

Annex L

Furthering Scientific Cooperation Between ASCOBANS and the IWC

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and

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In recent years, the IWC Scientific Committee has spent considerable effort in examining the status of harbour porpoise stocks in the North Atlantic (IWC, 1996; 1997; 1998). This work is ongoing (see Annex I). In response to a Commission initiative, it has also dedicated effort into addressing issues related to environmental factors and cetaceans. In particular it held a Workshop in Bergen in 1995 to address the issue of chemical pollutants and cetaceans. In response to the recommendations of that Workshop, the Committee has developed a research programme to examine cause-effect relationships between pollutants and cetacean health. In that proposal, endorsed by the Commission last year, the need for co-operation with other organisations, including ASCOBANS was highlighted.

As observers at each other's meetings, we have noted that there is considerable mutual interest in these subjects. This became explicit at the 4th Meeting (1997) of the Advisory Committee of ASCOBANS, where these two subjects were identified as of mutual interest and the work of the IWC Scientific Committee was extensively referred to. This was also the case in the Report of the Working Group on Scientific Matters which met at the 2nd Meeting of Parties to ASCOBANS. At that meeting, ASCOBANS adopted two Resolutions pertaining to these issues of mutual interest as follows.

A resolution relating to the status of North Atlantic harbour porpoises drew in part on the Scientific Committee's work on this subject and in effect endorsed the longer-term approach identified by the Committee last year (IWC, 1998).

A resolution relating to pollutant matters strongly endorsed the IWC research programme on pollutants, and indeed all the recommendations of the Bergen Workshop. It was agreed that the ASCOBANS Parties and the Advisory Committee should consider ways to facilitate the development and execution of the Programme, which addresses that issue in harbour porpoises, in co-operation with the IWC and others.

The Advisory Committee, at its 5th Meeting in Hel (Poland) held immediately prior to the Scientific Committee meeting, agreed that close co-operation with the IWC would be of mutual benefit. It was recommended that the Advisory Committee liaise with the Scientific Committee on scientific issues of mutual interest. This is comparable to the Scientific Committee's request for co-operation in the pollution research programme.

We therefore believe that it would be extremely useful for the IWC Scientific Committee to welcome this request by ASCOBANS for co-operation, by developing mechanisms for co-operation between the two organisations at the scientific level, while recognising that they are responsible for managing different groups of cetacean species.

One way in which this can be done is to encourage co-operation in the holding of joint working groups or workshops on scientific matters of mutual interest. For example, ASCOBANS, particularly through the efforts of its Advisory Committee Chairman, is playing an important role in helping to organise the Workshop to develop further the IWC pollution research programme to be held in Barcelona in the Autumn of this year (Annex H).

Similarly, it seems sensible to further the scientific work on the status of harbour porpoises in the North Atlantic, by holding the joint working group meeting suggested in Annex I, recognising that this meeting will be discussing scientific and not direct management issues.

We suggest that the Scientific Committee might like to formally endorse this approach.

REFERENCES

- International Whaling Commission. 1996. Report of the Scientific Committee. *Rep. int. Whal. Commn* 46:49-236.
- International Whaling Commission. 1997. Report of the Scientific Committee. *Rep. int. Whal. Commn* 47:59-257.
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