

 <p data-bbox="233 510 456 546">Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels</p>	<p data-bbox="568 239 1374 280">Fourteenth Meeting of the Advisory Committee</p> <p data-bbox="866 300 1374 336"><i>Lima, Peru, 12 – 16 August 2024</i></p> <p data-bbox="563 414 1318 508">Draft Advisory Committee Report to the Eighth Meeting of Parties</p> <p data-bbox="528 580 1355 620"><i>Advisory Committee Chair, Vice-chair, Secretariat</i></p>
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[DRAFT DOCUMENT TO BE UPDATED AFTER AC14]

SUMMARY

The Advisory Committee and its Working Groups made considerable progress against the Advisory Committee Work Programme 2023 - 2025. A summary of activities and achievements is provided here.

Progress included the continued development and review of its Best Practice Advice for seabird bycatch mitigation measures, bycatch mitigation fact sheets, conservation guidelines, and species assessments. All this information is available from ACAP's website.

The Agreement has also continued to successfully collate data on ACAP-listed species, their breeding sites and on at-sea and land-based threats.

The many resources developed by the Advisory Committee and its Working Groups inform Parties, Range States and many organisations and entities on actions to address threats to albatrosses and petrels, both at sea and on land.

Of concern, however, is that when population data are assessed using ACAP's own indicators they show many populations continue to decline and in general the Agreement is not achieving its stated objective to 'achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for albatrosses and petrels.'

The Advisory Committee recognised this conservation crisis in 2019 (AC11), and agreed that its focus should shift from not only developing bycatch mitigation advice, but to also increasing the implementation of best practice seabird bycatch mitigation methods by Parties and fisheries organisations.

To this end, the Advisory Committee has revised its RFMO Engagement Strategy, including organisation-specific approaches that will increase ACAP's ability to influence the adoption of improved conservation measures to mitigate seabird bycatch. The Advisory Committee also continues to encourage Parties to implement best practice bycatch mitigation measures and recognises that currently few ACAP Parties are providing sufficient data to assess the seabird bycatch or the implementation of seabird bycatch mitigation measures in their fisheries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Advisory Committee review this Draft Advisory Committee Report to the Eighth Meeting of the Parties, suggest amendments as appropriate, and agree to recommend that the Meeting of the Parties:

1. Note the progress and achievements made by the Agreement and its Advisory Committee during the past triennium.
2. Note that ACAP indicators show a continued decline in the status of many ACAP-listed species and their populations.
3. Agree to support and implement ACAP's revised RFMO Engagement Strategy.
4. Agree Parties should implement ACAP's Best Practice Advice on seabird bycatch mitigation in their fisheries and collect and report data sufficient to: 1) demonstrate high compliance with mitigation measures and 2) provide precise estimates of seabird bycatch.

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 MoP8 will be prepared after the conclusion of the Fourteenth Meeting of the Advisory Committee (AC14), 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 MoP8.

1.1 Establishment of the Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee was established at MoP1, held in Hobart, Australia, from 10 to 12 November 2004.

1.2 Election and appointment of Advisory Committee Officers

Since AC13 marked the end of all Advisory Committee Officials' terms, all positions required election or re-election.

Mike Double (Australia) was re-elected as Chair, and Tatiana Neves (Brazil) was re-elected as Vice-chair of the Advisory Committee.

Sebastián Jiménez (Uruguay) and Igor Debski (New Zealand) were re-elected as Co-convenors, and Dimas Gianuca (BirdLife International) was re-elected and Megan Tierney (United Kingdom) was elected as joint Vice-convenors of the Seabird Bycatch Working Group (SBWG).

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

Mark Tasker (United Kingdom) was re-elected as Convenor and Alan Tennyson (New Zealand) was elected as Vice-convenor of the Taxonomy Working Group (TWG).

Juan Pablo Seco Pon did not stand for re-election as joint Vice-convenor of the Seabird Bycatch Working Group at AC13 due to other commitments. The AC thanks Dr Seco Pon for his contributions to ACAP and welcomes his continued involvement in the SBWG.

1.3 Members, Alternates, Observers and Experts

Lists of Advisory Committee Members, Alternates, Observers and Experts attending each of the Advisory Committee meetings in the triennium are in ANNEX 1 of the AC13 and AC14 reports.

1.4 Review of rules of procedure

The Advisory Committee established its [Rules of Procedure](#) (RoP) at AC1 and has reviewed them at subsequent meetings. The Advisory Committee's RoP were last amended at AC6 (Guayaquil, Ecuador, 29 August to 2 September 2011).

1.5 Meetings and other activities since MoP7

After MoP7, the Advisory Committee met formally for its Thirteenth Meeting (AC13) at Edinburgh, UK, from 22 to 26 May 2023, and for its Fourteenth Meeting (AC14), at Lima, Peru from 12 to 16 August 2024. Meetings of the Population and Conservation Status Working Group (PaCSWG7 and PaCSWG8), and the Seabird Bycatch Working Group (SBWG11 and SBWG12) preceded AC13 and AC14, respectively, including as joint sessions of SBWG and PaCSWG to discuss cross-cutting issues.

Informal meetings of the Advisory Committee's Officials (Chair and Vice-chair, Working Group Convenors and Vice-convenors) and the Secretariat have been held every three or four months to coordinate the Advisory Committee's intersessional activities and in particular to discuss the implementation of ACAP's RFMO strategy (AC14 Doc 14), attendance at RFMO and CCAMLR meetings and progress within the intersessional correspondence groups established at AC13.

2. OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES AND MEETINGS OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

2.1 Activities of the Advisory Committee Chair

Mike Double was elected as Chair of the Advisory Committee at the conclusion of AC12 (2 September 2021) and was re-elected as Chair at AC13.

2.1.1 Recruitment

The Chair, during AC13, facilitated preliminary discussions at AC13 amongst the members of the recruitment sub-committee appointed by MoP7 to recruit a new Executive Secretary to take up the role in July 2025.

2.1.2 Budgets

The Chair has been consulted as required by the Secretariat on issues related to management of the Agreement's budget.

2.1.3 Consultations with the Agreement Secretariat

As the Chair and Secretariat are both located in Hobart, Australia, the Chair has maintained near-monthly visits and discussions with the Secretariat. He has also convened near-quarterly informal meetings with the Advisory Committee's Officials.

2.1.4 Other activities

With the Secretariat, the Chair, in his role as Chair of the Grants Sub-committee managed a Secondments Grants round in 2022/23 and 2023/2024 and a Small Grants round in 2023/2024. These grant rounds allocated a total of AUD\$286k to five secondments and eight small grants.

The Chair also led an intersessional correspondence group on 'AC reporting to the MoP' and participated in other Advisory Committee intersessional groups (see below). In addition, the Chair contributed to a publication celebrating ACAP's achievements in its first twenty years (2004–2024).

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 2023 - 2025 is provided in **ANNEX 1 [TO BE INCLUDED AFTER AC14]**. This document has also been used as the basis for the development of the Advisory Committee's Work Programme for the 2026 - 2028 triennium (**MoP8 Doc 00**).

Scientific and technical advice provided by the Advisory Committee to the MoP is based on the work produced by the Advisory Committee's Working Groups:

- The Population and Conservation Status Working Group (PaCSWG) addresses land-based threats, threats at sea other than fisheries bycatch, and determines the conservation status of species listed in Annex 1 of the Agreement (hereafter 'ACAP species').
- The Seabird Bycatch Working Group (SBWG) addresses threats to ACAP species from seabird bycatch in fisheries.
- 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 again made considerable progress during the last triennium. Key achievements since MoP7 are summarised below.

- Maintained the ongoing production and review of ACAP's suite of [bycatch mitigation best practice advice](#) documents for pelagic longline, demersal longline and trawl fisheries, including recommendations for standalone mitigation measures in pelagic longline fisheries.
- Conducted a revision of ACAP's RFMO Engagement Strategy to include RFMO-specific strategies that aim to deliver more effective engagement.
- Implemented ACAP's RFMO Engagement Strategy by directly engaging in meetings of RFMOs and CCAMLR to promote the development, adoption, implementation and review of conservation measures relevant to ACAP species.

- Continued to engage in the review processes of seafood certification schemes and delivered substantial improvements to a new standard. The standard now includes requirements on information, management and outcomes for seabird bycatch.
- Updated the seabird bycatch mitigation advice toolbox for artisanal and small-scale fisheries.
- Continued to review and update the BirdLife International - ACAP bycatch [mitigation fact sheets](#) aimed at fisheries managers to assist in reducing bycatch in longline and trawl fisheries in several relevant languages.
- Completed the update of several ACAP [species assessments](#) and initiated the update of the remaining species.
- Implemented ACAP's prioritisation framework to identify priority actions to address land-based and at-sea threats.
- Continued the collation of data to assess current population trends in ACAP-listed species and to determine ACAP indicator metrics.
- Further assessed and reviewed ACAP's list of High Priority Populations.
- Identified key gaps in breeding site monitoring, and with assistance from BLI, in tracking data.
- Established an intersessional group of experts to monitor and advise ACAP Parties and other agencies on the spread, impact and response to the spread of the High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza virus.
- Continued review of taxonomy-related publications relevant to ACAP species and a specific evaluation of taxonomic status of the subspecific taxa of Buller's albatross *Thalassarche bulleri*.
- Continued the assessment of global species checklists and initiatives to bring together the main global taxonomies for all seabird species.
- Further developed the ACAP [database](#) to facilitate the work of the Advisory Committee and its Working Groups.

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 (**MoP8 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. However, as noted in **AC13 Doc 10**, the IOC has proposed merging the Balearic Shearwater (*Puffinus mauretanicus*) and Yelkouan Shearwater (*P. yelkouan*) but as yet no decision has been made.

2.2.3 Recommendations concerning the Action Plan and further research

A draft Advisory Committee Work Programme for the 2026 - 2028 triennium has been prepared and submitted as **MoP8 Doc 00**.

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

ACAP species status and trend indicators, as well as indicators on breed sites and tracking data availability are presented in **MoP8 Doc 00** [AC14 Doc 16]

Capacity building indicators, as endorsed by MoP6, are presented and discussed in **MoP8 Doc 00** [AC14 Doc 19].

The use of indicators on seabird bycatch and the implementation of seabird bycatch mitigation measures by Parties is still not possible, largely due to Parties not providing any or suitable data.

In response, the Seabird Bycatch Working Group and the Advisory Committee have been exploring other approaches that could deliver an assessment of progress towards the implementation of seabird bycatch mitigation methods and the reduction in seabird bycatch (**AC14 Doc 12**).

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 by Parties, which has been produced using the web-based reporting system, is provided as **MoP8 Doc 00** [AC14 Doc 15].

2.2.6 Other Activities

After AC13 the Advisory Committee established six intersessional correspondence groups to progress its work on a Communications Strategy, the RFMO Engagement Strategy, AC reporting to the MoP, seabird bycatch data, seabird bycatch indicators, and High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza (HPIA). Each of these groups reported back to AC14 on progress.

The intersessional group on 'AC reporting to the MoP' proposed a revised suite of papers that aimed to improve reporting to the MoP by aggregating related issues, avoiding duplication and producing shorter topic-specific papers. The implementation of this new approach was agreed intersessionally by AC members and draft papers were developed for AC14.

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. The Secretariat engaged the services of a communications advisor in 2022 and she led an Advisory Committee intersessional group to progress the development of this strategy (**AC14 Doc 21**).

The Secretariat, together with Advisory Committee officials, experts, NGOs, and other bodies, continued to celebrate World Albatross Day on 19 June 2023 (Plastic pollution) and 2024 (Marine Protected Areas), leading to worldwide activities focused on albatross conservation.

MoP7 agreed to develop a publication celebrating ACAP's achievements in its first 20 Years (2004 – 2024). Australia, Ecuador, the United Kingdom offered to coordinate the development of this publication together with the Secretariat and Advisory Committee members and officials. Parties, Range States and others contributed to the content and the document was published in May 2024.

Grant rounds for the Advisory Committee Secondments Programmes and Small Grants were conducted in 2022/23 and 2023/24. Both these schemes play an important role in supporting the successful delivery of the Advisory Committee Work Programme.

2.3 Meetings of the Advisory Committee

Reports from the [Thirteenth](#) and Fourteenth Meetings of the Advisory Committee can be found on the Agreement's website.

3. CONCLUSIONS

3.1 Achievements

ACAP's achievements over the last triennium and indeed the last 20 years are beautifully presented in ACAP's recent publication 'Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels: Achievements in the First Twenty Years 2004 – 2024'.

Many of these achievements have been informed by ACAP advice developed through the innumerable contributions made by experts in its Working Groups. This advice, provided to Parties and a range of organisations, is readily accessible through the ACAP website and includes conservation guidelines, best practice advice for bycatch mitigation measures, mitigation fact sheets developed in conjunction with BirdLife International, and a seabird bycatch ID guide developed with assistance from the Japanese Far Seas Fisheries institute, among others.

The Advisory Committee has continued to enhance the influence of ACAP's resources (available on ACAP's website) through the revision of its RMFO Engagement Strategy and by further refining a Communications Strategy. The Advisory Committee has attempted to improve its reporting to the MoP by revising the number and structure of its papers including specific papers on the status of species (**MoP8 Doc 00**), threats to ACAP listed species (**MoP8 Doc 00**) and priority actions for the 2026-2028 triennium (**MoP8 Doc 00**).

The ACAP database and online reporting systems are now mature and provide Parties and other users access to essential information for the effective implementation of the Agreement's Action Plan. Ongoing reporting 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.

ACAP's Small Grants and Secondments Programmes remain effective and efficient tools to implement the Advisory Committee's Work Programme and they continue to deliver conservation benefits to albatrosses and petrels, as well as enhance capacity building.

3.2 Difficulties encountered and challenges for the next triennium

While the Advisory Committee celebrates the achievements highlighted in ACAP's 20-year publication it recognises ACAP-listed species continue to be impacted by many threatening processes including fisheries bycatch, invasive species, marine debris, disease, pollution, climate change and habitat modification. These impacts are reflected in the status of ACAP's species; ACAP's own indicators show many if not most populations are in decline. As such, the Agreement is not achieving its stated objective to 'achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for albatrosses and petrels'.

The decline in the status of many populations can be linked directly to fisheries bycatch. However, one of the biggest difficulties encountered by the Advisory Committee is the provision of sufficient data across all high-risk fisheries to assess true bycatch rates and the implementation of mitigation measures.

The Advisory Committee therefore advises the MoP that, while there are many actions that can be taken to improve the Agreement's likelihood of success, the highest priority is rapid progress on improving the implementation of seabird bycatch mitigation measures. This is ACAP's principal challenge for the next triennium and can be addressed in part by:

1. Agreeing that Parties should implement fully ACAP's Best Practice Advice on seabird bycatch mitigation in their fisheries and collect and report data sufficient to: 1) demonstrate high compliance with mitigation measures and 2) provide precise estimates of seabird bycatch.
2. Fully implementing ACAP's revised RFMO Engagement Strategy.