



UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME



*Marine mammals:
global plan of action*

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FAO

PREFACE

In response to Governing Council decisions 59 (IV) of 13 April 1976 and 88 (V) of 25 May 1977, UNEP initiated, in co-operation with FAO, a project to develop a global plan of action for marine mammals.

The first draft of this plan was circulated to Governments, international organizations and individuals for comment, and a progress report on the Plan was submitted by the Executive Director to the Governing Council at its ninth session. In its decision 9/10 A of 26 May 1981, the Council noted this report and requested the Executive Director to continue the preparation of the Plan with a view to its submission to the Council at its eleventh session.

Due to the complexity of the projects to be implemented in support of the Plan and the procedures laid down in the Governing Council decision 9/25 of 26 May 1981, on the financing of action plans, it was not possible to finalize the plan in time for the Council's eleventh session. However, an ad hoc interagency consultation on the plan was convened by UNEP and FAO in Nairobi from 10 to 14 January 1983. The consultation, which was attended by representatives from IWC, IUCN, SCAR, CITES, UNESCO/IOC, FAO and UNEP reviewed the Action Plan and identified 18 projects for implementation under it.

By paragraph 11 of decision 11/7 of 24 May 1983, the Governing Council requested the Executive Director "to finalize a financial plan for the implementation of the draft global plan of action for the conservation, management and utilization of marine mammals and submit it to the Council at its twelfth session".

To comply with this decision, and in accordance with the procedures laid down in decision 9/25, the Executive Director requested on October 1983 that Governments indicate commitments for the Plan's implementation.

The Plan and associated projects for its implementation were revised and updated in the light of comments received at the FAO Committee of Fisheries, which met from 10 to 19 October 1983. The Ad Hoc Planning and Co-ordinating Committee for the Plan held its second consultation at FAO Headquarters, Rome, from 11 to 13 January 1984 and agreed on the final version of the Draft Plan, including nine revised projects with a total budget of US\$ 11,842,000 for implementation under the Plan.

The twelfth session of UNEP Governing Council (Nairobi, 16-29 May 1984) considered the final version of the plan of action (document UNEP/GC.12/15, Annex I) and adopted the following decision (decision 12/12 I of 28 May 1984):

"The Governing Council

1. Endorses the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Management and Utilization of Marine Mammals as a timely and valuable framework for policy planning and programme formulation by the international community;

2. Notes the efforts of the Executive Director to prepare and submit a financial plan for the implementation of the Plan of Action;
3. Appeals to all Governments and international organizations to make firm commitments to the Plan of Action;
4. Requests the Executive Director to promote a broad-based response to the Plan of Action, drawing upon the capabilities of existing institutions to the maximum extent possible and utilizing the catalytic role of the United Nations Environment Programme as appropriate;
5. Requests the Executive Director to take the following approach in securing additional financial commitments in support of the Plan of Action:
 - (a) To circulate to potential donors fact sheets on individual projects identified for the implementation of the Plan;
 - (b) To investigate the possibility, in the case of projects with a strong regional component, of adopting a regional approach to their funding in consultation with the countries concerned;
6. Invites the Executive Director to report to the Governing Council at its thirteenth session on the response of Governments and international organizations to the Plan of Action."

The International Whaling Commission also considered the Action Plan at its 36th meeting in Buenos Aires (June 1984) and endorsed its implementation.

Section A of the present document reproduces Annex I of document UNEP/GC.12/15, (Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Management and Utilization of Marine Mammals) and Section B reproduces Annex II, (Draft Financial Plan) of the same document.

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A. GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE CONSERVATION,
MANAGEMENT AND UTILIZATION OF MARINE MAMMALS

SUMMARY

1. For the purpose of the Plan, marine mammals are taken to include those mammals which spend all or a large proportion of their time in the sea and obtain their food predominantly from it. They also include a few species whose ancestors were marine but which have moved into fresh waters.
2. These marine mammals belong to four groups: cetaceans, pinnipeds, sirenians and some others. The populations of many of these animals have been severely depleted by human activities, mainly by hunting, but also by incidental catches in fishing nets, destruction of their habitats and disturbance of breeding colonies; pollution has also had serious effects on some species in some areas.
3. The most seriously depleted large whales are the right and bowhead whales and, to a lesser extent, the blue and humpback whales. The fin and sei whales, although less depleted, are well below their most productive levels in most areas. The minke whale has in most areas been relatively little affected by exploitation. The status of sperm whales is particularly difficult to assess, but the population seems to be still very large.
4. There is more uncertainty about the status of a number of the small cetaceans, but probably those in the most critical condition are some of the freshwater forms whose habitats have been gravely impoverished by the construction of dams, siltation and water pollution.
5. Many of the pinnipeds which were seriously reduced by hunting in the past have made good recoveries, and the forms in greatest danger at present are the several species of monk seals, whose habitat requirements make them particularly susceptible to coastal modification and disturbance, and some fur seals and sea lions.
6. The sirenians, which live in coastal and fresh waters in tropical areas, have been severely reduced throughout much of their range as a result of hunting (mainly subsistence but locally some commercial), habitat modification and disturbance.
7. Public concern about the threatened status of many of the marine mammals, particularly the large whales, rose rapidly in the early seventies. This led to the growth of whale-watching and similar activities, which attached so-called low- consumptive values to the animals, in addition to the economic values associated with exploitation.
8. As a consequence of this rising public concern, the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm, 1972) made recommendations relating to the conservation of marine mammals. In the same year, FAO, through the Advisory Committee of Experts on Marine Resources Research (ACMRR), inaugurated a broad review of the status of marine mammals. This culminated in the Scientific Consultation in Bergen in 1976, to which UNEP

contributed substantial support. In reviewing the results of this study, FAO's Committee on Fisheries recommended that FAO should continue its activities in relation to marine mammals and that it should do so in co-operation with UNEP. As a result of this recommendation a joint FAO/UNEP project was set up to develop the Plan of Action which is summarized here.

9. It is proposed that, following approval by their respective governing bodies, FAO and UNEP should consult on the measures which should be taken to implement the Plan. It seems appropriate, in view of their existing involvement and the general nature of their responsibilities, that FAO and UNEP should continue to play key roles as the implementation develops, but the global nature of the proposals and the wide range of disciplines involved will make it essential that many other bodies should take a very active part. Particularly important among these bodies are UNESCO, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and, among other organizations, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN).

10. The size and scope of the Plan are such that it will be necessary to ensure that there are effective administrative, supervisory and advisory mechanisms for its implementation. It is proposed that this should consist of an ad hoc planning and co-ordinating committee, an ad hoc advisory committee of scientists and a small full-time professional secretariat. These mechanisms should be established by FAO and UNEP jointly, in consultation with other bodies as appropriate. The secretariat would be under the general supervision of the planning and co-ordinating committee. It would be located either at the headquarters of one of the participating bodies or at an appropriate independent site such as Cambridge, United Kingdom. Such arrangements would ensure co-ordination, avoid overlaps and duplication of efforts, and maintain momentum in the implementation of the global plan of action.

11. The steps needed to achieve effective conservation, management and utilization of marine mammals are numerous and complex, and cannot be fully identified at present. Therefore, although the total plan is seen as a long-term project of indefinite duration, the activities listed in the financial plan cover the medium-term period devoted to taking specific steps to deal with some urgent situations which can currently be identified, to improving in a number of areas the existing conservation mechanisms relating to marine mammals, and to obtaining information which will be needed as the implementation of the plan proceeds. A Review Meeting is proposed to be held at the end of the first biennium to examine the results obtained and develop further plans for implementation.

12. For the purpose of the Plan, "conservation" is taken to include rational exploitation, as well as the management of human activities which affect the marine mammals directly or indirectly, including exploitation. It includes also actions related to trade in products from marine mammals, to the various threats to their well-being and to the realization of human values from them on a sustainable basis. The term "management" is used to mean the positive

actions which may be undertaken to achieve the conservation of a species, population or ecosystem. It embraces, for example, creation of sanctuaries, prohibition of public access to breeding areas, catch limits and other restrictions on exploitation. Thus, while conservation is a concept, management is a means by which that concept is put into effect.

13. The Plan puts forward a series of Recommendations which are summarized and classified in table 1, with an indication of the bodies which it is proposed should implement each Recommendation. In addition to those relating to establishing the machinery described in paragraph 10 above, the Recommendations deal with the following general areas of activity:

- (a) Identification of conservation and management objectives;
- (b) Actions to meet present critical situations;
- (c) Actions to increase present knowledge so as to provide a basis for further stages of the Plan;
- (d) Actions to improve the overall machinery of conservation, including:
 - (i) Improvement in the availability of information;
 - (ii) Increase in the number of scientists working on marine mammals;
 - (iii) Increase in scientific activities;
 - (iv) Development of concepts and mechanisms for the establishment of protected areas for marine mammals;
 - (v) Improvement in public understanding of marine mammals and their conservation.

14. In the area of objectives, an interim definition of "optimum population level" is proposed for use as a guideline in the first biennium of the Plan. It is recommended that the Review Meeting should consider means by which a review of information, concepts and alternatives for global objectives for the

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