



# Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

*Secretariat provided by the United Nations Environment Programme*



## **Bradnee Chambers – Opening Address – ASCOBANS MOP8**

On behalf of the extended CMS Family, I welcome everyone to this Meeting of the Parties to the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans in the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas. This gathering presents a moment to reflect upon previous successes and to set in motion future implementation of the ASCOBANS mission to conserve dolphins and porpoises.

This is a pivotal time for many of the species listed under ASCOBANS. This is particularly true for the harbour porpoise population in the Baltic Sea, which has shrunk to an estimated 500 individuals and is now critically endangered. As we heard from Lewis Pugh, the United Nations Patron of the Oceans in his video message addressed to this meeting, the life of a harbour porpoise and other marine mammals is a daily fight to survive, punctuated by struggles with threats such as bycatch, pollution from PCBs, interference from ocean energy, underwater noise, and submerged munitions. These underwater threats are multiple, cumulative and simultaneous, and demand a response.

For threatened and endangered species such as the harbour porpoise, species action plans such as the Jastarnia Plan present a path forward, while resolutions targeting specific threats such as bycatch can help shield entire ecosystems. Together, these proposed resolutions and action plans can help ensure rich, thriving oceans and seas.

The proposed resolutions focus on the ASCOBANS area, but they address broad, global problems. Threats such as pollution alter the lives of migratory species in every ocean and sea, on mountains and in forests, in the desert or in the sky. Actions agreed by Parties to ASCOBANS will not only help countries focus their efforts in the ASCOBANS region, but will help to highlight these issues on a wider scale, and emphasize that tackling them will require global cooperation and collaboration.

In grappling with these challenges, Parties to ASCOBANS can underline the importance of international conservation instruments such as ASCOBANS and CMS. Multilateral Environmental Agreements such as CMS and ASCOBANS are vital in stimulating and fostering this much needed collaboration amongst countries to tackle the common environmental problems - they are the lifeblood of species conservation. In striving to protect animals in international waters from a range of risks, ASCOBANS in many ways represents the highest aims of the CMS Family: to conserve migratory species of wild animals in places and ways that individual States could not.

As the Earth's population continues to grow, these multifaceted challenges will not vanish. If anything the detrimental human impacts on our planet and its oceans are likely to intensify unless we collectively move towards a more sustainable path, one which ensures that we conserve and sustainably use the world's oceans and seas and helps to protect and restore marine biodiversity actively. In moving to do so, ASCOBANS and the actions agreed and implemented by its Parties, play an important and active part in a global movement underway, which recognizes and alleviates the results of human actions on the natural world – the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

I applaud the work of ASCOBANS Parties, the ASCOBANS Secretariat, and especially the Finnish Government as hosts in the run-up to this meeting, and wish you all a productive few days to come in beautiful Helsinki. Thank you.