

 <p>Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels</p>	<p><b>Thirteenth Meeting of the Advisory Committee</b> <i>Edinburgh, United Kingdom, 22 – 26 May 2023</i></p> <p><b>Identification of conservation actions to booster the implementation of the MoU between ACAP and IAC</b></p> <p><b><i>IAC Scientific Committee (Victoria González Carman, Heriberto Santana, Javier Quiñones, Leslie Bustos, Jennifer Suarez, Victor Chocho), IAC Secretary (Verónica Cáceres) &amp; PaCSWG Co-convenor (Marco Favero)</i></b></p>
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### **SUMMARY**

In 2016 the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC) to facilitate the cooperation between the Secretariats of both organisations. The Memorandum was recently renewed in 2023 and the IAC Scientific Committee tasked a working group to develop a strategy to assist in its implementation. Potential areas of collaboration include electronic monitoring, the identification of important areas for seabirds and sea turtles, bycatch mitigation in artisanal and small-scale fisheries, and the generation of advice for Regional Fisheries Management Organisations. The document presents the interest demonstrated by the IAC in bringing the MoU with ACAP to another level, with substantial conservation actions supporting what it is stated in the Memorandum. Following the example of the IAC, the Advisory Committee may consider the inclusion in the ACAP Advisory Committee Work Programme the collaboration with IAC SC working group, taking into consideration the discussions with the IAC Scientific Committee, and advise on further steps to booster the implementation of the MoU between both organisations.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Advisory Committee take into consideration the discussions with the IAC Scientific Committee and advise on further steps to booster the implementation of the MoU between both organisations.

## **1. BACKGROUND**

In 2016 the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC). The MoU was signed to facilitate the cooperation between the Secretariats of both organisations '*with a view to supporting efforts to maintain a favourable conservation status and minimise the incidental by-catch of albatrosses and petrels, and sea turtles*'.

In 2021 the IAC Scientific Committee tasked a working group to develop a strategy to assist the implementation of the MoU, with Scientific Committee members from Argentina (coordinator), Chile, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru in the group. The approach was either for both organisations to work together to improve results in areas relevant to both agendas (e.g. collaboration with RFMOs), or for one of the organisations to progress in certain areas/topics by taking advantage of the experience already available in the other organisation (e.g. ACAP advice on electronic monitoring, IAC experience in artisanal and small-scale fisheries and application of models such as EASI-FISH to assess vulnerability of data limited bycatch species to fisheries).

The MoU was originally signed for a period of six years and recently renewed in 2023 with both organisations demonstrating interest in identifying conservation tasks that would booster the collaboration. This document specifically describes the discussions around the 19th Meeting of the IAC Scientific Committee (SC19) held in November 2022 to develop such a plan of action.

## **2. TOWARDS IDENTIFYING AREAS OF COMMON INTEREST**

Following is a brief description of areas of interest identified by the IAC Scientific Committee (SC) during recent meetings in discussions with ACAP representatives and the IAC Secretariat.

### **2.1. Electronic Monitoring**

The IAC agreed to make progress undertaking a review of literature relevant to the use of electronic monitoring (EM) systems to monitor sea turtle interaction with fisheries, taking advantage of information compiled in the ACAP advice (SBWG10 Doc 14 Rev 1, ACAP Guidelines on Electronic Monitoring Systems for Fisheries). IAC SC interest in these matters are clearly linked with the updated Resolution on Reduction of the Adverse Impacts of Fisheries on Sea Turtles adopted in 2022 [Resolution CIT-COP10-2022-R7](#) urging Parties to improve the collection of quantitative data on sea turtle interaction with fisheries through, for example, the implementation of EM programs. This review of literature is currently in progress. So far, it remains unclear what kind of tangible collaboration may occur but there is potential for discussing approaches leading to the promotion and development of EM in a way that would be beneficial at a multi-taxa level.

### **2.2. Important geographic areas**

Discussions during the meeting indicated some lack of clarity regarding the final purpose of the task on identifying geographic areas of common interest, in particular regarding what conservation actions would take place once those areas are identified. Although this action

wasn't left behind, it may need further brainstorming to have a better understanding of the final goal.

### **2.3. Artisanal and small-scale fisheries**

In recent meetings there were references to the interest demonstrated and progress made by ACAP to develop mitigation advice for artisanal and small-scale fisheries in the form of a mitigation toolbox ([Mangel et al. 2017 SBWG8 Doc 16](#)). The experience that the IAC has (particularly the expertise held by the SC) may be of value for ACAP in developing approaches allowing a better understanding of social and technical issues in such fisheries, including data collection (methods and forms) and bycatch mitigation, among others.

### **2.4. Collaboration with RFMOs**

Finally, and in a way linking some of the points above, there were multiple discussions on possible mechanisms to jointly improve the collaboration with Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs), in particular the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) and the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT). Although some areas like bycatch mitigation might result more challenging (not impossible), issues like the need of improving observer coverage, the merit of revising and eventually refining observer protocols, and the building of capacities in observer programs to improve data quality might be easier and quick to be implemented through the joint submission of meeting papers. That strategy has the potential of gaining critical mass for the consideration of relevant issues at a multi-taxa level. In addition, IAC SC has collaborated with IATTC in a paper on “vulnerability status and efficacy of potential conservation measures for the east pacific leatherback turtle stock using the EASI-FISH approach”. This was done as a way of testing the effectiveness of sea turtle conservation management measures included in IATTC resolution C-19-04. The IAC experience in data sharing among many nations of both conventions, and testing bycatch mitigation methods with a model approach could be something of interest to ACAP regarding the lessons learned from such collaboration. This was referenced at previous IAC SC meetings as the value that IAC has showed at building strong technical partnerships with RFMOs.

## **3. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This document presents the interest demonstrated by the IAC in bringing the MoU with ACAP to another level, with substantial conservation actions supporting what is stated in the Memorandum. Following the example of the IAC, the Advisory Committee may wish to consider including in the ACAP Advisory Committee Work Programme the collaboration with IAC SC working group, taking into consideration the discussions with the IAC Scientific Committee, and advise on further steps to booster the implementation of the MoU between both organisations.