 'population' instead. Ms Murphy said that 'biological population' was in some circumstances not a suitable alternative as it has a defined meaning, and 'ecological unit' would be preferable. For most small cetaceans in the ASCOBANS region, there is knowledge on their population structure, and for discriminating below the (sub-) population level, 'ecological units' or some other term could be employed.
251. Mr Schall (Germany) said that he had received several letters from members of the public regarding the hunting of whales in the Faroe Islands. The hunt was more of an animal welfare issue than a conservation concern for ASCOBANS, although some of the species killed were part of populations living within a range covered by the Agreement. Mr Schall suspected that the series of letters had been prompted by an NGO campaign and preparing the responses was time-consuming and delaying other urgent matters. He added that Germany had offered to use a part of its voluntary contribution for public awareness raising materials concerning the Faroes' methods of whale hunting.
252. Mr Simmonds (HSI) said that he too received letters on the subject of the Faroese whale hunt and noted that ASCOBANS Parties had in the past written to the Faroese authorities. He also noted that Denmark had again not sent a representative to the AC and suggested that the Secretariat write to the Danish Government to ascertain why.
253. The Secretariat was also receiving emails about the Faroese whale hunt and, in its replies, referred to the comprehensive [CMS online statement](#) on the hunting of dolphins in Taiji and the Faroe Islands.

13. Adoption of the List of Action Points of the Scientific Session

254. A draft list of Action Points and Recommendations had been circulated and the Secretariat presented the list on screen and invited comments. Ms Bell (UK) asked for an explanation of the difference between Action Points and Recommendations. The Secretariat said that Action Points could be ticked off as 'done', whereas a recommendation might 'encourage' to do something. The Secretariat suggested that it might be useful if the action points and recommendations were listed separately.
255. Ms Scheidat (Netherlands) said that some of the wording was rather vague and more specific actions would be more useful in some cases. Each point was reviewed and edited on screen. The revised and final lists of Action Points and Recommendations could be found at the [AC25 website](#) under 'Meeting Report', and as Annexes 1 and 2 to the meeting report.

14. Close of the Scientific Session

256. After the customary expression of thanks to all involved in the successful conduct of the meeting, the Chair declared the Scientific Session closed at 16:40.

15. Opening of the Institutional Session

257. Penina Blankett (Finland) assuming the chair opened the institutional session.

16. Accession and Agreement Amendment

258. No further countries had acceded to the Agreement since AC24. With regard to ratification of the extended Agreement Area, Belgium and Lithuania were the only two Parties still to complete the process. Lithuania had indicated that progress would be made but no official notification had been received confirming ratification. Mr Haelters (Belgium) said that he had been assured by the office responsible that the ratification would be dealt with as soon as possible.

17. National Reporting Form

17.1. Report back from the Intersessional Working Group on National Reporting

17.2. Development of the National Reporting Form for 9th Meeting of the Parties

259. Ms Scheidat (Netherlands) [reported](#) on the work of the Intersessional Working Group on National Reporting. The group had consisted of Ms Bell, Farah Chaudry, Peter Evans, Sara Königson, Ms Macleod, Mr Pierce, Ms Svoboda, and first Aline Kühl-Stenzel and later Ms Renell for the Secretariat. Its mandate was derived from Resolution 8.1 and directly from AC24, and the recommendation sought to strike a balance between reporting progress and the effort required to complete the forms. Ideally reporting would be spread across the entire four years of the intersessional period and the format would evolve over time to adapt to new circumstances.

260. The Working Group met in February 2019 in Bonn, Germany, to draft a format for AC25. In revising the format, the group had opted for more visual presentation and simplified answers such as colour coding, tick boxes and pre-selection of species and regions, which also aimed to facilitate use for online entry. However, in the end there had been no time to put questions in the ASCOBANS online reporting tool. To help with harmonization, the same sub-regions were issued as OSPAR and HELCOM.

261. Given that AC24 did not allocate funding to engage a consultant, and that the group members had limited time and capacity working on a voluntary-basis, the Working Group concentrated on the “must” task: creating national report questions for sections for AC25. Further updates would be necessary for the reports to be submitted to the MOP in 2020. It had not been possible to complete the “should” task of revising or creating new questions for sections allocated for AC23, AC24 and MOP9 by March 2019; nor the “would like to” task of having the above in an online data entry format ready for input by March 2019.

262. The new format for AC25 (see [AC25/Doc.17](#)) considered easy compilation for presentation at AC of results from all Parties. In addition, it already considered that the MOP report should have the potential to communicate the agreement work, progress or issues in implementation, in a way that is accessible for the MOP audience. Ms Scheidat showed how traditionally in ASCOBANS MOPs, the Chair and Vice-chair of the Advisory Committee presented an evaluation of the implementation success, including an evaluation index. Ms Scheidat also suggested a color-coded assessment of ASCOBANS implementation success per country, to be presented at each MOP.

263. It was noted that developing meaningful reporting questions was no easy task. The Advisory Committee was asked to dedicate funds to pay for a consultant, to review past and current national reporting formats, including an investigation/questionnaire for Parties and stakeholders – in particular to cover questions on measuring success of implementation, quantifiable data, storage and dissemination of data, and (regionally appropriate) analyses of data; and to dedicate resources within CMS/ASCOBANS Secretariat to ensure the online questionnaire is available on time.

264. The Secretariat thanked Ms Scheidat and the Intersessional Working Group for all the work and time donated to develop this year’s national reporting form. Ms Brtnik (Germany) joined in the thanks and said that given the lack of funding it might be

preferable to retain a paper (Word) reporting system rather than use an online system similar to the one used by CMS. The Secretariat estimated that the simplest specification for putting the current questions in an online space would cost €4,500; and noted with thanks that the Netherlands had committed to making a voluntary contribution of €5,000 to finalise the questions for the coming years.

18. Financial and Administrative Issues

18.1. Administrative Issues

265. The Secretariat introduced the report ([AC25/Doc.18.1](#)). The main changes in staffing were the appointment of Jenny Renell replacing Aline Kühl-Stenzel as coordinator and Amy Fraenkel being appointed Acting Executive Secretary of CMS and ASCOBANS following Bradnee Chambers' death. The Secretariat would report to Parties as soon as there were developments regarding a permanent appointment. Bettina Reinartz remained as part-time assistant and was now working part time for CMS in the run-up to CMS COP13.

18.2. Accounts for 2018 and 2019

266. The Secretariat presented accounts for the year 2018 ([AC25/Doc.18.2a](#)). All assessed contributions had been received from Parties, together with voluntary contributions of €25,600 from Germany, €5,000 from Poland and €28,250 from Sweden.
267. When the accounts for mid-2019 (as at 30 June) ([AC25/Doc.18.2b](#)) were prepared, five Parties had not paid their assessed contributions (but two payments had since been received). Voluntary contributions of €4,900 had been received from Germany and €6,250 from Finland.

19. Assignment of Funds to Prioritized Activities

(see Agenda Item 9.3)

20. Options for future meetings of the Advisory Committee

268. As requested by AC24, the Secretariat had prepared options ([AC25/Doc.20](#)) for changing the periodicity of intervals between meetings of the AC and the content. The options resulted from comparisons with other instruments of the CMS Family.
269. The three options were: Option 1 - the status quo (meetings of the AC in each of the intersessional years dealing with both scientific and institutional issues); Option 2 which would reduce the number of institutional sessions to one in the middle year of the intersessional period, with the scientific sessions being held yearly; and Option 3 which would dispense with a meeting of the AC in the middle year of the intersessional period entirely, but holding both scientific and institutional sessions in the other two years. There were advantages and disadvantages with all of the options.
270. Ms Scheidat (Netherlands) pointed out that the AC did not meet annually as indicated in the document as it did not meet in MOP years any more. The Secretariat undertook to correct the text.
271. Ms Bell (UK) said the UK supported Option 3 mainly in order to reduce the carbon footprint of the AC. There were other ways of working using technology such as Skype. Momentum could be maintained through greater use of virtual meetings.
272. Mr Schall (Germany) recounted his experiences of working with EUROBATS for 15 years. That Agreement had established a Standing Committee to deal with

administrative matters, leaving the Technical (Advisory) Committee to concentrate on science. EUROBATS was also concerned about its carbon footprint and the inefficiency of bringing delegates from several countries together for short meetings, but in pre-MOP years, the Standing Committee had to convene to consider the budget options. Savings could be made by holding the Standing Committee and Technical (Advisory) Committee back-to-back.

273. The Netherlands and Poland also supported Option 3. Mr Hassani (France) stated a preference for Option 2 or an amended Option 3 with an additional virtual meeting.
274. Mr Simmonds (HSI), as a longstanding observer at the AC, was concerned at the potential loss of momentum and noted that one AC meeting had already been lost through the adoption of a four-year cycle of MOPs. While fully aware of the climate crisis and the need to reduce carbon footprints, he was also concerned about the massive threats to biodiversity, which organizations such as ASCOBANS sought to address. He welcomed the use of technology to find solutions but asked whether other biodiversity agreements were reducing the frequency of their meetings. He added that face-to-face meetings were useful for networking in the margins.
275. Ms Bell (UK) said that ASCOBANS could be in the vanguard of changing work patterns and was not fearful of ASCOBANS entering a 'spiral of doom'. The new system could be tried and if momentum really was lost, ASCOBANS could revert to the former scheme of meetings.
276. Ms Svoboda (Netherlands) pointed out that many OSPAR Working Groups were organized together and in some cases were cooperative initiatives with ICES and/or HELCOM. This saved time and money.
277. Ms Scheidat (Netherlands) suggested that online meetings could be held for some items. Similarly, the North Sea and Jastarnia Groups could consider meeting remotely. Reducing the carbon footprint of the Agreement was as important as saving money.
278. Mr Schall (Germany) pointed out that the current meeting of three days' duration had been split 2.5:0.5 between science and institutional matters. It seemed that institutional matters might need a face-to-face meeting in the year before the MOP but could otherwise meet virtually.
279. Ms Carlén (CCB) said that the Jastarnia Group could alternate between face-to-face and virtual meetings.
280. Mr Simmonds (HSI) said that the case had to be made to the MOP that the effort to save biodiversity to which ASCOBANS contributed needed to be maintained.
281. The Secretariat summarized the revised Options 2 and 3, which would be put to the MOP for a decision. The status quo (Option 1) would also be offered.

21. Any other Institutional Issues

282. There were no items raised under Any Other Institutional Issues.

22. Date and Venue of the 9th Meeting of the Parties and the 26th Meeting of the Advisory Committee

283. During AC25, the Secretariat had received confirmation that Belgium would host the next MOP. Venue city was to be confirmed. The timing would have to avoid the IWC meeting late September 2020, and early September had been suggested (but the first days of the school year should also be avoided).
284. Offers to host AC26 in 2021 were invited. None were forthcoming and the Secretariat would pursue options later.

23. Adoption of the List of Action Points of the Institutional Session

(The Action Points and Recommendations are included in Annexes 1 and 2 to this report.)

24. Close of the Meeting

285. After the customary expression of thanks – including for the generous welcome dinner, guided tour of Ozeaneum and walking tour of Stralsund – the Chair declared the Institutional Session of the meeting closed at 17:40.

Annex 1: List of Action Points from AC25

General

1. All Parties and Range States are asked to contribute complete and accurate information in their national reports.
2. Parties are encouraged to apply urgently for European Maritime and Fisheries Funds (EMFF), which can be used to finance measures relevant for Natura 2000, marine biodiversity and Marine Strategy Framework Directive. Secretariat to clarify whether EMFF can be used for transboundary projects.
3. The Advisory Committee instructs the Secretariat to seek voluntary contributions from Parties for the prioritized activities requiring funding.
4. The Secretariat to provide revised options for future meetings of the Advisory Committee, as discussed at AC25, to be presented at ASCOBANS MOP9.

Cetacean Watching Industry

5. The ASCOBANS Secretariat to collaborate with ACCOBAMS Secretariat with regards to mitigating pressures from the cetacean watching industry.

Pollution and hazardous substances

6. ASCOBANS to participate in IWC work on pollutants, for example to 'Pollution 2025' which is building on previous work and with a potential focus on cumulative impacts.

Ship Strikes

7. The ASCOBANS Secretariat to coordinate with the IWC Secretariat in: (a) Working on streamlining national progress report formats regarding ship/strikes of small cetaceans; (b) Discussing the process how ASCOBANS information can feed into the global IWC ship strike database.

Climate Change

8. Because of changes in ecosystem dynamics due to climate change, there are changes in small cetacean population distributions, abundances, and life histories. Parties are requested to look in more detail into the drivers of distributional shifts in context of climate change of cetaceans and prey.

Physical Habitat Change

9. The Advisory Committee, led by the UK, to draft a Resolution on an ecosystems approach to examine the effects of pressures on small cetaceans, to be submitted to ASCOBANS MOP9. Members of the correspondence group are: Mark Simmonds, Kelly Macleod, Catherine Bell, Meike Scheidat, Anne-Marie Svoboda and Vedran Nikolic.

Marine Protected Areas

10. The UK to develop a map of cetacean Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) for the entire ASCOBANS Area using maps that are available from HELCOM, OSPAR or Natura 2000 databases. Parties are to provide access to shapefiles in cases where the necessary data are not available. Developing the map would meet ASCOBANS Work Plan Activity 21.

11. It is of particular interest to ASCOBANS to obtain an overview of the current scale of MPAs and to review best practice approaches to their management in order to make recommendations to Parties, taking MPAs beyond being just 'paper parks'. Therefore, it is requested that an international workshop be organized (involving among others ASCOBANS, the European Commission and ACCOBAMS) on cetacean MPA management. ASCOBANS to seek funding from the European Commission, with a voluntary contribution sought from a Party or Parties. The organizational committee includes Ida Carlén, Penina Blankett, Heike Zidowitz, Mark Simmonds, Stina Nyström.

Use of bycatches and strandings

12. The Advisory Committee endorses the process of harmonizing cetacean research monitoring and research within Europe and the resulting document outlining best practice; and recommends that the final protocol be adopted at ASCOBANS MOP9 as an Annex to a Resolution. A correspondence group drafting the Resolution includes Andrew Brownlow and Sinéad Murphy, and any additional members.

Bycatch

13. The Advisory Committee, through the Joint Bycatch Working Group, is to review and update the existing Resolution 8.5 on Bycatch, with a view of submitting a Resolution to ASCOBANS MOP9.

Marine Debris

14. The Advisory Committee, through the Marine Debris Working Group, is to submit a draft Resolution on Marine Debris to ASCOBANS MOP9. A correspondence group drafting the Resolution includes Mark Simmonds (coordinator), Anne-Marie Svoboda, Peter Evans, Greg Donovan, Finn Larsen, Eunice Pinn, Michael Dähne, Bianca Unger, Carolin Philip, Ursula Siebert and Sinéad Murphy.

Resource Depletion

15. The Advisory Committee, through the Resource Depletion Working Group, is to draft a Resolution on Resource Depletion, with a view of submitting it to ASCOBANS MOP9.

Common Dolphin SAP

16. The ASCOBANS Secretariat is to send letters to request Non-Party Range States to participate in the implementation of the Species Action Plan on Common Dolphins.
17. The Advisory Committee, through its Common Dolphin Group, is to review and update the existing Resolution 8.4 'Conservation of Common Dolphins' e.g. to include the fact that the Species Action Plan has been adopted. The drafting will be led by the Co-chairs of the Common Dolphin Group, Sinéad Murphy and Florence Caurant, with a view of submitting the Resolution to ASCOBANS MOP9.
18. The Advisory Committee requests the Secretariat to organize a joint ASCOBANS-ACCOBAMS workshop on the Common Dolphin at the European Cetacean Society conference in 2021.
19. The Advisory Committee requests the Secretariat to seek funding for a position of Coordinator for the Species Action Plan for the North-East Atlantic Common Dolphin.

Harbour Porpoise

20. The Advisory Committee reconfirms its desire to see proposals submitted to CMS COP14 (2023) to list the Baltic population of the Harbour Porpoise on Appendix I and the Iberian population on Appendix I and II, and urges interested Parties to submit the proposals well in advance of the EU internal deadline.
21. The text of the CMS species listing proposal for the Harbour Porpoise and Iberian populations in the Baltic to be listed in CMS Appendices should be discussed in the 26th Meeting of the Advisory Committee (scheduled for 2021).
22. The Advisory Committee, through the Jastarnia Group, is to draft a Resolution on Harbour Porpoises in the Baltic, to be submitted to ASCOBANS MOP9.

Lagenorhynchus species

23. Parties are requested to address the following research questions regarding the research and conservation of White-beaked Dolphins and Atlantic White-sided Dolphins and to report back to A26 (scheduled for 2021):
 - a. Studies of life history parameters (ages and lengths at sexual maturity, reproductive rates, life spans) from stranded and bycaught animals;
 - b. Better abundance estimates across all areas of the North Atlantic;
 - c. Genetic sampling in northern and north-eastern parts of range;
 - 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.

Beaked Whales

24. Parties are to request their navies to provide their mitigation protocols for use of military sonar, with the view to the Advisory Committee assessing whether such protocols are effective.

Noise

25. The Secretariat is to review and update Resolution 8.11. on the CMS Family Guidelines on Environmental Impact Assessments for Marine Noise-generating Activities, with a view to submitting a Resolution to ASCOBANS MOP9 to adopt these guidelines.

ASCOBANS Outreach and Education Award 2020

26. Parties, NGOs and others are requested to send nominations for recipients of the ASCOBANS Outreach and Education Award 2020, as described in AC25/Doc.8.2. The jury comprises Mark Simmonds, Lucy Babey, Patricia Brtnik, Penina Blankett, and Sami Hassani.

Annex 2: List of Recommendations from AC25

General

1. All Parties and Range States are encouraged to collate information on threats to cetaceans in their countries.

Cetacean Watching Industry

2. Parties are encouraged to implement appropriate codes of conduct and keep a log of cases of harassment/disturbance as reported to regional or national authorities.
3. Parties are encouraged to promote and make use of the IWC-CMS Whale Watching Handbook nationally and are invited to submit case studies on country profiles for the Handbook.

Recreational Sea Use

4. Recreational sea use is poorly mapped across the Agreement Area, and therefore, Parties are encouraged to work towards collecting information wherever risks exist or are highly probable for small cetaceans.
5. Parties are encouraged to keep a log of cases of harassment/disturbance due to recreational sea use and cetacean watching industry as reported to regional or national authorities. Since at the regional level, many different management bodies may be involved, it is important there is good communication across all sectors.
6. National guidelines/codes of conduct should be developed for all Parties. They could be incorporated within guidelines for commercial cetacean watching, but recreational sea users represent a much wider and more heterogeneous target group and so may require greater effort on education and outreach. These would be then used to aim towards future common protocols.

Pollution and hazardous substances

7. Parties are encouraged to collaborate to monitor pollutants in cetaceans, where possible through existing international fora, such as OSPAR, to ensure that the key pollutants are monitored, particularly persistent legacy pollutants, and to initiate screening for emerging pollutants including those identified as endocrine disrupting pollutants.
8. Parties are encouraged to collaborate to monitor pathogens in cetaceans and ensure that the key pathogens are monitored.

Ship Strikes

9. Information on ship strikes with regard to small cetaceans remains scarce. Therefore, the AC recommends Parties to collect data so as to identify high risk areas for ship strikes.

Climate Change

9. Noting that climate change effects on small cetaceans are not fully understood, Parties are encouraged to gather evidence and/or support research on distinguishing effects of climate change from those of other drivers considering the scales at which different pressures act.

10. Parties should consider cumulative impacts of all threats, including climate change, noting that it may be difficult to mitigate specifically against climate change effects.

Physical Habitat Change

11. Parties are encouraged to ensure that early in the process of drafting maritime spatial plans, the impact of cumulative effects of various physical habitat changes, together with other pressures on small cetaceans is duly taken into account in order to effectively contribute to an ecosystem-based approach.

Use of bycatches and strandings

12. The Advisory Committee recommends further work in developing best practice on identifying causes of death in stranded cetaceans.
13. Parties are encouraged to establish long-term strandings networks, where networks do not exist yet, and when feasible, that provide an adequate coverage of their coastlines and result in complete datasets, and to liaise with existing networks and the IWC strandings initiative for assistance.

Bycatch

14. Parties are encouraged to liaise with OSPAR, HELCOM, and other relevant organizations (including Regional Fisheries Management Organizations, Regional Coordination Groups, Advisory Councils for fisheries), on communicating relevant information and recommendations coming from the Joint OSPAR-HELCOM workshop to examine possibilities for developing indicators for incidental bycatch of birds and marine mammals.
15. Given the many uncertainties around the use of PALs, the Advisory Committee recommends Schleswig-Holstein and the German Government to conduct monitoring and research into this issue, including the assessment of their efficacy in mitigating Harbour Porpoise bycatch.

Harbour Porpoise

16. The Advisory Committee would be pleased to work with CMS and its Scientific Council and ACCOBAMS and its Scientific Committee to help identify and refine further measures, including concerted actions, for the Harbour Porpoise.

Lagenorhynchus species

17. Parties are encouraged to consider including White-beaked Dolphins and Atlantic White-sided Dolphins as priority species for strandings investigations. Analysis of the current samples archive is encouraged, in particular from networks at the margins of current distribution and for historical samples. Emphasis of value in collaboration/data sharing between strandings networks would enable a wider, ecosystem approach to any analysis.

Beaked Whales

18. The Advisory Committee recommends that applying the precautionary principle is of greater importance with Beaked Whales, as compared with other small cetaceans. Given the likelihood of small population sizes in Beaked Whales, and the overwhelming evidence that military activities can have severe impacts on these taxa, and acknowledging the difficulties encountered in gaining reliable information.

**Annex 3: Action Points from the 15th Meeting of the Jastarnia Group regarding
Jastarnia and WBBK Plans**

(adopted by AC25)

| Reference | Action Point (old reference) | Jastarnia Plan | | WBBK Plan | |
|-----------|--|----------------|---|-------------|--|
| | | Appl ies | Mandate | App lies | Mandate |
| JG15/AP1 | Parties shall establish or further improve local and national monitoring programmes for Harbour Porpoise occurrence and to further ensure these are aligned in terms of timing and methodology between countries, in order to complement large-scale international monitoring activities. (JG14/AP1) | X | MON-01: Implement and harmonize long-term continual acoustic Harbour Porpoise monitoring | X | Objective d: Monitoring the status of the population |
| JG15/AP2 | Parties are strongly encouraged to support SAMBAH-II, specifically in terms of fundraising, in order for a project proposal to be submitted in 2019 and for the project to start in 2020. Noting that management authorities are required to be formal partners for the SAMBAH-II Life application. (JG14/AP2) | X | | | |
| JG15/AP3 | Parties are strongly encouraged to continue to undertake and cooperate on inter-SCANS surveys of the WBBK Harbour Porpoise population and evaluate trends in population density and abundance. (JG14/AP3/WBBK) | | | X | Rec.7: Estimate trends in abundance of Harbour Porpoises in the Western Baltic, the Belt Sea and the Kattegat |
| JG15/AP4 | Parties are strongly encouraged to use the data provided by SAMBAH, in particular in connection with the establishment of MPAs for Harbour Porpoises, as well as with regard to management plans and mitigation measures. (JG14/AP4) | X | MIT-06: Expand the network of protected areas for Harbour Porpoises, improve its connectivity, and develop and implement appropriate management plans including monitoring schemes for these areas | | |
| JG15/AP5 | Parties should investigate possible detrimental effects of various types of sound and disturbance on Harbour Porpoises (including pinger signals, noise from vessels, seismic surveys, wind parks or construction). Parties should initiate and support studies on the effect of anthropogenic noise on the Harbour Porpoise both on the | X | RES-07: Improve knowledge on impact of impulsive and continuous anthropogenic underwater noise on Harbour Porpoises, and development of | X | Objective e: Ensuring habitat quality favourable to the conservation of the Harbour Porpoise |

| Reference | Action Point (old reference) | Jastarnia Plan | | WBBK Plan | |
|-----------|--|----------------|---|-------------|--|
| | | Appl ies | Mandate | App lies | Mandate |
| | individual and on a population level. (JG14/AP6) | | threshold limits of significant disturbance and GES indicators | | |
| JG15/AP6 | Parties are encouraged to develop and adopt internationally harmonized national regulations on sound emissions associated with anthropogenic activities in the marine environment. Such regulations should set upper limits to sound emissions and be consistent with the relevant Indicators for Good Environmental Status to be developed for the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. (JG14/AP7) | X | MIT-05: Implement regionally harmonized national threshold limits and guidelines for regulation of underwater noise | X | |
| JG15/AP7 | Parties should promote research on the consequences of impacts on prey communities for Harbour Porpoises. (JG14/AP7) | | | X | Rec.10: Include monitoring and management of important prey species in national Harbour Porpoise management plans |
| JG15/AP8 | Parties are required to establish systems to effectively monitor bycatch covering all sizes of fishing vessels. (JG14/AP9) | X | MON-03: Monitor and estimate Harbour Porpoise bycatch rates and estimate total annual bycatch | X | Rec.6: Estimate total annual bycatch |
| JG15/AP9 | Parties should consider the recommendations of the October 2015 ASCOBANS Workshop on Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) and implement this technique for bycatch monitoring as appropriate in the national context. (JG14/AP10) | X | RES-03: Improve methods for monitoring and estimation of Harbour Porpoise bycatch | X | |
| JG15/AP10 | Parties are strongly encouraged to carry out spatio-temporal risk-assessments of Harbour Porpoise bycatch using Harbour Porpoise distribution and fishing effort data. (JG15/AP13) | X | RES-04: Carry out a spatio-temporal risk assessment of Harbour Porpoise bycatch | X | |
| JG15/AP11 | Parties should endeavour to develop, in cooperation with stakeholders, fishing gear that does not cause Harbour Porpoise bycatch, and strive to replace gillnets with such alternative gear, especially in MPAs.. (JG14/AP16, JG14/AP13) | X | RES-05: Further develop and improve fishing gear that is commercially viable with no Harbour Porpoise bycatch MIT-01: Implement the use of fishing gear that is commercially viable with no | X | Objective b: Mitigation of bycatch |

| Reference | Action Point (old reference) | Jastarnia Plan | | WBBK Plan | |
|-----------|---|----------------|--|-------------|---|
| | | Appl ies | Mandate | App lies | Mandate |
| | | | Harbour Porpoise bycatch | | |
| JG15/AP12 | Parties should promote the development of pingers not audible to seals and alerting devices other than pingers. (JG14/AP14) | X | RES-05: Further develop and improve fishing gear that is commercially viable with no Harbour Porpoise bycatch | X | |
| JG15/AP13 | Parties should monitor the use and functioning of deterrent and alerting devices. (JG14/AP15) | X | MIT-03: Continue or implement the use of acoustic deterrent devices (pingers) and acoustic alerting devices proven to be successful when and where deemed appropriate | X | |
| JG15/AP14 | With respect to recreational fisheries, Parties should work towards banning or limiting the use of those types of gear known to pose a threat to Harbour Porpoises. (JG14/AP17) | X | MIT-02: Reduce or eliminate fishing effort with gillnets or other gear known to cause porpoise bycatch in areas with higher Harbour Porpoise density or occurrence, and/or in areas with higher risk of Harbour Porpoise bycatch, according to spatio-temporal risk assessments | X | Rec.3: Protect Harbour Porpoises in their key habitats in minimizing bycatch as far as possible Rec.5: Where possible replace gillnet fisheries known to be associated with high porpoise bycatch with alternative fishing gear known to be less harmful |
| JG15/AP15 | Parties are encouraged to coordinate and standardize monitoring of stranded and bycaught animals, determining the appropriate number of animals to be necropsied in each country, and ensuring that health, contaminant load, life-history parameters and cause of death is examined in a similar manner, and that tissue samples are collected for future needs. (JG14/AP18, JG14/AP19) | X | MON-04: Collect dead specimens and assess health status, contaminant levels, cause of mortality and life-history parameters of Harbour Porpoises | X | Rec.8: Monitor population health status, contaminant load and causes of mortality |
| JG15/AP16 | All Parties and range states should establish programmes for recording, bycatch, strandings and opportunistic sightings for inclusion in a national | X | PACB-01: Improve communication and education for | X | Objective d: Monitoring the status of the population |

| Reference | Action Point (old reference) | Jastarnia Plan | | WBBK Plan | |
|-----------|--|----------------|--|-------------|---|
| | | Appl ies | Mandate | App lies | Mandate |
| | database, and report annually to the ASCOBANS/HELCOM database. (JG14/AP20) | | increased public awareness and collection of live observations and dead specimens of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise | | |
| JG15/AP17 | The Jastarnia Group promotes further cooperation with HELCOM EG MAMA and will strive to cooperate with the HELCOM Fish Group. The Jastarnia Group should invite HELCOM to its meetings. (JG14/AP22) | X | COOP-02: Strive for close cooperation between ASCOBANS and other international bodies | X | Rec.2: Cooperate with and inform other relevant bodies about the Conservation Plan |
| JG15/AP18 | ASCOBANS should join efforts with HELCOM to liaise with the European Commission and other relevant bodies to influence the implementation by Member States of the EU Technical Measures Regulation and the Data Collection Framework to better incorporate and tackle bycatch concerns. (JG14/AP23). | X | | X | |
| JG15/AP19 | Coordinating Authorities of the countries hosting the Group's meetings are asked to ensure the attendance of an expert on the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) at the respective meetings of the Group. The Secretariat should recall this recommendation to the Coordinating Authority of the host country in good time before the meeting. (JG14/AP24) | X | Other | X | Other |
| JG15/AP20 | Parties should ensure that Belt Sea and Baltic Sea populations of harbour porpoises are assessed and managed as separate populations, e.g. in management plans and national redlists. | X | Other | X | Other |

Annex 4: Priority Recommendations from the 8th Meeting of the North Sea Group (adopted by AC25)

1. Work nationally (e.g. through work plans) and regionally (through 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).
2. ASCOBANS to write to the North Sea Regional Coordination Group (RCG) to introduce our work and its relevance to data collection, and where ASCOBANS may contribute. In addition, Parties should contact their own fisheries administrations to facilitate representation of ASCOBANS interests at RCG meetings.
3. ASCOBANS to request a seat in the North Sea Regional Advisory Council.
4. Make better use of funding from the EU (e.g. EMFF) to jointly implement better bycatch monitoring and mitigation.
5. Encourage further analysis towards fine-scale risk-mapping to better understand factors determining high bycatch and to direct resources to high-risk areas and times.
6. Investigate gear specific solutions to mitigate bycatch, including alternative fishing methods to static gillnetting.
7. Encourage Parties to pass on bycatch monitoring and mitigation recommendations under ASCOBANS, at a national level, to the appropriate persons to facilitate engagement internationally.
8. Recommend to Parties that at future meetings of the Advisory Committee and the North Sea Group a fisheries representative from the respective Party is present.
9. Parties to identify further ways to directly engage relevant sectors of the fishing industry.
10. Recommend that North Sea-wide information on life history parameters be collected and analysed from stranded and bycaught animals in order to assess for evidence of temporal changes in those parameters that may have resulted from anthropogenic activities.
11. Identify and / or fill gaps (for example in Lower Saxony) in stranding networks within the North Sea Region.
12. Encourage adopting the 'Best Practice on Cetacean Post Mortem Investigation and Tissue Sampling', when available, which includes instruction on how one can define "bycatch" in strandings.
13. Consider promotion (and funding) of a cross-border workshop on Harbour Porpoise conservation and management of the North East Atlantic, as proposed by the Netherlands.
14. Parties to fill in gaps in monitoring and survey data / data analysis to determine trends in distribution and abundance within their North Sea EEZ, and identify causes for observed changes.
15. Parties to support coordination of SCANS-type surveys through a central body and undertake these ideally at a six-year frequency.

**Annex 5: Recommendations from the 1st Meeting of the Common Dolphin Group
(adopted by AC25)**

1. SAP Range States to complete the 'Achievements Table' by end of 2019 to identify data gaps and actions that are required going forward.
2. Letters of invitation to be sent from the Secretariat to request Non-Party Range States' participation in implementation of the SAP on Common Dolphins.
3. ASCOBANS Secretariat to ensure ACCOBAMS Secretariat is informed about the work of the Common Dolphin Group and invite input regarding the area of common interest and the threats in this area.
4. A review should be undertaken of aerial survey monitoring techniques to better discriminate small delphinid species to ensure explicit estimates of population size and uncertainty.
5. ASCOBANS Advisory Committee to consolidate some of the common/similar recommendations coming from ASCOBANS species conservation plans' Steering Groups, such as on bycatch and on fisheries involvement.
6. Support recommendations from the 8th Meeting of the North Sea Group that are relevant to the Common Dolphin and which could be adapted to apply to the North East Atlantic.
7. A joint ACCOBAMS-ASCOBANS workshop on the Common Dolphin to be held at the next European Cetacean Society conference in 2021.
8. To call on stakeholders to urgently help raise awareness about the Common Dolphin and the Species Action Plan for the North-East Atlantic Common Dolphin.

Annex 6: Terms of Reference for the Common Dolphin Group

The Common Dolphin Group established in 2019 is the Steering Group for the ASCOBANS Species Action Plan (SAP) for the North-East Atlantic Common Dolphin. The SAP can be accessed at <http://www.ascobans.org/en/documents/action-plans>.

Terms of Reference for the Steering Group for the ASCOBANS Species Action Plan for North-East Atlantic Common Dolphin (“Common Dolphin Group”)

1. Introduction

The Short-beaked Common Dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*; hereafter referred to as the Common Dolphin) population in the North-East Atlantic is facing ever-increasing anthropogenic pressures, the most significant of which is bycatch. Chemical pollution and noise disturbance are also major anthropogenic pressures.

In 2015, the Advisory Committee of the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas (ASCOBANS) noted the need for monitoring the North-East Atlantic Common Dolphin population. In 2016, Parties to ASCOBANS adopted Resolution 8.4 on the conservation of Common Dolphins, requesting the Steering Group to develop a comprehensive conservation plan for the Common Dolphin in the eastern North Atlantic with the aim of restoring the population to a favourable conservation status. The draft Species Action Plan for the North-East Atlantic Common Dolphin was first tabled at the 24th Meeting of the Advisory Committee in 2018 and adopted intersessionally.

2. Terms of Reference

The group as described here will hereafter be referred to as the “Common Dolphin Group”. The Common Dolphin Group is a Steering Group of the ASCOBANS Species Action Plan (SAP) for North-East Atlantic Common Dolphin, a group under the Advisory Committee within the meaning of Article 5.4 of the Agreement. The work of the Common Dolphin Group will be facilitated by the ASCOBANS Secretariat. Pending funding, a Coordinator will support the work in the future. The Chair or Co-chairs of the Common Dolphin Group will be appointed in its first meeting.

a) Tasks

The Common Dolphin Group has the following tasks:

- Coordinate and drive the implementation of the Species Action Plan for the North-East Atlantic Common Dolphin, including assessing funding options where appropriate;
- Collate reports on the progress of implementation, effectiveness, issues encountered and the results obtained;
- Evaluate progress in implementation, specifically with regards to each of the ten actions as defined in the SAP;
- Establish further implementation priorities and make appropriate recommendations;
- Report to each Advisory Committee meeting on the progress;
- Encourage countries to harmonise their national efforts, including allocation of funding;
- Encourage cooperation between ASCOBANS, ACCOBAMS¹¹ (in particular taking into consideration the ongoing initiative of ACCOBAMS/IWC Conservation and Management Plan for Mediterranean Common Dolphins) and other Range States;
- Promote the SAP to relevant stakeholders; and

¹¹ Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area.

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the SAP every six years to make recommendations for updating it.

b) Composition

The group will aim to have representatives from all Range States of the species in the North-East Atlantic¹², irrespective of their status as ASCOBANS Parties or Non-Party Range States, preferably represented by members that are participating in the development and implementation of the national conservation plans for Common Dolphins.

Each State within the main distributional range shall be entitled to appoint Group Members, who shall represent the environmental sector and the fisheries sector and such Advisers as the State may deem necessary. Appointed Common Dolphin Group Members should ensure sufficient national coordination.

Environmental non-governmental organizations and Sea fisheries organizations working in the NE Atlantic shall be entitled to appoint one Common Dolphin Group Member per organization and such Advisers as they may deem necessary.

The group will also comprise representatives of the ASCOBANS and ACCOBAMS Secretariats, and can include representatives from other UN Agencies, the European Commission, intergovernmental organisations such as fisheries management authorities, ICES and OSPAR.

The Common Dolphin Group may, as appropriate, invite representatives of any other body or any individual qualified in cetacean conservation and management to participate in a meeting in the capacity of an "Invited Expert".

c) Meetings

The Common Dolphin Group will work intersessionally using email and internet-conferencing platforms. The group will meet in person approximately once a year, funds permitting, and preferably in the margins of a regular ASCOBANS Advisory Committee meeting or other relevant meeting.

d) Rules of Procedure

Pursuant to Rule 18 of the Rules of Procedure of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee, those Rules shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to the proceedings of the Common Dolphin Group insofar as they are applicable.

¹² France, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom.

Annex 7: Terms of Reference for the Resource Depletion Working Group

The 24th Meeting of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee requested the establishment of a Working Group on resource depletion to (i) review new information on resource depletion and its impacts on small cetacean populations and (ii) make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.

The Resource Depletion Working Group (RDWG) will work intersessionally using email and internet-conferencing platforms. RDWG is to report to Meetings of the Advisory Committee, as necessary.

The Working Group membership shall include veterinary and fishery science expertise as well as cetacean ecology and conservation expertise, i.e. people who collect samples from stranded animals and determine causes of death, who investigate diet, or feeding ecology studies, or are involved in management and governance. Additional members may be added, for example to facilitate links with HELCOM, OSPAR, ICES, IWC, ACCOBAMS, ECS, EAMM, SMM, NAMMCO, and WDC.

The RDWG will carry out the following tasks:

- 1) Review/summarise recent information on resource depletion and its impacts on small cetaceans and identify additional research needed.
- 2) Review sources of information on *prey distribution and abundance* (e.g., fishery landings and effort data, stock assessments, fish surveys (which potentially offer information with a higher spatial resolution), habitat models for fish and cephalopods) and, if appropriate, propose a mechanism to collate relevant data, focused on species already identified as of importance in the diet of small cetaceans.
- 3) Liaise with other ASCOBANS initiatives to develop *health/condition indicators* for small cetaceans, based on information from live animals and/or necropsies, with the ultimate aim to improve the resolution of these indicators for identifying impacts of prey depletion and other cumulative stressors. Establish collaboration with HELCOM in relation to their development of a health indicator for porpoises. The indicators are likely to be multi-faceted, including information on pathology, physiological status (e.g. pregnancy, stress), body condition (e.g. blubber thickness), considering that simple indicators such as blubber thickness are influenced by multiple factors and do not necessarily reflect resource abundance.
- 4) Review and collate information on *diet of small cetaceans* in the ASCOBANS area (including long-term dietary variation) and foraging behaviour, to improve understanding of likely responses to changes in prey availability; identify knowledge gaps and encourage new research and monitoring of diet, considering that ongoing monitoring of diet and spatio-temporal trends is an essential part of surveillance of cetacean conservation status.
- 5) Review spatio-temporal trends in *sightings data on distribution and abundance* of small cetaceans, in relation to possible relationships with trends in distribution and abundance of their known prey.
- 6) Review relevant information from *emerging technologies* (e.g. drones to determine condition; eDNA to estimate fish presence in association with actively feeding cetaceans) and multidisciplinary research cruises
- 7) Explore prospects for *integrating information from multiple data sources* to provide inter/multidisciplinary insights into the resource depletion issue.
- 8) Recommend possible mitigation measures; explore options for better integrating cetacean conservation measures (e.g. MPAs, time-area closures) with fishery management procedures to help reduce risk of prey depletion.

Annex 8: List of Dates of Interest to ASCOBANS in 2019/2020

| Date | Organizer | Title | Venue | Participation/ Report |
|-----------------------|---|---|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 19-20 Sept 2019 | EU | EU Working Group on Good Environmental Status | Brussels, Belgium | |
| 22-27 Sept 2019 | CBD | Regional Workshop to Facilitate the Description of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas in the North-East Atlantic Ocean and Training Session on EBSAs https://www.cbd.int/meetings/EBSA-WS-2019-01 | Stockholm, Sweden | |
| 24-26 Sept 2019 | HELCOM | 13 th Meeting of the Expert Group on Marine Mammals (EG MAMA) | Helsinki, Finland | Ida Carlén |
| 30 Sept – 2 Octo 2019 | Partnership for Regional Ocean Governance | Marine Regions Forum https://www.prog-ocean.org/marine-regions-forum/ | Berlin, Germany | Secretariat |
| 3-4 Oct 2019 | UNEP | 21 st Global Annual Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans | Berlin, Germany | Secretariat |
| 4 Oct 2019 | HELCOM | 8 th Meeting of Technical Group on Marine data (MSFD TG DATA) | Brussels, Belgium | |
| 7-11 Oct 2019 | IMO | 41 st Consultative Meeting of Contracting Parties to the London Convention and 14 th Meeting of Contracting Parties to the London Protocol http://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/Conferences/Pages/Default.aspx | London, UK | |
| 7-12 Oct 2019 | World Cetacean Alliance | World Whale Conference https://www.worldwhaleconference.com/ | Hervey Bay, Queensland, Australia | |
| 8-10 Oct 2019 | ACCOBAMS | Workshop on Sonar and Cetaceans Interactions | Toulon, France | Pelargis, Secretariat |
| 8-10 Oct 2019 | OSPAR | Intersessional Correspondence Group on MPAs https://www.ospar.org/meetings/archive/intersessional-correspondence-group-on-marine-protected-areas-787 | Vilm, Germany | |
| 8-10 Oct 2019 | NAMMCO | Abundance Estimates Working Group https://nammco.no/topics/abundance-estimates-wg/ | Tromsø, Norway | |
| 8-10 Oct 2019 | Bonn Agreement | Contracting Parties to the Bonn Agreement (BONN 19) https://www.bonnagreement.org/meetings | Bonn, Germany | |
| 15-16 Oct 2019 | European Commission | 14 th Meeting of the Technical Group on underwater noise (TG Noise) | Brussels, Belgium | |
| 21-25 Oct 2019 | HELCOM | 11 th Meeting of the HELCOM Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature Conservation (State & Conservation 11-2019) | Latvia | Penina Blankett |
| 22-24 Oct 2019 | HELCOM | 11 th Meeting of the Working Group on Reduction of Pressures from the Baltic Sea Catchment Area | Brussels, Belgium | |
| 23-24 Oct 2019 | Our Ocean | Sixth Our Ocean Conference https://ourocean2019.no/ | Oslo, Norway | |

| Date | Organizer | Title | Venue | Participation/ Report |
|---------------------|--|---|-------------------------------|--|
| 29 Oct - 1 Nov 2019 | NAMMCO | 26 th Scientific Committee https://nammco.no/topics/committee-meetings/ | Tórshavn, Faroe Islands | |
| 5-6 Nov 2019 | OSPAR | Intersessional Correspondence Group on Noise | Portugal | |
| 5-6 Nov 2019 | European Commission | Marine Strategy Coordination Group (MSCG) | Brussels, Belgium | |
| 5-8 Nov 2019 | ACCOBAMS | 7 th Meeting of the Parties to ACCOBAMS http://www.accobams.org/meetings/7th-meeting-of-the-parties-to-accobams/ | Istanbul, Turkey | Secretariat |
| 12-15 Nov 2019 | CMS | 4 th Meeting of the Sessional Committee of the CMS Scientific Council (ScS-SC4) | Bonn, Germany | Secretariat, Mark Simmonds |
| 12-15 Nov 2019 | OSPAR | Intersessional Correspondence Group on Marine Litter | Wexford, Ireland | |
| 18-22 Nov 2019 | ICES | Working Group on Monitoring and on Trends and Effects of Substances in the Marine Environment | Copenhagen, Denmark | |
| 25-29 Nov 2019 | CBD | 23 rd Meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice | Montreal, Canada | |
| 19-21 Nov 2019 | OSPAR | Intersessional Correspondence Group on Coordination of Marine Biodiversity Assessment and Monitoring | London, UK | |
| 2-5 Dec 2019 | OSPAR | Intersessional Correspondence Group on the Protection of Species and Habitats | Spain, Madrid | |
| 3-5 Dec 2019 | | Marine Debris Workshop | La Carriga, Spain | Mark Simmonds |
| 4 Dec 2019 | European Commission | Marine Expert Group meeting | Brussels, Belgium | Ida Carlén, Peter Evans, Secretariat |
| 8-12 Dec 2019 | Society for Marine Mammalogy, European Cetacean Society | 2 nd World Marine Mammal Conference (WMMC2019) https://www.wmmconference.org/ | Barcelona, Spain | Graham Pierce, Fabian Ritter, Mark Simmonds, Anne-Marie Svoboda, Pelargis |
| 9-10 Dec | HELCOM | 57 th Meeting of the HELCOM Heads of Delegation | Helsinki, Finland | |
| 28-30 Jan 2020 | OSPAR | Working Group on Inputs to the Marine Environment | Gothenburg, Sweden | |
| 10-14 Feb 2020 | ICES | Meeting of the Working Group on Marine Mammal Ecology (WGMME) | Barcelona, Spain | Farah Chaudry, Pelargis |
| 15-22 Feb 2020 | CMS | 13 th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CMS COP13) | Gandhinagar India | Secretariat, Mark Simmonds, Anne-Marie Svoboda |
| 16-21 Feb 2020 | AGU, ASLO, TOS | 2020 Ocean Sciences Meeting www.osm.agu.org | San Diego, USA | |
| 4-5 Mar 2020 | HELCOM | 41 st Meeting of the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM 41-2020) incl. high-level segment | Helsinki, Finland | |
| 10-13 Mar 2020 | ICES | Meeting of the Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species (WGBYC) | Amsterdam, Netherlands | Kelly Macleod, Pelargis |

| Date | Organizer | Title | Venue | Participation/ Report |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|---|--------------------|---|
| 17 Mar 2020 | NAMMCO | Meetings of the Management Committees (MCS) | Oslo, Norway | |
| 18-19 Mar 2020 | NAMMCO | 28 th Meeting of the Council https://nammco.no/topics/events/nammco-28-meeting-of-the-council/ | Oslo, Norway | |
| 19-20 Mar 2020 | | XXI International Environmental Forum "Baltic Sea Day" | St. Petersburg | |
| 23-27 Mar 2020 | OSPAR | Biodiversity Committee | Reykjavik, Iceland | Anne-Marie Svoboda |
| 23-27 Mar 2020 | OSPAR | Hazardous Substances and Eutrophication Committee | Madrid, Spain | |
| April/May 2020 (TBC) | CMS/IWC | Workshop on Ecosystem Functioning | TBC | Secretariat |
| 12-24 May 2020 | IWC | Annual Meeting of the Scientific Committee (SC67B) https://iwc.int/annual-meeting-of-the-scientific-committee-sc67b | Cambridge, UK | Mark Simmonds, Graham Pierce, Fabian Ritter, Anne-Marie Svoboda, Pelargis |
| 18-23 May 2020 | CBD | 24 th Meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) | Montreal, Canada | Penina Blankett (tbc) |
| late May / early June | OSPAR | Intersessional Correspondence Group on Marine Litter | TBC | |
| (tbc) 2020 | ASCOBANS | 16 th Meeting of the Jastarnia Group (Baltic Harbour Porpoise); 9 th Meeting of the North Sea Group (North Sea Harbour Porpoise) | TBC | Ida Carlén, Peter Evans |
| 2-6 June 2020 | UN | High-Level UN Conference to Support the Implementation of SDG14 (UN Ocean Conference) https://oceanconference.un.org/ | Lisbon, Portugal | |
| 11-19 June 2020 | IUCN | IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020 https://www.iucncongress2020.org/ | Marseille, France | Mark Simmonds, Pelargis |
| 29 June – 3 July 2020 | OSPAR | OSPAR Commission / Ministerial Meeting | Lisbon, Portugal | Pelargis |
| 2 nd week of Sept 2020 | ASCOBANS | 9 th Meeting of the Parties | Belgium | |
| 25 Sept – 2 Octo 2020 | IWC | Biennial Meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC68) | Portoroz, Slovenia | Mark Simmonds, Lucy Babey, Anne-Marie Svoboda, Pelargis |
| Oct 2020 (tent) | CBD | 15 th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity | Kunming, China | Penina Blankett (tbc) |
| 9-19 Nov 2020 | UNFCCC | 2020 UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP26) | UK | |

Annex 9: List of Participants

Head of Official Delegation

Belgium

HAELTERS Jan
Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences
Oostende, Belgium
E: jhaelters@naturalsciences.be

Finland

BLANKETT Penina
Ministry of the Environment
Helsinki, Finland
E: penina.blankett@ym.fi

France

HASSANI Sami
Oceanopolis
Brest, France
E: sami.hassani@oceanopolis.com

Germany

SCHALL Oliver
Federal Ministry for Environment, Nature
Conservation and Nuclear Safety
Bonn, Germany
E: Oliver.Schall@bmu.bund.de

Netherlands

SVOBODA Anne-Marie
Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food
Quality
The Hague, Netherlands
E: a.m.svoboda@minlnv.nl

Poland

LESZ Monika
Ministry of Environment
Warszawa, Poland
E: monika.lesz@mos.gov.pl

United Kingdom

BELL Catherine
Department for Environment, Food and
Rural Affairs
London, United Kingdom
E: catherine.bell@defra.gov.uk

Member of Official Delegation

Finland

LOISA Olli
Turku University of Applied Sciences
Turku, Finland
E: olli.loisa@turkuamk.fi

France

CAURANT Florence
Centre d'Etudes Biologiques de Chizé
La Rochelle, France
E: florence.caurant@univ-lr.fr

RIDOUX Vincent
Centre d'Etudes Biologiques de Chizé
La Rochelle, France
vincent.ridoux@univ-lr.fr

Germany

BRTNIK Patricia
German Oceanographic Museum
Stralsund, Germany
E: patricia.brtnik@meeresmuseum.de

DÄHNE Michael
German Oceanographic Museum
Stralsund, Germany
E: Michael.Daehne@meeresmuseum.de

MENNEMEIER Philipp
Federal Ministry for Environment, Nature
Conservation and Nuclear Safety
Bonn, Germany
E: Philipp.Mennemeier@bmu.bund.de

RUSER Andreas
Institute for Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife
Research (ITAW), University of Veterinary
Medicine Hannover,
Büsum, Germany
E: andreas.ruser@tiho-hannover.de

Netherlands

GEELHOED Steve
Wageningen Marine Research
Den Helder, Netherlands
E: steve.geelhoed@wur.nl

SCHEIDAT Meike
Wageningen Marine Research
Ijmuiden, Netherlands
E: meike.scheidat@wur.nl

Observers:

Inter-Governmental Organizations

ACCOBAMS Secretariat

LE RAVALLEC Celia
Jardin de l'UNESCO
Monaco, Monaco
E: cleravallec@accobams.net

Non-Governmental Organizations

Coalition Clean Baltic

CARLÉN Ida
Uppsala, Sweden
E: ida.carlen@ccb.se

Humane Society International

SIMMONDS Mark
London, United Kingdom
E: mark.simmonds@sciencegyre.co.uk

Poland

KAMINSKA Katarzyna
The Fisheries Department, Ministry of
Maritime Economy and Inland Navigation
Warsaw, Poland
E: k.kaminska@mgm.gov.pl

Sweden

CARLSTRÖM Julia
Swedish Museum of Natural History
Stockholm, Sweden
E: julia.carlstrom@nrm.se

United Kingdom

MACLEOD Kelly
Joint Nature Conservation Committee
Aberdeen, United Kingdom
E: kelly.macleod@jncc.gov.uk

European Commission

JANIAK Katarzyna
DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
Bruxelles, Belgium
E: katarzyna.janiak@ec.europa.eu

NIKOLIC Vedran
DG Environment
Auderghem, Bruxelles, Belgium
E: vedran.nikolic@ec.europa.eu

ORCA

BABEY Lucy
Portsmouth, United Kingdom
E: lucy.babey@orcaweb.org.uk

Whale and Dolphin Conservation

RITTER Fabian
München, Germany
E: fabian.ritter@whales.org

WWF Germany

ZIDOWITZ Heike
Hamburg, Germany
E: heike.zidowitz@wwf.se

WWF Sweden

NYSTRÖM Stina
Solna, Sweden
E: stina.nystrom@wwf.se

Invited Expert

Cetacean Strandings Investigation Programme

BROWNLOW Andrew
SRUC Disease Surveillance Centre
Inverness, United Kingdom
E: andrew.brownlow@sruc.ac.uk

Instituto de Investigaciones Marinas

PIERCE Graham
Vigo, Spain
E: g.i.pierce@iim.csic.es

University of St Andrews

HOOKER Sascha
Sea Mammal Research Unit
St Andrews, United Kingdom
E: s.hooker@st-andrews.ac.uk

Other

Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology

MURPHY Sinéad
Galway, Ireland
E: sinead.murphy@gmit.ie

Meereszoologie

KOSCHINSKI Sven
Nehnten, Germany
E: sk@meereszoologie.de

German Oceanographic Museum

GALLUS Anja
Stralsund, Germany
E: anja.gallus@meeresmuseum.de

Seafish

PINN Eunice
Edinburgh, United Kingdom
E: eunice.pinn@seafish.co.uk

SCHWARZBACH Patrick
Stralsund, Germany
E: patrick.schwarzbach@meeresmuseum.de

Secretariat

ASCOBANS Secretariat

REINARTZ Bettina
Bonn, Germany
E: bettina.reinartz@un.org

VIRTUE Melanie
Bonn, Germany
E: melanie.virtue@un.org

RENELL Jenny
Bonn, Germany
E: jenny.renell@un.org

Report Writer

VAGG Robert
Bonn, Germany
E: robert.vagg@cms.int