



CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES

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NINTH MEETING OF THE
CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
Rome, 1-5 December 2008
Agenda Item 9.0

REVIEW OF ARTICLE IV AGREEMENTS ALREADY CONCLUDED

1. The Secretariat is circulating herewith, for the information of participants in the Ninth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species, the report provided by the Secretariat of the Agreement on the Conservation of **Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas (ASCOBANS)**, to accompany document UNEP/CMS/Conf.9.9.
2. The report is provided unedited in the format and language that it was submitted.

EXAMEN DES ACCORDS DE L'ARTICLE IV DEJA CONCLUS

1. Le Secrétariat diffuse ci-joint, pour l'information des participants à la neuvième session de la Conférence des Parties à la Convention sur les espèces migratrices, le rapport développé fourni par le Secrétariat de l'Accord sur la conservation des petits cétacés de la mer Baltique et de la mer du Nord (ASCOBANS) pour accompagner le document UNEP/CMS/Conf. 9.9.
2. Le rapport est fourni sans avoir été mis au point, dans le format et la langue dans lesquels il a été soumis.

REVISIÓN DE ACUERDOS ARTÍCULO IV YA CONCLUIDOS

1. La Secretaría adjunta, para información de los participantes a la Novena Conferencia de las Partes de la Convención sobre Especies Migratorias, el informe completo presentado por la Secretaría del Acuerdo sobre la conservación de los pequeños cetáceos del Mar Báltico y el Mar del Norte (ASCOBANS), en complemento en el documento UNEP/CMS/Conf. 9.9.
2. El informe se presenta sin modificaciones editoriales, bajo la forma y en el idioma originales.



**Report of the joint CMS/ASCOBANS Secretariat
to the 9th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CMS**

Extension of the Agreement Area

1. The Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas is a legally binding instrument which came into force on 29 March 1994. An extension of the ASCOBANS Agreement area south-westwards, as decided by the 4th Meeting of Parties in 2003, entered into force on 3 February 2008 after the fifth country had ratified the amendment to the Agreement text. The official title of the Agreement thereby, for those countries that accepted the amendment, changed to Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas. The acronym stays unchanged.

5th Meeting of the Parties

2. The most important ASCOBANS meeting in the past triennium was the 5th Meeting of Parties (Netherlands, 2006), at which Resolutions were passed concerning administrative and budgetary matters as well as key conservation issues such as the development of a Conservation Plan for Harbour Porpoises in the North Sea; the Implementation of the Recovery Plan for Baltic Harbour Porpoises; Adverse Effects of Sound, Vessels and Other Forms of Disturbance on Small Cetaceans; Incidental Take of Small Cetaceans; and Research on Habitat Quality, Health and Status of Small Cetaceans in the Agreement Area. The Parties also adopted a new Triennial Work Plan for 2007-2009.

3. MOP5 moreover decided that on 1 January 2007, the UNEP/ASCOBANS Secretariat would be merged with the UNEP/CMS Secretariat for a provisional three-year period. The Executive Secretary of CMS now serves as Acting Executive Secretary of ASCOBANS. The Agreement continues to be an independent and legally binding instrument, holding its own meetings and managing its own financial resources. In order to support the Executive Secretary and the CMS Scientific and Technical Support Officer, who have primary responsibility for the ASCOBANS Secretariat, a consultant acting as coordinator was recruited at P2 level.

4. The new arrangements are subject to a UNEP-led review, which should identify their benefits and shortfalls and make suggestions for an improved set-up in the next triennium (2010-2012).

Budget

5. In the past three years, the work of ASCOBANS has been supported by voluntary contributions from several countries, including the United Kingdom, Sweden and Finland. Germany, the host of the Agreement Secretariat, supports ASCOBANS by means of a yearly voluntary contribution. Also, significant savings from the core budget in the year 2007, as well as funds recovered from a previous years' budget, were diverted for use in conservation and research projects selected by the Advisory Committee.

Advisory Committee Meetings and Working Groups

6. Three meetings of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee (AC 13-15) were held in the last triennium, as well as three meetings of the ASCOBANS Jastarnia Group (JG 2-4), which was established by the 4th Meeting of the Parties in 2003 to carry forward the Agreement's Recovery Plan for Baltic Harbour Porpoises (Jastarnia Plan).

7. While bycatch remains at the centre of attention for ASCOBANS, the Agreement also continues to address other threats facing cetaceans in the Agreement Area. The 15th Advisory Committee meeting established an Intersessional Working Group on the Assessment of Acoustic Disturbance, which will focus on three main human activities: use of sonar, seismic surveys and pile-driving, and will also give consideration to ship-based noise, as far as is appropriate. For each of these subjects, the working group will examine the management (e.g. impact mitigation) of the activities with regard to noise; summarise the assessments that have been made, and indicate the main concerns relevant to the ASCOBANS objectives. The goal is to identify or prepare guidelines or recommendations for best practice.

Workshops

8. A workshop on "Selection Criteria for Marine Protected Areas for Cetaceans" was held under the joint auspices of ECS, ASCOBANS and ACCOBAMS in San Sebastian on 22 April 2007 on the margins of ASCOBANS Advisory Committee meeting and the ECS conference. In addition, another workshop dealing with "Wind Farms and Marine Mammals" was also held in San Sebastian on 21 April 2007, under the joint auspices of ECS and ASCOBANS. Proceedings are now available from the ASCOBANS website (<http://www.ascobans.org/index0504.html>) or as hardcopy upon request from the Secretariat.

9. In order to improve the knowledge of the geographic distribution, density and size of the harbour porpoise distribution in the Baltic Sea, experts from several Baltic countries came together for a series of workshops/meetings on Static Acoustic Monitoring of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise in 2007, at which a project proposal for a Baltic-wide joint acoustic monitoring project was developed. The ASCOBANS Secretariat has since actively promoted this project with the European Commission.

10. In October 2007, two workshops were organized at the Secretariat's premises in Bonn, Germany, under the joint auspices of ASCOBANS and HELCOM (The Helsinki Commission): at the "Workshop on Small Cetacean Population Structure in the

ASCOBANS Area” (8-9 October 2007) experts from 13 countries met for two days to consider the advantages and limitations of different methods to study cetacean population structure and dynamics and for reporting on the state of knowledge with regard to the harbour porpoise, the bottlenose dolphin, the short-beaked common dolphin, the white-beaked dolphin and the Atlantic white-sided dolphin. Back to back with this ASCOBANS area-wide workshop, a smaller group gathered for the “Workshop on Genetics and Population Structure of the Harbour Porpoise in the Baltic” (10 October 2007), where the current knowledge about genetics and population structure of the Baltic harbour porpoise was considered. Reports of these workshops and their follow-up will be made available by the scientific conveners soon.

Outreach Activities

11. Following a request by the 14th Advisory Committee Meeting, the ASCOBANS Secretariat has started publishing a newsletter, reporting on current activities and events and highlighting upcoming ones of interest to the Parties. Four editions have so far been published and widely circulated and can be downloaded from the ASCOBANS website (www.ascobans.org).

12. Activities to update the ASCOBANS leaflets and exhibition material are ongoing, as well as a modernisation of the look of the website and the addition of new pages and features. While some continuity in design and content will be maintained throughout the process, the links of ASCOBANS with UNEP and the CMS Family of Agreements will be underlined more on the website. On Sunday, 18 May 2008, for the sixth year running, institutions in countries around the Baltic Sea celebrated the International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise (IDBHP). An updated report on IDBHP activities and suggestions for outreach events on that occasion, the “IDBHP Handbook”, is available on the ASCOBANS website. The Secretariat made use of the unique outreach opportunity presented by the 9th COP of the Convention on Biological Diversity in May 2008 in Bonn by displaying a new IDBHP banner and distributing matching postcards as well as information material.

13. ASCOBANS has been one of the founding partners of the Year of the Dolphin campaign, together with CMS, ACCOBAMS, TUI and WDCS. The campaign has received support from more than 40 official supporters. Supporters have been active in the development of YoD partnerships and cooperation with a focus on research and conservation projects, awareness raising, fundraising, public events, publications, media and lectures. Facilitated through the ASCOBANS Secretariat, a Portuguese translation and online edition of the Dolphin Manual was produced.