Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature Conservation

Tallinn, Estonia, 7-11 November, 2016

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Document title	ASCOBANS Resolution No. 7: Impacts of Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs)
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Agenda Item	6 – Any other business
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Submitted by	Secretariat
Reference	Reference to relevant meeting decision

Background

At the 8th Meeting of the Parties to ASCOBANS, which was held on 30 August - 1 September 2016 in Helsinki, Finland, ASCOBANS adopted Resolution No. 7 on Impacts of Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs).

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the information.

Resolution No. 7:

Impacts of Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs)

Recalling Resolution No. 4 of MOP7 on Impacts of Chemical Pollution on Small Cetaceans;

Expressing again concern that chemical pollution continues to represent a significant threat to populations of small cetaceans within the Agreement Area, as evidenced by new data on correlation between reproductive failure in the North East Atlantic harbour porpoise population and PCB burdens, and very high concentrations of PCB in the blubber of killer whales, bottlenose dolphins and other cetacean species across the ASCOBANS range;

Acknowledging the international efforts under the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Stockholm Convention, the Geneva Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution with its Aarhus Protocol on Persistent Organic Pollutants (CLRTAP Protocol on POPs), and through the PCB Elimination Network (PEN) to reduce levels of PCBs in the environment;

Further acknowledging the important role of the European Union and regional agreements such as OSPAR and HELCOM, in addressing this problem at a regional level;

The Meeting of the Parties to ASCOBANS

1. *Encourages* Parties to prioritize and support appropriate research and in particular to:

   (a) continue to monitor PCB exposure in small cetacean species across the ASCOBANS range, with particular emphasis on species considered to be at high risk, such as killer whales, bottlenose dolphins and harbour porpoises, and in geographic areas with high concentrations;

   (b) seek to identify geographic areas where pollutant levels are higher than elsewhere ("PCB hotspots"), possibly involving collaborative studies between countries and other regional agreements;

   (c) continue time-series analysis of trends in PCBs and other contaminants in harbour porpoises (as a sentinel species) wherever possible using stranded and bycaught animals;

   (d) where the use of dead stranded or bycaught animals is not sufficient i.e. for vulnerable species with low stranding rates and high pollution levels (e.g. bottlenose dolphins and killer whales), coordinate the taking of any tissue samples from live animals across the Agreement Area to ensure efficient and effective sampling and to minimize any welfare implications;

   (e) use skin samples to help determine population structure of species with high exposure to PCBs;

   (f) maintain key data-flow from strandings networks across the ASCOBANS range;

   (g) coordinate and jointly plan research efforts with involvement of the Advisory Committee;

2. *Encourages* Parties and *invites* non-Party Range States, in their capacity as Parties to global and regional processes and treaties aimed at reducing the levels of PCBs in the environment, to inform these fora of the recent findings on the effects of PCBs on small cetaceans and to use their influence to have this problem addressed proactively;

3. *Reiterates* its call to Parties to continue their efforts to implement fully the relevant provisions and decisions of other global and regional processes and treaties to which they are Party, in particular the Stockholm Convention, the CLRTAP Protocol on POPs, OSPAR and HELCOM;

4. *Urges* Parties and *invites* non-Party Range States to expedite efforts to (i) identify sources of PCBs and (ii) using this and other appropriate knowledge to avoid the further input of PCBs into the marine environment;

5. *Supports* the IWC Pollution 2020 Programme;

6. *Requests* the Secretariat to transmit this resolution and information on the effects of PCBs on small cetaceans to UNEP, the Stockholm Convention, the CLRTAP Protocol on POPs, HELCOM and OSPAR for further consideration and possible action;

7. *Further requests* the Secretariat and the Advisory Committee to engage with these processes as far as is feasible;

8. *Requests* the Advisory Committee to continue reviewing new information on this issue and to make recommendations to Parties as appropriate;

9. *Reaffirms* Resolution No. 4 of MOP7 (2012), as well as Resolution No. 7 of MOP5 (2006) on Research on Habitat Quality, Health and Status of Small Cetaceans in the Agreement Area; and

10. *Repeals* Resolution No. 4 of MOP2 (1997) on Management and Further Research Needs to Address Effects of Pollutants on Cetacean Health.