



Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels

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A Review of ACAP's Strategy for Engaging with RFMOs

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A Review of ACAP's Strategy for Engaging with RFMOs

Abstract

At AC4 a strategy was adopted to facilitate the Agreement's engagement with Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs). It was agreed to trial a process whereby a RFMO Coordinator would be nominated for selected RFMO meetings to facilitate the exchange of information and products between ACAP and the RFMO, and to coordinate agreed positions amongst ACAP Parties and Range States attending the RFMO meetings (refer to AC4 Doc 56 rev 1).

The operation of the process since AC4 is reviewed in this paper, and recommendations made to strengthen the operation of the strategy.

Engagement with Regional Fisheries Management Organisations¹

The RFMO engagement strategy adopted at AC4 has proven to be effective overall; however, there are two areas that need to be addressed. The first is a capacity issue, and in particular the work-load for the RFMO Coordinators and the amount of time required to undertake this role effectively. The second is the need to improve the transfer of information to ACAP Parties' representatives within fisheries meetings, to ensure they understand and are supportive of the messages and positions being put forward by ACAP. This paper does not review progress made within individual RFMOs, as this will be reviewed at the Seabird Bycatch Working Group (SBWG-3) meeting, being held immediately prior to AC5.

RFMO Coordinator Capacity

Experience has shown that to be effective, a RFMO Coordinator must be prepared to devote a significant amount of time to this role. Typically, an RFMO Coordinator will spend around two weeks preparing briefing material and coordinating positions with ACAP Parties, Range States and NGOs attending the meeting. As the meetings are normally of one week duration a single meeting may require 3-4 weeks work. As each RFMO has two or more meetings each year, the workload may easily equate to two months a year per RFMO.

RFMO Coordinators were provided for some, but not all of the fishing agencies/RFMOs. During 2008 and 2009, the Secretariat (Executive Secretary and Technical Officer), the Chair of the Advisory Committee and Dr Carlos Moreno, with support from a number of Parties,

¹ The term RFMO is used in this context to include marine conservation organisations such as the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), which technically are not RFMOs.

coordinated the Agreement's work in CCAMLR, CCSBT, IATTC, IOTC, SPRFMO and WCPFC. No RFMO Coordinators were available for ICCAT and SEAFO meetings.

The \$30,000 allocated from the Advisory Committee Work Programme to support attendance at RFMO meetings has proven to be sufficient to attend selected meetings, although as noted above a number of RFMOs were not supported by a RFMO Coordinator. The proposal at the Kobe II meeting (Second Joint Meeting of Tuna Regional Fisheries Management Organizations, San Sebastian, June 29 – July 3, 2009) to create a single advisory group to provide advice on bycatch related issues to the five tuna RFMOs could result in significant cost-savings and efficiencies, and relieve some of the current resource constraints.

However, given the work-load and the resources required, it is unlikely that the Agreement will have, in the short to medium term, the capacity to provide RFMO Coordinators for all RFMO meetings. To over-come these capacity constraints it is recommended that the Agreement prioritise those meetings it will attend using two criteria: 1) the likelihood of being able to progress the Agreement's agenda within the meeting/RFMO; and 2) targeting those RFMOs where the most at-risk populations/species are being caught. Although these populations/species have not yet been identified, it is expected that the conservation prioritisation process currently being developed will provide this information.

Advancing ACAP Positions at RFMO Meetings

The second issue that needs consideration in relation to our engagement strategy is ensuring that our Parties' representatives at RFMO meetings are aware of, and support, positions and products being put forward by ACAP. Parties' representatives at RFMO meetings are unlikely to be the same as those attending ACAP meetings and it was clearly apparent at a number of meetings that Parties' representatives had not been briefed on ACAP's agenda, or chose not to follow the brief given. In one instance, a Party's representative had no knowledge of the Agreement or its work.

This lack of understanding amongst ACAP Parties' representatives can seriously impede progress. For example, at CCAMLR XXVIII held in November last year, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between ACAP and CCAMLR was put forward for the meeting's consideration. This MoU followed the template adopted at MoP3 and relevant ACAP Parties were contacted prior to the CCAMLR meeting to seek their delegations' support for the MoU. However, during the course of CCAMLR XXVIII, a number of ACAP Parties proposed amendments to the MoU with the result that it appeared the MoU would not be adopted. It was only at the last minute and after extensive negotiations that the MoU was adopted by CCAMLR, with substantive amendments. It should be noted that objections to the MoU only came from CCAMLR Members that were also ACAP Parties. This example highlights the need to ensure that Parties' delegations attending fisheries meetings are adequately briefed and are supportive of ACAP products and/or positions.

To address this situation it is recommended that National Contact Points are provided with information on ACAP positions well in advance of the meeting so they have adequate time to gain whole-of-government support. ACAP Parties could also encourage greater participation of their fisheries management agencies in ACAP meetings/work so they have a better appreciation of the outcomes being sought at RFMO meetings to further seabird conservation.

The further development and distribution of ACAP products, such as the RFMO-specific engagement strategies, risk assessment recommendations and observer programme protocols to Parties' representatives at these meetings will also facilitate the advancement of our positions. It will also lighten the work-load of the RFMO Coordinators, as agreement will already have been reached amongst the Parties on key issues to be addressed within the RFMOs. It is recommended that the development of these products be given a high priority by the Advisory Committee.

Recommendations

1. ACAP prioritises the RFMO meetings it will attend on the basis of the likelihood of being able to progress the Agreement's agenda within the meeting/RFMO; and targeting those RFMOs where the most at-risk populations/species are being caught;
2. National Contact Points are provided with information on ACAP positions well in advance of the meeting so Parties have adequate time to gain whole-of-government support; and
3. ACAP parties encourage greater participation of their fisheries management agencies in ACAP meetings/work so they have a better appreciation of the outcomes being sought at RFMO meetings to further the conservation of albatrosses and petrels.
4. That the Advisory Committee give a high priority to the completion of products to be used in RFMO meetings, such as RFMO specific engagement strategies, risk assessment recommendations and observer programme protocols.