

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.