

RESOLUTION 7.15**ASSESSING MARINE LITTER IMPACTS ON CETACEANS**

The Meeting of the Parties to the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area:

Stressing that marine litter (or marine debris) pollution is a global environmental concern, with the Mediterranean Sea being heavily affected, and can be a conservation concern for many marine species, in particular cetaceans, that may be harmed or killed by it,

Aware of the related work underway under the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), and *recalling* related decisions, in particular CMS Resolution 12.20 on Management of Marine Debris,

Recalling that litter and micro-litter ingested by marine animals is addressed by Descriptor 10 and its related criteria under the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (Directive 2008/56/EU and Decision 2017/848/EU), as well as by the Ecological Objective 10 of the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and coast and related Assessment Criteria (IMAP) of the Barcelona Convention,

Considering that, to contribute evaluating the actual and potential deleterious effects of marine debris, including entanglement in abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) and direct ingestion of both macro- and micro-plastics, and other threats to cetaceans, common best practices for stranding events have been drafted and discussed in several other fora,

Considering also that, in 2014 and 2015, the IWC held two Expert Workshops on this subject, one science-oriented and the other policy-oriented,

Taking note of the joint ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS/SPA-RAC Workshop on marine debris and cetacean stranding that was held on 8 April 2018 in La Spezia, Italy, and the joint ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS Workshop on harmonization of the best practices for necropsy of cetaceans and for the development of diagnostic frameworks, held on 24th and 25th June in Legnaro, Italy,

Recalling Recommendation 12.7 of the 12th ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee Meeting on strandings and marine litter,

Referring to Resolution 7.14 on best practices on cetacean stranding, adopted at this Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Parties,

Emphasizing that a multi-disciplinary approach delivered across different spatial and temporal scales is necessary to tackle the issue of marine litter effectively,

1. *Reiterates* that evaluating and addressing threats, such as marine litter, is a key part of the ACCOBAMS objectives and is relevant to past decisions related to, *inter alia*, the ACCOBAMS Conservation Plan, the ACCOBAMS 2014-2025 Strategy, the 2017-2019 work programme and Resolution 6.22 on cetacean live strandings;
2. *Stresses* the importance of evaluating and addressing negative impacts of marine litter on cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Area, in particular through monitoring ingested marine litter and entanglement evidences during necropsies;
3. *Recommends* the Scientific Committee to consider the results and recommendations from relevant projects, initiatives and workshops, including the workshop to be organized by the IWC in Barcelona, Spain, in December 2019, aimed at assessing impacts of marine litter on cetaceans and to identify potential hotspot areas for cetacean entanglement and ingestion of marine litter, for example through ecological risk assessment methods or other mapping and modelling approaches;
4. *Encourages* increased international cooperation on this issue with other bodies, in particular those relevant for cetaceans, as well as regional initiatives on marine litter (*e.g.* those promoted by the European Union under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and those promoted by the Barcelona Convention under the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and related Assessment Criteria of the Barcelona Convention and the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean);
5. *Invites* Parties and the Permanent Secretariat to liaise with other relevant Bodies, Organizations and Initiatives at the regional scale to:
 - a) support effective means to reduce marine debris in the environment, including voluntary and legislative initiatives to reduce production and consumption of single-use items, and to invest in the collection, recycling and sustainable disposal of waste;
 - b) develop and implement educational and public awareness programmes related to marine litter and cetaceans and the steps that individuals can take to reduce marine litter.