

 <p>Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels</p>	<p>Twelfth Meeting of the Advisory Committee <i>Virtual meeting, 31 August – 2 September 2021 (UTC+10)</i></p> <p>Draft Advisory Committee Report to the Seventh Meeting of Parties</p> <p><i>Advisory Committee Chair, Vice-chair</i></p>
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SUMMARY

This report to the Seventh Meeting of the Parties 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 will be prepared after the conclusion of the Twelfth Meeting of the Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee and its Working Groups made progress during the past quadrennium, despite the problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Agreement continued to provide expert advice to Parties, Range States and several organisations and entities on actions to address threats to albatrosses and petrels, both at sea and on land. A substantial proportion of this information is readily accessible through the ACAP website, including conservation guidelines, best practice advice for bycatch mitigation measures, and mitigation fact sheets, among others. The Agreement took advantage of the availability of funds from the FAO/GEF through the ABNJ project, to produce updates of some of these documents.

Now that effective mitigation measures have been identified for the key fishing activities known to result in the incidental catch of ACAP species, the challenge ahead is to have these mitigation measures used in those fisheries where seabird bycatch is occurring. Another key challenge is to obtain the fisheries data required to improve our understanding and management of seabird bycatch. The process of developing an appropriate methodology for the use of this data has continued in the past quadriennium.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Advisory Committee review the Draft Advisory Committee report to the Seventh Meeting of the Parties and suggest amendments as appropriate.

1. INTRODUCTION

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 MoP7 will be prepared after the conclusion of the Twelfth Meeting of the Advisory Committee (AC12), to reflect inputs from the Advisory Committee, and actions and decisions taken during this meeting. The document will be circulated intersessionally among the members of the Advisory Committee for review and approval in advance of MoP7.

1.1 Establishment of the Committee

The Committee was established at the First Session of the Meeting of Parties, held in Hobart, Australia, from 10 to 12 November 2004.

1.2 Election and appointment of Advisory Committee Officers

Since AC11 marked the end of all Committee Officials' terms, all positions required election or re-election. Nathan Walker (New Zealand) was re-elected as Chair, and Tatiana Neves (Brazil) was re-elected as Vice-chair of the Advisory Committee.

Anton Wolfaardt (United Kingdom) and Igor Debski (New Zealand) were re-elected as Co-Convenors, and Sebastian Jimenez (Uruguay) and Juan Pablo Seco Pon (Argentina) were re-elected as joint Vice-convenors of the Seabird Bycatch Working Group.

Patricia Serafini (Brazil) and Marco Favero (Argentina) were elected as Co-convenors and Richard Phillips (United Kingdom) was elected as Vice-convenor of the Population and Conservation Status Working Group.

Mark Tasker (United Kingdom) was re-elected as Convenor and Mike Double (Australia) was re-elected as Vice-convenor of the Taxonomy Working Group.

At AC12 further elections were required as Nathan Walker resigned as Chair and Anton Wolfaardt resigned as Co-Convenor of the Seabird Bycatch Working Group, both due to other commitments. [TO BE UPDATED AFTER AC12]

1.3 Members, Alternates, Observers and Experts

Lists of Advisory Committee Members, Alternates, Observers and Experts attending each of the Committee meetings in the quadrennium are in Annex 1 of the AC11 and AC12 reports.

1.4 Review of rules of procedure

The Committee established its Rules of Procedure (RoP) at AC1 and has reviewed them at subsequent meetings. The AC's RoP were last amended at AC6 (Guayaquil, Ecuador, 29 August to 2 September 2011). At AC11 the Advisory Committee continued discussions about amending Rule 20. No agreement was reached on amendments to the RoP and so the current RoP were adopted for the meeting.

At AC12...

1.5 Meetings and other activities since MoP6

After MoP6, the AC met formally for its Eleventh Meeting (AC11) at Florianópolis, Brazil, from 13 to 17 May 2019, and for its Twelfth Meeting (AC12), held virtually from 31 August to 2 September 2021. Meetings of the Population and Conservation Status Working Group (PaCSWG5 and PaCSWG6), and the Seabird Bycatch Working Group (SBWG9 and SBWG10) preceded AC11 and AC12, respectively.

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 Secretariat have been held on a regular basis to coordinate the Advisory Committee's intersessional activities. In addition, because of the postponement of AC12 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, an intersessional Advisory Committee consultation process took place by internal correspondence in late 2020. Through this intersessional process the Advisory Committee reviewed the Advisory Committee Work Programme (2019-2021) and an additional year of activities, creating a Work Programme for the quadrennium 2019-2022 that was subsequently approved intersessionally by the Meeting of the Parties (see [Record of Decisions](#)).

2. OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES AND MEETINGS OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

2.1 Activities of the Chair

2.1.1 Recruitment

No recruitment activities were undertaken during the period covered by this report.

2.1.2 Budgets

The Chair has been consulted regularly by the Secretariat on issues related to management of the Agreement's budget. In all cases, agreement was reached.

2.1.3 Consultations with the Agreement Secretariat

The Chair and Vice-chair have maintained regular correspondence with the Secretariat and AC Officials.

2.1.4 Other activities

The Chair and AC Officials have represented the Agreement at a number of meetings of Regional Fisheries Management Organisations 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 2019-2022 is provided in **ANNEX 1** [TO BE INCLUDED AFTER AC12]. It should be noted that the Work Programme evolved considerably during discussions at AC11 and subsequent intersessional review, including the 2020 consultations by internal correspondence. New tasks were added to reflect the work conducted by the Advisory Committee during this period. The work programme in **ANNEX 1** reflects those revisions.

This document has also been used as the basis for the development of the Advisory Committee's Work Programme for the 2023 - 2025 triennium (**AC12 Doc 16**), which will be endorsed at AC12 and submitted to MoP7 for its consideration and final approval.

Scientific and technical advice provided by the Advisory Committee is based on the work produced by its Working Groups:

- The Population and Conservation Status Working Group (PaCSWG) addresses land-based threats and conservation status of species listed in Annex 1 of the Agreement.
- The Seabird Bycatch Working Group (SBWG) addresses at-sea threats for ACAP species.
- The Taxonomy Working Group (TWG) reviews the taxonomic status of taxa listed on Annex 1 of the Agreement.

The Advisory Committee and its Working Groups made good progress during the last quadrennium, especially in view of the constraints caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Key achievements since MoP6 are summarised below. Financial assistance received from the FAO's GEF-funded ABNJ Common Oceans Tuna Project was used to update ACAP Best Practice Advice, guidelines and fact sheets and translate them into several languages.

[OUTCOMES TO BE UPDATED AFTER AC12]:

- Ongoing development of the ACAP [database](#) to facilitate the work of the Advisory Committee and its Working Groups.
- Ongoing review of population trends of ACAP species.
- Identification of key gaps in tracking and breeding site monitoring data.
- Use of the prioritisation framework to guide the work of the Agreement for land based and at-sea actions.
- Ongoing review and update of the ACAP [species assessments](#).
- The effective implementation of a strategy to engage RFMOs and to assist in the development, adoption and implementation of conservation measures relevant to ACAP species.
- Advice on effective mitigation measures has been refined and promoted to relevant fisheries managers for those fishing activities known to cause significant incidental mortality to species listed under Annex 1 of the Agreement.
- Progress achieved with the adoption of seabird conservation measures by relevant RFMOs that are based on ACAP's best practice advice.

- The ongoing review of [bycatch mitigation best practice](#) advice documents for pelagic and demersal longline and trawl fisheries.
- New advice on improving safety when hauling branchlines during pelagic longline fishing operations
- Progress in developing bycatch mitigation advice for other fisheries, including artisanal and small-scale fisheries and purse seine fisheries, using a toolbox approach.
- The ongoing review of the BirdLife International - ACAP [mitigation fact sheets](#) aimed at fisheries managers to assist in reducing bycatch in longline and trawl fisheries in a number of relevant languages.
- Continued refinement of biosecurity, census, eradication, and translocation [guidelines](#) for ACAP seabird breeding sites and the hook-removal and Seabird Bycatch ID guides.
- Review of all ACAP guidelines to ensure that they adequately cover gadfly petrels and smaller Procellariiformes
- Development of guidelines for sampling ACAP species to assess plastic ingestion (macro and microplastics), as well as chemical compounds

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

The International Ornithological Congress (IOC) standard taxonomy continues to be the reference list for any new proposals for Annex 1 of ACAP (MoP7 Inf 00). There has been no change in taxonomy of species covered by the Agreement since the last report to the Meeting of the Parties.

2.2.3 Recommendations concerning the Action Plan and further research

A draft Advisory Committee Work Programme for the 2023 - 2025 triennium has been prepared and submitted as MoP7 Doc 00.

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

The progress of breeding sites and status and trend indicators, as well as indicators on tracking data availability and seabird bycatch since MoP6 is presented in MoP7 Doc 00. The lack of timely submission of bycatch data by Parties has hindered the population and analysis of this suite of indicators. Capacity building indicators are also presented for the first time in MoP7 Doc 00.

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 which has been produced using the web-based reporting system is provided as MoP7 Doc 00. The information that Parties are required to provide is being progressively included in the products produced by the

Agreement, such as species assessments and reports on fisheries bycatch and will significantly support the work of the Advisory Committee in future years [TO BE COMPLETED AFTER AC12].

2.2.6 Other Activities

AC11 declared a conservation crisis for albatrosses and petrels and decided that ACAP should develop a communications strategy to highlight this crisis and the urgent need for mitigation measures. AC11 also decided that ACAP should engage with certification schemes, and that our interaction with RFMOs should expand to include engagement with compliance bodies. AC11 also supported the establishment of a World Albatross Day. In response:

- Following advice received from a consultant contracted by the Secretariat, AC officials, experts and the Secretariat began interacting with certification schemes (see **AC12 Inf 02**).
- A review of current communication platforms was distributed intersessionally during 2020 as a first step towards development of a communications strategy and products (see **AC12 Inf 03**).
- The Secretariat, together with AC officials, experts, NGOs, and other bodies, successfully publicised the commemoration of World Albatross Day on 19 June 2020 (Eradicating Island Pests) and 2021 (Ensuring Albatross-friendly Fisheries), leading to worldwide activities focused on albatross conservation.
- ACAP representatives attending RFMO meetings have made focused statements about the conservation crisis facing albatrosses and petrels and the availability of solutions. ACAP has begun to participate in RFMO Compliance Committee meetings.

Two rounds of the Advisory Committee Small Grants and Secondments Programmes were implemented since MoP6, following AC11 in 2019, and in 2020 (see **AC12 Inf 01**).

2.3 Meetings of the Advisory Committee

Reports from the [Eleventh](#) and Twelfth Meetings of the Advisory Committee can be found on the Agreement's website. [Provide link after AC12]

3. CONCLUSIONS

3.1 Achievements

The Agreement succeeded in providing expert advice to Parties and a range of Organisations on actions to address threats to albatrosses and petrels, both at sea and on land. A substantial proportion of this information is readily accessible through the ACAP website, including conservation guidelines best practice advice for bycatch mitigation measures; mitigation fact sheets developed in conjunction with BirdLife International; and a seabird bycatch ID guide, among others.

The further development of the ACAP database and implementation of the electronic reporting system provides 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 an analysis of its performance, and most importantly, identify the progress achieved and the needs in different regions, and for individual Parties.

A large proportion of the actions planned for the 2019-2022 quadrennium were accomplished. 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: (1) the access to better data from Parties and other fisheries managers on their fisheries and on levels of seabird bycatch, that will allow improved evaluation of bycatch numbers for each ACAP listed species; (2) ongoing use of a suite of indicators of the success of the Agreement (3) [TO BE COMPLETED FOLLOWING AC12].

3.2 Difficulties encountered and challenges for the next triennium

Now that effective mitigation measures have been identified for the key fishing activities known to result in the incidental catch of ACAP species, the challenge ahead is to have these mitigation measures used in those fisheries where seabird bycatch is occurring. AC11 commented on the key role of compliance and monitoring in this regard. [ADD FURTHER DETAILS AFTER AC12]

Another key challenge is to obtain the fisheries data required to assess the level of implementation and effectiveness, as well improving our understanding and management of seabird bycatch.

One of the main challenges of the past quadrennium has been, as for all organisations and countries, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. As well as requiring the postponement of ACAP meetings, the pandemic has led to delays in or suspension of work by RFMOs and others on conservation-related activities (for example, some RFMOs suspended or reduced the requirement for on-board observers). RFMO reviews of conservation measures (including those related to seabird bycatch) have been delayed, and the opportunities for fruitful engagement have been reduced. This has, accordingly, been a difficult period in which to launch and advance the ideas stemming from the AC11 and working group discussions.

ACAP's secondment and small grants programmes have also been affected. Secondments approved in 2019 have not yet been carried out, whereas no secondment applications were received in the 2020 round, despite the criteria being adjusted to suit the prevailing circumstances. Some projects for which grants were awarded in 2019 have also suffered delays (see **AC12 Inf 01**).

4. RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING

The following recommendations are provided for the consideration of the Meeting of the Parties:

- Note progress and difficulties

- Review and approve the work programme proposed for the Advisory Committee for the next triennium (refer **AC12 Doc 16**)

[UPDATE AFTER AC12]