Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels

Fifth Meeting of the Parties

Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Spain, 4 - 8 May 2015

Report on Progress with the Implementation of the Agreement 2013 - 2015

Advisory Committee, Secretariat

SUMMARY

This report has been compiled pursuant to Article X (j) and in fulfilment of Articles VII (1)(c) and IX (6)(d) of the Agreement. The information contained within Section 1 of this report has been obtained by the Secretariat from Parties pursuant to Article VII (1) (c) and Article VIII (10). Section 2 contains information provided by Parties to the Advisory Committee (AC) on an annual basis to enable it to conduct an assessment of the status and trends of albatross and petrel populations. Section 3 identifies difficulties encountered in the implementation of the Agreement.

All thirteen ACAP Parties and the United States of America, a participating non-Party, contributed information to Section 1.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Advisory Committee and the Secretariat recommend that Parties and where appropriate, participating non-Party Range States continue:

(i) to address high priority at-sea threats in accordance with the conservation priorities (see **MoP5 Doc 15**);

(ii) to address high priority land-based threats in accordance with the conservation priorities (see MoP5 Doc 15);

(iii) to ensure that appropriate mechanisms are established/maintained to identify seabird bycatch in relevant fisheries and to monitor the implementation of effective bycatch mitigation;

(iv) to review the efficacy of seabird bycatch mitigation measures used in the fisheries that they manage on the basis of the information provided by the SBWG and explore the performance of new mitigation technologies and related safety and other operational issues;

(v) to support the collection and provision of seabird bycatch data by RFMOs that they are members of;

(vi) their priority population monitoring programmes, including maintaining long-term monitoring (see AC8 Doc 11, p. 11-16);

(vii) to implement best practice monitoring practices that include censuses of breeding sites conducted at a minimum of 10 year intervals, and annual monitoring of population trend and demography at a minimum of one representative site for each island group;

(viii) to conduct priority tracking programmes to enable a better understanding of at-sea distribution (see AC8 Doc 11, p. 16-18);

(ix) to update the ACAP database on an ongoing basis to maintain the currency of analyses;

(x) to support the allocation of funds for the operation of the Advisory Committee to enable its effective operation, taking into account the growth in the complexity and number of matters it now addresses;

(xi) to provide the necessary resources for the conduct of the research and conservation programmes identified by the Advisory Committee's Working Groups (see **MoP5 Doc 16**);

(xii) effective domestic consultation processes to facilitate implementation of the Agreement.

This summary report has been compiled by the Advisory Committee and the Secretariat to provide MoP5 with a succinct overview of progress that has been made with implementation of the Agreement since MoP4 and to recommend a set of actions that should be undertaken in the next triennium to further the Agreement's objective. The information provided by Parties, Range States and others is detailed in information papers submitted to AC8 (AC8 Inf 03 to AC8 Inf 16) and summarised in AC8 Doc 15 by the Secretariat and Advisory Committee Officials.

Section 1 of this report provides an overview of information provided by Parties and participating non-Parties pursuant to Article VII (1) (c) and Article VIII (10) of the Agreement. **Section 2** provides a review of changes in the status and trends of the albatrosses and petrels listed under Annex 1 of the Agreement. **Section 3** identifies difficulties encountered in the implementation of the Agreement.

SECTION 1 - SUMMARY OF INFORMATION PROVIDED BY PARTIES PURSUANT TO ARTICLE VII (1) (C) AND ARTICLE VIII (10)

Implementation reports were received from all thirteen Parties. In addition, one Range State provided a report on actions they had taken relevant to the Agreement's work. The reports received followed the reporting format prescribed in Annex 8 of the report of the Third Meeting of the ACAP Advisory Committee (AC3), and covered the period April 2011 to March 2014, as well as earlier information where relevant. Not all respondents reported against every reporting item.

SECTION 2 - REPORT ON THE STATUS AND TRENDS OF ALBATROSSES AND PETRELS INCLUDING INFORMATION REQUIRED UNDER SECTION 5.1 OF THE ACTION PLAN

2.1. Assessment and review of the status of populations of albatrosses and petrels (item 5.1.a).

2.1.1. Current Conservation Status

With the addition of the Critically Endangered Balearic shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus* by MoP4, there are currently 30 seabird species listed by ACAP in Annex 1 of the Agreement. Of these, 20 (67%) are classified at risk of extinction, a stark contrast to the overall rate of 12% for the 9,799 bird species worldwide. Of the 22 species of albatrosses listed by ACAP, three are listed as *Critically Endangered*, five are *Endangered*, seven are *Vulnerable* and seven are *Near Threatened*. Of the eight petrel species, one is currently listed as *Critically Endangered*, four as *Vulnerable,* one as *Near Threatened* and two species as *Least Concern* (**Table 1**).

2.1.2. Changes in Status and Trends since MoP4

Since MoP4 (2012), there has been a change in the status of three ACAP species, reflecting reviews by BirdLife International, the listing authority for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). These species are Black-browed and Black-footed albatross, *Thalassarche melanophris* and *Phoebastria nigripes* respectively (downlisted to Near Threatened), and Grey-headed albatross, *Thalassarche chrysostoma* (uplisted to Endangered).

2.1.3. Status of knowledge relating to population size and trends

Since MoP4 substantial progress was made in determining the population trend of ACAP species over the last twenty years (since early 1990s). This period was considered appropriate to reflect the trend of these long lived species, some of which breed only every two years, and which may show high annual variation in breeding numbers.

Twelve ACAP species (40%) are currently showing overall population declines. For two species (*c.* 7%), the trend over the last 20 years is unknown. Eight species (*c*. 27%) appear to have been stable over that time period, with a further eight species increasing. The confidence of the assigned trend in Table 1 reflects both the accuracy and extent of the population data.

Some gaps in population data remain for a number of breeding sites, despite recent monitoring efforts to address these gaps. There are three albatross species and one petrel species in three island groups which account for at least 5% of the species' total global breeding pairs, which have not been censused at that island group in the last 20 years. Five albatross populations on four islands which were estimated to hold more than 10% of a species' global breeding pairs have not had a population estimate update in the last 20 years or more. These gaps often reflect the challenges of site remoteness and access issues, as well as the large number of breeding sites within certain jurisdictions.

A series of species assessments which describe succinctly the state of knowledge of each of the ACAP species are available on the ACAP website in the three languages of the Agreement.

Table 1. *2014 Summary of Status of ACAP Albatross and Petrel species*

IUCN Status 2014[1]	Common name	Number of sites (ACAP)[2]	Single Country Endemic	Annual breeding pairs (ACAP)[3]	Population Trend 1993-2013[4]	Trend Confidence
CR	Amsterdam Albatross	1	France	31	↑	High
CR	Balearic Shearwater	5	Spain	2,954	↓	Medium
CR	Tristan Albatross	1	UK	1,650	↓	High
CR	Waved Albatross	1	Ecuador	9,615	↓	Low
EN	Atlantic yellow-nosed Albatross	6	UK	33,650	↔	Low
EN	Grey-headed Albatross	29		97,716	↓	Medium
EN	Indian yellow-nosed Albatross	6		39,320	↓	Medium
EN	Northern royal Albatross	5	NZ	5,782	?	-
EN	Sooty Albatross	15		12,170	↓	Very Low
VU	Antipodean Albatross	6	NZ	8,274	↓	Medium
VU	Black Petrel	2	NZ	1,577	↓	Medium
VU	Campbell Albatross	2	NZ	21,648	↔	Low
VU	Chatham Albatross	1	NZ	5,245	↔	Medium
VU	Salvin's Albatross	12	NZ	42,219	↓	Low
VU	Short-tailed Albatross	2		592	↑	High
VU	Southern royal Albatross	4	NZ	7,941	↔	Medium
VU	Spectacled Petrel	1	UK	14,400	↑	High
VU	Wandering Albatross	28		8,132	↓	High
VU	Westland Petrel	1	NZ	2,827	↔	Low
VU	White-chinned Petrel	73		1,057,930	↓	Very Low
NT	Black-browed Albatross	65		673,048	↑	High
NT	Black-footed Albatross	13		71,592	↑	High
NT	Buller's Albatross	10	NZ	29,948	↔	Low
NT	Grey Petrel	17		79,649	↓	Very Low
NT	Laysan Albatross	17		676,785	↔	High
NT	Light-mantled Albatross	71		12,082	↔	Low
NT	Shy Albatross	3	Australia	14,618	↑	Low
NT	White-capped Albatross	5	NZ	100,525	?	-
LC	Northern giant Petrel	50		10,318	↑	Medium
LC	Southern giant Petrel	119		47,083	↑	Medium

[1] ***IUCN Status:*** *CR =Critically Endangered, EN = Endangered, VU = Vulnerable, NT = Near Threatened, LC = Least Concern.* IUCN 2014. *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*. <www.iucnredlist.org>.
[2] ***Site:*** *usually an entire, distinct island or islet, or section of a large island*
[3] ACAP database. <data.acap.aq>. May 2014.
[4] ***ACAP Trend:*** *↑ increasing, ↓declining, ↔ stable, ? unknown*

2.2. Identification of internationally important breeding sites (item 5.1.b)

The ACAP database lists 194 sites that hold more than 1% of the global population of each ACAP species where population numbers are known. Most ACAP species breed at relatively

few sites; for 13 of the 30 species, there are only 1-3 sites that hold internationally important numbers (i.e. >1% of the global population).

It should be recognised that (i) census data are unavailable for approximately a third of breeding sites, particularly those of the White-chinned Petrel and the Light-mantled Albatross, and (ii) some counts are of low reliability or were collected a decade or more ago. Filling these gaps and obtaining updated population estimates should be considered a priority. There are also some inconsistencies in the scale at which breeding sites were defined by Parties when the ACAP database was set up, such that large islands may be entered as a single site, or split.

2.3. Reviews to characterise the foraging range and migration routes and patterns of populations of albatrosses and petrels (item 5.1.c).

BirdLife International has now compiled and summarized all the available information on tracking studies undertaken on ACAP-listed species, including data that have not yet been deposited in the *Tracking Ocean Wanderers (TOW)* database, into a single metadata table. This will be regularly updated in order to assess where major gaps in knowledge of the at sea distribution of these species occur, thus helping set future study priorities. The TOW database includes tracks of ACAP species collected from 89 colonies covering a range of life-history stages..The gap analysis highlighted that breeding season data are available for all ACAP species, and that while tracking data are available during the non-breeding season for most species, this is from very few juveniles and immatures.

A number of priority tracking programmes have been identified and ACAP Parties and Range States are encouraged to submit new data sets to the TOW as part of the on-going work of the Agreement.

The ACAP Species Assessments also include distribution maps as well as maps showing satellite-transmitter and other tracking data for breeding and non-breeding birds where available. These maps have been prepared by BirdLife International based on information in the TOW Database and other sources.

2.4. Identification and assessment of known and suspected threats affecting albatrosses and petrels (item 5.1.d)

2.4.1. Threats at breeding sites

ACAP has adopted a system for standardising the listing of threats to breeding sites adapted from criteria produced initially by IUCN and the Conservation Measures Partnership. Each threat is assessed according to the Scope (proportion of population affected) and Severity (intensity), that when combined provide an indication of the magnitude of the threat. These consider not only current impact, but also the anticipated impact over the next decade, assuming the continuation of current conditions and trends. A breakdown of the proportion of sites, and of the global population that are subjected to threats that meet these criteria are listed below (**Table 2**). The vast majority of these relate to introduced mammals or disease and are described in section 5.1h) below. The remainder involve natural disasters.

Table 2. *Species affected by land threats at 1% or more of breeding sites, or 1% or more of the population affected. Green <1%; Orange 1-33%; Red >33%*

Species	No of sites	% of sites									% of global population								
		Natural disaster	Contamination	Light pollution	Human disturbance	Parasite or pathogen	Predation by alien species	Habitat loss or destruction by alien species	Stress by alien species	All threats	Natural disaster	Contamination	Light pollution	Human disturbance	Parasite or Pathogen	Predation by alien species	Habitat loss or destruction by alien species	Stress by alien species	All threats
Diomedea antipodensis	6	0	0	0	0	0	16.7	0	0	**16.7**	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	**1**
Diomedea dabbenena	1	0	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	**100**	0	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	**100**
Diomedea epomophora	4	0	0	0	0	0	25	0	0	**25**	0	0	0	0	0	<1	0	0	**<1**
Diomedea exulans	35	0	0	0	0	0	5.7	0	0	**5.7**	0	0	0	0	0	28.8	0	0	**28.8**
Phoebastria albatrus	2	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**50**	91.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**91.7**
Phoebastria immutabilis	17	35.3	0	0	5.9	0	17.6	0	0	**58.8**	99.7	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	**99.8**
Phoebastria irrorata	3	0	0	0	33.3	33.3	0	0	33.3	**66.7**	0	0	0	0.1	99.9	0	0	0.1	**100**
Phoebastria nigripes	15	46.7	6.7	0	6.7	0	6.7	13.3	0	**60**	98.2	33.9	0	0	0	0	38.2	0	**98.2**
Phoebetria fusca	15	0	0	0	0	6.7	6.7	0	0	**13.3**	0	0	0	0	3.3	12.1	0	0	**15.4**
Phoebetria palpebrata	72	1.4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**1.4**	?	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**?**
Procellaria aequinoctialis	74	0	0	0	0	0	18.9	6.8	0	**18.9**	0	0	0	0	0	37.8	17.8	0	**37.8**
Procellaria cinerea	17	0	0	0	0	0	35.3	11.8	0	**35.3**	0	0	0	0	0	27.9	4.5	0	**27.9**
Puffinus mauretanicus	5	0	0	60	40	0	100	0	0	**100**	0	0	64.4	44.9	0	100	0	0	**100**
Thalassarche carteri	6	0	0	0	0	16.7	0	0	0	**16.7**	0	0	0	0	68.7	0	0	0	**68.7**
Thalassarche cauta	3	0	0	0	0	33.3	0	33.3	0	**66.7**	0	0	0	0	66.8	0	2.3	0	**69.2**
Thalassarche melanophris	65	1.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**1.5**	<1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**<1**
Thalassarche steadi	5	0	0	0	0	0	20	0	0	**20**	0	0	0	0	0	5.6	0	0	**5.6**

2.4.2. Threats at sea

Albatrosses and petrels face many threats at sea including ingestion of marine debris including fishing hooks discarded in fish offal, entanglement in lost fishing gear and other marine debris, contamination from pollutants and over-fishing of prey species. However, direct interactions with fishing operations have been identified by ACAP and others as a major threat causing widespread declines in populations throughout the world. All ACAP listed species are at risk from this threat. Since MoP4 much of the Seabird Bycatch Working Group's work has focussed on reviewing best practice mitigation advice for industrial fishing gear types, principally demersal and pelagic longline, and trawl gear, as well collection of fisheries bycatch data, and engagement with RFMOs, particularly the tuna RFMO's.

The data underlying a prioritisation framework for at-sea threats has also been reviewed since MoP4. The framework provides a robust basis for decision-making to set, monitor and report on progress against priority conservation actions for ACAP listed species. Twenty seven fisheries and 28 seabird populations have been identified as priority targets for action during this latest iteration of the prioritisation process.

2.5. Identification of methods by which these threats may be avoided or mitigated (item 5.1.e)

2.5.1. Threats at breeding sites

A new best practice document "Guidelines for translocations of albatrosses and burrow-nesting petrels and shearwaters" has been finalised since MoP4. Translocation of albatrosses and petrels should be considered as a conservation tool when populations can be enhanced by moving birds back to sites where they have previously occurred as part of an ecological restoration or as part of an assisted colonization of a new site in response to emerging threats at existing colonies. Two other resources, Eradication Guidelines and Biosecurity Guidelines have also been updated.

2.5.2. Threats at sea

Based on reviews of mitigation developed for pelagic longline, demersal longline and trawl gear types, the SBWG has updated advice on current best scientific approaches to mitigating bycatch in these gear types to assist RFMOs and ACAP parties in managing bycatch in their fisheries. The best practice advice, including descriptions of measures, current knowledge, implementation guidance and research needs is available on the ACAP website and is suitable for dissemination to relevant fisheries managers. RFMOs and Parties have been encouraged to use the materials to guide the development of policy and practice within the fisheries under their jurisdiction

2.6. Review and updating of data on the mortality of albatrosses and petrels in fisheries (item 5.1.f).

A web-based reporting system has been progressively developed for the capture and use of fisheries and bycatch data from Parties and collaborating Range States. Currently, the data are provided at the level of the entire fishery or fleet, a temporal and spatial resolution which is too coarse to enable useful assessments of seabird bycatch levels and trends. For many

fisheries, the bycatch and fisheries data submitted by Parties are also incomplete, hampering the possibility of conducting even a low level assessment of bycatch levels and trends of ACAP-listed species. Spatial and temporal stratification of the reported data has been recommended (i.e. to report bycatch and fishing effort for each 5x5 degree square and year quarter), to provide a more accurate and meaningful estimates of the number of seabirds killed each year. Following discussions at SBWG6, a recommendation was made to first define clearly the bycatch indicators that would be used by ACAP to measure and track bycatch of ACAP species. Once these indicators are defined, the data, methodological approaches to estimating bycatch, and reporting requirements can be determined.

2.7. Review of data on the distribution and seasonality of effort in fisheries which affect albatrosses and petrels (item 5.1.g)

Some data on fishing effort has been provided by Parties as part of their annual reporting (see 2.6 above). However, there has been no recent comprehensive review of effort as relevant to albatross and petrel distribution. The seabird distribution (tracking)-fishing effort overlap maps are scheduled to be updated in the 2016-2018 triennium (Action 3.2 of the AC Work Programme). These maps will provide useful information for the upcoming reviews planned by some RFMOs to assess the effectiveness of seabird bycatch mitigation measures within their areas of jurisdiction. Consequently, the scheduling and prioritisation of these updates will be influenced by the RFMO work plans.

2.8. Reviews of the status at breeding sites of introduced animals, plants and disease-causing organisms known or believed to be detrimental to albatrosses and petrels (item 5.1.h).

Habitat destruction and predation by introduced mammals are listed far more frequently than any other processes as threats to breeding sites of ACAP species. Those affecting the most breeding sites (site-species combinations) were predation by feral cat *Felis catus,* black rat *Rattus rattus* and brown rat *R. norvegicus*, and habitat destruction by reindeer *Rangifer tarandus* (**Table 3**). All other threats affected only a few sites, although were severe in some cases (Medium or High according to the agreed threat criteria), which included the effects of avian cholera at Amsterdam Island (**Table 4**). The species affected at the most breeding sites were the burrow-nesting White-chinned Petrel *P. aequinoctialis*, and Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus,* mainly because of predation or habitat destruction by introduced mammals. In interpreting the tables below and the conclusions, it should be noted that: (1) threats only include those that are documented and known or likely to cause a population decline in <10 years, (2) values in the tables are the number of breeding sites, equivalent to each species-site combination *i.e.* two species breeding in the same area constitute two breeding sites, (3) although most islands are listed as one site, a small number have been subdivided into separate sites, and (4) no attempt has been made to consider the number of birds or the percentage of the global population at each site.

Table 3. *Number of breeding sites of ACAP species affected by threats of different magnitude (Low to Very high).*

Nature of Threat	Threat subcategory	Threat Species	Number of breeding sites affected:				
			Low	Medium	High	Very High	All
Contamination	Toxins - man made	-	1				**1**
Habitat loss or destruction	Habitat destruction by alien species	Reindeer	6				**6**
	Increased competition with native species	Australasian gannet			1		**1**
	Vegetation encroachment		3				**3**
Human disturbance	Military action	-		2			**2**
	Recreation/tourism	-	1	2			**3**
Light pollution	Collision injury or grounding	-	3				**3**
Parasite or pathogen	Pathogen	Avian pox virus	1				**1**
		Avian cholera.	1	1			**2**
Predation by alien species	Predation by alien species	Dog		1			**1**
		Cat	12	2	2		**16**
		Pig	4				**4**
		House mouse	1	1			**2**
		Polynesian rat	1				**1**
		Brown (Norwegian) rat	7				**7**
		Black (ship) rat	13				**13**
Stress by alien species	Nest desertion	Black (ship) rat			1		**1**
All			**54**	**9**	**4**	**0**	**67**

Table 4. *Breeding sites of ACAP species affected by threats of Medium or High magnitude*

Nature of Threat	Threat subcategory	Threat Species	Breeding sites affected:	
			Medium	High
Habitat loss or destruction	Increased competition with native species	Australasian gannet		Pedra Branca - Shy albatross
Human disturbance	Military action	-	Kaula – Laysan albatross Kaula – Black-footed albatross	
	Recreation/ tourism	-	Ibiza – Balearic shearwater Isla de la Plata – Waved albatross	
Parasite or pathogen	Pathogen	Avian cholera	Falaise d'Entrecasteaux (île Amsterdam) - Indian yellow-nosed albatross	
Predation by alien species	Predation by alien species	Dog	O'ahu – Laysan albatross	
		Cat	Isla Guadalupe – Laysan albatross O'ahu – Laysan albatross	Formentera – Balearic shearwater Menorca – Balearic shearwater
		House mouse	Gough Island – Tristan albatross	
Stress by alien species	Nest desertion	Black (ship) rat		Isla de la Plata – Waved albatross

The highest five priority actions with regard to Habitat loss or destruction/predation by alien species would be to remove Cats from Grande Terre (Kerguelen), House Mouse from Gough Island, Reindeer from Grande Terre (Kerguelen), and Cats from Formentera and Menorca. The highest priority action with regard to a Parasite or Pathogen would be to address the problem of Avian cholera at Ile Amsterdam.

There have been three whole island eradications since MoP4. The successful eradication of rabbits, mice and black rats from Macquarie Island has been confirmed in April 2014. Feasibility plans have also been produced for a number of other sites, and in some cases planning is well advanced and eradications are scheduled for the next few years**.**

A review of parasites, pathogens and diseases in ACAP species has also been updated since MoP4.

2.9. Reviews of the nature of, coverage by, and effectiveness of, protection arrangements for albatrosses and petrels (item 5.1.i).

All species in all jurisdictions are now covered by management plans, including NPOAs for incidental bycatch, Threat Abatement Plans, Conservation Strategies, Conservation Action Plans, Recovery Plans and Site Management Plans. However, Parties will need to provide advice as to the effectiveness of those protection arrangements, prior to MoP4.

2.10. Reviews of recent and current research on albatrosses and petrels with relevance to their conservation status (item 5.1.j)

See 1.5 above and relevant papers tabled at SBWG6 and PaCWG2.

This review is ongoing through all Working Groups and the Secretariat, who produce Species Assessments, Action Plans and Best Practice Guidelines. The following documents have been completed to date*:*

- Biosecurity and quarantine guidelines for ACAP breeding sites
- Census guidelines to assist with the development and implementation of plans to census ACAP species
- Guidelines for eradication of introduced mammals from breeding sites of ACAP-listed seabirds
- Thirty Species Assessments

The Secretariat maintains a bibliographic reference database of relevant literature which supports the compilation and updating of these documents.

2.11. List of authorities, research centres, scientists and non-government organisations concerned with albatrosses and petrels (item 5.1.k).

The ACAP website provides a comprehensive list of links to various centres, institutions, organisations and websites concerned with albatrosses and petrels.

2.12. Directory of legislation concerning albatrosses and petrels (item 5.1.l)

The ACAP database holds information on legislation relevant to species listed on Annex 1 and their breeding sites.

2.13. Reviews of education and information programmes aimed at conserving albatrosses and petrels (item 5.1.m)

Parties reported on a range of programmes being undertaken, including education, training and outreach. Collaboration between Governmental agencies and NGOs was evident in most of cases. The main targets were observer programmes (training for the identification of species and observation protocols), fishermen and the public in general. See details of these programmes in section 1.6 above.

2.14. Review of current taxonomy in relation to albatrosses and petrels (item 5.1.n).

The TWG recommended no changes to the current ACAP taxonomic approach.

2.15. Identified gaps in information as part of the above reviews, with a view to addressing these in future priorities (item 5.2).

The following gaps in the information provided were identified:

- Census data are unavailable for approximately a third of breeding sites and some counts are of low reliability or were collected a decade or more ago.
- Gaps remain in demographic data for a third of the species
- Gaps in the tracking data for albatross and petrels have been identified and ACAP Parties are encouraged to submit new data sets as part of the on-going work of the Agreement.
- Scarcity of information especially at an appropriate resolution, on seabird mortality in a large number of fisheries
- Lack of understanding of the magnitude and dynamics of seabird mortality in artisanal fisheries.

SECTION 3 - NEXT STEPS FOR THE AGREEMENT

3.1. Amendments to the Action Plan

No amendments have been proposed to the Action Plan (Annex 2 to the Agreement).

3.2. Achievements and difficulties with implementing the Agreement

Some progress has been made on the three key outcomes identified at MoP4 for the 2013-2015 triennium. These were:

(i) Improvement in the quality of seabird by-catch data and fishing effort provided by the Parties.

A review of fisheries data submitted by Parties (SBWG5 Doc 16) highlighted that the temporal and spatial resolution of the data were too coarse to enable useful assessments of seabird bycatch levels and trends. Consequently, at SBWG5 it was recommended that data should be provided at a spatial scale of at least 5x5 degrees grid-square for each quarter of the year. A number of Parties submitted data at this level for consideration at SBWG6. Following discussion about whether the Parties should analyse their own data and routinely submit the results to ACAP, or whether the raw or aggregated data should be sent to ACAP for analyses, a recommendation was made to first define clearly the bycatch indicators that would be used by ACAP to measure and track bycatch of ACAP species. Once these indicators are defined and agreed, the data, methodological approaches to estimating bycatch, and reporting requirements will be able to be determined.

(ii) Implementation of best practice mitigation measures in both domestic and high seas fisheries.

As mentioned earlier, many Parties and RFMOs have adopted fisheries management measures based on ACAP's best practice advice, although in many cases this advice has only been adopted partially. The low level of observer coverage in many domestic and high seas fisheries has made it difficult to assess the level of implementation being achieved.

(iii) Filling gaps in data relating to population status and trends.

Both France and New Zealand, two Parties with the greatest number of breeding sites and therefore monitoring gaps identified, have made good progress in obtaining population data for a number of sites. Data on other neglected populations is still required, and its procurement is essential for ultimately measuring the success of the Agreement.

3.3. Key outcomes for the next triennium

Key challenges for the Agreement in the next triennium remain the same as those identified in the last triennium, namely to continue to improve the collection of data on seabird bycatch in relevant fisheries; to implement ACAP's best-practice seabird bycatch mitigation measures in relevant domestic and high-seas fisheries; and to fill the significant gaps in data relating to population status and trends, particularly for the species which are currently in decline.

All of the above activities are considered essential to the on-going effective implementation of the Agreement and require continued support from MoP over the next triennium.

In view of the continued difficulties experienced in gathering relevant data, both on land and at sea, Parties are encouraged to seek and use new and innovative techniques for the collection of this data, such as electronic data collection and monitoring equipment.