



REPORT OF THE ACCOBAMS SECRETARIAT

Dr. Marie-Christine Van Klaveren
Executive Secretary

This report covers the main activities of 2004.

State of the Agreement and Administrative Matters

Parties

The Contracting Parties to the Agreement are currently 18 (see Annex 1).

Move of the Secretariat

From 2002 to the first months of 2004, the Secretariat was within the Department of International Cooperation for Environment and Development of the Government of Monaco. Since summer 2004, it has been integrated into the Department of Foreign Affairs. New, more spacious, and better-adapted offices allowing for the staff accommodation and additional equipment were allocated last summer.

Secretariat staff

Following the secondment of one expert from Turkey in 2003, in 2004, the Secretariat received the support of the Italian Ministry of the Environment through the appointment of 2 experts.

Since the middle of August, a young German expert is assisting the Secretariat in the frame of an internship.

The Parties approved the appointment of an administrative assistant for the triennium.

Budget

In implementing Resolution 1.7 the Secretariat has established terms of reference for the Supplementary Conservation Funds. Those funds will benefit from voluntary contributions from states and sponsors and be put towards national projects up to a maximum of 15000 Euros.

Only developing Countries and Countries with economies in transition will benefit from this funding. A floor contribution of 1000 Euros was adopted by the Parties.

Main Activities

Capacity building

The activities carried out within this main item are:

- The development of a cetological knowledge base for scientists from institutes in charge of cetacean conservation (Morocco, Bulgaria, Romania, Italy, Libya, Greece and Slovenia) and for public administrations involved in the management of the Pelagos Sanctuary (Italy);
- More specialised programmes (photo-identification) for Black Sea scientists (Ukraine, Russian Federation and Georgia);
- Participation in sightings programmes and acoustic studies (IFAW and Ocean Alliance) within the scientific zones of the Agreement;
- The setting up of a regional stranding network and the establishment of a national network programme in a pilot workshop in Syria. In 2005, other ACCOBAMS member States which have not developed such a network will benefit from the programme.

- Evaluation trip to Georgia to optimise the knowledge in the capacity building programme of the country.

Research and monitoring campaigns

Research programmes and surveys have been undertaken in collaboration with NGOs (SEC, IFAW and Ocean Alliance). Such programs included as well, the participation of guest scientists from the area.

Guidelines elaboration

The Secretariat prepared several guidelines like the “Guidelines for technical measures to minimize cetacean-fishery conflicts in the Mediterranean and Black Sea”, the “Guidelines on tissue banks” and the “Guidelines for the development of National Stranding Networks of cetacean stranding monitoring”.

Projects

In the frame of developing actions to mitigate the interactions human-cetaceans, the project for “Assessing and mitigating the adverse impacts of interactions between cetaceans and fishing activities in the ACCOBAMS area” was elaborated and presented for funding.

Within the educational strategy besides, a project on “Education strategy and program” was prepared by WDCCS and ASMS Ocean Care, two ACCOBAMS’ Partners, and approved by the Meeting of the Parties.

The “Conservation Plan for short-beaked common dolphins in the Mediterranean Sea” was as well approved by the Parties.

Meetings

Several meetings and workshops were organized in 2004 in the frame of the activities to be carried out for the implementation of the Agreement:

- The workshop on by-catch and interactions between cetaceans and fisheries (Italy);
- The workshop on the drafting of guidelines for the use of pingers (Italy);
- The workshop on the establishment of a national strandings network in Syria;
- The workshop on the elaboration of the guidelines for tissue Banks, (Libya).

Among the meetings with the Countries and ACCOBAMS Institutional Bodies:

- Two meetings on bilateral cooperation which were promoted in Libya and in Syria in the frame of ACCOBAMS workshops, involving Italy, Spain, France and the European Community;
- The Third meeting of the Bureau;
- The Second Meeting of the Parties which was held in November 2004.

Collaborations

The Secretariat developed permanent exchanges with the Secretariat of the umbrella Convention of the Agreement. Two inter-secretarial sessions took place at the Secretariat Headquarters in Bonn. As well, the Executive Secretary is in permanent contact with the Convention.

Work sessions have also taken place with UNEP and especially with the Environmental Conventions Division so as to identify ways and means to reinforce the links with such Organisation.

Collaboration with NGOs and Partners was mainly related to research, capacity building, awareness and promotion of the Agreement as well as to the preparation of the conservation plans.

Several new Organizations successfully applied to the status of ACCOBAMS’ Partner, as evidence of the huge involvement and interest of many of them in biodiversity protection and cetacean conservation (see Annex 2)

The Second Meeting of the Parties

Main issues

(Excerpt from the Press release)

“A comprehensive Working Program that lists eleven priority actions for the period 2005 – 2007 has been agreed on by the Parties. The encouraged close collaboration with related Conventions, International Organizations and ACCOBAMS’ Partners shall guarantee the effective implementation of the Program. This effort benefits from ACCOBAMS’ important regional and international role for the conservation of cetaceans that has also been recognized by strengthening its close relation to the Environmental Programme of the United Nations (UNEP) and the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) at this Conference. Complementing these efforts, the Parties agreed to contribute towards the implementation of the Joint working program between CMS and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) as being a vital part within the preparation and implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans.

The Parties highly welcomed a **Conservation Plan for the Common Dolphin** in the Mediterranean Sea. In 2003 the Common Dolphin (*delphinus delphis*) population has been recognized as “endangered” in the IUCN RedList as a result of scientific evidence that has documented the decline of common dolphins in the Mediterranean Sea in the last few decades and its almost disappearance from large portions of its former range.

Much attention was given to a resolution assessing the impact of **man-made noise** on cetaceans by being aware that some types of anthropogenic noise can travel hundreds and even thousands of kilometers underwater and, more than other forms of pollution, are not restricted by national boundaries. Consensually, the Parties agreed on the Resolution which urges Range States to take special care and, if appropriate, to avoid any use of man made noise in habitat of vulnerable species and in areas where marine mammals or endangered species may be concentrated. Parties shall consult with any profession conducting activities to produce underwater sound with the potential to cause adverse effects on cetaceans and extreme caution be exercised in the ACCOBAMS area until satisfactory guidelines are developed.

Bycatch of cetaceans is identified as one of the main concerns of CMS and its Regional Agreements being one of the major causes of mortality from human activities. Special concern has been expressed by the ACCOBAMS Parties over the continued use of pelagic gill nets in the Agreement Area in contrast to mainstream international and national legislation. In a Resolution the Parties are urged to ensure that their fishing operations are conducted in full accordance with the relevant existing regulations aimed at the mitigation of cetacean bycatch. Furthermore, a project to assess and mitigate the adverse impacts of interactions between cetaceans and fishing activities in the Agreement Area is planned to be undertaken. A progressive and precautionary step forward has been made by adopting „Guidelines for technical measures to minimize cetacean-fishery conflicts in the Mediterranean and Black Seas“. One of the techniques for the remediation of by-catches in fishing gear are acoustic devices, including so called “**pingers**”, which on nature and on different components of biodiversity cannot be fully assessed or predicted at present as they may produce significant noise pollution and possibly exclude cetaceans from certain areas. Recognizing this fact, the Parties are urged that the use of pingers, where authorized and appropriate, only be conducted with controlled studies to ensure that they are an effective mitigation measure and link any use of pingers with an observer scheme designed to monitor their effectiveness over time.

The development of criteria for the selection of **special protected areas for cetacean conservation**, the adoption of „framework guidelines on the derogations for the purpose of non-lethal in situ research aimed at maintaining a favorable conservation status for cetaceans“, the undertaking of a massive project on the „abundance and distribution of cetaceans within the ACCOBAMS area“, the promotion of photo-identification activities, providing support to the **Tissue Bank system** and the development of and engagement in an **educational strategy** and program as part of the awareness raising initiatives of the Agreement have been other important items the Parties welcomed and agreed on. Strengthening the link to IUCN and recognizing the important role of Non-Governmental organizations (NGOs) in

Cetacean Conservation, ACCOBAMS has reconfirmed to be fully transparent and successful due to the involvement of Partners, governmental or non governmental, to reach the same objectives: the conservation of cetaceans in the Agreement Area.

The Government of **Croatia** has extended the invitation to host the next Meeting of the Parties which will take place in the end of 2007. The waters of the Losinj-Cres Archipelago, Croatia, has been identified to be an important habitat for bottlenose dolphins. Since 2002, with the support of the Principality of Monaco, the Croatian Research Institute „Blue World Institute of Marine Research and Conservation“ started the project that aims to establish a protected area for this species. Preliminary results have been presented to the Parties during the MOP2.

The Meeting was attended by around 80 delegates, comprising representatives from the Parties, observing countries and ACCOBAMS Partners, IGOs and NGOs etc. and adopted 30 Resolutions and 3 Recommendations were (Annex 3).

Communication and Information

Publications and awareness material

Information leaflets in English and French have been published and distributed in the relevant Countries of the area to arise awareness on cetacean conservation, on the Agreement and its objectives. Some material has been successfully realized in collaboration with ACCOBAMS' Partners (IFAW, WDCS) and the CMS.

Given the cost of printing and distribution of bulletins, after publishing four issues, a newsletter called FINS in an electronic version has been produced and distributed to more than 2000 correspondents.

A compilation of press articles concerning ACCOBAMS was prepared for presentation at MOP2 and around 50 articles were collected.

The preparation of a CD-Rom is in progress as well as of a folder including a complete set of information sheets on the Agreement.

Two complete booklets on the guidelines on whale watching and the development of national stranding networks were published in collaboration with the Regional Activity Centre for specially Protected Areas.

A Social Science thesis on ACCOBAMS was completed by Dr. Sarah Gotheil of the Social and Political Sciences Faculty, University of Lausanne.

For 2005 two calendars have been issued, in collaboration with CMS and WDCS/ASMS Ocean Care.

Contacts with the Countries

To facilitate the establishment of the Agreement, the Secretariat, the representatives of the Principality of Monaco of CMS and its Agreements, have established contacts within each of the neighbouring States through meetings concerned with biodiversity and/or protection of the marine environment.

The ACCOBAMS Secretariat successfully promoted several opportunities to meet the authorities of different Countries, both not-yet Parties to the Agreement in order to present the objectives of ACCOBAMS and facilitate their membership, and certain Parties in order to define their activities under the Agreement. Worth to be stressed, the meeting on bilateral cooperation held in countries as Libya and Syria and involving Italy, Spain, France and the European Community.

Annex 1

COUNTRY	SIGNATURES	RATIFICATIONS		ENTRY INTO FORCE
	Dates	Date of the Tool	Deposit of the Tool	
ALBANIA	24/11/1996	25/05/2001	03/07/2001	01/10/2001
ALGERIA				
BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA				
BULGARIA	16/09/1999	23/09/1999	10/11/1999	01/06/2001
CHYPRUS	24/11/1996			
CROATIA	24/11/1996	03/05/2000	10/07/2000	01/06/2001
EGYPT				
EUROPEAN COMMUNITY				
FRANCE	24/11/1996	26/02/04 (AA)***	10/03/2004	01/06/2004
GEORGIA	24/11/1996	30/03/2001	31/05/2001	01/06/2001
GREECE	24/11/96*	24/11/96*	24/11/96*	01/06/2001
ISRAEL				
ITALY	24/11/1996	10/02/2005		
LEBANON				
LIBYA		12/05/2002	18/06/2002	01/09/2002
MALTA	23/03/2001*	23/03/2001*	23/03/2001*	01/06/2001
MONACO	24/11/1996	25/04/1997	30/04/1997	01/06/2001
MOROCCO	28/03/1997	13/05/1999	05/07/1999	01/06/2001
PORTUGAL	24/11/1996	30/09/2004	15/10/2004	01/01/2005
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA				
ROMANIA	28/09/1998	13/06/2000	17/07/2000	01/06/2001
RUSSIA				
SLOVENIA				
SPAIN	24/11/1996	07/01/1999	02/02/1999	01/06/2001
SYRIA		07/02/02 (A)**	22/03/2002	01/06/2002
TUNISIA	24/11/1996	31/12/2001	15/01/2002	01/04/2002
TURKEY				
UNITED KINGDOM				
UKRAINE		09/07/2003	23/10/2003	01/01/2004

* Signature valant ratification

** A = Adhésion

*** AA = Approbation

Annex 2

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Annex 3

Resolutions and Recommendations approved by the Second Meeting of the Parties

- Res. 2.1** Granting the right to vote
Res. 2.2 Strengthening links with UNEP and CMS
Res. 2.3 Financial and administrative matters
Res. 2.4 Supplementary Conservation Grants Fund
Res. 2.5 Follow up of the Resolutions/Recommendations for the triennium 2004 – 2007
Res. 2.6 Regional Representatives to the Scientific Committee
Res. 2.7 Working Program 2005 – 2007
Res. 2.8 Framework guidelines on the granting of exceptions for the purpose of non-lethal in situ research aimed at maintaining a favourable conservation status for cetaceans
Res. 2.9 Contribution to CBD/CMS Joint Work Programme
Res. 2.10 Facilitation of exchange of tissue samples
Res. 2.11 Facilitation of scientific research campaigns and programs
Res. 2.12 Guidelines for the use of Acoustic Deterrent Devices
Res. 2.13 Pelagic gillnets
Res. 2.14 Protected Areas and Cetacean Conservation
Res. 2.15 Guidelines on Tissue Banks
Res. 2.16 Assessment and impact assessment of Man-Made Noise
Res. 2.17 On the release of cetaceans into the wild
Res. 2.19 Abundance and distribution of cetaceans within the ACCOBAMS area
Res. 2.20 Conservation Plan for Short-Beaked Common Dolphins (*Delphinus Delphis*)
Res. 2.21 Assessment and mitigation of the adverse impacts of interactions between cetaceans and fishing activities in the ACCOBAMS area
Res. 2.22 Relation with IUCN
Res. 2.23 Education Strategy and programs
Res. 2.25 Prey Depletion
Res. 2.27 Date, venue and funding of the Third Session of the Meeting of the Parties
Res. 2.28 On the promotion of Photo-Identification activities
Res. 2.29 Tribute to organisers
Res. 2.30 Recognising the important role of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOS) in Cetacean Conservation

Recommendations

- Rec. 2.1** Identification and encouragement of economic activities participating to the mitigation of Human - Cetacean impacts
Rec. 2.2 Advisory role of ACCOBAMS in CITES Appendices Amendments
Rec. 2.3 Advisory role of ACCOBAMS in CMS Appendices Amendments