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<b>Agenda Item</b>	5 – HELCOM Recommendation 17/2 on 'Protection of harbor porpoise in the Baltic Sea area'
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<b>Submitted by</b>	Secretariat
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### Background

State & Conservation 6-2017 considered the proposed Guidelines for reporting on the implementation of the [HELCOM Recommendation 17/2](#) for countries being also ASCOBANS parties and agreed on the final version of the Guidelines.

The meeting proposed including the guidance as an attachment to Recommendation 17/2, and that the reporting requirement of the Recommendation should be revised to take place every fourth year. The Meeting agreed to proceed with this updating after the ASCOBANS reporting format has been published on the ASCOBANS website, and decided to come back to this issue at State & Conservation 7-2017.

Finland is invited to inform the meeting of the status of publication of the reporting format on the ASCOBANS website.

### Action requested

The Meeting is invited to update, as needed, and endorse the updated Recommendation 17/2, including the addition of the Guidelines as an attachment.

## Recommendation 17/2 on 'Protection of the harbour porpoise in the Baltic Sea area'

### HELCOM RECOMMENDATION 17/2

Adopted 12 March 1996 and revised 6 March 2013, having regard to Article 13, Paragraph b) of the Helsinki Convention

### PROTECTION OF HARBOUR PORPOISE IN THE BALTIC SEA AREA

#### THE COMMISSION,

**DEEPLY CONCERNED** about the population status of harbour porpoise in the Baltic Sea and **AWARE** that individual numbers have drastically decreased,

**RECOGNIZING** the relevance of the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas (ASCOBANS), including the Recovery Plan for Baltic Harbour Porpoises (Jastarnia Plan), as well as the action list and relevant recommendations by the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) and the resolutions of International Whaling Commission (IWC) and European Cetacean Society (ECS),

**RECOGNIZING** that harbour porpoise is and should remain an integral part of the marine ecosystems,

**RECOGNIZING FURTHER** that by-catches, habitat deterioration and disturbance adversely affect this species,

**CONVINCED** that the critical status of harbour porpoises in the Baltic Sea calls for immediate actions in order to safeguard their survival. The progressive, critical threat of extinction of the harbour porpoise in the Baltic proper (ICES areas 24-32) and apparent decline in numbers in other parts of the Baltic Sea region (such as ICES area 21-23) requires immediate action and, in the case of ICES area 24-32 emergency action, to ensure their survival.

**RECOMMENDS** that the Governments of the Contracting Parties to the Helsinki Convention:

- a) give highest priority to avoiding by-catches of harbour porpoises, particularly following the recommendations of ASCOBANS and the ASCOBANS Jastarnia Plan, in order to achieve the ecological objective of the Baltic Sea Action Plan: "By 2015 by-catch of harbour porpoise, seals, water birds and non-target fish species has been significantly reduced with the aim to reach by-catch rates close to zero";
- b) take action in close co-operation with ASCOBANS and ICES, for collection and analysis of additional data on population distribution and abundance, stock identities, behavior and threats such as by-catch mortality, underwater noise, pollutant levels, ship strikes, changes in food base, epizooties, climate changes, marine installations and construction;
- c) consider the establishment of marine protected areas for harbour porpoises within the framework of the Baltic Sea Protected Areas (BSPAs), when documented information is available that an area hosts harbour porpoises;
- d) report to the Commission every ~~three~~four years, beginning from 1998 on their progress in implementing the above recommendations.

**Guidelines for Reporting on the implementation of HELCOM Recommendation 17/2 for countries being also ASCOBANS parties.**

National reports should be available at the ASCOBANS website:

<http://www.ascobans.org/en/documents/national-reports>

In order to fulfil reporting obligation stemming from HELCOM Recommendation 17/2, four main topics should be extracted from the ASCOBANS National Reports. These are as follows:

**1. Reduction of by-catch close to zero**

This information should be taken out from the **Section II A. Fisheries related threat** of the revised National Reporting Format for ASCOBANS. Such information including changes in fishing effort, mitigation measures, as well as monitoring/data collection programs, will be reported by ASCOBANS Parties in 2017 and 2019.

**2. Data collection and research on disturbance to harbour porpoises such as underwater noise, pollutant levels, ship strikes, changes in food base, epizooties, climate changes, marine installations and construction.**

Such information should be available under **Section II A (point 2), B (point 3 and 6) as well as C (10, 11, 12, 13)**, and it should be reported to ASCOBANS in 2016 (B3) and 2018 (B6, C10, C11, C12, C13) as well as in 2019 all the points.

**3. Protected areas for small cetaceans**

Information should be provided on a basis of **Section II E. Area based conservation/Marine Protected Areas** of the ASCOBANS revised National Reporting Format. Information on Marine Protected Areas designated in order to protect cetaceans, including also information on management measures, will be reported by ASCOBANS Parties in 2018 and 2019.

**4. Further research on small cetaceans (collection and analysis of additional data on population distribution and abundance, stock identities and behaviour).** Data on research activities regarding cetaceans (abundance estimates, information on life history parameters) should be available from **Section III A** (biological information). In addition, information on other research on cetaceans should be available in **Section III C (point 8)**. Such data are to be reported in 2017 and in 2019, before the next MoP session.

Information about strandings, including recorded events and necropsies, could be taken out from **Section IV B**, which should be reported in 2017 and in 2019 (before the MoP meeting in 2020).

National Reports to ASCOBANS should be submitted by 31 of March each year using the online reporting system developed by CMS Family. In the online reporting system only required information in a given year will be possible to be reported.

Taking into account the complicated nature of the reporting obligations under ASCOBANS Agreement, Poland and the co-Chair of State and Conservation recommend to consider reporting to HELCOM Recommendation 17/2, every 4 years, just before after the ASCOBANS Meetings of Parties (MoP), when all current information should be available (ASCOBANS proposes to report comprehensive information every time before the MoP meetings).

Reporting should take place during the annual HELCOM Seal meetings in order to evaluate the reporting and provide comments before the State and Conservation Working Group meetings.

## Resolution on National Reporting 1

### adopted during the 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties to ASCOBANS (MoP Helsinki 30.08-1.09.2016)

*Recalling* Article 2.5 of the Agreement requesting Parties to submit to the Secretariat a brief report not later than 31 March each year, covering progress made and difficulties experienced during the past calendar year in implementing the Agreement;

*Conscious* that an assessment of the progress in implementing the Agreement is possible only through meaningful national reporting;

*Mindful* that in national reporting, the right balance needs to be struck with respect to the information desired and the use to which the data will be put, so as not to burden the Parties unnecessarily;

*Grateful* for the work undertaken by the Advisory Committee in developing a new reporting format that reflects the range of issues relevant to small cetacean conservation in the Agreement Area, and for its advice on the periodicity;

#### *The Meeting of the Parties to ASCOBANS*

1. *Decides* that Parties will be required to submit one comprehensive national report within each MOP-cycle;

2. *Further decides* that in order to meet the requirements of Article 2.5 of the Agreement the obligation to submit brief annual reports is retained, covering basic information as well as in-depth considerations on specific topics, as outlined below;

3. *Adopts* the outline for national reports presented in Annex 1;

4. *Directs* that each topic should be considered at least once per intersessional period, and that the report submitted in the year of the Meeting of the Parties should provide up-to-date information on all these topics, as follows

(a) all reports (annually): Section I, Section VII

(b) 2016 Report (for AC23 in 2017) and 2019 Report (for MOP9 in 2020): Section II B3, B4, C8 and D15

(c) 2017 Report (for AC24 in 2018) and 2019 Report (for MOP9 in 2020): Section II A1, A2 and C9, Section III, Section IV

(d) 2018 Report (for AC25 in 2019) and 2019 Report (for MOP9 in 2020): Section II B5, B6, B7, C10, C11, C12, C13, C14, E16 and E17, Section VI

(e) only 2019 Report (for MOP9 in 2020): Section V

5. *Requests* the Advisory Committee

(a) to develop the sections of the reporting format one by one, starting with those to be considered in each report and at the first Advisory Committee Meeting after this Meeting of the Parties;

(b) in developing the detail of each section, to consult experts on the subjects in order to ensure that essential information is gathered in a form that standardizes responses and lends itself to statistical analysis as far as possible, and to decide which topics should be reported on by region;

(c) make full use of the information submitted in order to assess progress in the implementation of the Agreement and make recommendations to Parties;

(d) tailor the agenda for each of its meetings to reflect the topics selected for the previous year's national reports;

6. *Urges* Parties to submit their national reports by the deadline of 31 March of each year, indicated in Article 2.5 of the Agreement, making use of the online reporting system developed for the CMS Family;

7. *Requests* the Secretariat to remind Parties of the date for submission of their national reports;

8. *Recognizes* that in order to meet its obligation to present Parties with a summary of the Party reports by 30 June of each year, as required in Article 4.2 of the Agreement, the Secretariat requires the submission of all national reports sufficiently in advance of this date;

9. *Requests* the Secretariat to inform the Common Information Management, Communication and Outreach Team of the UNEP/CMS and UNEP/AEWA Secretariats of the comments made by ASCOBANS Parties regarding the functionalities of the online reporting system, which would be useful when working to improve it;

10. *Repeals* Resolution No. 1 of MOP1 (1994) on National Reports.

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## Outline of a Revised National Reporting Format for ASCOBANS

### **Section I: General Information**

#### **A. Party Information**

1. Name of Party
2. Details of National Coordinator (Focal Point) for ASCOBANS
3. Details of delegates (contributors to the report)
4. List of relevant national institutions

### **Section II: Habitat Conservation and Management (threats and pressures on cetaceans)**

*[Where indicated, each threat/pressure shall have the following standard questions associated with it:*

- *Specific, where available quantitative information on the threat, provided on a national or regional geographic scale, as appropriate (by sea area / by action plan area)*
- *The perceived level of risk to favourable conservation status (FCS) or good environmental status (GES), i.e. is the pressure increasing, decreasing, staying the same or unknown; to be done on a species by species basis where applicable*
- *Any notable instances/issues in the reporting period*
- *How the pressure is being managed, incl. relevant regulations / guidelines and the year of implementation (current and planned)*
- *Relevant new research/work/collaboration*

*Any additional questions considered appropriate are indicated separately below].*

#### **A. Fisheries-related Threats**

##### **1. Bycatch**

- *Standard questions*
- *Changes in fishing effort (for fisheries known to have an impact)*
- *Application of mitigation measures and alternative gear*
- *Monitoring / data collection programmes (also in recreational fisheries)*

##### **2. Resource Depletion**

- *Standard questions*

#### **B. Disturbance (including potential physical impacts)**

##### **3. Noise (impulsive i.e. piling and continuous/ambient i.e. shipping)**

- *Standard questions (unless already covered below)*
- *Any notable instances/issues in the reporting period, including providing information on planned or completed significant developments/activities, including the details of EIAs and monitoring in place before, during and after the project and relevant new research and work/collaborations*
- *Noise management for individual approved activities*

- Noise management for cumulative impact, including assessment of associated or coincidental activities, regulations and guidelines, seismic shot point densities and level of impact that was assessed and deemed acceptable

#### **4. Ocean Energy**

- *Standard questions*

#### **5. Cetacean Watching Industry**

- *Standard questions*

#### **6. Recreational Sea Use**

- *Standard questions*

#### **7. Other Sources of Disturbance**

- *Standard questions*

### **C. Habitat Change and Degradation (incl. potential physical impacts)**

#### **8. Unexploded Ordnance**

- *Standard questions*

#### **9. Marine Debris (ingestion and entanglement)**

- *Standard questions*

#### **10. Pollution and hazardous substances (incl. microplastics)**

- *Standard questions*

#### **11. Ship Strikes**

- *Standard questions*

#### **12. Climate Change (incl. ocean acidification)**

- *Standard questions*

#### **13. Physical Habitat Change (e.g. from construction)**

- *Standard questions*

#### **14. Other Issues**

- *Standard questions*

### **D. Management of Cumulative Impacts**

#### **15. Marine Spatial Planning**

- National processes
- Transboundary processes

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## **E. Area-based Conservation / Marine Protected Areas**

### **16. List of protected areas, e.g. Natura 2000 sites**

- Number, names and status of MPAs with cetaceans forming part of the selection criteria
- Information on management measures, incl. any temporal/spatial restriction of activities i.e. seasonal fishery closures, changes to vessel activity etc.

### **17. Website or contact where spatial information on MPAs can be obtained**

## **Section III: Surveys and Research**

### **A. Biological Information (per species)**

#### **1. Abundance estimates**

- Area of coverage
- Survey period applicable
- Method of abundance estimation
- Confidence limits where applicable

#### **2. New information on Life history parameters**

- Age at sexual maturity
- Inter-birth intervals
- Calf and adult mortality rates
- Potential reproductive span
- Longevity

### **B. Monitoring Programmes**

#### **3. High level overview of current monitoring programme**

#### **4. Detail of any planned activities of note**

#### **5. Relevant outputs to note (by species)**

### **C. Dedicated Surveys and Other Relevant Research**

#### **6. Aerial surveys (how many have been conducted, over which area, when?)**

- Number of surveys
- Area covered (with map)
- For which species?
- Timeframe of survey

#### **7. Passive Acoustic Monitoring (PAM)**

- Locations of moored instruments (with map)
- Timeframe of survey
- Target species
- Make and model of instruments used

**8. Other research (not mentioned elsewhere in Section II, III or IV)**

- Name of the project
- Institution
- Duration
- Aim
- Method

**Section IV: Use of Bycatches and Strandings****A. Stranding Network****1. Collection of Carcasses**

- Details (phone, email, website)

**2. Live-Stranding Responses**

- Details (phone, email, website)

**B. Strandings****3. Recorded events (for each)**

- Species
- Location
- Number of animals found per event
- Found dead or alive

**4. Chosen response in the event of live strandings**

- (Attempted/successful) re-floating
- (Attempted/successful) rehabilitations
- Euthanasia (incl. method used)

**5. Necropsies**

- Details of responsible institution (phone, email, website)
- Protocol used for dissection methodologies, collection of samples etc.
- Number of carcasses necropsied
- Causes of death identified
- Any notable issues to report

**6. Database**

- Details of responsible institution (phone, email, website)

**Section V Legislation****A. Overview of legislative framework****1. National**

- Legislation
- Guidelines

## **2. Regional / International**

- Legislation
- Guidelines

### ***Section VI: Information and Education***

#### **A. Education and outreach**

- Details of education/outreach events, stakeholders engaged i.e. industry, and threat/species focused on
- Details of information/outreach materials produced, threat/species focused on and target audience

### ***Section VII: Other Matters***

#### **A. Other information or comments important for the Agreement**

#### **B. Difficulties in implementing the Agreement**

## Annex 2

## National Report on implementation of HELCOM Recommendation 17/2 on protection of harbour porpoise in the Baltic Sea Area

## A. General information

Name of Contracting Party:	Period covered:
Name of report compiler and contact details:	Date of report:

## B. Information on new activities concerning minimization of threats on porpoises and measures for their protection

## 1. Reduction of by-catch and monitoring/data collection programmes on by-catch

Investigations of methods to reduce by-catch
Implementation of methods to reduce by-catch
Monitoring/data collection programmes on by-catch

By-catch in set net fisheries			
Harbour porpoise sex/total length	Number of by-caught animals	Location (ICES area or more detailed)	Notes (type of fishery, effort (net length/soak time), seasonal variations, etc.)
(written in one line if more than one harbor porpoise in the same location and time is by-caught)			

## 2. Data collection and research on disturbance to harbour porpoises

Information on disturbance:  (e.g. seismic surveys, new high-speed ferry routes, studies about acoustic impacts on porpoises, marine installations, construction, pollutant levels, ship strikes, changes in food base )
Implementation of guidelines, new legislation, etc. to reduce disturbance

### 3. Protected areas for small cetaceans

Measures taken to identify, designate and manage protected areas

### 4. Further research on small cetaceans

Research on distribution, abundance and population structure of harbour porpoises

Collection of information on stranded porpoises

<b>Harbour porpoise sex/total length</b>  (written in one line if more than one harbor porpoise in the same location and time is stranded)	<b>Number of stranded animals</b>	<b>Location (ICES area or more detailed)</b>	<b>Notes (level of decomposition, cause of death identified, notable issues to report, protocol used, etc.)</b>
Other research (not mentioned under section 1 – 3)			