



Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels

Fourth Meeting of Advisory Committee
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Report of the Interim Secretariat

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Report of the Interim Secretariat

The following report provides the Advisory Committee with information on the operations of the Interim Secretariat since the last meeting of the Advisory Committee. The Secretariat continues to operate in an interim capacity pending implementation of the Headquarters Agreement by the Australian Government. A detailed report on progress achieved on the Secretariat's Work Programme is provided separately in AC4 Doc 6.

Overview of Operations

There has been a significant growth in both the work-load and outputs of the Secretariat, which reflects the increased capacity and outputs of the Agreement itself. The Secretariat has worked closely with the Chair and Vice-chair of the Advisory Committee and the Convenors of the Working Groups on activities associated with implementation of the Action Plan and has contributed to a range of noteworthy achievements, including the adoption of seabird bycatch mitigation measures in a number of Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs), the development of the species assessments and ACAP database, and the development of capacity building initiatives involving both Parties and intergovernmental organisations.

In addition to maintaining the operation of the Secretariat's office and managing the Agreement's budget the major activities of the Secretariat over the past year have included:

- co-ordinating the development of the ACAP database;
- the development of species assessments for ACAP listed species;
- providing support to the Advisory Committee's Working Groups with implementation of the Action Plan;
- supporting the work of the Advisory Committee's Officials;
- representing the Agreement at relevant international fora, and in particular advancing the Agreement's objectives at regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs);
- engaging with Range States who are not yet ACAP Parties to encourage their accession to the Agreement;
- contributing to the development of supporting documentation for the possible listing of additional species under the Agreement;
- the examination of potential capacity building initiatives in South America;
- entering into arrangements with other organizations, specifically a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Tasmania and a formal arrangement with the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), and initiating discussions for a similar arrangement with the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) ;
- furthering development of the ACAP website to promote the objectives of the Agreement and facilitate its implementation;
- providing support for the second Waved Albatross Workshop, held in Guayaquil, Ecuador;

- coordinating the Agreement's activities with a wide range of governmental and non-governmental organisations dealing with the conservation of albatrosses and petrels; and
- organizing the fourth meeting of the Advisory Committee and the meetings of the Breeding Sites, Seabird Bycatch and Status and Trends Working Groups.

Human Resources

The Agreement budget provides funding for approximately one and a half positions within the Secretariat, but due to the contributions of Parties, volunteers and contractors the Secretariat has achieved a work programme commensurate with a much larger organization.

The Executive Secretary remains the only full-time employee in the Interim Secretariat.

Mr Barry Baker continued to be engaged on a consultancy basis to undertake the work of ACAP technical/scientific officer in a part-time capacity. Mr Baker's appointments as Scientific Councillor on Bycatch with the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and as Convener of ACAP's Seabird Bycatch Working Group, provide a high level of synergy with the work of this position and offers potential budgetary savings in travel costs, where these can be shared with the CMS.

Dr Wieslawa Misiak has been engaged on a consultancy basis to draft and coordinate the development of the species assessments. Dr Misiak has also provided significant input into the development of the ACAP database and an image library.

Ms Tatiana Neves (Brazil) undertook a three-month secondment to the Secretariat to examine potential capacity building initiatives in South America. The results of this work have been submitted as meeting documents for consideration at AC4. The support of the New Zealand Government in providing a voluntary financial contribution for this secondment is appreciated.

Mr Ken Morgan (Canada) undertook a three month placement in the Secretariat to assist with the preparation of supporting documentation for the possible listing of the three northern hemisphere species of albatrosses under the Agreement.

Dr John Cooper continued in his role as ACAP's honorary news editor and information officer. Dr Cooper visited the Secretariat's offices in June this year and made substantial progress with the development of a News Section on the website, as well as developing promotional material and setting up an archive of important documents relating to the establishment of the Agreement.

Elgin Associates (Dr Luke Finley) has been engaged on a contract basis to develop and maintain the ACAP Website.

The Language Group (Mr JC Lloyd-Southwell) has been engaged on a contract basis to provide translation and interpretation services for the Agreement.

Etaz was engaged on a contract basis to develop the ACAP database and web portal.

Dr Heidi Auman has recently commenced working on a voluntary, part-time, basis with the Secretariat. In addition to assisting with the general operations of the Secretariat Dr Auman has prepared a number of information papers for AC4.

The mix of permanent staff, consultancies, secondments, and volunteers provides the Secretariat with access to a wide range of expertise, as well as providing flexibility with which to respond to changing work priorities. Secondments from Parties provide the Secretariat with an important resource with which to undertake project work as well as directly facilitating capacity building within the Agreement.

There are however gaps in the level and type of services that the Secretariat is able to provide and consideration is required on the need for additional staff, either contract or permanent, to fill these gaps. The growth in the work undertaken by the Agreement is reflected in the requests received by the Secretariat for specialist advice and the need to prepare papers and reports for the many meetings that are attended by ACAP representatives. The increased outputs of the Advisory Committee and its Working Groups also necessitate an increased level of support from the Secretariat. To meet these needs it is proposed that funding for the scientific/technical officer work be increased from half to full-time.

Legal Advice

Over the past year a number of countries interested in joining the Agreement have sought advice on the interpretation of the Agreement's text. As well, the Secretariat has been involved in the preparation and negotiation of formal arrangements and Memorandum of Understandings that have benefitted from the provision of legal advice. There is also an occasional requirement for legal advice in the development of contracts for goods and services. It is proposed that an indicative amount be included in future budgets for the purpose of seeking legal advice.

Formal Arrangements and MoUs

Since the last meeting of the Advisory Committee the Secretariat signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Tasmania for the provision of office accommodation and other support; and also entered into a formal arrangement with the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), to facilitate cooperation between the two organisations. A number of Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) have expressed interest in entering into 'arrangements' similar to as the one entered into between the WCPFC and the Agreement Secretariat. The Advisory Committee's endorsement is sought for the Secretariat to be authorised by MoP to enter into similar arrangements with other RFMOs.

Financial Management

The Agreement's finances are currently managed on a calendar year basis in accordance with the requirements of Finance Regulation 2.1. However the State of Tasmania, which holds the Agreement's funds and provides it with financial services, uses the period 1 July to 31 June as the basis for its financial year. This inconsistency generates a significant additional work-load for the Secretariat, as well as making management of the Agreement's funds more difficult. It is proposed that the Agreement use the same calendar year as the State of Tasmania. A proposal will be put to the next Meeting of the Parties to amend the Agreement's Financial Regulations accordingly. The main impact of this would be to change the financial reporting period. It would not be necessary to change the timing or amount of Parties contributions to the Agreement.

Action:

The Advisory Committee's support is requested for:

- additional funding to increase the level of scientific/technical support to full-time;
- the provision of resources for specialist legal advice;
- authorisation from MoP for the Secretariat to enter into arrangements with RFMOs; and
- amendment of the Financial Regulation 2.1 to change the timing of the financial year.

