



Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels

Sixth Meeting of Advisory Committee

Guayaquil, 29 August – 2 September 2011

Advisory Committee's Report to the Fourth Session of the Meeting of the Parties (MoP4) to the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels

Advisory Committee Chair & Vice-Chair

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Advisory Committee's Report to the Fourth Session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels

Marco Favero (AC Chair) & Mark Tasker (AC Vice-Chair)

This report follows the structure agreed during the First Session of the Meeting of Parties (MoP1, Resolution 1.5, Annex 1) and has been drafted as a document in progress for the Advisory Committee by the Chair and Vice-Chair with the assistance of the Agreement's Secretariat. The final version of this report to MoP4 will be prepared after the conclusion of the Sixth Meeting of the Advisory Committee (AC6), in order to reflect the actions and decisions taken during this meeting. The document will be circulated intersessionally among the members of the Advisory Committee for review and approval prior to MoP4.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Establishment of the Committee

The Committee was established at the First Session of the Meeting of Parties, 10-12 November 2004.

1.2 Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

Dr Marco Favero (Argentina) was re-elected as Chair, and Mark Tasker (United Kingdom) was re-elected as Vice-Chair at the Fifth Meeting of the Advisory Committee. They have held their posts since that date.

1.3 Members, Alternates, Observers and Experts

The lists of Advisory Committee Members, Alternates, Observers and Experts in attendance at each of the meetings of the Committee in the triennium may be found in Annex 1 of AC5 (<http://www.acap.aq/meeting-documents/english/advisory-committee/ac5/ac5-final-report>) and AC6 (INSERT LINK HERE) final reports.

1.4 Review of rules of procedure

The Committee established its rules of procedure at AC1 and have reviewed at subsequent meetings. Since MoP3, the AC RoP have been amended at AC5 (further amendments to be discussed and introduced at AC6. Latest updated rules can be found at <http://www.acap.aq/instruments/download-document/1195-advisory-committee-rules-of-procedure>.

1.5 Meetings and other correspondence since MOP3

After MoP3, the AC met formally for its Fifth Meeting on 13-17 April 2010 in Mar del Plata, Argentina, and for its Sixth Meeting on 29 August – 02 September 2011 in Guayaquil, Ecuador. Both meetings were preceded by meetings of the Breeding Sites, the Status and Trends and the Seabird Bycatch Working Groups.

There has been considerable formal and informal correspondence in association with the implementation of the Advisory Committee work programme. Informal meetings of the Advisory Committee's Officials (AC Chair and Vice-Chair, Working Group Convenors and the Executive Secretary) were held on a regular basis to co-ordinate the intersessional activities of the Advisory Committee.

2 OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES AND MEETINGS OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

2.1 Activities of the Chair

2.1.1 Recruitment

Following the conclusion of interviews conducted in the margins of MoP3, the Chair of the Advisory Committee finalised the recruitment of the Agreement's Executive Secretary, with the assistance of the Recruitment Sub-committee. The Chair prepared a document to AC5 (see AC5 Doc 26) outlining the process and offering a series of comments on lessons learnt and recommendations for its refinement in future occasions [NOTE: this will be the basis for a doc to be prepared for MoP4]

2.1.2 Budgets

The Chair has been consulted by the Secretariat on a number of occasions on issues regarding management of the Agreement's budget. In all cases, agreement was reached.

2.1.3 Consultations with the Agreement Secretariat

The Chair has conducted considerable correspondence with the Secretariat (e-mail often on daily basis and telephone conversations on weekly basis) and others less frequently. The Vice Chair maintained periodic correspondence with AC Officials and the Secretariat as well.

2.1.4 Other activities

The Chair, Vice-Chair and other AC Officials have represented the Agreement at a number of meetings of Regional Fisheries Management Organisations and at relevant conferences and other international meetings.

2.2 Progress with Actions under Article IX of the Agreement

2.2.1 *Provision of scientific, technical and other advice*

A summary of progress against the Work Programme for 2010-12 (MoP3 Resolution 3.4) is provided in Annex 1 [NOTE: to be included after AC6]. It should be noted that the Work Programme has developed considerably during the two Advisory Committee meetings held since MoP3 and new tasks were added to reflect the work initiated by the Advisory Committee during this period. The work programme in Annex 1 reflects the latest version, revised at AC6.

This document has also been used as the basis for the development of the Advisory Committee's work programme for the next triennium, which will be submitted to MoP4 for its consideration and approval.

Scientific and technical advice provided by the Advisory Committee was originally produced by its Working Groups:

- Status and Trends Working Group (STWG), Convenor Dr Rosemary Gales, Australia; Vice-Convenor Dr Henri Weimerskirch, France.
- Breeding Sites Working Group (BSWG), Convenor Dr Richard Phillips, United Kingdom. This WG compiles information on the breeding sites of ACAP species including an assessment of threats faced by ACAP species at their breeding sites.
- Seabird Bycatch Working Group (SBWG), Convenor Barry Baker, Australia; Vice-Convenor Dr Anton Wolvaardt, UK. This WG co-ordinates ACAP work in relation to interactions between ACAP species and fisheries.
- Taxonomy Working Group (TWG), Convenor Dr Mike Double, Australia; Vice-Convenor Dr Diego Montalti, Argentina. This WG reviews the taxonomic status of taxa listed on Annex 1 of the Agreement.

Excellent progress has been made by all WGs and the Advisory Committee during the last triennium. Key achievements since MoP3 are summarised below [NOTE: outcomes to be updated after AC6]:

- Successful completion of the species assessments for all species listed under the Agreement, containing information on population status and trends, distribution, land based and at-sea threats, as well as the conservation measures that are in place to protect the ACAP species. These assessments are available on ACAP's website (<http://www.acap.aq/acap-species>) in English and Spanish and are currently in the process of being translated into French.
- Development of biosecurity and quarantine guidelines for ACAP seabird breeding sites, aimed to prevent the introduction occurring as far back along the introduction pathway as possible. These guidelines were endorsed by the AC in 2010 (<http://www.acap.aq/conservation-guidelines>).
- The progress achieved in the standardisation of stored data and functionality of the online database. The Advisory Committee highlighted that these changes to

the database are integral to the successful development of a suite of breeding site indicators and to the ACAP prioritisation process.

- The complete review of mitigation measures for pelagic long-line, trawl and demersal long-line fisheries (Annexes 6, 8 and 10 of AC5 Final Report, respectively) and the development of best practice advice for these fisheries (Annexes 7, 9 and 11 of AC5 Final Report, respectively).
- The elaboration -in collaboration with BirdLife International- of a suit of 14 mitigation fact sheets aimed at fisheries managers to assist in reducing bycatch in longline and trawl fisheries. These fact sheets are available on the ACAP website (<http://www.acap.aq/mitigation-fact-sheets>) and are currently translated into a number of relevant languages identified.
- The review and improvement of the strategy for the coordination and planning to engage and assist RFMOs on the basis of experience gained during the last years. Issues identified with the implementation of the strategy included the work-load for the RFMO Coordinators, and the need to improve the transfer of information to ACAP Parties' representatives within fisheries meetings.
- The process for the identification of conservation priorities for the Agreement commenced in AC4 and was addressed in successive Advisory Committee meetings. AC5 analysed the progress achieved until early 2010 and made recommendations for the finalisation of the process. [NOTE: complete according to developments in AC6]

2.2.2 Progress with standard reference text on taxonomy of species covered by the Agreement

The Taxonomy Working Group reviewed recent publications pertinent to albatross and petrel taxonomy. This found that there were two schools of thought relating to the taxonomy generally, one of which closely followed the taxonomy adopted by the Agreement. The TWG recommended that the current ACAP taxonomic approach be endorsed given the strong logic behind it.

2.2.3 Recommendations concerning the Action Plan and further research

A draft Advisory Committee Work Programme for the triennium 2013-2015 has been prepared and submitted as meeting document MoP4 Doc XX [TO BE UPDATED]. [NOTE: previous reports didn't incorporate priorities in the work programme, an exercise which is highly desirable for the next triennium, irrespective of whether the prioritisation framework is completed.]

2.2.4 Development of indicators to assess progress towards achieving and maintaining a favourable conservation status for albatrosses and petrels

The development of performance indicators to measure the effectiveness of the Agreement was considered at MoP3 (see MoP3 Doc 27, MoP3 Inf 2) and

subsequently considered through the past triennium by the AC (see Docs 28 and 16, AC5 Inf 8, AC5 Inf 16 Rev 1). At AC5, the Advisory Committee agreed that indicator categories should conform to the State-Pressure-Response system, and that some basic indicators in Annex 15 of AC5 Final Report could be adopted and incorporated into the national reporting template. Following further discussion at AC6, the Advisory Committee recommends that MoP4 endorse use of the performance indicators detailed in **Annex ?** of the AC6 Final Report.

2.2.5 Progress with collation of information under Section 5 of the Action Plan and identification of gaps in knowledge

A report on progress with implementation of the Agreement following the framework adopted in MoP2 (MoP2 Doc 29) is provided as **MoP4 Doc XX [UPDATE]**. The information that Parties are required to provide is being progressively included in individual species assessments to enable more effective use to be made of the information provided. The new reporting systems and standardisation of the Agreement's database will allow a better understanding of areas where knowledge is needed and the identification of data gaps

2.2.6 Other Activities

The reports mentioned above and in **Annex ?** to this report describe the activities of the Advisory Committee **[TO BE INCLUDED AFTER AC6]**.

2.3 Meetings of the Advisory Committee

Reports from the Fifth and Sixth Meetings of the Advisory Committee can be found at <http://www.acap.aq/meeting-documents/english/advisory-committee/ac5/ac5-final-report>) and **[INSERT LINK HERE FOR AC6]**, respectively.

3 CONCLUSION

3.1 Achievements

We are pleased to say that the great willingness of Parties and others to work together internationally has continued. The interactions between the Meeting of Parties, the Secretariat and the Advisory Committee were excellent although further active engagement from some Parties would be appreciated.

The further development of the database and implementation of the more efficient and effective electronic reporting system provides ACAP parties and other users access to essential information for the effective implementation of the Agreement's Action Plan. As data is progressively added to this database it will allow the Agreement to conduct a detailed analysis of its performance, and most importantly, identify the progress achieved and the gaps/needs required in different regions, and for individual Parties.

The maturity of the Agreement is further demonstrated in its ability to provide expert advice on the various measures that can be taken to address threats to albatrosses

and petrels, both at sea and on land, information that is readily accessible through the ACAP website. This includes: conservation guidelines for the eradication of predators, and for biosecurity and quarantine; best practice advice for bycatch mitigation measures in longline and trawl fisheries, and; mitigation fact sheets developed in conjunction with BirdLife International.

A very large proportion of the actions planned to be undertaken during the 2010-12 triennium were accomplished. Clear examples of the significant progress achieved include: the elaboration of conservation guidelines; the implementation of the strategy to engage RFMOs (although further refinement will always be needed); agreement on the data reporting system and development of the Agreement's database, and; the completion of the species assessments.

It is expected that the Advisory Committee and its Working Groups will continue to make good progress. Some outcomes expected for the next triennium should include:

- access to better data from Parties and other fisheries managers on their fisheries and on levels of seabird bycatch, to permit improved evaluation of bycatch numbers for each ACAP listed species;
- a suite of indicators of the success of the Agreement is in use, based partly on a completed framework for prioritising actions. (NOTE – may be completed by AC6).
- additional outcomes to be announced pending completion of WG and AC6.

3.2 Difficulties found and challenges for the next triennium

With the listing of the three northern hemisphere albatross species at MoP3 the number of potential Parties and Range States was increased. For instance, the United States, Japan and Mexico are all breeding Ranges States and the waters of many other states are used by feeding albatrosses. Although USA and Canada are not Party to the Agreement, their high level of participation is very welcome. There is only minimal engagement by other Range States and ACAP should aim to increase this participation significantly during the next triennium.

Over the past triennium, a number of ACAP parties adopted National Plans of Action – Seabirds under FAO guidelines, implemented new conservation measures and regulations in breeding sites and fisheries, or developed Plans of Action for individual species. This is excellent news, although this shouldn't be considered as the end of the road, but the beginning. It is critical for the improvement of the conservation status of albatrosses and petrels that those plans and measures be effectively implemented and monitored in a quantitative manner. Otherwise it will be impossible, both for individual Parties and the Agreement, to determine the performance and effectiveness of these measures on ACAP species. The AC has a key role in assisting with this process.

One of the most challenging difficulties found in the past triennium and which will continue to be a challenge for the next one, is the increasing size and complexity of

the Agreement's agenda and the asymmetry with the growth of capacity (both in terms of funds and human resources). Although, in view of the current global economic situation, monetary resources are likely to be restricted during the next triennium, the work load could be alleviated by the incorporation or engagement of new people to undertake particular actions.

The development and implementation of the Waved Albatross Action Plan has demonstrated the PoA process to be an effective mechanism for triggering conservation actions in particular regions/fisheries). However, it should be kept in mind that such Plans of Actions need to be developed thoughtfully, with expert advice informing the planning of conservation actions that ensure the plan can be implemented in an effective manner with priorities clearly set and the allocation of resources optimised.

We hope that the recommendations in this paper and those contained in MoP4 Doc XX will help the Fourth Meeting of Parties to drive forward the objectives of ACAP and look forward to serving ACAP/the Parties in the next triennium.

Recommendations Arising

The following recommendations arising from this report are provided for the consideration of the Meeting of the Parties:

- Give consideration to suggested improvements to the recruitment process for the position of Executive Secretary (refer AC6 Doc ??)
- Review and approve the work programme proposed for the Advisory Committee for the next triennium (refer AC6 Doc ??)
- Endorse the taxonomic approach proposed by the Taxonomy Working Group;
- Endorse use of the performance indicators detailed in Annex ? of the AC6 Final Report.