



Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area, concluded under the auspices of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)



Accord sur la Conservation des Cétacés de la Mer Noire, de la Méditerranée et de la zone Atlantique adjacente, conclu sous l'égide de la Convention sur la Conservation des Espèces Migratrices appartenant à la Faune Sauvage (CMS)

REPORT OF THE THIRD BIENNIAL CONFERENCE ON CETACEAN CONSERVATION IN SOUTH MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES



Jounieh (Lebanon), 21-23 October 2014



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INTRODUCTION

The *Biennial Conference on Cetacean Conservation in South Mediterranean Countries* (CSMC) comes from an initiative launched by the ACCOBAMS Permanent Secretariat in 2009. The First edition of the Conference (CSMC1) was organized in 2009 in Tabarka (Tunisia) and CSMC2 took place in El Jadida (Morocco) in 2012.

The CSMC3 has been organized in **Jounieh** (Lebanon) from **21 to 23 October 2014**, in collaboration with the National Centre for Marine Sciences of CNRS (Lebanon), the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (RAC/SPA -MAP-UNEP) and the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation. CSMC3 was financially supported by a voluntary contribution from the Principality of Monaco.

More than 40 participants from 10 Mediterranean Countries (Algeria, Egypt, France, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Monaco, Morocco, Tunisia and Syria) and from 5 International Organisations (ACCOBAMS, GFCM, IUCN, MedPAN, RAC/SPA) attended the Conference (the list of participants appears in [Annex 1 to this report](#)).

CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES

The aim of the Biennial Conference is to assess the available knowledge on cetaceans in the South of the Mediterranean, to identify gaps and stimulate the development of conservation actions in order to promote the implementation of the ACCOBAMS Agreement. The Conference provides an opportunity to the cetacean specialists, active in the South of the Mediterranean, to exchange their experience and their data and to discuss the best approaches and priority actions for a better knowledge of cetacean populations in this region where data still remain sporadic and scarce. This Conference also aims at involving the student community and at rising awareness of managers and stakeholders on marine issues.

The main topics of this conference are:

- Interactions between cetaceans and human activities,
- Monitoring of cetacean populations and stranding,
- Critical habitats for cetaceans,
- Conservation plans for cetacean species,
- Networking and exchange of information,
- Photo-identification of cetacean species.

The final agenda of the CSMC3 appears in [Annex 2](#) of the report.

PROCEEDINGS AND WORKS OF THE CONFERENCE

The working languages of the Conference were English and French. A simultaneous translation was available during the entire Conference.

1. Opening session

The Conference was opened on the 21st October 2014. At the opening session **Mr. Gaby KHALAF**, Director of the National Centre for Marine Sciences welcomed the participants and emphasized that this Conference will be of a great help for the conservation of cetaceans throughout the Agreement area.

Mrs. Florence DESCROIX COMANDUCCI, Executive Secretary of ACCOBAMS, expressed her gratitude to Lebanese authorities for hosting the Conference. She also thanked the RAC/SPA and the IUCN for their collaboration in the Conference organisation and in their involvement for the implementation of ACCOBAMS. She indicated that the organisation of this Third Biennial Conference was possible thanks to the financial support of the Principality of Monaco.

H.E.M Patrick VAN KLAVEREN, Vice-Chair of the ACCOBAMS Bureau, Representative of the Principality of Monaco, indicated that since the beginning of ACCOBAMS, the Principality of Monaco has been giving financial support to the implementation of the Agreement, focusing its interventions on some of the fundamental themes for international cooperation as a guarantee for efficiency and sustainability of conservation actions.

Mr. Georges TOHMÉ, President of the Board of the National Council for Scientific Research, explained that the CNRS promoted research and related activities in Lebanon, especially activities for a sustainable development. Since the signature of a MoU between the CNRS and the ACCOBAMS Secretariat, in 2009, priority was given to the conservation of the marine environment, in particular the cetaceans.

H.E.M Mohamad AL MASHNOUK, Minister of Environment was represented by **Mr. Nadim MROUE** who welcomed participants and expressed his satisfaction towards the collaboration established for many years between his country and ACCOBAMS. He highlighted the recent actions undertaken by Lebanon, through the Ministry of Environment, for the inventory and preservation of marine sites of conservation interest along the entire Lebanese coast. In this context he commended the contributions and assistance provide to his country by the relevant regional organisations.

2. Working Sessions

The first session was devoted to **the International Organisations relevant for the conservation of cetaceans**. Presentations were made by the representatives of ACCOBAMS, IUCN, GFCM and from the Principality of Monaco:

- Florence DESCROIX COMANDUCCI : Presentation of ACCOBAMS activities
- Alain JEUDY DE GRISSAC: Presentation of IUCN activities related to the conservation of endangered species, including cetaceans
- Aurora NASTASI: Presentation of CGPM Activities of relevance for cetacean conservation
- Patrick VAN KLAVEREN: Presentation of International Organizations relevant for the Conservation of cetaceans

The second session was on the **Evaluation and management of the interactions between humans and cetaceans & stranding monitoring**. It was chaired by Simone PANIGADA, Chair of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee. The presentations were as follows:

- Chedly RAIS : Introductory presentation on the interactions between humans and cetaceans
- Francoise HENRY : Méthodologie employée pour l'analyse des contaminants chimiques pour de futures applications dans l'aire ACCOBAMS : Cas du marsouin commun (*Phocoena phocoena*)
- Faycal TERKMANI : Estimation d'abondance et interaction des petits cétacés avec l'activité de pêche au sein du tiers Ouest des eaux algériennes
- Kamel LARBI DOUKARA : Etude du régime alimentaire du Grand dauphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) du littoral occidental algérien
- Said BENCHOUCHA : Recensement des espèces de Cétacés de la Méditerranée marocaine à travers le suivi régulier des échouages
- Hédia ATTIA EL HILI : Interactions des cétacés avec les bateaux et les filets de pêche : Résultats d'examens de cétacés échoués au nord de la Tunisie
- Mohamed Nejmeddine BRADAI : Analyse des données d'observations du rorqual commun *Balaenoptera physalus* sur les côtes tunisiennes

The third session was chaired by Gabi KHALAF. It was devoted to the **Cetacean Habitat protection**. Here are the presentations given during the session:

- Chloë WEBSTER : Introductory presentation on Marine Protected Areas and presentation of MedPAN
- Lobna BEN NAKHLA : La conservation des espèces dans le cadre de la Convention de Barcelone – projets en cours au CAR/ASP
- Chedly RAIS : Présentation du Plan d'Action pour les cétacés de la Convention de Barcelone
- Mehdi AÏSSI: Efficiency of MPAs on marine mammals conservation: case study of large cetaceans in the central Mediterranean
- Houssine NIBANI : Implication de la flotte des palangriers du port d'Al Hoceima dans la Gestion intégrée des Espaces critiques pour les cétacés au sein de la mer du Sud d'Alboran

A **side event** on the joint project ACCOBAMS/GFCM regarding interactions between cetaceans and fisheries activities with financial support of MAVA Foundation was presented by Célia LE RAVALLEC.

The first Conference day ended with the **poster presentation session**. The following posters were displayed and presented by their authors:

- Assia HENDA : Impact de la déprédation des petits delphinidés sur la pêche et interaction pêcheries –cétacés en Algérie

- Khayr-eddine CHOUAL : Recensement des Cétacés et des Tortues marines capturés sur la côte orientale algérienne
- Yahia BOUSLAH : Les échouages récents des Cétacés sur le littoral occidental algérien
- Mohamed Said ABDEL-WARITH and Mahmoud FOUAD : National Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals in the Egyptian Mediterranean Sea – 2012 to 2016
- Sadia BELCAID : Les mammifères marins échoués sur les côtes Nord Ouest du Maroc (Jebha-Larache) entre 2005 et 2012
- Rimel BENMESSAOUD : Utilisation du Logiciel de photo-identification Darwin pour l'analyse numérique et la reconnaissance des images de la population de *Tursiops truncatus* de la région Nord
- Sami KARAA : Estimation des paramètres de la croissance du grand dauphin *Tursiops truncatus* des côtes tunisiennes à partir des données d'échouage
- Amani EL AYADI : Factors determining the interaction between bottlenose dolphins and Gillnets off the Kerkennah archipelago (Central Mediterranean Sea)
- Almokhtar SAIED : Recent studies implemented about the Egyptian Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine mammals in the Egyptian Mediterranean Sea

During the second day of the Conference, H.E.M Patrick VAN KLAVEREN chaired the fourth session on **research and contiguous monitoring**. The presentations given during the session were as follows:

- Simone PANIGADA: Introductory presentation on aerial surveys and satellite telemetry in the Central Mediterranean Sea
- Guido GNONE : Mediterranean Bottlenose dolphin Conservation plan
- Abderraouf BENMOUSSA : Programme d'action pour la conservation des Cétacés en Méditerranée (Maroc)
- Mouina BADRAN : Cetaceans in Syria: the Current Status and the Governing Legislations
- Milad FAKHRI : Activités relatives à la présence des cétacés dans le milieu marin libanais
- Mohamed RAMDANI : Les cétacés observés pendant 45 jours (Août-septembre 2012) au large de l'Égypte entre Port Saïd et Mersa Matuh à bord du bateau sismique Pacific Explorer : Biodiversité et comportement des dauphins
- Rimel BENMESSAOUD : Analyse de la structure sociale de la population de *Tursiops truncatus* de la région Nord-Est de la Tunisie
- Céline MAHFOUZ : Utilisation de trois méthodes complémentaires pour l'étude du régime alimentaire des cétacés : contenus stomacaux, isotopes stables et acides gras
- Gaby KHALAF : Distribution and Relative Abundance of the *Tursiops truncatus* in Lebanese Marine Waters (Eastern Mediterranean)

Maylis SALIVAS presented an initiative launched by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat in collaboration with WWF France: the implementation of **first cetacean conservation network in the ACCOBAMS area**, through the ACCOBAMS Interactive Platform. The objective is to facilitate the dynamic exchange and data information flow between all experts involved in cetacean conservation.

A round table “**State of conservation of cetaceans in South Mediterranean Countries: what are the needs and priorities?**” was facilitated by Alain JEUDY DE GRISSAC. Recommendations issued from the round table are included in the CSMC3 Recommendations.

The third day of the Conference was devoted to **training activities on photo-identification techniques** with the support of:

- Léa DAVID : Field training - sea trip on the CNRS Lebanon Research Boat CANA
- Guido GNOME: Introduction to the use of the Intercet Database

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CONFERENCE

The scientific papers presented during the Conference showed a significant progress in the scientific knowledge regarding cetaceans in the Southern Mediterranean countries.

They also showed that scientific teams were in place, working on issues of interest for cetacean conservation.

The following Conclusions and Recommendations emerged from the debates of the Conference sessions, including the round table. They will be useful to:

- Identify priorities in research programs in the Southern Mediterranean countries
- Give guidance to scientists in the region, and to national authorities, for their activities related to the implementation of ACCOBAMS.

COMMUNICATION / PUBLIC AWARENESS

1. To raise awareness of other sectors / other public, especially young people from primary and secondary schools, on cetaceans and the importance of their conservation. The coloring book prepared by RAC / SPA and the game for children produced by ACCOBAMS could serve as a basis for this purpose.
2. To create, using social networks, a liaising page targeting scientists concerned with cetaceans conservation in South Mediterranean countries. It would allow, in particular, the rapid exchange of information, including topics of ongoing master and thesis works. The page will also complement the ACCOBAMS interactive Platform (<http://accobams.geo2i.com/>).
3. After the effort deployed to elaborate NAPs for cetaceans in most of the South Mediterranean countries, it becomes now urgent to focus on the implementation of these NAPs through concrete achievements. The establishment of National Committees for the conservation of cetaceans could facilitate their implementation.
4. MedPAN has awareness materials developed by its MPA members. Such tools are available and could be used in awareness activities for the implementation of ACCOBAMS.
5. A special effort should be made to raise awareness among decision-makers on the need to enact legislation, and other legal instruments, in order to transpose, at national level, the provisions of ACCOBAMS and of other relevant Agreements / Conventions.

6. The participants reiterated their interest in the establishment of the "ACCOBAMS Day." They recommended, however, to have it held at the occasion of another event already in place (such as the World Environment Day and the World Oceans Day, etc.) in order to avoid duplication of efforts and take advantage of the wider audience available in such events.
7. The participants noted with satisfaction the establishment of the ACCOBAMS module on cetology in several universities and they recommended its implementation:
 - in English at universities in non-French speaking countries of the ACCOBAMS area;
 - in veterinary training institutions;
 - in other forms, such as online teaching modules.

RESEARCH AND MONITORING

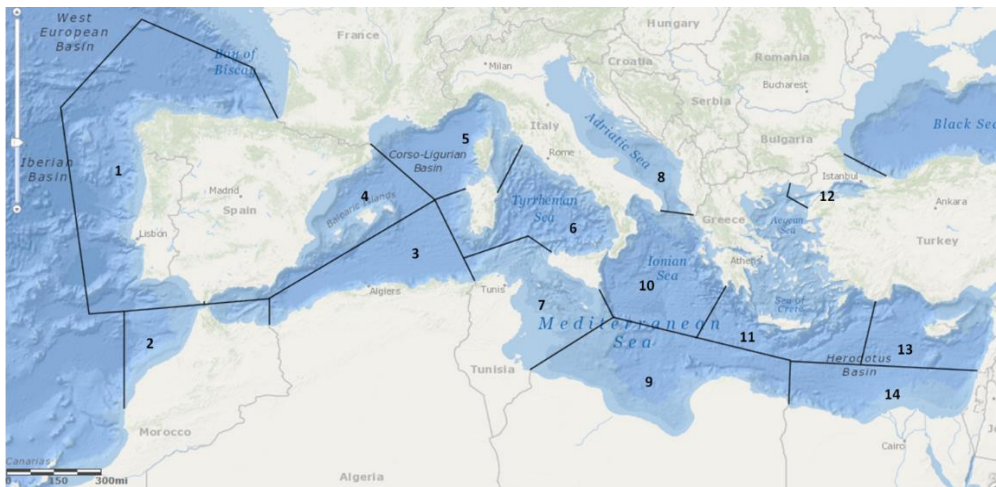
8. With the increasing number of seismic surveys in the Southern Mediterranean Sea, it is recommended to establish:
 - a working group on the impact of seismic surveys on cetaceans in the Southern Mediterranean Sea which will report its conclusions and its recommendations to the joint Working Group ACCOBAMS/ ASCOBANS/ CMS on noise;
 - a system for cetacean data collection from **Marine Mammals Observers (MMOs)** during seismic surveys. Such data would be made available to scientists through the interactive platform of ACCOBAMS.
9. The standardization of data collection facilitates exchanges and maximizes the benefit from available data. It was therefore recommended to promote within the ACCOBAMS, the development of standard protocols and standard forms for data collection with the view of ensuring their wide use by scientists in the ACCOBAMS area.
10. It was recommended that the ACCOBAMS Secretariat coordinates with other relevant bodies involved in the monitoring of the marine environment (Barcelona Convention, GFCM MedPAN, etc.), and makes available for them the monitoring protocols and standard forms developed under ACCOBAMS.
11. Scientists not already transmitting their data to the Stranding database MEDACES, are invited to do so, if necessary through National Committees or other relevant bodies.
12. Scientists working on cetacean conservation in South Mediterranean Countries are invited to share their data with other scientists within the region, particularly through the publication of their results in relevant journals and by using other ways for exchanging data used by the scientific community.
13. In the light of the scientific presentations given during the Conference, the Participants recommended a more focused cetacean research in South Mediterranean Countries, on the following research topics:
 - Evaluation of cetacean populations (distribution, population density, etc.). The Tunisian-Sicilian Channel was considered among the most important areas to be studied for cetacean conservation where data were still poor;
 - Impact of noise on cetaceans: start activities of monitoring and mapping of anthropogenic noise;
 - Interactions cetaceans / shipping; particularly in the Strait of Gibraltar;

- Impact of chemical pollution on cetaceans, including the impact of plastic debris and micro plastics;
- Interactions with fisheries: mitigation of depredation by bottlenose dolphins and killer whales, through modifications in fishing gears, methods and practices;
- Impacts of offshore aquaculture facilities;
- Population structure;
- Health risks during cetacean strandings.

14. In order to facilitate the work of scientists, it was recommended:

- to establish systems for obtaining the necessary permits for research surveys and exemption permits for sampling. Information on procedures for obtaining such permits must be made available for scientists;
- to ensure a continual skill upgrading of scientists by training activities on new technologies;
- to organize trainings on the determination, during diagnostic processes, of mortality causes of the stranded cetaceans.

15. To take into account the new sub-regions proposed in the Bottlenose Dolphin Conservation Plan, as presented during the Ninth Meeting of Scientific Committee of ACCOBAMS, in order to implement Intercet in the ACCOBAMS area. The Secretariat will contact the Coordinator of the Bottlenose Dolphin Conservation Plan in order to identify relevant experts who can act as regional coordinators for the sub-regions 2 and 10. It will propose a workshop at the next ECS Conference (March 2014) to train the sub-regional coordinators on the use of Intercet.



New sub-regions proposed for the implementation of the Bottlenose dolphin Conservation Plan and for the Intercet database

PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

- 16.** The cetacean conservation could benefit from the new classifications of natural sites of interest such as the Ecologically or Biologically Significant Areas (EBSAs), the Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs), the Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas (PSSAs), etc.
- 17.** It was recommended to take into account socio-economic aspects (uses) in the designation of sites of interest for cetacean conservation.

18. It was recommended to provide managers of MPAs, in collaboration with MedPAN, with information and relevant tools for a better management of cetaceans in the areas covered by their MPAs.
19. Participants welcomed the joint project ACCOBAMS / GFCM on interactions between cetaceans and fishing activities, funded by the MAVA Foundation. In this context, it was suggested to ensure more synergy between the activities undertaken by the South Mediterranean countries and to organize for this purpose a regional workshop on the subject.
20. Given the strong involvement of the bottlenose dolphin in the interactions with fisheries in South Mediterranean Countries, it was recommended to include the issue of interactions with fisheries in the ACCOBAMS Bottlenose dolphin Conservation Plan.

CLOSING OF THE CONFERENCE

Mrs. Florence DESCROIX COMANDUCCI congratulated all the participants for the quality of their presentations and for their involvement in cetacean conservation activities. She recalled that all these initiatives actively participated to the implementation of ACCOBAMS.

Representatives from Algeria informed the Meeting, that they would be very pleased to host the Fourth Conference on cetacean conservation in South Mediterranean Countries in 2017. This proposal was warmly welcomed by all participants.

After thanking the organizers and the participants, Mrs. Florence DESCROIX COMANDUCCI closed the Conference at 6.00 p.m. on Thursday 23rd October 2014.

ANNEX 1 : LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

ABDEL-WARITH Mohamed Said

Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA)
30 Misr-Helwan zyraee rd. Madii
Cairo – EGYPT
Tel : 002-01007757864
mohamed7j@hotmail.com &
sevejan010@yahoo.com

AISSI Mehdi

Faculté des Sciences de Bizerte
Zarzouna
BP 197 - 7000 Bizerte – TUNISIE
Tel : +21698947026
mehdi.aissi@gmail.com

ATTIA EL HILI Hedia

Institut National des Sciences et Technologies de
la Mer (INSTM)
28, Rue 2 Mars 1934,
2025 Salammbô, Tunis – TUNISIE
Tel : +216 71 730 420 / +216 273 765 63
hedia.attia@instm.rnrt.tn

BADRAN Mouina

Syrian Society for Conservation of Wildlife
Al-Mazzeah, Sheikh Saad,
Shaaban Building, 1st Floor
Damascus – SYRIA
Tel : +963 988446019
memi78@gmail.com & sscw.syria@gmail.com

BEJAOUI Nejla

Institut National Agronomique de Tunisie
43, Avenue Charles Nicolle
1082 Tunis Mahrajène – TUNISIE
Tel : + 216 98 31 39 39
nejla.bejaoui@gnet.tn

BELCAID Sadia

Institut National de Recherche Halieutique
(INRH)
BP. 5268 Dradeb – Tanger – MAROC
Tel : +212 668630574
sadiabelcaid@hotmail.com

BEN NAKHLA Lobna

UNEP MAP/Regional Activity Centre for Specially
Protected Areas (RAC/SPA)
Programme Officer. RAC/SPA
Bd. Du Leader Yasser Arafat B.P. 337
1080 Tunis cedex. TUNISIA
Tel: +216 71 206485- Fax: +216 71 206490
lobna.bennakhla@rac-spa.org

BENCHOUCHA Said

Institut National de Recherche halieutique
(INRH)
BP. 5268 Dradeb – Tanger – MAROC
Tel : +212 623695259
bench2468@yahoo.fr

BENMESSAOUD Rimel

Institut National des Sciences et Technologies de
la Mer (INSTM)
Annexe La Goulette- Port de Pêche
2060 La goulette- Tunis – TUNISIE
Tel : + 26232362/ 98520051/71735848
benmessaoud_rimel@yahoo.fr

BENMOUSSA Abderraouf

Chef de Service de la Coopération Multilatérale
Ministère de l'Agriculture et de la Pêche
Maritime
Nouvelle Cité Administrative -
B.P. 47 Rabat - MAROC
Tel: +212 537 68 81 53 - Fax: +212 537 68 81 94
benmoussa@mpm.gov.ma

BITAR Ghazi

Professeur chercheur –
Fac. Sci U. L.iban
Tel : +961 3315162
ghbitar@ul.edu.lb

BOUSLAH Yahia

Université d'Oran
BP 1524
31000 – Oran – ALGERIE
Tel : 0550 313 320
bouslah28@yahoo.fr

BRADAI Mohamed Nejmeddine

Institut National des Sciences et Technologies de
la Mer (INSTM)
BP 1035 – 3018 Sfax – TUNISIE
Tel : +216 74497117
mednejmeddine.bradai@instm.rnrt.tn

CHOUAL Khayr-Eddine

Institut des Sciences Agronomiques et
Vétérinaires (I.S.A.V)
Université Mohammed Chérif Messaadia
41 002 Sedrata, (W) Souk-Ahras – ALGERIE
Tel : +213 670 02 24 27
choualk@yahoo.com

DAHER Housni

Général,
Commandant de la base militaire de Jounieh
Tel : +961 9910350

DAVID Léa

EcoOcéan Institut
Dr écologie marine cétologie/ornithologie
18 Rue des Hospices
34090 Montpellier, FRANCE
Tel : +33 4 67 84 28 87
lea.david2@wanadoo.fr

DESCROIX COMANDUCCI Florence

ACCOBAMS Executive Secretary
Les Terrasses de Fontvieille
Jardin de l'UNESCO
MC-98000 Monaco
Tel: +37798 98 80 10 – Fax: +377 98 98 42 08
fcdescroix@accobams.net

EDRIS Iffat

Operation Big Blue Association
Tel: +961 03747789
iffatedriss@yahoo.com

EL AYADI Amani

Institut National des Sciences et Technologies de
la Mer (INSTM)
(Centre de Sfax) BP 1035
3018 Sfax. – TUNISIE
Tel : +216 605 794
instm.amani@hotmail.com

FAKHRI Milad

Chercheur
Centre de Recherches Marines
Centre National des Sciences Marines
P.O. BOX 534, Batroun – LIBAN
Tel: +961 3496680
milosman@hotmail.com

FOUAD Mahmoud

Marine Ecologist & Nature Conservation
Consultant, M.Sc.
Environics, Environment and Development
Advisors
EGYPT
Tel: +2 0122 1177 671
mahmoud_ncs@yahoo.com

GEMAYEL Elissar

Doctorante
Centre de Recherches Marines
CNRS – Liban
Tel : +961 70794882
elissargemayel@hotmail.com

GHANEM Abir

Master 2, U.L.
Tel : +961 3014389
Abeer_ghanem@hotmail.com

GHOUREYB Joseph

Général
Représentant le commandant en chef de l'armée
Libanaise –
Base Navale de Beyrouth
Tel : +961 1983463

GNONE Guido

Research Coordinator
Acquario di Genova - Scientific Research
Area Porto Antico - Ponte Spinola
16128 Genova – ITALY
Tel: +39 010 234 5285 – Fax: +39 010 256 160
ggnone@costaedutainment.it

HENDA Assia

Ecole nationale supérieure des sciences de la
mer et de l'aménagement du littoral (ENSSMAL)
Nouveau paradou bt 4 hydra alger – Algérie
16405 ALGER – ALGERIE
Tel : +213 556228535
henda_assia@yahoo.fr

HENRY Françoise

Université du Littoral
Laboratoire d'Océanologie et Géosciences
MREN / LOG 32 avenue Foch
62 930 Wilmereux – FRANCE
Tel : +33 321 99 64 04
henry@univ-littoral.fr

JEMAA Sharif

Doctorant
Centre de Recherches Marines
CNRS – Liban
Tel : +961 3 429 186
jemaa.sherif@hotmail.com

JEUDY DE GRISSAC Alain

International Union for the Conservation of
Nature
Center for Mediterranean Cooperation
Marine Conservation Programme Manager
IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation
C/Marine Curie 22
29590 Campanillas, Malaga - ESPAGNE
Tel/Fax: +34 952 028 430 /145
Mob : +34 693 803 972
alain.jeudy@iucn.org

KARAA Sami

Institut National des Sciences et Technologies de
la Mer (INSTM)
BP 1035 – 3018 Sfax – TUNISIE
Tel : +216 27456521
k-sami@hotmail.fr

KHALAF Gaby

Directeur du Centre de Recherches Marines
Centre National des Sciences Marines
P.O. BOX 534, Batroun – LIBAN
Tel: +961 6741580 / +961 33 039 69
bihar@cnrs.edu.lb

LARBI DOUKARA Kamel

Laboratoire Réseau de Surveillance
Environnementale (LRSE)
Université d'Oran
BP 1524
31000 – Oran – ALGERIE
artimagvakamel@yahoo.fr

LE RAVALLEC Célia

Project Officer
Les Terrasses de Fontvieille
Jardin de l'UNESCO
MC-98000 MONACO
Tel: +377 98 98 40 74 – Fax: +377 98 98 42 08
clervallec@accobams.net

LTEIF Myriam

Doctorante
Centre de Recherches Marines
CNRS – Liban
Tel : +961 3 1982 77
myriamlteif@hotmail.com

MAHFOUZ Céline

Doctorante
Centre de Recherches Marines
CNRS – Liban
P.O Box 534 – Batroun – LIBAN
Tel : +961 6 741 582
Celine.mahfouz@gmail.com

MATAR Nada

Assistante de recherche
Centre de Recherches Marines
Centre National des Sciences Marines
P.O. BOX 534, Batroun – LIBAN
Tel: +961 3625798
bihar.jn@cnrs.edu.lb

MOUAWAD Rita

Professeur chercheur –
Fac. Sci U. L.iban
Tel : +961 70500058
rita_mouawad@hotmail.com

NASTASI Aurora

Consultant for environmental issues
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United
Nations (FAO)
Fisheries and Aquaculture Department
General Fisheries Commission for the
Mediterranean (GFCM)
GFCM Secretariat,
Palazzo Blumenstihl
Via Vittoria Colonna, 1
00193 Rome, ITALY
Tel: +39 06 57052054
aurora.nastasi@fao.org

OUBA Anthony

Doctorant
Centre de Recherches Marines
CNRS – Liban
Tel : +961 70613277
Anthony_ouba@hotmail.com

PANIGADA Simone

Tethys Research Institute
Vice-President
Viale G.B. Gadio2
20 121 Milan – ITALY
Tel: (+39) 02 7200 1947 – (+39) 02 6694 114
panigada@inwind.it

RAIS Chedly

Consultant
Menzah VIII, Tunis – TUNISIE
Tel: +216 98444629 – Fax: +216 71763533
chedly.rais@okianos.org

RAMDANI Mohammed

Institut Scientifique
Université Mohamed V Rabat
10010 – Rabat – MAROC
Tel : +212 648 020 855
ramdanimohamed@gmail.com &
mramdani@israbat.ac.ma

SAIED Almokhtar

Head of Marine and wildlife section
Nature Conservation Dept
Environment General Authority
P.O.Box 13793 Tripoli - LIBYA
Tel: +218 91 455 96 15
mok405@yahoo.com

SALAMEH Youmna

Professeur chercheur –
Fac. Sci U. L.iban
Tel : +961 71613363

SALIVAS Maÿlis

Scientific Officer
Les Terrasses de Fontvieille
Jardin de l'UNESCO
MC-98000 MONACO
Tel: +377 98 98 42 75 – Fax: +377 98 98 42 08
msalivas@accobams.net

SAMAHA Lara

Chef de département
Ministère de l'environnement
Tel: +961 3717127
lara_samaha@hotmail

TILBIAN Mary

Assistante de recherche
Centre de Recherches Marines
Centre National des Sciences Marines
P.O. BOX 534, Batroun – LIBAN
Tel: +961 9934763
bihar.jn@cns.edu.lb

TERKMANI Fayçal

Université d'Oran
Cité 200 lgts BT « L » N 01
Ahmed Zabana
22 000 Sidi Bel Abbes – ALGERIE
Tel : 0555725356/0780726998
f.terkmani@yahoo.fr

VAN KLAVEREN Patrick

Délégué Permanent auprès des Organismes
Internationaux à caractère scientifique,
environnemental et humanitaire
Département des Relations Extérieures et de la
Coopération
Ministère d'Etat
Place de la Visitation
98000-MONACO
Tel: +377 9898 8148
pvanklaveren@gouv.mc

WEBSTER Chloé

MedPAN
Scientific Officer
48 Rue St Suffren
13006 Marseille, FRANCE
Tel: +33678733234
chloe.webster@medpan.org

ANNEX 2 : AGENDA

Day 1: Tuesday, 21 October	
8:30 - 9:30	Participants' Registration
9:30 -10:30	Opening session
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Gaby KHALAF, Director of the National Centre for Marine Sciences
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mrs. Florence DESCROIX COMANDUCCI, Executive Secretary of ACCOBAMS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E.M Patrick VAN KLAVEREN, Vice-Chair of the ACCOBAMS Bureau, Representative of the Principality of Monaco
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Georges TOHMÉ, President of the Board of the National Council for Scientific Research
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E.M Mohamad AL MASHNOUK, Minister of Environment
10:30 -11:00	Coffee break
11:00 - 12:00	International Organisations relevant for the Conservation of cetaceans
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Florence DESCROIX COMANDUCCI, Presentation of ACCOBAMS activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alain JEUDY DE GRISSAC, Presentation of IUCN activities related to the conservation of endangered species, including cetaceans
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aurora NASTASI, Presentation of CGPM Activities of relevance for cetacean conservation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patrick VAN KLAVEREN, Presentation of International Organizations relevant for the Conservation of cetaceans
12:00 – 12:30	Evaluation and management of the interactions between humans and cetaceans & stranding monitoring
	<p>Chairperson: Simone PANIGADA Introductory presentation by Chedly RAIS</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Francoise HENRY, Méthodologie employée pour l'analyse des contaminants chimiques pour de futures applications dans l'aire ACCOBAMS : Cas du marsouin commun (<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faycal TERKMANI, Estimation d'abondance et interaction des petits cétacés avec l'activité de pêche au sein du tiers Ouest des eaux algériennes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kamel LARBI DOUKARA, Etude du régime alimentaire du Grand dauphin (<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>) du littoral occidental algérien
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Said BENCHOUCHA, Recensement des espèces de Cétacés de la Méditerranée marocaine à travers le suivi régulier des échouages
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hédia ATTIA EL HILI, Interactions des cétacés avec les bateaux et les filets de pêche : Résultats d'examens de cétacés échoués au nord de la Tunisie
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mohamed Nejmeddine BRADAI, Analyse des données d'observations du rorqual commun <i>Balaenoptera physalus</i> sur les côtes tunisiennes
13:30 – 15:00	Lunch break
15:00 – 16:15	Habitat protection
	<p>Chairperson: Gabi KHALAF Introductory presentation by Chloë WEBSTER</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobna BEN NAKHLA, La conservation des espèces dans le cadre de la Convention de Barcelone – projets en cours au CAR/ASP
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chedly RAIS, Présentation du Plan d'Action pour les cétacés de la Convention de Barcelone
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mehdi AÏSSI, Efficiency of MPAs on marine mammals conservation: case study of large cetaceans in the central Mediterranean

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Houssine NIBANI, Implication de la flotte des palangriers du port d'Al Hoceima dans la Gestion intégrée des Espaces critiques pour les cétacés au sein de la mer du Sud d'Alboran
16:15 – 16:45	Side event : Présentation du projet conjoint ACCOBAMS/CGPM sur les interactions entre les cétacés et les activités de pêche – Célia LE RAVALLEC
16:45 – 17:10	Coffee break
17:10 – 18:00	Poster Session

19:30	Cocktail (kind invitation of the Principality of Monaco) Hotel Porto Emilio & Resort- Jounieh
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DAY 2: Wednesday, 22 October	
9:00 -12:00	Research and continuous monitoring
	Chairperson: Patrick VAN KLAVEREN Introductory presentation by Simone PANIGADA
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guido GNONE, Mediterranean Bottlenose dolphin Conservation plan Abderraouf BENMOUSSA, Programme d'action pour la conservation des Cétacés en Méditerranée (Maroc) Mouina BADRAN, Cetaceans in Syria: the Current Status and the Governing Legislations Milad FAKHRI, Activités relatives à la présence des cétacés dans le milieu marin libanais
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee break
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mohamed RAMDANI, Les cétacés observés pendant 45 jours (Août-septembre 2012) au large de l'Égypte entre Port Said et Mersa Matuh à bord du bateau sismique Pacific Explorer : Biodiversité et comportement des dauphins Rimel BENMESSAOUD, Analyse de la structure sociale de la population de <i>Tursiops truncatus</i> de la région Nord-Est de la Tunisie Céline MAHFOUZ, Utilisation de trois méthodes complémentaires pour l'étude du régime alimentaire des cétacés : contenus stomacaux, isotopes stables et acides gras Gaby KHALAF, Distribution and Relative Abundance of the <i>Tursiops truncatus</i> in Lebanese Marine Waters (Eastern Mediterranean)
12:00 - 13:00	Capacity building and exchange of information
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aurélie TASCOTTI and Maylis SALIVAS, Présentation du réseau de cétologues dans la zone ACCOBAMS
13:00 – 14:30	Lunch break
14:30 -16:00	Round table - State of conservation of cetaceans in South Mediterranean Countries: what are the needs and priorities?
	Facilitator : Alain JEUDY DE GRISSAC
16:00 – 16:30	Coffee break
16:30 – 18:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Léa DAVID, Theoretical training on photo-identification techniques

20:00	Réception dinatoire (offerte par le Conseil national de la recherche scientifique, Liban) Restaurant "The Stone", Zouk Michael
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DAY 3: Thursday , 23 October		
8:00 -13:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Léa DAVID, Workshop – Field training on photo-identification techniques for cetaceans Sea trip on the CNRS Lebanon Research Boat CANA <i>Only for 15 participants (registered students)</i>	Free time for other participants
13:00 – 14:30	Lunch break	
14:30 – 16:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guido GNOME, Introduction to the use of the Intercet Database 	
16:00 – 16:30	Coffee break	
16:30 – 17:30	Conclusions and Recommendations of the Conference	
17:30 – 17:45	Date and place of the next Biennial Conference on the Conservation of Cetaceans in South Mediterranean Countries	
17:45 – 18:00	Closing of the Conference	