



AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION OF ALBATROSSES AND PETRELS

SUMMARY OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE MEETING OF PARTIES

The First Session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) was held in Hobart from 10-12 November. It was preceded by an informal scientific meeting from 8-9 November, also in Hobart.

There was a strong sense of cooperation amongst participants. The meeting was attended by five Parties: Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Spain and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK); three Signatory States: Argentina, Brazil and France; and three Range States: Namibia, Norway and the United States of America (USA). Observers attended from the Antarctic Treaty Secretariat, Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition (ASOC), the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT), the Convention on the Conservation Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), BirdLife International, the Institute of Antarctic and Southern Ocean Studies (IASOS), the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR), Southern Seabird Solutions Trust (SSS) and University of Texas at Austin (Prof. R Doughty).

PROGRESS WITH RATIFICATIONS

Six Parties have currently ratified the ACAP Agreement: Australia, Ecuador, New Zealand, the Republic of South Africa, Spain and the United Kingdom. Three Signatory States: Argentina, Brazil, and France, announced that ratification of the Agreement is currently being considered by their respective Parliaments.

AGREEMENT SECRETARIAT

At the Meeting, Australia presented an offer to host the Secretariat permanently in Hobart. There was unanimous support for this proposal from the Parties present. A process for the establishment of the Secretariat was agreed, with Australia to continue to provide the interim Secretariat until the permanent Secretariat is established.

BUDGET AND SCALE OF CONTRIBUTIONS FROM PARTIES

A core budget was agreed for the next 2 years, along with a scale of contributions from the 6 Countries which are currently Parties to ACAP. As new Countries ratify the agreement, their contributions will be used to increase the total budget. It was agreed that

after 2 years the budget will be revisited. Revised contributions will take into account the Gross Domestic Product of individual Parties with consideration given to providing encouragement for developing Countries to join the Agreement.

EMERGENCY CRITERIA

Interim criteria to define emergency situations for albatrosses and petrels and assign responsibility for action were adopted by the first Meeting of Parties. An emergency situation was defined as: *an unexpected event that threatens albatrosses and petrels at the population level; requires urgent conservation measures; is of such a magnitude that it exceeds the immediate capacity of the affected Country to adequately respond; and for which international resources and/or assistance are required.*

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

An Advisory Committee was established to provide scientific, technical and other advice to the Meeting of Parties; and a work programme for this Committee was endorsed. Two working groups were also established, to carry out a review of the status and trends of albatrosses and petrels covered by the Agreement; and to consider issues related to the taxonomy of albatrosses.

PRIORITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION PLAN

It was agreed that priority areas of the ACAP Action Plan which require immediate attention are fisheries bycatch of albatrosses and petrels; and the management and protection of breeding sites, including in particular any adverse effects of introduced species, parasites or diseases. Mortality from interactions with fishing vessels represents the most serious threat to most species of albatrosses and petrels covered by the ACAP Agreement. Much work has been done or is ongoing with respect to the mitigation of adverse effects of fisheries on albatrosses and petrels. The Advisory Committee will be tasked with recommending the best way to integrate the work of ACAP with existing initiatives. The aim is to enhance and advance current initiatives, not to duplicate them.

COLLABORATION

The meeting was pleased to receive presentations and offers of collaboration from the following observer organizations: BirdLife International, the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT), the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR), and the Southern Seabird Solutions Trust.

NEXT MEETING

The next session of the Meeting of the Parties to ACAP will take place late in 2006. The UK offered to consult with its authorities with a view to making an offer to host this meeting. The Advisory Committee is due to meet in mid 2005 and Australia has offered to host this meeting in Hobart.

ACAP Interim Secretariat