



PROVISIONAL REPORT OF THE ACCOBAMS WORKSHOP ON SONARS AND CETACEAN INTERACTIONS

(TOULON - 8 & 9 OCTOBER 2019)

Addressing the impacts of anthropogenic noise on cetaceans is considered as of high priority by ACCOBAMS Parties for reaching ACCOBAMS objective to achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for cetaceans. The ACCOBAMS Resolution 4.17 on “Guidelines to address the impacts of anthropogenic noise on cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS area” was adopted in 2010 and several important achievements have been made in the recent years with the support of the Joint ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS/CMS Noise Working Group (e.g. identification of the noise hot spots, regional impulsive noise register, collaboration with the EU TG Noise and with the Barcelona Convention, etc.).

During the Sixth Meeting of Parties to ACCOBAMS (22nd – 25th November 2016, Monaco), the ACCOBAMS Permanent Secretariat was requested to organize a workshop inviting NATO and National Navies to show how the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee can provide advice and assistance with respect to mitigating adverse effects on cetaceans for any future exercises.

In this context, the ACCOBAMS Permanent Secretariat, with the assistance of the co-chair of the JNWG and with the FMES Institute (Mediterranean Institute for high level Strategic Studies), organized a workshop in Toulon, France, on 8th and 9th October 2019.

Despite numerous attempts, the ACCOBAMS Secretariat did not reach to have responses from NATO. However, two National Navies have joined this initiative: the French Navy and the Italian Navy.

The final list of participants appears in [Annex](#) to the report.

The main objective of this workshop was:

- to improve dialogue and cooperation among national navies and ACCOBAMS for the seek of cetacean conservation
- to introduce how the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee could provide updated advice and specific assistance with respect to mitigating adverse effects on cetaceans for any future exercises

During this workshop, the participants reviewed progress by ACCOBAMS, and the difficulties encountered. Their work was focused on three main issues:

- **organisation** to improve ACCOBAMS effectiveness;
- **information sharing** between Parties, Scientific Committee and Navies;
- **protocols/procedures** implemented by navies during the planning of exercises and use of sonar to limit the risks for cetaceans.

After the first day, the participants identified several points that needed to be explored to develop an action plan:

- identify relevant Point of Contact (POC) between ACCOBAMS Secretariat and each navy;
- clarify distinction between operations and exercises, for purposes of determining how the impacts of naval sonar activities can be mitigated;
- determine with more accuracy the part of the sonar emissions which affect cetaceans, to explore the potential of signal modification as a mitigation measure;
- improve and make available information on cetacean distribution (map) and seasonality;
- explore the concept of a sonar area-based moratorium, pursuant to the recommendation in de Quiros et al. 2019;
- compare and analyse navies' protocols;
- compile and assess guidelines from international fora;
- investigate information and best practices for underwater noise mitigation of other sectors (e.g., Germany for pile driving);
- consider use of spatial/temporal closures and other mitigation in activity planning;
- explore transparency possibility and limits: data collection and information sharing;
- identify which information is to be shared:
 - from ACCOBAMS to navies: CCH¹, IMMAs², protected areas,
 - from navies to ACCOBAMS: exercises information;
- improve process of exchange of information (POC):
 - exchange information with: EU MSFD³, NATO MILOC⁴, EcAp⁵ (Barcelona convention),
 - identify individual champions,
 - identify consultation process;
- explore the use of EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive as a driver for action by EU member states' navies;
- formation/training by ACCOBAMS of planners of exercises and warship Commanding Officer (observers, sonar operators) (ACCOBAMS resolution.)

The actions identified are summed up in the following action plan.

¹ CCH= Cetacean Critical Habitats

² IMMAs= Important Marine Mammal Areas

³ EU MSFD= Marine Strategy Framework Directive

⁴ NATO MILOC= NATO Military Oceanography Group

⁵ EcAp= Ecosystem Approach

Action plan

N°	Action	Pilot
Organisation		
1	Request the TG-Noise/MSCG ⁶ chairs to share information on EU parties point of contact (POC)	ACCOBAMS Secretariat
2	Request MEDPOL Focal Points to share information on POC for non-EU Contracting Parties	ACCOBAMS Secretariat
3	Request Parties (Focal Points) to assign a POC in national navies by MOP7 using Resolution 6.17	ACCOBAMS Secretariat
4	Allow the ACCOBAMS secretariat to get in direct contact with navies' POC for the purpose of implementing the action plan	Parties
5	Allow the Secretariat to get into contact with NATO (working group)	Parties
6	Request the ACCOBAMS Secretariat, with the engagement of the Scientific Committee, to organize information/training/formation session of appropriate bodies in navies (planners and CO), also recalling final report of MOP6	Parties
Information Sharing		
7	Provide ACCOBAMS with clarification of the distinction between exercises and operations, for purposes of informing how impacts from naval sonar activities can be mitigated (consider more the activity rather than the area)	French Navy
8	Map/identify sonar exercise areas, including where major NATO exercises are carried out	ACCOBAMS Secretariat in coordination with navies
9	Produce an overview of sonar types	ACCOBAMS Secretariat in coordination with navies
10	Consider listing and prioritizing areas for avoiding or limiting active sonar use	ACCOBAMS SC
11	Provide navies with available practical information on cetacean distribution (map) and seasonality, in a way that is understandable by navy planners and crews	ACCOBAMS Secretariat
12	Improve knowledge on cetacean distribution and seasonality, particularly on beaked Whales and unsurveyed areas, and provide updated information to navy planners and crews	ACCOBAMS SC
13	Provide feedback to ACCOBAMS SC and Secretariat on how information on cetacean distribution and seasonality has been used in planning and mitigation of active sonar activities	Navies
14	Ask the appropriate scientific organisations in countries to establish cooperation (e.g., data collection) with ACCOBAMS SC	ACCOBAMS Secretariat
15	Collect data from appropriate bodies (e.g. CMRE ⁷) on cetacean distribution	ACCOBAMS SC
16	Analyse data gaps pertaining to marine mammal conservation and request the ACCOBAMS SC to fill these gaps; priority should be given to areas planned for exercises	ACCOBAMS SC
17	Hold follow-up workshop(s), inclusive of additional navies and NATO, to aid in implementing the elements of this action plan	ACCOBAMS Secretariat, in coordination with navies
Protocols/Procedures		

⁶ Marine Strategy Coordination Group

⁷ Centre for Maritime Research and Experimentation

18	Prioritize areas of high risk to beaked whales for spatial avoidance (following Bernaldo de Quiros et al. 2019)	ACCOBAMS Secretariat and SC, in coordination with Navies
19	Ask the navies to provide standing protocols they use, then synthesize and propose a global protocol	ACCOBAMS Secretariat with ACCOBAMS SC
20	Propose a pilot project to perform scientific surveys of the exercise areas before and after the exercise	ACCOBAMS SC
21	Propose sending gliders (with hydrophones) to monitor a proposed exercise area ahead of exercises in suitable beaked whale habitat to avoid beaked whales	Navies
22	Support permanent monitoring of areas used recurrently	Parties
23	Investigate how to transpose to sonar the best practices used by Germany's Sound Protection Concept (StUk3) for pile driving	ACCOBAMS SC
24	Ask the relevant bodies to provide guidelines they have already published (e.g. TG Noise)	ACCOBAMS Secretariat
25	Encourage national navies to make use of relevant guidelines (ACCOBAMS/CMS)	ACCOBAMS Secretariat?
26	Explore the possibility of replacing the notion of "moratorium area" with that of "sensitive zone"	ACCOBAMS SC
27	Use information on cetacean distribution and seasonality provided by ACCOBAMS in planning and mitigating active sonar activities, and provide feedback to ACCOBAMS on actions taken to reduce impact of sonar on cetaceans	Navies
28	Give available information relating to use of sonar before, during and after exercises	Navies
29	Include risk assessment for marine mammals in the planning of major exercises or of regular sonar activity in an exercise area	Navies

ANNEX – LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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