

Agenda Item 2

Opening Statement

Information Document 2.b-iii

**Opening Statements: Observers –
CCB/HSI/NABU/WDC/WWF**

Action Requested

Take note

Submitted by

CCB/HIS/NABU/WDC/WWF



Note:

Delegates are kindly reminded to bring their own document copies to the meeting, if needed.

ASCOBANS MOP9 NGO statement

Honourable Minister, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Coalition Clean Baltic (CCB), Humane Society International (HSI), Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union (NABU), Whale and Dolphin Conservation (WDC) and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) are pleased to be represented at the ASCOBANS MOP9 and thank the host government Belgium and the Secretariat for finding ways to take this meeting forward during this difficult time. We note and welcome the participation of Spain and the Russian Federation and look forward to closer cooperation of these Non-Parties within the ASCOBANS framework.

We strengthen our call for immediate conservation action and note in particular the precarious situation of the harbour porpoise populations of the Baltic Proper and the Iberian Peninsula. Recently, the Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) highlighted these populations as requiring urgent action.

In this context we would like to draw the attention of Parties, Non-Parties and observers to the recent ICES special advice¹ on emergency measures to prevent bycatch of common dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*) and Baltic Proper harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) in the Northeast Atlantic. We strongly support this advice and urge countries to ensure that any proposed joint measures on fisheries regulations (following on the ICES advice) aim to implement the recommended measures in full.

Finally, we would like to bring to the attention of ASCOBANS Parties and observers the statement from over 300 cetacean experts from more than forty countries concerning cetacean conservation that was issued last week². The experts note an alarming number of cetacean species and populations are in real and imminent risk of extinction due to many human activities, including chemical and noise pollution, loss of habitat and prey, climate change, ship strikes and incidental take in fishing operations.

The scientists call on leaders to take precautionary action to protect species from human activities. This should include fully resourced monitoring to observe and address activities at sea. The scientists' statement communicates the great urgency in this matter and calls for strengthening of the relevant international agreements, not least those within the framework of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS).

We herewith call upon the ASCOBANS Parties, Non-Parties and observers to put the above-mentioned ICES advice and this call by cetacean scientists into action, not least through passing adequate Resolutions here at the 9th Meeting of the Parties. We wish you a successful meeting.

¹ http://www.ices.dk/sites/pub/Publication%20Reports/Advice/2020/Special_Requests/eu.2020.04.pdf

² https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b8797f45417fc360d47af9f/t/5f527a7071a53c741c7ee5be/1599240820154/Scientists+Sign+on+Final+4+September_MasterDocument+REV+%281%29.pdf