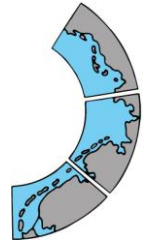




Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

Secretariat provided by the United Nations Environment Programme



PRESS RELEASE

20 years of seal protection in the Wadden Sea The first Agreement concluded under the Bonn Convention celebrates its success

Bonn/Wilhelmshaven, 16 October 2010 - Seal numbers in the trilateral Wadden Sea are on the rise. In total, about 21,600 Harbour Seals were counted in Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands during the seal census in 2009. Also for the Grey Seals, though formally not covered by the Agreement on the Conservation of Seals in the Wadden Sea but protected indirectly through the Agreement, the increasing population trend has continued during the last years. In 2009, around 2,800 Grey Seals were counted in the entire Wadden Sea area.

“We now have been working together on cross-border protection of seals in the Wadden Sea for 20 years,” said Jens Enemark, head of the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat in Wilhelmshaven, which coordinates the trilateral seal monitoring and management. “The recovery of seals in the Wadden Sea is a true success story of the Agreement. The Seal Agreement provides an indispensable legal framework for the proper protection and management of the population”. This protection of seals was also acknowledged by the designation of the Dutch and German Wadden Sea as UNESCO World Heritage in 2009 and the Danish Wadden Sea National Park which will be inaugurated on the day the Agreement was signed.

Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, Executive Secretary of the UNEP/CMS Secretariat said: “The Agreement on Seals in the Wadden Sea - the first species instrument concluded under the Bonn Convention - has not only stopped the further decline of the seal population, but it has also achieved the success of seal numbers being on the highest level since concluding the Agreement. This upward trend gives us hope for positive results at the forthcoming biodiversity conference next week in Nagoya.”

The Agreement requires Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands to develop a conservation and management plan for the seal population based on recent scientific knowledge. This Seal Management Plan, which also includes the protection of the Grey Seal, aims to restore and maintain viable stocks and a natural reproduction capacity, including juvenile survival. It contains action points on habitat protection; research and monitoring; pollution and wardening; taking seals out of the sea for captivity and public information. The governments regularly amend the plan in order to meet the challenge of protecting this flagship species of the Wadden Sea.

“It clearly indicates that the Seal Management Plan is an example for transboundary management that others may wish to emulate. We have recorded the highest numbers of seals ever counted in the Wadden Sea area, which document the fast recovery of the population after the last seal epidemic in 2002”, said Kristine Jung, coordinator of the seal expert group at the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat.

On 16th October 1990, Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands signed the first Agreement under the Bonn Convention. The Agreement on the Conservation of Seals in the Wadden Sea is now reviewing its success.

The Agreement on the Conservation of Seals in the Wadden Sea was the first regional agreement signed under UNEP's Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, also known as the Bonn Convention. It was concluded after the first distemper in 1988, when almost 60% of the seal population in the Wadden Sea died. The Seals Agreement provides a framework and crucial support to protect, manage and monitor seals in the Wadden Sea.

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