

REPORT OF THE FIFTH MEETING OF THE ACCOBAMS EXTENDED BUREAU



Monaco, 26-27 April 2022

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1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

1. The Fifth Meeting of the Extended Bureau of the Parties to ACCOBAMS was convened in the Principality of Monaco, at the Hotel Novotel, on 26th and 27th of April 2022.
2. In accordance with Article 3 of the Rules of Procedure for the Bureau of the Parties to the Agreement on the Conservation on Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic area, the Meeting was attended by:
 - the Members of the Bureau: Mr. Fahrettin Ulu (Turkey), Chair of the ACCOBAMS Bureau, and the Vice-Chairs: Ms. Marie-Thérèse Gambin (Malta), Ms. Elvira Garcia-Bellido Capdevila (Spain), Mr. Gaby Khalaf (Lebanon) and Mr. Abdelali Loudrhiri (Morocco),
 - the following appointed Experts: Ms. Mihaela Candea, Mr. Alain Jeudy De Grissac and Ms. Ana Štrbenac,
 - the following National representative: Ms. Céline Impagliazzo (Monaco),
 - the Regional Coordination Units Representatives: Ms. Lobna Ben Nakhla (SPA/RAC) and Ms. Iryna Makarenko (BSC).
3. It was also attended by the Executive Secretary of ACCOBAMS, Ms. Susana Salvador, by the Chair of the Scientific Committee of ACCOBAMS, Mr. Simone Panigada, by the Advisor to the Chair of the Bureau, Mr. Aybars Altiparmak and by the Secretariat members and experts. The full list of participants is reflected in [Annex 1](#) to this report.
4. The Chair of the Bureau, Mr. Fahrettin Ulu, welcomed the participants and opened the Meeting at 9.00 a.m., on Tuesday 26th April 2022. He expressed his satisfaction with the holding of this Extended Bureau meeting in person, and congratulated the Secretariat for having succeeded in maintaining all previous institutional meetings online throughout the long period constrained by health restrictions related to the Covid pandemic.
5. The Executive Secretary welcomed all distinguished participants, including experts and observers, the National Focal Point of Monaco, the Chair of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee, and representatives of Regional Coordination Units. She reminded that the next MOP will be hosted by Malta and thanked the representative of Malta for their hospitality and generosity.
6. Finally, she further provided details about interpretation and logistic arrangements, as well as Meeting documents.
7. The Chair of the Bureau reminded the mission of the Extended Bureau and the applicable Rules of Procedure, in accordance with ACCOBAMS Resolution 6.4.

2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

8. The Executive Secretary introduced the Provisional Agenda (ACCOBAMS-BUEXT5/2022/**Doc01Rev1**), the Provisional Annotated Agenda (ACCOBAMS-BUEXT5/2022/**Doc02**) and the proposed timetable (ACCOBAMS-BUEXT5/2022/**Doc 04**).

9. The Executive Secretary requested the introduction of a subject to be tackled under Agenda item 9 – Any other business, regarding the 2022 ACCOBAMS Call for project proposals, which was agreed by the Bureau.
10. The Bureau adopted the draft Agenda and the corresponding timetable. The agenda is shown as [Annex 2](#) to this report.

3. UPDATE ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SECRETARIAT AND THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

11. The Executive Secretary presented the activities of the Secretariat since December 2021 and then invited the Chair of the Scientific Committee to provide information on the Scientific Committee activities.

• Management of the Agreement

12. Regarding the state of ratification of the 2010 Extension Decision, the Executive Secretary informed Bureau Members that Malta had ratified early 2022 the Amendments set in Resolution A/4.1. Thus, up until present, 10 Parties in total have ratified the Amendment on the geographical enlargement of the Agreement area in the Atlantic.
13. Regarding institutional meetings, the Executive Secretary informed that the 14th Meeting of the Bureau was held online on 18-19 January 2022 and that the 3rd Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Follow up Committee took place online on 29–30 March 2022.
14. Regarding the involvement of all key stakeholders, a joint ACCOBAMS-SPA/RAC session on “showcase of initiatives for mobile species conservation” was organized during the MPA Forum Session in December 2021.

• MA 2a – Mobilizing and diversifying funding sources

15. The Executive Secretary informed the Meeting that the 2022 ACCOBAMS Call for proposals was launched on 16 February 2022 in accordance with BU14 decision, under which up to 4 projects could be selected for funding support, in application of the previously agreed priorities.

• CA 1a Improve knowledge about state of cetaceans

16. Amongst the major actions conducted in the context of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative, two sub-regional data analysis Workshops were organised (Eastern Mediterranean / Black Sea and Western Mediterranean); and the Secretariat and Scientific Committee members participated at the UNEP/MAP-SPA/RAC CORMON Meeting on Biodiversity and fisheries on 28-29 March 2022.
17. To address the key issue of sustainability of monitoring operations, the *ad hoc* group requested by the BU14 to support the preparation of a draft Resolution on the ACCOBAMS Long-term Monitoring Programme was set up and mobilized during a first meeting held online on April 21st. In addition, dedicated communication material is under development to support future fundraising efforts for the next ASI and the LTMP.
18. The Executive Secretary reminded that it would be much appreciated to have more participation to the *ad Hoc* Group second Meeting and to receive additional completed questionnaires.

19. The Executive Secretary also informed the Meeting about the main activities coordinated by the Secretariat in the framework of the ABIOMMED project “*Support coherent and coordinated assessment of biodiversity and measures across the Mediterranean for the next 6-year cycle of MSFD implementation*” funded by DG-Environment, particularly in relation to the coordination of a Working Group of EU countries on cetacean monitoring under the MSFD.

• **CA 1c Monitoring cetacean’s status**

20. The Executive Secretary informed the Meeting that an ACCOBAMS drafting experts’ workshop on bottlenose/common dolphins Conservation Management Plans was organized in Cap d’Ail (France) from 7 to 9 March 2022.

• **CA 1d Functional stranding networks and responses to emergency situation**

21. The Executive Secretary explained that a training on necropsy procedures was initiated in 2021, following “Best Practices on cetacean post-mortem investigation and tissue sampling resulted from the harmonization process in ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS”.
22. Due to restrictions related to the COVID situation the training was subdivided in online and practical sessions, from June to October 2021, and continued through practical sessions in Padua (from 22nd to 24th February 2022) and Liege (from 22nd to 24th March 2022)

• **CA 2a - Interactions with fisheries/aquaculture**

23. The Executive Secretary reminded that as part of the MAVA funded Depredation project, the Secretariat has continued to ensure the coordination of the activities in liaison with the project partners. In particular, the Secretariat supported the development of additional activities with four indirect partners, and significant progress has been made to develop depredation related studies with the first draft on Depredation Monitoring Methodology circulated by GFCM, and the appointment of an expert charged of conducting a Depredation Status Review within the ACCOBAMS Area. Regular technical and logistical support has been provided by the Secretariat to indirect partners, resulting particularly in a training organised in Morocco and a coordinated assistance provided by technical experts on acoustic monitoring. The Secretariat has also been organising a Know-How Webinar on By-catch and Depredation planned for 16 May 2022, and a depredation workshop scheduled for 8-10 June 2022 in Sicily.
24. Regarding MAVA funded MedBycatch project, the Executive Secretary provided a brief update on the activities under the Secretariat’s responsibilities, in particular the support provided to Moroccan partners to implement project activities on bycatch monitoring and testing mitigation trials.

• **CA 2b Underwater noise**

25. The Executive Secretary emphasised that the ACCOBAMS Secretariat is currently involved in a new EU-funded project - QUIETSEAS project on “Assisting (sub)regional cooperation for the practical implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) second cycle by providing methods and tools for D11 (underwater noise)”.
26. A hybrid workshop, on 15-16 March 2022, with members of the Joint Working Group on Noise CMS/ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS, was organized in the framework of the QUIETSEAS project in order to discuss noise thresholds for D11C2.

• **CA 3a Area-Based measures for cetacean conservation**

27. An ACCOBAMS workshop on Cetacean Critical Habitats was organized in Cap d'Ail (France) on 10-11 March 2022 focusing on a full review of progress and on assessing what work remains for wider circulation, first to the Scientific Committee and ultimately to the Parties.
28. The Executive Secretary recalled that the 14th Meeting of the Scientific Committee resulted in 11 recommendations and that in the same week the celebration of the 25th Anniversary of ACCOBAMS took place under the high patronage of His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco. During this successful event H.S.H Prince Albert II unveiled the artwork entitled "*Ainsi soit-il!*" ("*So be it!*") which was offered by ACCOBAMS to the Principality of Monaco to mark the date.
29. The Chair of the Scientific Committee then provided an update of the Scientific Committee activities conducted since the last meeting of the Bureau. He reminded the Scientific Committee work on the recommendations that emerged from the 14th Meeting of the Scientific Committee and from the workshops conducted on Cetaceans Critical Habitats (CCH) and Cetaceans Management Plan (CMP). He informed that the European Cetacean Society (ECS) Conference (5-7 April 2022) was attended by several members of the Scientific Committee and that ACCOBAMS activities and related actions would be relayed as well during the International Whaling Commission (IWC) Scientific Committee Meeting (25 April – 13 May 2022). He also updated the meeting on the progress of the ASI special issue in the *Frontiers Journal*, noting that a dozen abstracts from across the Agreement area had been received by the editors, describing scientific work derived from ASI data or results, and that its final publication was expected by the end of the year.
30. The Chair of the Scientific Committee also informed the Meeting that significant progress was made regarding the CMP development process as well as the Particularly Sensitive Area (PSA) proposal to the International Maritime Organization (IMO), which is being developed by France, Italy, Monaco and Spain with support from the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee notably through providing available scientific information to reinforce the proposal.

4. IMPLEMENTATION OF RESOLUTION 4.18 ON THE GUIDELINES ON THE GRANTING OF EXCEPTIONS TO ARTICLE II, PARAGRAPH 1, FOR THE PURPOSE OF NON-LETHAL IN SITU RESEARCH IN THE AGREEMENT AREA

31. The Executive Secretary informed the Meeting about an issue recently brought to the attention of the Secretariat regarding the implementation of Resolution 4.18 on the Guidelines on the granting of exceptions to Article II, paragraph 1, for the purpose of non-lethal *in situ* research in the Agreement Area.
32. Referring to the relevant provisions of the Agreement and Resolution 4.18, she explained that research activities at sea that are likely to cause harassment of cetaceans must be prohibited unless the Party in question decides to grant an exception, in which case such exception should be granted only after obtaining advice from the Scientific Committee.
33. While pointing out that many activities generating harassment within the meaning of the Guidelines of Resolution 4.18 are possibly carried out in the ACCOBAMS area, she indicated that no request for advice has ever been submitted to the Scientific Committee.

Conclusion 1:

The Bureau emphasized this was a major issue and the procedure should be reminded to all ACCOBAMS constituents and relevant stakeholders. The Bureau mandated the Secretariat to address an official letter accompanied by an explanatory note on relevant legal provisions to all National Focal Points, Scientific Committee members, Sub-Regional Coordinating Units, Partners and relevant partner organizations in order to remind all about the applicable procedure for granting exemptions to research activities at sea that are likely to cause harassment of cetaceans, and to invite the Parties to inform the Secretariat about exemptions that they may have granted during the five past years.

Conclusion 2:

With regard to future requests to be sent to the Secretariat for advice by the Scientific Committee, and considering the need to implement this procedure as efficiently as possible so as not to hinder the implementation of research activities, and in agreement with the Chair of the Scientific Committee, the Bureau invited the Scientific Committee to provide its advice on the week following the receipt of a request for exemption. If no advice is received after this period, the requesting Party may consider the advice of the Scientific Committee is favorable.

5. BUDGETARY MATTERS

34. The Executive Secretary presented the report on incomes and expenditures for 2021 as per 31st December 2021 (ACCOBAMS-BUEXT5/2022/Doc05).

Conclusion 3:

The Bureau congratulated the ACCOBAMS Secretariat for the presentation and the management of the financial contributions.

6. ACCOBAMS PARTNERS

35. The Executive Secretary presented the state of collaboration of ACCOBAMS Partners (ACCOBAMS-BUEXT5/2022/Doc06) prepared by the Secretariat following BU14 request to list ACCOBAMS Partners by reflecting their reporting contributions to ACCOBAMS. She underlined that this document provides an overview of both the compliance of ACCOBAMS Partners with documentation requirements and their collaborative efforts in aligning their activities with the ACCOBAMS objectives or priorities.
36. The Executive Secretary pointed out that 8 Partners have neither provided any documental information (programmes of activities or reports of collaboration) nor got involved in any ACCOBAMS activities.

Conclusion 4:

After considering this question, and while recalling that the status of ACCOBAMS Partner may be withdrawn by the ACCOBAMS Bureau based on the information provided by the Secretariat, the Bureau mandated the Secretariat to address an official letter to the 8 concerned ACCOBAMS Partners in order to remind them of the applicable rules and commitments of ACCOBAMS Partners, and to warn them about the likely withdrawal of their current status of ACCOBAMS Partner.

Conclusion 5:

Considering the different issues raised during this discussion, the Bureau also invited the Secretariat to develop, as part of the 2023-2025 ACCOBAMS Work Programme, a strategy on the ACCOBAMS Partnership status.

37. The Executive Secretary presented the applications for ACCOBAMS partnership as contained in ACCOBAMS-BUEXT5/2022/Doc07:

- The existing application by DeITa Association (Italy), on which the advice from the Italian National Focal Point has not been received so far;
- a new application by the Yacht Club of Monaco (YCM).

Conclusion 6:

After considering both applications for ACCOBAMS partnership, the Bureau decided:

- to postpone its decision concerning Delta Association awaiting the advice from the National Focal Point of Italy;
- to grant the status of ACCOBAMS Partner to the YCM.

The Bureau invited the Secretariat to inform both applicants accordingly.

7. COMMUNICATION

38. The Executive Secretary introduced ACCOBAMS-BUEXT5/2022/Doc08 on the state of development of the Communication Strategy and reminded the different steps that have been followed with the recruited consulting company beginning of 2021 and the Communication Steering Group.

39. She presented the draft ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy, which is to be examined by the Communication Steering Group before becoming an Annex to the corresponding draft Resolution to be submitted to MOP8. She emphasized that the refreshment of the ACCOBAMS logo was recommended as a basic step for launching the Communication Strategy in 2023, and thus it is advised that by the end of 2022 a corporate or brand identity be consolidated for ACCOBAMS as an indispensable point of departure for launching the Communication Strategy.

Conclusion 7:

The Bureau thanked the Secretariat for the work undertaken with the consulting company, with the support of the Communication Steering Group, on the development of the ACCOBAMS communication strategy.

Recognizing the need to strengthening the ACCOBAMS brand positioning, the Bureau agreed that it would be beneficial if all conditions are in place for an efficient implementation of the Strategy during the next *triennium*. With that in mind, the Bureau mandated the Secretariat to work on proposals for a new or a modernized logo to be submitted for the consideration and decision by MOP8, through a corresponding draft Resolution.

8. PREPARATION OF THE EIGHT MEETING OF THE PARTIES (MOP8)

8.1 Review of draft Resolutions to be submitted to MOP8

40. The Executive Secretary introduced the list of draft Resolutions to be presented to the Eighth Meeting of the Parties (ACCOBAMS-BUEXT5/2022/**Doc09**) and highlighted the changes that occurred since the last meeting of the Bureau. Those changes are due to the addition of a draft Resolution on the ACCOBAMS logo, a draft Resolution on the Follow-up Committee (FC) in line with the decision of its Third Meeting (29-30 March 2022) and the withdrawal of a draft Resolution on ACCOBAMS partners because of the need to further reflect on the subject of Partnership Status and next steps.
41. The final list of draft Resolutions to be submitted to the MOP8 is shown in [Annex 3](#) to this report.

Draft Res 8.1: Granting the right to vote

42. According to Article 14. 2 of the Rules of Procedure of the Meeting of the Parties, *“Representatives of Parties which are three or more years behind in paying their subscriptions on the date of the opening session of the Meeting of the Parties shall not be eligible to vote. However, the Meeting of the Parties may allow such Parties to continue to exercise their right to vote if it is satisfied that the delay in payment arises from exceptional circumstances”*.
43. In this context, if Parties which are three or more years behind in paying their ordinary contributions, provide the Secretariat with a formal letter explaining the “exceptional circumstances” that led to the delay in payment, this document may be examined at the opening of the forthcoming Meeting of the Parties in order to decide if the Party will be exceptionally granted the right to vote during the Meeting.
44. The corresponding draft Resolution, as approved by the Bureau, is shown in [Annex 4](#) to this report.

Draft Res 8.2: Scientific Committee

45. According to Resolution 7.7 and the modalities described in the Rules of the Scientific Committee for a rotation between the Mediterranean Science Commission (CIESM) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to be entrusted with the Chairpersonship of the Committee, the MOP8 will entrust to IUCN the Chair of the Scientific Committee and to CIESM the Vice-Chair for the triennium 2023-2025.
46. The draft Resolution, as approved by the Bureau, is shown in [Annex 4](#) to this report.

Draft Res 8.3: Work programme and budget for the triennium 2023-2025

47. The proposed draft ACCOBAMS Work Programme for 2023-2025 was elaborated by the Secretariat based on proposals by the Fifth Meeting of ACCOBAMS National Representatives (12-15 July 2021); Scientific Committee input on conservation actions and means of implementation; recommendations from SC14 and FC3 Meetings, as well as from other workshops and training sessions organized during the triennium. Progress made in the implementation of ongoing activities under the 2020-2022 Work Programme was also taken into account, as well as the ACCOBAMS Strategy for 2014-2025.

48. Each action proposed under the draft 2023-2025 Work Programme is accompanied by a corresponding total budget, encompassing the proposed secured funds (from Ordinary Contributions, Voluntary Contributions or External Funds) as well as the required additional Voluntary Contributions and/or External Funds.
49. The Executive Secretary emphasized that due to the costs associated to the need of (i) conducting the evaluation of the effectiveness of the Agreement and the development of a new ACCOBAMS Strategy, (ii) launching and implementing the ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy, (iii) adjusting the miscalculated wages for the 2020-2022 triennium and to take into account the expected inflation rates, the draft budget results in an increase of 15% as compared to the 2020-2022 budget.

Conclusion 8:

The Bureau recommended that, in addition to this draft budget, the Secretariat prepares two more budget options for presentation at the MOP8: a zero-increase budget and a budget increased of 5%, as compared to the 2020-2022 budget.

The Bureau also recommended that the Secretariat prepares an explanatory note to highlight the advantages and disadvantages of each different budget option.

50. The draft Resolution, as approved by the Bureau, is shown in [Annex 4](#) to this report. The Annexes of the draft Resolution, particularly on the annual ordinary contributions and the draft budget sustaining the proposed Work Programme for 2023-2025, will be revised by the Secretariat according to the suggestions of the Extended Bureau meeting.

Draft Res 8.4: ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy

51. The adoption of a Communication Strategy is of crucial importance to strengthen the ACCOBAMS visibility. The Secretariat has been working since 2020 with a specialized company to develop such Strategy, in consultation with a Communication Steering Group. The Annex to the corresponding draft Resolution (the ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy) will be added once its review is concluded by the Steering Group.
52. The draft Resolution, as approved by the Bureau, is shown in [Annex 4](#) to this report.

Draft Res 8.5: NETCCOBAMS

53. A new version of NETCCOBAMS has been developed since early 2020 (i) by updating and improving the previous versions of the NETCCOBAMS platform and (ii) by tackling the willingness expressed by the Secretariat to experiment best available science and new technologies to collect, analyze, and model data on cetaceans, as well as on acoustic risk areas, in order to support the threat-based management approach and to implement all relevant conservation measures promoted by ACCOBAMS. On the basis of SC14 Recommendation 14.10, the Secretariat prepared a draft Resolution to be submitted to MOP8 on the matter.
54. The draft Resolution, as approved by the Bureau, is shown in [Annex 4](#) to this report

Draft Res 8.6: ACCOBAMS Logo

55. As underlined during Agenda item 7 discussions on the ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy, the refreshment of the ACCOBAMS logo is recommended as a prerequisite or a basic step preceding the launching phase of the new Communication Strategy in 2023, if and once adopted by MOP8. In line with the decision to mandate the Secretariat to develop proposals on a new or a modernized logo to be submitted for the consideration of MOP8, this draft resolution aims at replacing the previous ones in relation to the ACCOBAMS logo, namely Resolutions 1.14 and 4.21.
56. The draft Resolution, as approved by the Bureau, is shown in [Annex 4](#) to this report

Draft Res 8.7: Follow up Committee

57. This Draft Resolution was prepared following the Third Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Follow-up Committee (29-30 March 2022, online). In order to ensure visibility of the Follow-up Committee recommendations regarding submissions presented under the follow-up procedure, Members of the Follow-up Committee agreed to recommend the Meeting of the Parties to take decisions in the form of *ad hoc* Resolutions.
58. The draft Resolution, as approved by the Bureau, is reflected in [Annex 4](#) to this report

Draft Res 8.8: Procedure for projects submitted for institutional support

59. In accordance with MOP7 instruction to the Secretariat, to prepare, in consultation with the Scientific Committee, a proposal to update the procedure for requesting institutional support to projects submission, this draft Resolution aims at providing a clear procedure regarding requests for letters of support received by the Secretariat.
60. The draft Resolution, as approved by the Bureau, is shown in [Annex 4](#) to this report.

Draft Res 8.9: National Action Plans

61. National action plans, as dedicated policy documents, are aimed at supporting ACCOBAMS implementation at national level. The draft Resolution was prepared according to BU14 decision to present a draft Resolution on National Action Plans for adoption by MOP8.
62. The draft Resolution, as approved by the Bureau, is shown in [Annex 4](#) to this report.

Draft Res 8.10: The ACCOBAMS long-term monitoring programme

63. Ensuring the sustainability of synoptic monitoring operations in the ACCOBAMS Area is a prerequisite to assess trends in population status and to ensure the efficiency of conservation measures over the long term. The Secretariat has been working during the triennium to develop an ACCOBAMS Long Term Monitoring Program (LTMP), in consultation with the Scientific Committee and the Bureau, and with the support of consultants. The LTMP was presented to different institutional meetings. The draft Resolution was prepared taking into consideration Recommendation 14.1 of the Scientific Committee, as well as relevant provisions of Resolution 7.10 that it would replace. Provisions on funding aspects will be added taking into account recommendations by the *ad hoc* Group which was created following BU14 decision in order to address the funding options to be considered in support of implementing the LTMP.

Conclusion 9:

When reviewing this draft Resolution, the Bureau agreed that the Secretariat would invite representatives of Regional Coordination Units to join the work of the *Ad hoc* Group.

64. The draft Resolution, as approved by the Bureau, is shown in [Annex 4](#) to this report.

Draft Res 8.11: IUCN Red List

65. Cetacean species IUCN conservation statuses were re-assessed (or assessed) between 2018 and 2021, using the data and knowledge gained, thanks to the ASI, as well as other data collected since previous assessments carried out in 2008-2011. This draft Resolution was prepared taking into consideration Recommendation 14.2 of the Scientific Committee with the aim of updating previous Resolution in relation to the IUCN Red List status of cetacean's species in the ACCOBAMS Area (notably, Resolution 3.19).

Conclusion 10:

The Bureau requested that ahead of MOP8 the Secretariat enquire the IUCN-Med on the preparation of the booklet with the new IUCN Red List status of cetacean species in the ACCOBAMS Area.

66. The draft Resolution, as approved by the Bureau, is shown in [Annex 4](#) to this report.

Draft Res 8.12: Conservation Management Plans (CMPs)

67. Taking into consideration Recommendation 14.13 of the SC14, the main objective of this draft Resolution is to take note of progress made on developing draft CMPs on fin whale, Risso's dolphins, common dolphins and bottlenose dolphins, and to consider drafting additional CMPs for other species.

68. The draft Resolution, as approved by the Bureau, is shown in [Annex 4](#) to this report.

Draft Res 8.13: Cetacean Stranding Networks (CSNs)

69. Based on Recommendation 14.14 of the SC14 and recommendations from necropsy trainings in Padova and Liège, this draft Resolution aims at increasing and promoting the use of new technologies, such as virtual reality and tele-necropsy, while encouraging collaboration so to facilitate exchanges of tissue samples for joint examination.

70. The draft Resolution, as approved by the Bureau, is shown in [Annex 4](#) to this report.

Draft Res 8.14: Interactions between fisheries and cetaceans

71. Based on Recommendation 14.5 of the SC14, this draft resolution will update the previous Resolution on bycatch and depredation issues, while focusing on the critical issue of porpoise bycatch in the Black Sea.

72. The draft Resolution, as approved by the Bureau, is shown in [Annex 4](#) to this report.

Draft Res 8.15: Illegal Driftnets

73. In view of the numerous events of whale entanglements in illegal driftnets that have occurred in recent years in the Mediterranean, efforts have been made by the Secretariat to draw the attention of the Parties to this issue throughout the triennium. This draft Resolution aims at recalling the important threat posed by driftnets to cetaceans and at encouraging Parties to adopt and enforce relevant national legislation in line with the ACCOBAMS ban.

Conclusion 11:

The Bureau mandated the Secretariat to explore, in collaboration with the Scientific Committee, the question on the definition of driftnets so that related ACCOBAMS provisions become clearer and more precise.

74. The draft Resolution, as approved by the Bureau, is shown in [Annex 4](#) to this report.

Draft Res 8.16: Anthropogenic noise

75. Based on Recommendation 14.6 of the SC14, this draft Resolution aims at updating previous noise related Resolutions by encouraging the monitoring of anthropogenic activities generating underwater noise and the use of relevant mitigation measures.

76. The draft Resolution, as approved by the Bureau, is shown in [Annex 4](#) to this report.

Draft Res 8.17: Ship strikes

77. Based on Recommendation 14.7 of the SC14, this draft Resolution aims at updating previous Resolutions relating to ship strikes, in particular through monitoring and identifying areas considered as high-risk areas for ship strikes (CCH) in the Mediterranean Sea.

78. The draft Resolution, as approved by the Bureau, is shown in [Annex 4](#) to this report.

Draft Res 8.18: Commercial whale watching activities

79. The Whale Watching Working Group (WWWG) pointed out the need to revise the Guidelines for monitoring programmes aimed at maximizing the chance of detecting potential adverse impacts of whale watching activities on individual cetaceans and populations (Annex 3 of Resolution 6.20). This draft Resolution was prepared taking into consideration provisions from previous Resolutions, as well as Recommendation 14.8 of the SC14, and includes an updated version of the guidelines in its annex.

80. The draft Resolution, as approved by the Bureau, is shown in [Annex 4](#) to this report.

Draft Res 8.19 Marine litter and chemical pollution

81. Marine litter and chemical pollution are major threats to the welfare, biology and ecology of marine wildlife, in particular cetaceans, which are being harmed or killed by marine litter ingestion, entanglement and chemical toxic effects. This draft Resolution was prepared taking into consideration Recommendation 14.9 of the SC14, and it aims at updating the previous Resolution on the subject.

82. The draft Resolution, as approved by the Bureau, is shown in [Annex 4](#) to this report.

Draft Res 8.20 Cetacean Critical Habitats

83. The draft Resolution was prepared taking into account recommendations issued by the Cetacean Critical Habitat (CCH) Workshop organized in Cap d'Ail, France, on 10 -11 March 2022. Its aim is to update and identify CCH through detecting priority areas to implement actions that are likely to mitigate known threats, and at the same time to continue implementing conservation and management measures in the existing CCHs.
84. The draft Resolution, as approved by the Bureau, is shown in [Annex 4](#) to this report.

Draft Res 8.21 Citizen Science

85. Based on Recommendation 14.11 of the SC14, this draft Resolution aims at promoting the use of citizen science, which may complement the collection of scientific data on cetacean sightings and strandings.
86. The draft Resolution, as approved by the Bureau, is shown in [Annex 4](#) to this report.

Draft Res 8.22 Tribute to the Organizers

87. The draft Resolution, as approved by the Bureau, is reflected in [Annex 4](#) to this report.

Draft Res 8.23 Date, venue and funding of the Ninth session of the Meeting of the Parties

88. The draft Resolution, as approved by the Bureau, is shown in [Annex 4](#) to this report.

Conclusion 12:

Draft Resolutions attached to this report may still be revised or updated in the run up to MOP8, in particular the bracketed/greyed text will be revised and/or completed before the finalization of the draft Resolutions in time for their presentation at MOP8.

The annexes to the draft Resolutions are not included in the present report as they still need to be revised or finalized.

The numbering of the draft Resolutions annexed may also be modified according to new draft Resolution(s) that may be added between the Extended Bureau Meeting and the upcoming MOP8, but also taking into account the MOP8 agenda.

8.2 Arrangements for MOP8

89. The representative of Malta and the Executive Secretary informed the Extended Bureau meeting on the progress made in preparation for the MOP8, which will be organized from 28th November to 2nd December 2022 in Malta.
90. The Chair of the Bureau thanked Malta for hosting the upcoming MOP8 in 2022 and wished for a very fruitful and memorable meeting.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

91. The Executive Secretary provided an update on the 2022 ACCOBAMS Call for project proposals that was launched on 16 February 2022, in accordance with BU14 decision.
92. She explained that considering the current composition of the Scientific Committee, 5 organizations from 4 eligible countries (out of 12 eligible countries) cannot submit proposals to the 2022 call due to the existing eligibility rule of the Procedure for the ACCOBAMS Call for proposals adopted by Resolution 7.8 (*«Proposals from Organizations having among their employees or board, one or more members of the Bureau of the Parties, of the Scientific Committee, or of the Permanent Secretariat of ACCOBAMS are not eligible»*).
93. The Executive Secretary emphasized that this situation was problematic because no proposals had been received to date and only a few days before the deadline for receipt of proposals. She also underlined that several members of the Scientific Committee (from eligible countries) contacted the Secretariat expressing their will to submit project proposals.
94. Bureau Members were also informed about issues encountered by some applicants with the letter of endorsement to be signed by the ACCOBAMS Focal Point of their country for their project proposals.

Conclusion 13:

While recalling the importance to avoid any conflict of interest during the selection process of project proposals, the Bureau agreed on a temporary modification to the eligibility rule, so to allow organizations from eligible countries having amongst their employees or board one or more members of the Bureau of the Parties or of the Scientific Committee, to submit proposals in the framework of the 2022 ACCOBAMS Call for proposals. The Bureau requested that any members of the Bureau, or of the Scientific Committee whose organisation is amongst the proponents of one or more projects under the 2022 ACCOBAMS Call for proposals, shall not be involved in the related process of evaluation and selection of projects.

The Bureau also agreed to postpone the deadline of the 2022 ACCOBAMS Call by one month (until the end of May 2022).

Conclusion 14:

The Bureau invited the Secretariat to revise the Procedure on ACCOBAMS Calls for proposals for projects to be funded under the Supplementary Conservation Grants Fund, in order to cover gaps and weaknesses encountered during the 2022 Call for proposals, in particular:

- the question posed by eligibility criteria on organizations having among their employees or board, one or more members of the Scientific Committee or of the Bureau of the Parties,
- the letter of endorsement on project proposals to be signed by the National Focal Point.

The Bureau invited the Secretariat to include the revised Procedure in a draft Resolution to be presented to the MOP8.

10. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

95. The Chair of the Bureau thanked the Meeting participants and closed the Extended Bureau Meeting on Wednesday 27th April 2022 at 5:30 pm.

ANNEX 1 - LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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ANNEX 2 - AGENDA OF THE FIFTH EXTENDED BUREAU MEETING

- 1. Opening of the Meeting**
- 2. Adoption of the Agenda**
- 3. Update on the activities of the Secretariat and the Scientific Committee**
- 4. Implementation of Resolution 4.18 on the Guidelines on the granting of exceptions to Article II, paragraph 1, for the purpose of non-lethal *in situ* research in the Agreement area**
- 5. Budgetary matters**
- 6. ACCOBAMS Partners**
- 7. Communication**
- 8. Preparation of the Eighth Meeting of the Parties (MOP8)**
 - 8.1 Review of draft Resolutions to be submitted to MOP8
 - 8.2 Arrangements for the MOP8
- 9. Any other business**

Arrangements regarding the 2022 ACCOBAMS Call for project proposals
- 10. Closure of the Meeting**

ANNEX 3 – LIST OF DRAFT RESOLUTIONS TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE MOP8

Draft Res 8.1	Granting the right to vote
Draft Res 8.2	Scientific Committee
Draft Res 8.3	Work programme and Budget for the 2023-2025 triennium
Draft Res 8.4	ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy
Draft Res 8.5	NETCCOBAMS
Draft Res 8.6	ACCOBAMS logo
Draft Res 8.7	Follow-up Procedure
Draft Res 8.8	Procedure for projects submitted for institutional support
Draft Res 8.9	National Action Plans
Draft Res 8.10	The ACCOBAMS long-term monitoring programme (LTMP)
Draft Res 8.11	IUCN Red List
Draft Res 8.12	Conservation Management Plans
Draft Res 8.13	Cetacean Stranding Networks
Draft Res 8.14	Interactions between fisheries and cetaceans
Draft Res 8.15	Illegal drift nets
Draft Res 8.16	Anthropogenic Noise
Draft Res 8.17	Ship strikes
Draft Res 8.18	Commercial whale watching activities
Draft Res 8.19	Marine litter and chemical pollution
Draft Res 8.20	Cetacean Critical Habitats (CCH)
Draft Res 8.21	Citizen Science
Draft Res 8.22	Tribute to Organisers
Draft Res 8.23	Date and venue of the Ninth session of the Meeting of the Parties
	Procedure for the ACCOBAMS Calls for proposals for projects to be funded under the Supplementary Conservation Grants Fund ¹

¹ This draft Resolution is added following the decision took by the Bureau during the discussions on the 2022 ACCOBAMS Call for proposals at the agenda item 9 “Any other business”.

ANNEX 4 – DRAFT RESOLUTIONS AS REVIEWED BY THE EXTENDED BUREAU**Note of the Secretariat:**

Draft Resolutions attached to this report may still be revised or updated in the run up to MOP8, in particular the bracketed/greyed text will be revised and/or completed before the finalization of the draft Resolutions in time for their presentation at MOP8.

The annexes to the draft Resolutions are not included in the present report as they still need to be revised or finalized.

The numbering of the draft Resolutions annexed may also be modified according to new draft Resolution(s) that may be added between the Extended Bureau Meeting and the upcoming MOP8, but also taking into account the MOP8 agenda.

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DRAFT RESOLUTION 8.2 - SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE	22
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DRAFT RESOLUTION 8.1
GRANTING THE RIGHT TO VOTE

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

Recalling Article III, paragraphs 5 and 6, of the Agreement regarding the right to vote,

[Informed by the Depository that some States have completed the process for becoming Parties to the Agreement under Article XIV. paragraph 2, but to be considered Parties must wait until the first day of the third month after completion of the procedures, in conformity with the above-mentioned provision,]

Recalling Article 14, paragraph 2, of the Rules of Procedure of the Meeting of the Parties, which provides that “Representatives of Parties which are three or more years behind in paying their subscriptions on the date of the opening session of the Meeting of the Parties shall not be eligible to vote. However, the Meeting of the Parties may allow such Parties to continue to exercise their right to vote if it is satisfied that the delay in payment arises from exceptional circumstances”,

Convinced that decision-making at the Eighth Meeting of the Parties will benefit from the active participation of as many Parties as possible,

1. *[Decides that States that have completed the process for becoming Parties to the Agreement but that are not yet considered as Parties, shall exceptionally be granted the status of full participating Party to this Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Parties with the right to vote;]*
2. *Decides* that, although some Parties are more than three years behind in paying their ordinary contributions, it is satisfied that the delay for payment arises from exceptional circumstances, and that these Parties may exercise their right to vote at the Eighth Meeting of the Parties;
3. *[Instructs the Credentials Committee to monitor the credentials of States that have completed the process for becoming Parties to the Agreement but that are not yet considered as Parties and report to the Eighth Meeting of the Parties.]*

DRAFT RESOLUTION 8.2
SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

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

Recalling Article VII of the Agreement on the composition and functions of the Scientific Committee,

Recalling Resolution 7.7 where the Rules of the Scientific Committee were adopted with a rotation between the Mediterranean Science Commission (CIESM) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to be entrusted with the Chairmanship of the Committee,

Considering the recommendations of the Scientific Committee and the Bureau,

Commending the participation in the Scientific Committee of representatives from CIESM, IUCN, the European Cetacean Society (ECS), the Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and the Scientific Council of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS),

Taking into account the ACCOBAMS Strategy (period 2014-2025), as adopted by Resolutions 5.1 and 7.4, and the Work Programme 2023-2025, as adopted by [Resolution 8.2],

Stressing the need for establishing a closer link between the Scientific Committee of ACCOBAMS and the rest of the scientific community working on cetaceans in the Agreement Area,

Stressing the need for strengthening the representation of the Parties' scientific community in the Scientific Committee of ACCOBAMS, by allowing Parties to designate, on a voluntary basis, national experts to participate to the work of the Scientific Committee,

Considering that the "Task Managers" and the regional representatives should have an active role in supporting the Chair during the meetings of the Scientific Committee and other works,

Stressing the need to ensure the diversity of experiences and competences and the equitable geographical distribution and gender balance of membership within the Scientific Committee,

1. *Entrusts* to IUCN the Chair of the Scientific Committee and to CIESM the Vice-Chair, according to the modalities described in the Rules of the Scientific Committee, annexed to Resolution 7.7;
2. *Takes note* of the experts appointed by CIESM and IUCN for the period 2023-2025 as follows:

- **CIESM:**

- [XXXX,
- XXXX,
- XXXX,]

- **IUCN:**

- [XXXX,
- XXXX,
- XXXX]

3. *Asks* the Scientific Committee to appoint, at its first Meeting of the triennium, its Chair among the experts designated by IUCN, its Vice-Chair among the experts designated by CIESM and its “Task Managers”;
4. *Invites* each of the two Organizations listed in the previous paragraph to appoint one of their experts to assist the Secretariat in the preparation of the first Meeting of the Scientific Committee of the triennium;
5. *Appoints* the regional representatives as follows:
 - XXXXX, representing the Western Mediterranean and contiguous Atlantic area,
 - XXXXX, representing the Central Mediterranean,
 - XXXXX, representing the Eastern Mediterranean,
 - XXXXX, representing the Black Sea;
6. *Takes note* of the representatives designated by CMS, ECS and IWC for the period 2023-2025 as follows:
 - XXXXX, representing the Scientific Council of the CMS,
 - XXXXX, representing the ECS,
 - XXXXX, representing the Scientific Committee of the IWC;
7. *Thanks* CIESM, CMS, IUCN and IWC for bearing the responsibility for their experts’ participation expenses;
8. *Invites* the Sub-Regional Coordination Units to fully participate in the work and the Meetings of the Scientific Committee;
9. *Invites* the Secretariat, if resources allow, to ensure, where necessary, the participation in the Meetings and/or work of the Scientific Committee of experts in disciplines that are not covered by the members of the Scientific Committee, including legal and socio-economic aspects, after consultation with the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Scientific Committee as for the selection and the definition of tasks of these experts;
10. *Decides* that the present Resolution amends Resolution 7.7.

DRAFT RESOLUTION 8.3
WORK PROGRAMME AND BUDGET FOR THE 2023-2025 TRIENNium

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

Acting in accordance with the commitments of the Parties to conserve cetaceans in conformity with the Agreement, especially the fundamental obligations placed upon Parties in Article II,

Recalling Article IX, paragraphs 1 and 2, of the Agreement, stating that the Parties shall determine the scale of contributions to the budget and that the Meeting of the Parties shall adopt a budget by consensus,

Taking into account the ACCOBAMS Strategy (2014-2025), as adopted under Resolution 5.1, as well as the new ACCOBAMS Strategy as adopted under Resolution 7.4,

Acknowledging the relevant work being carried out in other organizations, in particular within the framework of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the International Whaling Commission (IWC), the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention), the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention), the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution (Bucharest Convention) and the Agreement for the Establishment of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM),

Acknowledging with appreciation:

- a. the financial support and in-kind contributions provided by the Government of H.S.H. the Prince of Monaco for the ACCOBAMS Secretariat under the Headquarters Agreement,
- b. the voluntary contributions provided by the Governments of Italy, Malta, Monaco, and Spain,
- c. the co-financing from SPA/RAC and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN),
- d. the financial support provided by MAVA Foundation and European Union through specific projects,
- e. the support from Partner organisations for Agreement activities,

Thanking the Scientific Committee for its work and advice to Parties in setting up accurate conservation measures,

Thanking also the Sub-Regional Coordination Units and the ACCOBAMS Partners for their continuous support to the implementation of the Agreement,

Aware that scientific research in Agreement area remains essential to identify populations with the least favourable conservation status and to address the conservation priorities,

Conscious that the current heterogeneity of management and research capacity in the area covered by the Agreement must be addressed by capacity-building and public awareness,

Stressing the need to increase collaboration with those international organisations whose mandates encompass interrelated aspects in the same area of the Agreement, in the spirit of the ecosystem approach,

Recognizing the need to set priorities,

Taking into consideration the results of Meeting of National Representatives organised in July 2021, where the needs and priorities of Parties for the implementation of the Agreement have been identified,

Stressing the importance of the payment by all Parties of the contributions due to the budget of the Agreement,

Recalling that Article IX, paragraph 3, calls for voluntary contributions to increase the funds available for monitoring, research, training and projects related to conservation,

Recalling Resolutions 1.7 and 7.8, establishing and implementing a Supplementary Conservation Fund,

1. *Takes note* with satisfaction of the audited accounts for the period 2020-2022 presented by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat;
2. *Agrees* to provide financial support for the participation to the ACCOBAMS Meetings of the Parties of delegates (one delegate by country) from countries with middle and low incomes, as classified by the World Bank in 2022 and as listed in [Annex 5](#) to the present Resolution;
3. *Adopts* the Budget for 2023-2025, as in [Annex 1](#) to the present Resolution;
4. *Confirms* that Parties shall contribute to the budget, in accordance with Article III, paragraph 8 (e), of the Agreement, at the scale agreed upon by the Meeting of the Parties;
5. *Agrees* to apply, for the calculation of the minimum ordinary contributions, a percentage of the total budget, instead of a fixed amount;
6. *Agrees* to the scale and amounts of contributions of Parties to the Agreement, as listed in [Annex 2](#) to the present Resolution, and to the application of that scale to new Parties *pro rata* of the remaining financial year;
7. *Requests* Parties, in particular those that pay the minimum contribution, to consider paying for the entire triennium in one instalment at the beginning of the period;
8. *Further requests* Parties to pay their contributions as promptly as possible, but, in any case, no later than at the end of March of the corresponding year;
9. *Asks* the Parties that have unpaid pledges to pay their pending contributions within a reasonable time, at the latest two to three months after the end of 2022, in order to close the budget for the 2020-2022 triennium as soon as possible;

10. *Invites* Parties, Range States and organisations to consider the feasibility of providing personnel for the ACCOBAMS Secretariat;
11. *Also invites* States that are not Parties to the Agreement, as well as governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental Organizations and other possible donors, to consider contributing to the implementation of the Agreement on a voluntary basis;
12. *Encourages* Parties and Range States, when allocating funds for ACCOBAMS-related research, to take into account the priorities of the ACCOBAMS Work Programme and *asks*, as appropriate, for the advice of the Scientific Committee in identifying activities that:
 - a. are most directly in accordance with the conservation priorities identified in Resolutions adopted by the Parties, in particular the Work Programme, and
 - b. will directly assist the Scientific Committee in its priority work;
13. *Approves* the terms of reference for administration of the Agreement Budget for the period 2023-2025, as set out in [Annex 3](#) to the present Resolution, as well as the guidelines for the acceptance of financial contributions, as set out in [Annex 4](#), provided that no voluntary contribution shall entail any present or future financial liability for the Agreement Trust Fund without the prior consent of the Parties or the Bureau;
14. *Entrusts* the ACCOBAMS Secretariat with the task of exploring the availability of appropriate external funds to support the implementation of the Agreement;
15. *Adopts* the Programme of Work for 2023 – 2025, as presented in [Annex 6](#) to the present Resolution;
16. *Urges* Parties to support projects and activities in line with the Work Programme by means of financial and in-kind contributions and to report thereon to the Ninth Meeting of the Parties;
17. *Urges* Parties to fully commit themselves in the ACCOBAMS Meeting of National Representatives, which should be organized in 2024, by having a representative attending the Meeting;
18. *Recommends* Parties, in order to prepare this ACCOBAMS Meeting of National Representatives, to organize through ACCOBAMS Focal Points a half-day national meeting to collect all the relevant data prior the Meeting;
19. *Urges* Parties and specialized international organizations to develop international cooperative projects for implementation of the Work Programme and to keep the ACCOBAMS Secretariat fully informed of progress;
20. *Further urges* Parties and *encourages* other donors to provide financial assistance to Countries in need of capacity-building to support the implementation of the Agreement and of the Work Programme, directly or through the financial mechanisms of the Agreement, in particular through the Supplementary Conservation Fund;
21. *Asks* Parties, non-Parties, Partners, all relevant organizations and experts to share all relevant information regarding their activities in NETCCOBAMS;
22. *Calls on* the Scientific Committee, the ACCOBAMS Secretariat, the Bureau, the Sub-Regional Coordinating Units, ACCOBAMS Partners and international and national non-governmental Organizations to promote the actions

necessary to facilitate implementation of the Work Programme, bearing in mind the Resolutions adopted by the Meetings of the Parties;

23. *Calls on* the Scientific Committee to further promote cooperation with scientific Institutions of the ACCOBAMS area;
24. *Endorses* the conclusions issued by the Meeting of the Follow-up Committee (online, 29-30 March 2022) on the follow up of existing obligations and commitments related to (i) seismic activities in the ACCOBAMS Area (ii) military activities producing underwater noise in the ACCOBAMS Area, and (iii) interactions between humans and dolphins addressed by Resolution 3.13 (dolphin interaction programme) ;
25. *Requests* the ACCOBAMS Secretariat to strengthen co-operation and develop activities with other relevant bodies;
26. *Instructs* the ACCOBAMS Secretariat to:
 - a. disseminate the Work Programme for priority actions for 2023-2025, collaborate closely in its implementation with the Secretariats of other relevant conventions, international organizations and ACCOBAMS Partners and seek appropriate donors;
 - b. inform in time the National Focal Points of workshops and meetings, as well as of the establishment of working groups within the ACCOBAMS framework.

ANNEXES

[Annex 1](#): Budget 2023 -2025

[Annex 2](#): Annual contributions of Parties to the Trust Fund of ACCOBAMS

[Annex 3](#): Terms of reference for administration of the Budget

[Annex 4](#): Guidelines for accepting voluntary financial contributions

[Annex 5](#): Eligibility for funding to attend the Meetings of the Parties to ACCOBAMS

[Annex 6](#): Programme of Work 2023 - 2025

DRAFT RESOLUTION 8.4
ACCOBAMS COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

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

Recalling Article IV of the Agreement, paragraph 2 h), according to which the functions of the Agreement Secretariat shall be to provide information to the general public concerning this Agreement and its objectives,

Recalling Section 5 of Annex 2 to the Agreement, according to which Parties shall co-operate to develop common tools for the collection and dissemination of information about cetaceans and to organize training courses and education programmes. Such actions shall be conducted in concert at the sub-regional and Agreement level, supported by the Agreement secretariat, the Co-ordination units and the Scientific Committee and carried out in collaboration with competent international institutions or organizations. The results shall be made available to all Parties. In particular, Parties shall co-operate to prepare a sub-regional or regional information bulletin on cetacean conservation activities or contribute to an existing publication serving the same purpose and prepare information, awareness and identification guides for distribution to users of the sea,

Recalling Resolution 5.1 on ACCOBAMS Strategy for the period 2014-2025 and its strategic objective A.1, which calls to improve communication across, up and down ACCOBAMS as an organisation,

Recalling Resolution 7.4 on ACCOBAMS Strategy that requires to develop, implement and monitor a common communication, information and awareness plan,

Recalling Resolution 7.5 on ACCOBAMS Funding Strategy that highlights the fact that the development of an ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy is a key step for strengthening ACCOBAMS visibility and reputation, being mindful of the virtuous cycle between communication/outreach and fundraising,

Aware of the importance of communication as a central and cross-cutting element for implementing the Agreement,

Recognizing the need to enhance the visibility of ACCOBAMS activities and achievements in promoting cetacean conservation in the Mediterranean, Black Sea and contiguous Atlantic area,

Aware that adequate resources are essential to ensure quality and consistency of communication actions,

Recognizing the need to provide adequate resources for consistent and qualitative implementation of communication activities,

Considering the important contribution that the Agreement will provide towards achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets adopted by the Tenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, in particular with regards to Target 1 on making people aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably,

Recalling Resolution 11.8 on “Communication, information and outreach plan” adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS),

1. *Endorses* the ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy, shown in the Annex to this Resolution;
2. *Requests* the Secretariat to work on its implementation, including the assessment of its effectiveness, in cooperation with all ACCOBAMS bodies and in partnership or collaboration with relevant partner organizations;
3. *Requests* Parties to provide voluntary contributions towards the development and implementation of the ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy, with priority to the communication activities proposed in the 2023-2025 Programme of Work;
4. *Invites* all partners and relevant stakeholders to actively assist with in-kind support towards the implementation of the ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy.

ANNEX
ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy

(to be added at a later stage)

DRAFT RESOLUTION 8.5
NETCCOBAMS

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

Taking into consideration Recommendation 14.10 “NETCCOBAMS” of the 14th meeting of the Scientific Committee,

Recognizing that the NETCCOBAMS online platform [available at the link: accobams.sinay.fr²] is a source of valuable information on pressures and threats for cetaceans,

1. *Encourages* Parties to support the further development and improvement of NETCCOBAMS and invites Parties to report relevant activities through NETCCOBAMS;
2. *Welcomes* the establishment of an expert Working Group including scientists, managers, stakeholders and Parties, acting under the following Terms of Reference, for it to guide and provide oversight on:
 - (a) the selection and incorporation of appropriate validated data and information, including conditions of uploading and use³,
 - (b) analytical tools to be used for the various datasets,
 - (c) appropriate visualisation approaches (including those relevant to Cetacean Critical Habitats) and associated advice to Parties and other relevant subjects on the interpretation of outputs, and
 - (d) the future development of the NETCCOBAMS online platform (with a view to, *inter alia*, taking into account other threats and facilitating data entry and validation) to assist in the provision of conservation advice on cetaceans and their habitats, with priority given to developing a module for automatic identification system (AIS) data analysis by providing information in a specific selected area using the results of existing projects or online platforms (such as type of vessel, density, speed, waiting time, etc.) and taking into account data collected and reported under Resolution [8.17] on “Ship Strikes”;
3. *Requests* the Working Group to report on its work to the Eighth Meeting of the Parties;
4. *Recommends* that:
 - (a) relevant stakeholders (including ACCOBAMS Partners and industry bodies) be encouraged by both the Parties and the Secretariat to submit relevant data and information on cetaceans and anthropogenic activities to NETCCOBAMS (in accord with the Working Group’s advice), with a view to improving the value and application of the online platform in the provision of management advice over time,
 - (b) the NETCCOBAMS Working Group liaise with the Joint Noise Working Group regarding (i) the definition of potential quantitative targets in terms of reduction of risk; (ii) improvements in the robustness of model outputs (incorporating model uncertainty, *in situ* verification at selected sites); and (iii) the development of new features including simulated scenarios of noise (and risk) reduction in response to potential mitigation approaches to evaluate their likely effectiveness,

² To create a NETCCOBAMS account, please contact the ACCOBAMS Secretariat.

³ Such as validated abundance and habitat maps, Partner’s reports, documentation on the work of ACCOBAMS and its Committees, Parties and Partners.

- (c) the NETCCOBAMS Working Group liaise with the other relevant Working Groups when the platform will implement other features;
- 5. *Requests* the Secretariat to disseminate information on the value of the NETCCOBAMS online platform (including its contribution to achieved mitigation measures) to national and international *fora*, managers and stakeholders (such as shipping companies, port authorities and the International Maritime Organization), with a view to increasing the visibility of the work done in this context and encourage the platform's use and the submission of data.

DRAFT RESOLUTION 8.6
ACCOBAMS LOGO

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

Considering that the promotion of the Agreement, its mediatization and public awareness can only be facilitated by an immediate visual identification of the Agreement,

Recalling Resolution 1.14 on “Adopting a logo for the Agreement and conditions for its use” and Resolution 4.21 on “ACCOBAMS Logos: Conditions for its use”,

Recalling Resolution [8.3] on the ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy highlighting the need to review the ACCOBAMS logotype aiming at improving the visibility of ACCOBAMS corporate identity and communication outreach,

1. *Adopts* the logo of the Agreement as shown below and the conditions for its use, as included in the Annex;

NEW LOGO / MODERNIZED LOGO

2. *Instructs* the Secretariat to use the logo to identify actions and proposals concerning the Agreement, the Scientific Committee, the Sub Regional Coordination Units, combined, when possible, with their own logo, as well as for any activity occurring under ACCOBAMS sponsorship;
3. *Instructs* the Secretariat to update the ACCOBAMS Communication material with the new/modernized logo;
4. *Instructs* the Secretariat to inform ACCOBAMS Partners, Sub Regional Coordination Units, International Organisations and relevant stakeholders about the new/modernized logo;
5. *Urges* any applicant to request the use of the ACCOBAMS logo to the Agreement Secretariat;
6. *Decides* that the present Resolution replaces Resolutions 1.14 and 4.21.

ANNEX
Conditions for the Use of the ACCOBAMS Logo

(to be added at a later stage)

**DRAFT RESOLUTION 8.7
FOLLOW-UP PROCEDURE**

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

Having examined the report of the third meeting of the ACCOBAMS Follow-up Committee,

1. *Adopts* the following Resolutions:

**RESOLUTION 8.7.A
DECISIONS ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE FOLLOW-UP COMMITTEE ON SUBMISSIONS**

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

Acting upon recommendation FC3.1 of the Follow-up Committee,

Considering that, according to Art. 12, para. 1, of the Rules on the ACCOBAMS Follow-up Procedure, “the Meeting of the Parties may decide, upon consideration of recommendations of the Committee and taking in account the capacity of the Party concerned and factors such as the cause, type, degree and frequency of non-follow-up, to: a) endorse the measures recommended by the Committee; b) take any other non-confrontational action it deems appropriate”,

Convinced that it is appropriate to ensure visibility to the recommendations of the Follow-up Committee on submissions to the follow-up procedure and to the relevant decisions by the Meeting of the Parties,

1. *Decides* that the Meeting of the Parties shall take its decisions on the recommendations by the Follow-up Committee relating to submissions to the follow-up procedure in the form of *ad hoc* Resolutions.

**RESOLUTION 8.7.B
FOLLOW-UP SUBMISSION BY OCEAN CARE ON THE ASSESSMENT AND CONTROL
BY GREECE OF MILITARY ACTIVITIES AROUND SOUTH-EAST CRETE**

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

Acting upon recommendation FC3.2 of the Follow-up Committee,

Having examined the considerations and recommendations of the Follow-up Committee, as recorded in the reports of its second and third meetings,

Basing itself on the motivations stated in the above-mentioned reports,

Considering that the 7th Meeting of the Parties “endorsed the measures recommended by the Follow-up Committee” (para. 64 of the report of the 7th Meeting of the Parties),

Considering that the Party concerned did not provide the requested information to the ACCOBAMS Secretariat and recalling that the follow-up procedure is a non-confrontational procedure that requires the co-operation by the ACCOBAMS Parties,

2. *Finds:*

- that the second part of the submission is not admissible and not founded;
- that the first part of the submission is admissible;
- that it is likely that the atypical mass stranding of beaked whales brought to its attention by this submission was the result of the military exercises taking place from 31 March to 10 April 2014, in which the Party concerned was also involved;

3. *Invites:*

- the Party concerned to pursue all efforts to be in line with the ACCOBAMS resolutions addressing the impact of anthropogenic noise on cetaceans, such as Resolution 4.17, commending the Party concerned for what is being done in this direction;
- the Party concerned to provide information to the ACCOBAMS Secretariat about how, since 2014, the Guidelines annexed to Resolution 4.17 and the Guidelines annexed to Resolution 7.13, which in 2019 replaced the previous ones, have been implemented;
- the Secretariat to share the received information from the Party concerned with the Scientific Committee;

4. *Requests:*

- the Follow-up Committee to remain seized of the submission;
- the Secretariat to transmit this Resolution to the Party and the Partner concerned.

RESOLUTION 8.7.C

FOLLOW-UP SUBMISSION BY OCEAN CARE ON THE ASSESSMENT AND CONTROL BY SPAIN OF PETROLEUM EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES AROUND THE BALEARIC ISLANDS

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

Acting upon recommendation FC3.3 of the Follow-up Committee,

Having examined the considerations and recommendations of the Follow-up Committee, as recorded in the reports of its second and third meetings,

Basing itself on the motivations stated in the above-mentioned reports,

Considering that the 7th Meeting of the Parties “endorsed the measures recommended by the Follow-up Committee” (para. 64 of the report of the 7th Meeting of the Parties),

Bearing in mind that the 7th Meeting of the parties adopted Resolution 7.13 on noise, which “strongly encourages Parties to contribute to the ACCOBAMS register for impulsive noise sources, especially by sharing their data” and “calls the Parties for the development of a co-operation mechanism to identify the source of long-distance underwater noise in order to address its long-distance effects”,

1. *Finds* that there is no evidence that the authorities of the State concerned either authorized noise producing activities from July 2012 to July 2013 or were negligent in controlling what was taking place in the waters or seabed subject to the Spanish jurisdiction;
2. *Declares* the follow-up procedure closed as regards the implication of Spain;
3. *Requests* the Follow-up Committee to ensure the follow-up of Resolution 7.13, in so far as it “strongly encourages Parties to contribute to the ACCOBAMS register for impulsive noise sources, especially by sharing their data” and “calls the Parties for the development of a co-operation mechanism to identify the source of long-distance underwater noise in order to address its long-distance effects”;
4. *Stresses* the importance of monitoring impulsive noise sources and the need for awareness and workshops in this regard at the national and regional level, in light of Scientific Committee recommendation 14.6 on noise;
5. *Requests* the Secretariat to transmit this Resolution to the Party and the Partner concerned.

RESOLUTION 8.7.D

FOLLOW-UP SUBMISSION BY OCEAN CARE ON THE ASSESSMENT AND CONTROL BY PORTUGAL OF PETROLEUM EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES IN THE ALGARVE AND ALENTEJO BASINS

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

Acting upon recommendation FC3.4 of the Follow-up Committee,

Having examined the considerations and recommendations of the Follow-up Committee, as recorded in the reports of its second and third meetings,

Basing itself on the motivations stated in the above-mentioned reports,

Considering that the 7th Meeting of the Parties “endorsed the measures recommended by the Follow-up Committee” (para. 64 of the report of the 7th Meeting of the Parties),

Taking note that a written reply was provided by Portugal through a letter sent on 31 October 2019,

Taking also note that a statement by Ocean Care was forwarded to the Follow-up Committee,

1. *Recalls* that ACCOBAMS Parties are bound, inter alia, to apply the precautionary principle (Art. II, para. 4. ACCOBAMS) and to require impact assessments for allowing or prohibiting activities that may affect cetaceans or their habitat, such as offshore exploration and exploitation (see ACCOBAMS Annex 2, para. 1, c), and that, to address the concern of underwater noise, the ACCOBAMS Parties adopted Resolution 4.17, which includes a set of “Guidelines to address the impact of anthropogenic noise on cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS area”, replaced by Resolution 7.13, which sets “Guidelines to address the impact of anthropogenic noise on cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS area”;
2. *Takes note* that, after the presentation of the submission, the Portuguese legislation on petroleum exploration and exploitation activities has been strengthened and improved under the environment point of view, so to ensure an approach guided by the precautionary principle and that today all activities of petroleum exploration and exploitation fall under the environmental impact assessment regime, according to the characteristics of the project and its location;
3. *Believes* that useful guidance in addressing problems in petroleum exploration and exploitation activities can also be found in the Follow-up Committee’s recommendation related to seismic activities in the ACCOBAMS Area, approved at the Third Meeting of the Follow-up Committee;
4. *Appreciates* the statement by the Party concerned that it is deeply committed to the protection and safeguarding of sea life, specifically cetaceans, in full respect of ACCOBAMS;
5. *Declares* the follow-up procedure closed;
6. *Requests* the Secretariat to transmit this Resolution to the Party and the Partner concerned.

RESOLUTION 8.7.E

FOLLOW-UP SUBMISSION BY OCEAN CARE ON THE FAILURE BY ALBANIA, ALGERIA, CROATIA, CYPRUS, EGYPT, FRANCE, GREECE, ITALY, LEBANON, LIBYA, MALTA, MONACO, MONTENEGRO, MOROCCO, SLOVENIA, SPAIN, SYRIA AND TUNISIA TO IMPLEMENT THE ACCOBAMS CONSERVATION PLAN FOR MEDITERRANEAN COMMON DOLPHINS

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

Acting upon recommendation FC3.5 of the Follow-up Committee,

Having examined the considerations and recommendations of the Follow-up Committee, as recorded in the reports of its second and third meetings,

Basing itself on the motivations stated in the above-mentioned reports,

Considering that the 7th Meeting of the Parties “endorsed the measures recommended by the Follow-up Committee” (para. 64 of the report of the 7th Meeting of the Parties),

Considering that written replies were provided by Morocco, Spain and Malta,

Taking note that during the 7th Meeting of the Parties Albania, Algeria, Egypt, France, Lebanon, Malta and Morocco made remarks regarding the modalities and the difficulties in ensuring the implementation of the Conservation Plan for short-beaked common dolphins in the Mediterranean Sea,

Aware that fifteen Parties concerned have not provided to the Follow-up Committee information on the issue raised in the submission and recalling that the follow-up procedure is a non-confrontational procedure that requires the co-operation by the ACCOBAMS Parties,

1. *Recalls* that ACCOBAMS Parties are bound, inter alia, to apply Resolution 4.13, which stresses that the implementation of the Conservation Plan for short-beaked common dolphins in the Mediterranean Sea is a high priority in the region;
2. *Regrets* that it now appears that the Conservation Plan for short-beaked common dolphins in the Mediterranean Sea, as welcomed by Resolution 2.20 and recalled by Resolution 4.13, has not yet been fully implemented;
3. *Is confident* that the forthcoming Conservation Management Plan for *Delphinus delphis* which is now under elaboration by the Scientific Committee, will address the encountered difficulties in a satisfactory way;
4. *Considers* that there is an urgent need to have a Conservation Management Plan in place for the Mediterranean area and to have it implemented at national and transboundary level, as evidenced by the recent (December 2021) IUCN Red List assessment of the Inner Mediterranean subpopulation of common dolphins as Endangered, and of the Gulf of Corinth subpopulation as Critically Endangered;
5. *Stresses* that the proper implementation of Conservation Management Plans is critical to ensure the credibility of the ACCOBAMS mandate as an effective intergovernmental agreement of regional cooperation;
6. *Invites*:
 - fifteen Parties concerned, namely Albania, Algeria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Monaco, Montenegro, Slovenia, Syria and Tunisia, to provide information to the Follow-up Committee, through ACCOBAMS Secretariat, on specific measures taken for the implementation of the Conservation Plan for short-beaked common dolphins in the Mediterranean Sea, or any other measures considered relevant for their protection;
 - the Secretariat to share the information received from Parties with the Scientific Committee;
7. *Reserves* to make further decisions on the replies submitted at a later stage, when more national replies will be collected;
8. *Requests*:
 - the Follow-up Committee to remain seized of the submission;
 - the Secretariat to transmit this Resolution to the Party and the Partner concerned.

DRAFT RESOLUTION 8.8
PROCEDURE FOR PROJECTS SUBMITTED FOR INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

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

Considering that the implementation of the Agreement requires the development and implementation of projects for research and conservation that are in line with the objectives and priorities of ACCOBAMS,

Recalling that, as part of its functions defined in the Agreement, the Scientific Committee should provide advice on the development and coordination of international research and monitoring programmes,

Desirous of encouraging scientists, intergovernmental organizations and nongovernmental organizations to consult with the Scientific Committee and the Secretariat of ACCOBAMS when developing research and conservation projects,

Aware that letters of support are an important part of a project funding application process, as they demonstrate the credibility of the applicants and the reasons why the project proposals are suitable for funding,

1. *Adopts* the procedure in Annex to this Resolution for providing institutional support to project proposals;
2. *Instructs* the Secretariat and the Scientific Committee to apply the procedure in Annex for projects submitted for institutional support;
3. *Requests* the Secretariat to publicize the procedure on the ACCOBAMS website;
4. *Requests* the Secretariat, including through the Focal Points, to communicate the procedure to all interested stakeholders;
5. *Decides* that the present Resolution replaces Resolution 3.6.

ANNEX

Procedure for providing institutional support to project proposals
(to be added at a later stage)

DRAFT RESOLUTION 8.9
NATIONAL ACTION PLANS

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

Recalling Annex 2 of the Agreement on the conservation, research and management measures to be applied by Parties to achieve ACCOBAMS purpose,

Considering that national action plans, as dedicated policy documents, are aimed to support the implementation of ACCOBAMS at the national level,

Considering that such national action plans should be developed following an integrated and participatory approach involving competent authorities, managers, scientists, non-governmental organizations and other interested stakeholders,

Taking into consideration regional strategies, plans or programmes for the conservation of cetaceans, such as the ongoing ACCOBAMS Conservation Management Plan efforts,

Taking into consideration Decision IG.25/13 of the Meeting of the Parties to the Barcelona Convention, in particular its Annex 1 on the Action Plan for the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea,

Taking into consideration Decision IG.25/11 of the Meeting of the Parties to the Barcelona Convention on the Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region (Post-2020 SAPBIO),

Taking into consideration the relevant decisions under the Bucharest Convention,

1. *Invites* each Party, in accordance with its particular conditions and capabilities, to:
 - (a) Update or develop one or more national action plans for the conservation of cetaceans, which shall integrate, *inter alia*, the measures set out in the Agreement, in particular its Annex 2,
 - (b) Adapt, for this purpose, existing national relevant programmes,
 - (c) Integrate, as far as possible and as appropriate, the conservation of cetaceans into relevant sectoral or cross-sectoral plans, programmes and policies;

2. *Invites* the Secretariat, the Sub-Regional Coordination Units and the Scientific Committee to provide assistance to the Parties in the development and the updating of their national action plans.

DRAFT RESOLUTION 8.10
THE ACCOBAMS LONG-TERM MONITORING PROGRAMME

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

Recalling Article II, paragraph 3, of the Agreement and its Annex 2 (Conservation Plan), paragraph 2,

Recalling Resolution 2.11 on the facilitation of scientific research campaigns and programmes,

Recalling Resolution 5.1 on the ACCOBAMS Strategy for the period 2014-2025, in particular its specific objective B.1 “Improve the knowledge about state of cetaceans”,

Recalling Resolution 6.13 on Comprehensive cetacean population estimates and distribution in the ACCOBAMS Area (Monitoring of cetacean distribution, abundance and ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative), which has replaced the previous Resolutions 2.19, 3.15 and 5.9,

Recalling Resolution 7.10 on Improving monitoring and assessment of cetacean population abundance and distribution in the ACCOBAMS area, which recommended the development of a suitable monitoring programme for the ACCOBAMS region to enable abundance trends and potential distributional changes to be identified, consistently with the reporting cycles of European Union Habitats Directive, European Union Marine Strategy Framework Directive and IMAP (Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and coast and related Assessment Criteria) of the Barcelona Convention,

Taking into consideration Recommendation 14.1 of the Scientific Committee on the ACCOBAMS Long-Term Monitoring Programme (LTMP),

Considering that the LTMP is not only fundamental to the ability of the Parties to meet the stated objectives of ACCOBAMS, but will also assist individual Parties to meet relevant national and international commitments, which include the objectives of the Barcelona Convention Ecosystem Approach/Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (EcAp/IMAP), and the Action Plan for the Conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea (IG25/13), the European Union Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the European Union Habitats Directive, the Black Sea integrated monitoring and assessment programme,

Welcoming strongly the realization of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative in the Agreement Area and *commending* the Parties, the non-Party Range States, the Secretariat, the sub-regional Co-ordination Units, the Scientific Committee, all partner organizations and all persons involved for the successful implementation of the survey campaigns in summer 2018 in the Mediterranean Sea and in summer 2019 in the Black Sea,

Expressing its gratitude to France, Italy, Monaco, Slovenia, Spain, the MAVA Foundation, the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) for their voluntary contributions and financial support, and to other Parties that have provided in-kind contributions for the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative in the Mediterranean Sea,

Acknowledging the financial support provided by the European Commission to the project ‘CeNoBS’ - Support MSFD implementation in the Black Sea through establishing a regional monitoring system of cetaceans (Descriptor 1, biological diversity) and noise monitoring (Descriptor 11, noise and energy) for achieving GES, which supports the implementation of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative in the Black Sea,

Thanking also the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (SPA/RAC), the International Union for Conservation of Nature - Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation (IUCN-Med), the French Biodiversity Agency (OFB), the Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA) and the PELAGIS Observatory for their participation in the Steering Committee of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative project,

Recognizing the success of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative and ‘CeNoBS’ projects in providing baseline abundance summer estimates for cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS region that contributed to the assessment of IUCN conservation status for cetacean species in the region and to the publication “Conserving Whales, Dolphins and Porpoises in the Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea and adjacent areas: an ACCOBAMS Status Report 2021”,

Recognizing the significant value of the ASI dataset for the preparation of the Mediterranean Quality Status Report,

Stressing the need to explore new and alternative sources of data to assess cetaceans’ distribution and abundance, in particular through the use of existing marine monitoring programmes and innovative technologies,

I. ACCOBAMS Long-Term Monitoring Programme

1. *Endorses* and fully *commits* to facilitate the implementation of the ACCOBAMS LTMP reflected in the Annex which focuses primarily upon obtaining robust estimates of cetacean abundance and distribution and identifying respective changes over time, as well as other megafauna and human activities, in the context of providing advice on the achievement of conservation and management objectives;
2. *Asks* the Secretariat, in co-operation with the Scientific Committee, to review, consolidate and update the LTMP overview document at regular intervals;
3. *[Urges* the Parties and the Secretariat, given the fundamental importance of the LTMP, to establish a funding scheme and strategy for the LTMP;

[paragraphs on LTMP funding to be added following the results of the work of the ad hoc group established in accordance with BU14 Decision]

4. *Mandates* the Secretariat to secure funding in view of undertaking synoptic basin-wide surveys in the Mediterranean and Black Seas with a focus on abundance and trends in 2024-2025;]
5. *Invites* the ACCOBAMS Parties and range States to appoint a national contact person to participate in an ASI2 Contact Group to define implementation conditions and protocol for logistics (research platform, human means, equipment, training, etc.) and administration (survey restrictions, permits, etc.) related to undertaking basin-wide synoptic surveys based upon the experience gained from ASI1, taking into account the guidance provided in Recommendation 14.1 of the Scientific Committee;

6. Asks the Scientific Committee to review, and update as necessary, the field and analytical protocols for basin-wide cetacean surveys, also including selected marine megafauna and human activity data, and to consider new developments of technology, survey design and methods to analyse data in accordance with guidance provided in Recommendation 14.1;
7. Asks the Parties and the Secretariat, in conjunction with the Scientific Committee, given the great long-term value of the ASI dataset and future data collected under the LTMP and the importance of properly archiving this data and making its availability widespread for the benefit of the conservation science community:
 - (a) to work to optimize data archiving and sharing, including ensuring the interoperability of ASI data sets with other relevant databases, such as NETCCOBAMS, EMODnet, IMAP Info System, OBIS-SEAMAP and organisations for data exchange;
 - (b) to ensure that the protocol for obtaining access to the ASI and future data includes a component that states that the outputs of any analyses using ASI and future data are made available to ACCOBAMS, with appropriate publication safeguards, so that:
 - the outputs can be used by the Scientific Committee to contribute to its ability to give the best scientific advice, and
 - the Secretariat can monitor the use and influence of the knowledge base to assist in illustrating the broader value of the ASI and to assist in improving the undertaking and data collection on future surveys as part of the ACCOBAMS LTMP;
 - (c) to work in identifying ways to foster co-operation and partnerships between experts throughout the Agreement's range, including:
 - increasing the visibility of ASI and future datasets and related results, encouraging the widest use possible of existing analyses to contribute towards decision making on conservation matters, as well as encouraging further analyses of ASI and future data to meet conservation and management needs at cetacean and ecosystem levels;
 - providing sufficient resources to make best use of ASI data throughout the ACCOBAMS area, including through financial support for mentorship schemes, training and joint publications.

II – Improving cetaceans' distribution and abundance monitoring efforts in the Agreement area

8. *Recommends* that Parties and Range States ensure that any proposed national programmes on the study of abundance and distribution of cetaceans are compatible with the guidelines annexed to Resolution 6.13;
9. *Recommends* that Parties ensure that the relevant authorities share plans for their long-term national and sub-regional cetacean monitoring programmes, including ongoing activities under the European Union Habitats Directive, European Union Marine Strategy Framework Directive, EcAp/IMAP and other programs such as Action Plan for the Conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea;
10. Asks the Scientific Committee and the Sub-Regional Coordination Units to assist in identifying synergies and potential collaborations in existing or proposed programmes;
11. *Recommends* that Parties, Range States and ACCOBAMS Partners, where relevant, coordinate the implementation of national monitoring programmes, in particular by synchronizing their survey campaigns, and consider joint survey efforts, whenever possible, assisted by the Scientific Committee and the Secretariat;

12. *Asks* the Scientific Committee to assist in updating advice on methods and protocols for smaller-scale regional and national existing and new programmes for the monitoring of abundance, distribution and trends, in the light of information that will be received from periodic basin-wide summer synoptic surveys;
13. *Asks* the Scientific Committee to work as expeditiously as possible with relevant modelling experts in order to develop a simulation framework to examine the ability of different survey strategies, including frequency and geographical extent, to obtain robust abundance estimates, to detect trends in abundance and distribution and to determine whether ACCOBAMS conservation objectives are being met, mindful that the same framework should be used to examine how and where vessels of opportunity and multidisciplinary surveys can contribute to the LTMP;
14. *Invites* the Scientific Committee to assist in the following:
 - (a) investigating the use of vessels of opportunity and multidisciplinary cruises, as well as dedicated surveys, to provide information on:
 - areas that may not be able to be surveyed in basin-wide surveys and for which few data on presence or absence are available;
 - non-summer occurrence;
 - local trends in abundance and distribution; and
 - areas where those platforms are already used for the collection of data on cetaceans and their habitat components;
 - (b) undertaking pilot studies when new techniques or vessels of opportunity are considered; and
 - (c) further considering the use of passive and active acoustic monitoring for specific areas and species, such as sperm and Cuvier's beaked whales, in line with the ongoing monitoring plans, such as those under the European Union Marine Strategy Framework Directive and EcAp/IMAP, including the Eastern Basin.
15. *Decides* that the present Resolution complements Resolution 6.13 and replaces Resolution 7.10.

ANNEX

**ACCOBAMS long-term monitoring programme for estimating trends
in abundance and distribution of cetaceans**
(to be added at a later stage)

DRAFT RESOLUTION 8.11
IUCN RED LIST

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

Acting upon recommendation 14.2 of the Scientific Committee,

Recalling Resolution 2.22 on strengthening relations with IUCN, Resolution 3.19 on the IUCN Red List of cetaceans in the Mediterranean and Black Seas and Resolution 6.15 on the assessment of IUCN conservation status of cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Area,

Bearing in mind that the IUCN Red List provides a simple way of classifying the status of taxa at species or lower taxonomic levels such as subspecies, variety or subpopulation into one of eight categories: Data Deficient, Least Concern, Near Threatened, Vulnerable, Endangered, Critically Endangered, Extinct in the Wild, and Extinct,

Aware that all cetaceans regularly present in the Mediterranean and Black Seas have now been assessed or re-assessed and that the Scientific Committee has completed the work assigned to it in Resolution 6.15 (Assessment of IUCN Conservation Status in the ACCOBAMS Area), being greatly supported in this ambitious task by the data collected under the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative, as well as by other data collected since the previous assessments,

Expressing its gratitude for the work carried out by the Scientific Committee, the experts, the assessors and IUCN for the 2018-2021 assessments,

Recalling that numerous conservation measures have been developed by the Scientific Committee and have been endorsed and adopted by the Meeting of the Parties in different Resolutions towards a favourable conservation status of cetacean species within the Agreement Area,

Taking into consideration Decision IG.25/13 of the Meeting of the Parties to the Barcelona Convention, in particular its Annex 1 on the Action Plan for the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea,

Noting with satisfaction that the status of two species in the Mediterranean Sea (the striped and common bottlenose dolphins) has improved from Vulnerable to Least Concern,

Noting that the status of the three Black Sea species⁴ have remained the same (Vulnerable for the Black Sea common dolphin and Endangered for the Black Sea bottlenose dolphin and the Black Sea harbour porpoise), as has the status of Mediterranean sperm whales (Endangered) and Mediterranean common dolphins (Endangered), although for the latter the Alborán Sea is now excluded and the subpopulation is called the Inner Mediterranean subpopulation,

Noting with concern that the status of the Mediterranean fin whale has worsened from Vulnerable to Endangered,

Acknowledging that Mediterranean rough-toothed dolphins, have been identified as a subpopulation and have been assessed as Near Threatened, that Mediterranean Cuvier's beaked whales were assessed in 2018 as Vulnerable (in

⁴ These classifications are provisional as the assessments are under review by IUCN and the IUCN SSC Cetacean Specialist Group.

2006 they had been classified as Data Deficient) and that Risso's dolphins, assessed as Data Deficient in 2012, have now been assessed as Endangered,

Appreciating that Mediterranean long-finned pilot whales are now considered two subpopulations (Inner Mediterranean long-finned pilot whales are Endangered whilst those in the Strait of Gibraltar are Critically Endangered) and that four subpopulations of other species have also been agreed and assessed (Gulf of Corinth common dolphins – Critically Endangered; Gulf of Ambracia bottlenose dolphins - Critically Endangered; Gulf of Corinth striped dolphins – Endangered (in review); Strait of Gibraltar killer whales – Critically Endangered),

Noting that four draft Conservation Management Plans are close to completion,

1. *Invites* Parties to take note of the IUCN Red List status of cetacean species following the 2018-2021 assessments as well as of the changes occurred since the previous assessments:

Species	Previous IUCN Red List status		IUCN Red List status following the 2018-2021 assessments	
Bottlenose dolphin <i>Tursiops truncatus</i>	Mediterranean subpopulation	Vulnerable	Inner Mediterranean subpopulation	Least Concern
			Gulf of Ambracia subpopulation	Critically Endangered
Bottlenose Dolphin Black Sea subspecies <i>Tursiops truncatus ssp. ponticus</i>	Black Sea subspecies	Endangered	Black Sea subspecies	Endangered¹
Common dolphin <i>Delphinus delphis</i>	Mediterranean subpopulation	Endangered	Inner Mediterranean subpopulation	Endangered
			Gulf of Corinth subpopulation	Critically Endangered
Common dolphin Black Sea subspecies <i>Delphinus delphis ssp. ponticus</i>	Black Sea subspecies	Vulnerable	Black Sea subspecies	Vulnerable¹
Cuvier's beaked whale <i>Ziphius cavirostris</i>	Mediterranean subpopulation	Data Deficient	Mediterranean subpopulation	Vulnerable
Fin whale <i>Balaenoptera physalus</i>	Mediterranean subpopulation	Vulnerable	Mediterranean subpopulation	Endangered

Harbour porpoise Black Sea subspecies <i>Phocoena phocoena ssp. relicta</i>	Black Sea subspecies	Endangered	Black Sea subspecies	Endangered¹
Killer whale <i>Orcinus orca</i>	Mediterranean subpopulation	Not Evaluated	Strait of Gibraltar subpopulation	Critically Endangered
Long-finned pilot whale <i>Globicephala melas</i>	Mediterranean subpopulation	Data Deficient	Inner Mediterranean subpopulation	Endangered
			Strait of Gibraltar subpopulation	Critically Endangered
Risso's dolphin <i>Grampus griseus</i>	Mediterranean subpopulation	Data Deficient	Mediterranean subpopulation	Endangered
Sperm whale <i>Physeter macrocephalus</i>	Mediterranean subpopulation	Endangered	Mediterranean subpopulation	Endangered
Striped dolphin <i>Stenella coeruleoalba</i>	Mediterranean subpopulation	Vulnerable	Mediterranean subpopulation	Least Concern
			Gulf of Corinth subpopulation	Endangered
Rough-toothed dolphin <i>Steno bredanensis</i>	Mediterranean subpopulation	Not Evaluated	Mediterranean subpopulation	Near Threatened

2. *Urges* Parties to implement measures to address the threats posed to the populations assessed according to the list above, with particular regard to Critically Endangered and Endangered populations, and to update their national Red Lists;
3. *Recommends* that the draft Conservation Management Plan for common dolphins pays special attention to the Gulf of Corinth common dolphins that have been newly assessed as “Critically Endangered”;
4. *Strongly urges* Parties and *asks* non-Parties to pay particular attention to those “sub-populations” that have been assessed as Critically Endangered or Endangered and to take appropriate conservation actions, including in case of species for which Conservation Management Plans have not yet been developed;
5. *Decides* that the present Resolution replaces Resolutions 3.19 and 6.15.

DRAFT RESOLUTION 8.12
CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLANS

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

Recalling Resolution 6.21 on Conservation Management Plans (CMPs), where Parties took note of the CMP template, regarding new CMPs in the ACCOBAMS Area,

Taking into consideration Recommendation 14.13 “Conservation Management Plans (CMPs)” from the 14th meeting of the Scientific Committee,

Recognizing that the Scientific Committee and the four CMPs points of contact have devoted significant efforts during the past triennium (2020-2022) to develop draft CMPs for Mediterranean fin whales, Risso’s dolphins, common dolphins and bottlenose dolphins,

Recognizing also that, despite delays due to Covid-19 pandemic, the draft CMPs have been completed during the ACCOBAMS workshop in Cap d’Ail, France, from 7 to 9 March 2022,

Taking into consideration the recent IUCN Red List assessments [Resolution 8.11 on IUCN Red List],

1. *Takes note* of the draft CMPs as presented in documents [CMP fin whale, CMP Risso’s, CMP common dolphins, CMP bottlenose dolphins];
2. *Requests* the CMP points of contact to finalise the different CMPs through organising stakeholder workshops, in collaboration with the Secretariat and with the Sub-Regional Coordination Units, as an essential part of the process contributing to the effectiveness and successful implementation of CMPs;
3. *Encourages* Parties to work towards CMP key components, which should include:
 - support of national authorities,
 - involvement of stakeholders at an early stage of development,
 - recognition that CMPs complement existing measures without replacing them,
 - overview of present status of species,
 - clear and achievable objectives,
 - practical and prioritized mitigation actions,
 - regular monitoring and reporting,
 - clear governance structures to co-ordinate key stakeholders’ engagement;
4. *Recommends* the Scientific Committee to consider drafting a CMP for the following species/populations:

(a) *Mediterranean sperm whales*

Mediterranean sperm whales are listed as ‘Endangered’ in the IUCN Red List. The Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission has recommended in 2020 and 2021 that these species be treated as a

‘priority population’ for the purpose of the CMP development process. In addition to ship strikes, anthropogenic noise and bycatch, Mediterranean sperm whales are particularly vulnerable to marine litter. Range States include Albania, Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Libya, Malta, Monaco, Morocco, Spain, Tunisia, and Turkey;

(b) *Mediterranean Cuvier’s beaked whales*

Mediterranean Cuvier’s beaked whales are listed as ‘Vulnerable’ in the IUCN Red List. Threats to such species include anthropogenic noise, habitat degradation, chemical pollution, bycatch and ingestion of marine litter. Range States include Albania, Algeria, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Spain, and Turkey;

(c) *Black Sea cetaceans*

Harbour porpoises and bottlenose dolphins of the Black Sea are listed as ‘Endangered’ in the IUCN Red List. Common dolphins of the Black Sea are listed as ‘Vulnerable’. The Black Sea Commission (Sub-Regional Coordination Unit) recommended in 2021 to develop the updated Conservation Plan for Black Sea Cetaceans, as separate conservation plans for each of the three species. Threats to such species include bycatch (particularly for the harbour porpoise), habitat degradation (including prey depletion), illegal takes of bottlenose dolphins from the wild, and consequences of bio-invasions by alien species. Range States include Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Turkey, and Ukraine;

5. *Encourages* Range States to participate in the drafting process of the relevant CMPs.

DRAFT RESOLUTION 8.13
CETACEAN STRANDING NETWORKS

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

Recalling Resolutions 1.10 “Cooperation between National Networks of Cetacean Strandings and the Creation of a Database”, 2.10 “Facilitation of Exchange of Tissue Samples”, 3.25 “Cetacean Live Stranding”, 4.16 “Guidelines for a Coordinated Cetacean Stranding Response”, 6.22 “Cetacean Live Strandings” and 7.14 “Best Practices in Monitoring and Management of Cetacean Stranding”,

Recalling the document on “Best Practices on Cetacean *post mortem* Investigation and Tissue Sampling” resulting from the harmonization process in ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS (ACCOBAMS-MOP7/2019/Doc33),

Taking into consideration Recommendation 14.14 “Cetacean Stranding Networks (CSNs)” from the 14th meeting of the Scientific Committee,

Recognizing that:

- Cetacean Stranding Networks (CSNs) are an important source for complementing data on cetacean mortality, including bycatch occurrences;
- CSNs widely vary, depending on scientific requirements, political drivers, resources, infrastructure and personnel experience;
- a tiered approach to carcass triage allows investigations to be conducted at different levels, depending on the resources, facilities or experience of the stranding network, and offers a framework for data collection and interpretation appropriate and optimized to the resources available;
- in a large number of cases examined by the existing CSNs, the cause of death could not be identified, which indicates that there is still room for expertise improvement,

Acknowledging the significant efforts done by the Secretariat and both coordinators (University of Liege, Belgium, and University of Padua, Italy) to organise, despite the Covid-19 pandemic, online and in-presence trainings to forty ACCOBAMS experts on necropsy, following the best practices on the investigation of causes of death, including incidental catches during fishing operations (bycatch) and marine litter ingestion, entanglement, noise, ship strikes and infectious diseases (“Best Practices on Cetacean *post mortem* Investigation and Tissue Sampling” resulting from the harmonization process in ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS),

Recalling the Action Plan for the Conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea (IG25/13),

1. *Encourages:*

- the Parties to establish and /or to ensure the continuous functioning of stranding networks,
- the Secretariat to continue supporting the establishment of such networks in collaboration with the Sub Regional Coordination Units;

2. *Requests* the Secretariat to:
 - promote the use of new technologies, such as virtual reality and tele-necropsy, in order to increase the possibility of remote training, support and advice, in case of cetacean strandings,
 - increase capacity-building efforts to analyse tissues in order to determine the causes of the death,
 - increase capacity-building efforts in developing tissue banks;
3. *Requests* the Scientific Committee to test these new approaches and technologies in selected pilot areas, in order to implement a continuous training programme, connecting experts with local scientists dealing with cetacean strandings, and ensure a standardized approach to *post mortem* investigations, data collection, tissue sampling, and analyses;
4. *Stresses* the need for the improvement of data collection on cetacean population genetics and pathology;
5. *Encourages* Parties to submit their relevant national data in MEDACES;
6. *Encourages* Parties to further collaborate at a regional level between tissue banks, so to facilitate the exchanges of tissue samples for joint analyses.

DRAFT RESOLUTION 8.14
INTERACTIONS BETWEEN FISHERIES AND CETACEANS

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

Recalling the provisions of Article II, paragraph 3, of the Agreement, inviting Parties to implement, within the limits of their sovereignty and/or jurisdiction and in accordance with their international obligations, appropriate measures for the assessment and management of human-cetacean interactions and stressing that measures concerning fisheries activities shall be applied in all waters under their sovereignty and/or jurisdiction and, outside these waters, in respect of any vessel under their flag or registered within their territory,

Recalling the following Resolutions:

- Resolution 2.12 on guidelines for the use of acoustic deterrent devices,
- Resolution 2.13 on pelagic gillnets,
- Resolution 2.21 on assessment and mitigation of the adverse impacts of interactions between cetaceans and fishing activities in the ACCOBAMS area,
- Resolution A/3.1, amending Annex 2 to the ACCOBAMS, as regards the use of drift nets,
- Resolution 3.8 strengthening collaboration with the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM),
- Resolution 4.9 on fisheries interactions with cetaceans,
- Resolution 7.11 on interactions between fisheries and cetaceans,

Taking into consideration Recommendation 14.5 of the Scientific Committee on “Bycatch”,

Reiterating that bycatch in fishing gear is a widespread and significant threat to cetaceans across the Agreement area, although precise estimates are lacking for most areas and the region as a whole,

Recalling that it is essential that an improved understanding of bycatch levels is developed as soon as possible and that, together with the results of ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative, this will allow a better determination of bycatch rates and thus help determine the levels of bycatch reduction necessary to allow ACCOBAMS conservation objectives to be met,

Expressing great concern over the results of the project “Support MSFD implementation in the Black Sea through establishing a regional monitoring system of cetaceans (D1) and noise monitoring (D11) for achieving GES” (CeNoBS), as well as of other recent local surveys that have, even under conservative assumptions, highlighted the significant link between turbot fishery bycatch and high seasonal mortality of harbour porpoises in the Black Sea, which threatens the viability of this sub-species,

Fully aware of the complexity of the interactions between fisheries and cetaceans and their negative impacts on cetacean populations, as well as of their socio-economic implications in some zones of the ACCOBAMS area, in particular the situation of conflicts generated between fishermen and dolphins due to the damages caused by the latter to fishing gear,

Conscious 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 12.22 on “Bycatch”,

Conscious of the related work underway under the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas (ASCOBANS), and *recalling* relevant decisions, in particular ASCOBANS Resolution 8.5 on “Monitoring and Mitigation of Small Cetacean Bycatch”,

Endorsing the recommendations on monitoring and mitigation from the first Meeting of the ACCOBAMS-ASCOBANS Joint Bycatch Working Group, organized in February 2021, and *urging* the Parties to implement them as soon as possible,

Recognizing that Cetaceans Stranding Networks (CSNs) are an important source of data to determine cetacean causes of death, including bycatch events, and *taking note* of the results of the review of available data on cetacean bycatch in stranding databases from the ACCOBAMS area,

Commending the collaboration established between the Secretariats of ACCOBAMS and the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), in particular regarding the mitigation of the adverse impacts of interactions between cetaceans and fishing activities in the Agreement area,

Recalling with appreciation the recommendations adopted by the GFCM on the mitigation of incidental catches of cetaceans in the GFCM area (Recommendation GFCM/36/2012/2) and on the establishment of a set of minimum standards for bottom-set gillnet fisheries for turbot and conservation of cetaceans in the Black Sea (Recommendation GFCM/37/2013/2), as well as the guidelines included in the manual “Monitoring incidental catch of vulnerable species in the Mediterranean and Black Sea: Methodology for Data Collection”, developed by the GFCM in collaboration with other partners,

Noting with appreciation the recommendations recently adopted by the GFCM on the mitigation of fisheries impacts for the conservation of cetaceans (Recommendation GFCM/44/2021/15) and on abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (Recommendation GFCM/44/2021/14),

Noting with appreciation the translation into several languages of the ACCOBAMS Area of the FAO/ACCOBAMS good practice guides for the handling of vulnerable species caught incidentally in Mediterranean fisheries, developed in collaboration with SPA/RAC,

Greatly appreciating the financial support provided by MAVA Foundation for projects aimed at addressing the issues of interactions between fisheries and cetaceans,

Recalling the Action Plan for the Conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea (IG25/13)

1. *Stresses* the need to produce a realistic estimation of cetacean and other megafauna species bycaught in different types of legal fishing activities, taking into account the ongoing work of ECAP/IMAP, but also in result of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and ghost net fishing, and to develop related thresholds;
2. *Requests* the Parties to assess the level of cetacean bycatch arising from their fisheries using a combination of

methods, following the guidelines included in the manual “Monitoring incidental catch of vulnerable species in the Mediterranean and Black Sea: Methodology for Data Collection”, developed by the GFCM in collaboration with other partners, such as:

- a) trained observers on board fishing vessels, where possible,
- b) fishermen interview surveys,
- c) self-sampling by fishermen, where possible,
- d) strandings data collection,
- e) remote electronic monitoring;

3. *Urges* that, despite the need for more precise estimates, mitigation efforts be immediately intensified by both Parties and non-Party Range States throughout the region and especially in areas hosting populations identified as Critically Endangered or Endangered in the IUCN Red List;
4. *Asks* the Secretariat to share the results of the review of available data on cetacean bycatch in stranding databases from the ACCOBAMS Area with Parties and relevant organizations, and *encourages* further studies investigating the use of stranding data to assess bycatch mortality, including the use of carcass drifting models, whilst recognising that analyses of strandings data almost always underestimate bycatch to an unknown degree;
5. *Urges* the undertaking of studies on the behavior of animals during interactions with fisheries, including on their mortality caused by the ingestion of fishing gear, with a view to developing effective mitigation measures;
6. *Urges* the Parties to enhance fishing gear identification and traceability, as well as the retrieval of abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gears, to eliminate bycatch of cetaceans in ghost gears;
7. *Invites* the Parties and the Secretariat to disseminate amongst relevant organizations, in particular fishery professional organizations, the FAO/ACCOBAMS good practice guides for the handling of vulnerable species caught incidentally in Mediterranean fisheries, developed in collaboration with SPA/RAC;
8. *Requests* the Parties that socio-economic studies be conducted on the extent of depredation caused by cetaceans, where appropriate at regional level, in order to elaborate possible mitigation measures, which may help preventing retaliation actions by fishermen;
9. *Further requests* that assessments be conducted to evaluate the sustainability of fish stocks, while securing prey availability for cetacean species, in parallel with the aforementioned actions;
10. *Asks* the Secretariat to provide assistance to the Parties in addressing the issue of interactions between cetaceans and fisheries, including in the context of IUU fishing, ensuring that all activities are in line with the ACCOBAMS objectives, and considering the mutual impacts of mitigation measures;
11. *Invites* the Secretariat to pursue its collaboration with the Secretariats of GFCM, Barcelona Convention and Bucharest Convention, as well as SPA/RAC, and to strengthen its involvement in their relevant work and initiatives;
12. *Invites* the Secretariat to open communication with Mediterranean and Black Sea Advisory Councils supported by the European Union;
13. *Further invites* the Secretariat to strengthen its collaboration with the Secretariats of the CMS and ASCOBANS, as

well as with the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and other relevant organizations, with a view to investigating approaches for achieving a significant decrease in cetacean bycatch levels, using, as appropriate, the recommendations of the Scientific Committee;

The Black Sea

14. *Asks* that the relevant authorities implement, as a matter of urgency, continuous action to develop and apply measures to reduce bycatch levels, improve mandatory monitoring schemes, such as those run under the Data Collection Framework set out in the European Union Regulation 2017/1004 of 17 May 2017, and make available the official fishing effort data of turbot fishery, with a view to allow, *inter alia*, estimates of the fleet size and total length of nets involved, enabling the refinement of estimates of total bycatch in the Black Sea;
15. *Calls for* an enhanced cooperation of the relevant authorities with fishers and for an improved overall bycatch monitoring through the use of onboard observers, questionnaires to fishers, as well as available technical means, such as remote electronic monitoring (REM);
16. *Urges* the relevant authorities to enforce existing laws and regulations in the region to minimize IUU fishing;
17. *Asks* that the relevant authorities encourage the retrieval of bycaught animals from vessels, with a view to *obtaining* biological data, including tissue samples, for undertaking analyses to understand the status and demographic characteristics of the affected populations;
18. *Encourages* the further testing and development of bycatch mitigation measures, without delaying the implementation of immediate mitigation actions, including the use of pingers;
19. *Stresses* the need to carefully consider also any potential long-term negative effects of pingers, such as habituation and displacement of animals from their original habitats, as well as any ecological and economical costs and benefits of other mitigation measures, such as spatio-temporal closures of fishing where other mitigation measures are not possible, which should be identified in collaboration with fishers;
20. *Urges* the Parties in the Black Sea to facilitate the creation of an Emergency Task Force with the full participation of *the* European Commission, the ACCOBAMS Secretariat and the Scientific Committee, the GFCM and the Secretariat of the Black Sea Commission, to identify and implement the best fishery management measures;

The Mediterranean Sea

21. *Reiterates* its great concern for bycatch levels in the Mediterranean Sea;
22. *Takes note* of the need for urgent consideration of the results MedBycatch project, which has been implemented in five Mediterranean countries since 2017 and includes more than two years multi-taxa (including cetacean) bycatch data collection and science-based bycatch mitigation trials;
23. *Notes* that, to date, few models of pingers have been tested in some Countries and *stresses* that more research is needed on the effectiveness of such mitigation tool on both the short- and long-term basis;

24. *Encourages* the Secretariat to provide technical assistance and support to Parties engaged in the assessment and reduction of depredation caused by cetaceans in fisheries;
25. *Recommends* the continuation of such studies in the Mediterranean Sea to monitor and assess bycatch and depredation and ensure that mitigation measures are effective;
26. *Decides* that the present Resolution replaces Resolution 7.11.

DRAFT RESOLUTION 8.15
ILLEGAL DRIFT NETS

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

Recalling that compliance with the obligations arising from ACCOBAMS requires the adoption and enforcement of relevant national legislation, as provided for in Annex 2, paragraph 1, to ACCOBAMS,

Aware that the conservation status of cetaceans can be adversely affected by deliberate and incidental catches,

Deeply concerned that bycatches are by far the primary anthropogenic cause of mortality for most cetacean populations in the Mediterranean Sea,

Recalling their conviction that the vulnerability of cetaceans to such threats warrants the implementation of specific conservation measures, where they do not yet exist, by States that exercise sovereignty or jurisdiction over any part of their range, and by States flag vessels of which are engaged outside national jurisdictional limits in activities that may affect the conservation of cetaceans,

Recalling that the Agreement requires that Parties collect and analyze data on direct and indirect interactions between humans and cetaceans in relation to fishing and take appropriate remedial measures, applying, when necessary, the precautionary principle,

Aware that drift nets, in particular, are known to represent a major source of incidental mortality for cetaceans and can seriously affect cetacean populations,

Bearing in mind that a moratorium on all large-scale pelagic drift net fishing has been recommended by the United Nations General Assembly since Resolution 46/215 of 1991 and has been reaffirmed several times, and that such fishing gear has been restricted and prohibited by a number of instruments applicable to the ACCOBAMS Area, including General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean Recommendation 22/1997/1 and European Union Regulation 2019/1241,

Recalling that Annex 2 (Conservation Plan), as amended in 2007 by Resolution A/3.1, which forms an integral part to the Agreement, requires the Parties to work out and implement measures to minimize the fishing negative effects on the conservation of cetaceans and, in particular, provides that that no vessel will be authorized to keep on board to use any drift nets,

Mindful that such a total prohibition of drift nets is justified in the Agreement Area because scientific evidence shows that there is a serious threat to the conservation of sensitive species, such as cetaceans,

Recalling that, on the basis of the model legislation on cetacean conservation annexed to Resolution 4.19, it would be appropriate that the Parties ensure, in their national legislations, criminal provisions sanctioning the possession on board and the use of drift nets, as well as the act of discarding or leaving adrift at sea fishing gear,

Worried by the fact that drift nets are still under use in the Agreement's area notwithstanding the measures of conservation adopted at the international and regional level,

Noting that drift nets are resulting in significant cetacean mortality in the Agreement Area, even in marine protected areas especially established for the protection cetaceans,

Aware that effective measures against illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing, still occurring in the ACCOBAMS area, is a prerequisite for successfully addressing the relations between fisheries and cetacean conservation,

Recalling that Parties shall adopt the necessary legislative, regulatory or administrative measures to give full protection to cetaceans in waters under their sovereignty or jurisdiction and, outside these waters, in respect of any vessel under their flag or registered within their territory, engaged in activities which may affect the conservation of cetaceans,

Taking in consideration the “Guidelines for technical measures to minimize cetacean-fishery conflicts in the Mediterranean and Black Seas” adopted by Resolution 2.12,

Taking in consideration the Recommendations of the Scientific Committee, including Recommendation 14.5 on “Bycatch”,

Firmly convinced that concerns caused by the use of drift nets can be addressed only by close collaboration between relevant regional fisheries and conservation bodies,

Recalling:

- Resolution 2.12 on Guidelines for technical measures to minimize cetacean-fishery conflicts in the Mediterranean and Black Seas,
- Resolution 2.13 on Pelagic Gillnets,
- Resolution 2.21 on Assessment and Mitigation of the Adverse Impacts of Interactions between Cetaceans and Fishing Activities in the ACCOBAMS Area,
- Resolution A/3.1 on Amendment of the Annex 2 to the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area Related to the Use of Driftnets,
- Resolution 3.8 on Strengthening collaboration with the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean;
- Resolution 4.9 on Fisheries Interactions with Cetaceans,
- Resolution 4.19 on Model Measures on Conservation of Cetaceans,
- Resolution 7.11 on Interactions between Fisheries and Cetaceans,

Taking note of the study entitled “Use of Driftnets in the ACCOBAMS Area: A Review of Relevant Treaties and National Legislation”, prepared on the basis of the above information by legal consultants appointed by the Secretariat,

1. *Strongly reiterates* that bycatch in fishing gear, in particular drift nets, is a widespread and significant threat to cetaceans across the entire Agreement area;
2. *Urges* the Parties to develop an improved understanding of bycatch levels as soon as possible, in order to allow ACCOBAMS conservation objectives to be met and related implementing measures to be enhanced;
3. *Reiterates its concern* that the use of illegal drift nets for large pelagic species continue to cause mortality of several species of cetaceans, in particular sperm whales (*Physeter macrocephalus*) in the Mediterranean Sea, and *urges* that national legislations banning such fishing gear be enhanced, implemented and enforced by the Parties;

4. *Urges* Parties to ensure that their national legislation is in full accordance with the relevant treaties and regulations and that transgressors are sanctioned by penalties of sufficient gravity to deter violations, including accessory measures, such as confiscation of illegal nets;
5. *Notes* that programmes of compensation for dismissal of driftnets and reconversion of fishing vessels may be useful in promoting compliance with the rules on driftnets;
6. *Notes with appreciation* the information provided by several National Focal Points on the legal tools and measures applied under the Parties' jurisdiction to enforce the ACCOBAMS provisions on the drift nets ban;
7. *Encourages* those Parties that have not yet provided the above information to do so as soon as possible.

DRAFT RESOLUTION 8.16
ANTHROPOGENIC NOISE

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

Recalling Resolutions 7.13 on “Guidelines to address the impact of anthropogenic noise on cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Area”, 5.15 on “Addressing the impact of anthropogenic noise” and 6.17 on “Anthropogenic noise”,

Taking into consideration Recommendation 14.6 on “Anthropogenic Noise” of the 14th ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee Meeting,

Recognizing that a large portion of the Mediterranean area is impacted by noise-producing human activities and that it is likely that such activities will increase,

Recognizing also that cetaceans and other marine mammals, reptiles and fish species, and their prey, are vulnerable to noise disturbance and subject to a range of human impacts,

Convinced that environmental impact assessment procedures should be carried out prior to projects that may affect cetaceans and especially those involving impulsive noise,

Welcoming Directive 2014/52/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, amending Directive 2011/92/EU on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Public and Private Projects on the Environment,

Further welcoming the work undertaken by ACCOBAMS during the triennium regarding the management of noise activities, more particularly:

- the QuietSeas project which aims to enhance cooperation among Member States to implement the third Cycle of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and, in particular to support competent authorities and strengthen cooperation and collaboration in the Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea regions,
- the QuietMed2 project which aimed to support the assessment of the extent to which Good Environmental Status has been achieved in the Mediterranean Region regarding underwater noise, to get an updated, improved and more complete regional assessment,
- the online “ACCOBAMS MMO/PAM Courses for the standard MMO/PAMs training of all accredited trainers”,

Recognising that the NETCCOBAMS online platform provides new information about the propagation of shipping noise to cetacean habitats, using the best available science on cetacean distribution and continuous anthropogenic noise propagation to determine areas of risk of adverse effects caused by such anthropogenic pressure,

Conscious of the related work underway by the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), and *recalling* the related decisions, in particular Resolution 9.19 on Adverse Anthropogenic Marine/Ocean Noise Impacts on Cetaceans and other Biota, Resolution 10.24 on Further Steps to Abate Underwater Noise Pollution for the Protection of Cetaceans and Other Migratory Species, and Resolution 12.14 on Adverse Impacts of Anthropogenic Noise on Cetaceans and Other Migratory Species, and the attached CMS Family Guidelines on Environmental Impact Assessment for Marine Noise-generating Activities,

Noting the International Whaling Commission Resolution 2018-4 on Anthropogenic Underwater Noise,

Concerned over findings by the European Environment Agency (EEA) and the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) in their 2021 European Maritime Transport Environmental Report (EMTER) that underwater noise levels have doubled within European Union waters between 2014 and 2019,

Recognising that the risk areas generated by ship noise are widely spread in respect to cetacean habitats and that this represents a major concern for cetacean conservation and that these risk areas should be taken into account also in designing mitigation measures for ship strikes with large cetaceans to ensure that such measures do not increase noise on areas already at risk for deep divers;

Noting the European Union Marine Strategy Framework Directive and its implementing act, whereby Member States in European Union marine waters shall take necessary measures by 2020 to achieve or maintain their determined good environmental status, including on underwater noise, established by each of them and in coordination at Union, regional and sub-regional levels,

Also welcoming the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria (IMAP) of the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean, which includes candidate common indicators for underwater noise, intended to be further developed during the initial phase of IMAP based on pilot monitoring activities, additional expert knowledge, and scientific developments,

1. *Reaffirms* that there is a need for ongoing and further internationally coordinated research on the impact of underwater noise in order to provide adequate protection to cetaceans;
2. *Invites* the ACCOBAMS Parties to take into consideration the following documents in their future work to implement the Guidelines to Address the Impact of Anthropogenic Noise on Cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Area:
 - [The revised Methodological Guide: “Guidance on underwater noise mitigation measures”];
 - [The updated study on noise hotspot in the Mediterranean Sea];
3. *Requests* the ACCOBAMS Parties to avoid the introduction of potentially harmful impulsive noise, such as noise produced by airguns, sparkers, active sonars, within areas of importance for cetaceans, like the Pelagos Sanctuary, Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs);
4. *Asks* the Secretariat in conjunction with the Scientific Committee to:
 - (a) remind the relevant stakeholders to implement Annex 1 “Action Plan resulting from the ACCOBAMS Workshop on sonars and cetacean interactions” of Resolution 7.13 on Anthropogenic Underwater Noise and approach the ACCOBAMS Secretariat to explore the potential for joint outreach efforts to national navies and NATO to mitigate noise from military activities;
 - (b) develop joint projects and initiatives for simulating mitigation measures, such as speed reductions, and related benefits, with the aim of reducing the impact of noise on cetacean habitats;
 - (c) inform Parties about the deliverables of QuietSeas and QuietMed2 projects on guidance for underwater noise monitoring and assessment, and to encourage Parties to make relevant stakeholders of the private sector become aware of these developments;
 - (d) organize trainings for national entities on noise monitoring, including analyses of MAP collected data, in some identified priority areas;

5. *Encourages* Parties to:

- (a) disseminate the ACCOBAMS noise Guidelines as well as the CMS Family Guidelines on Environmental Impact Assessment for Marine Noise-generating Activities to all national departments involved in deciding on noise-generating activities;
- (b) improve enhanced training of regulators on the appropriate application of the CMS Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and ACCOBAMS Noise Guidelines prior to the approval of projects, including informing them of the willingness of the CMS and ACCOBAMS Secretariats to provide advice;
- (c) engage in the ongoing process of “review of the 2014 IMO Guidelines for the reduction of underwater noise from commercial shipping to address adverse impacts on marine life (circular MEPC.1/Circ.833) (2014 Guidelines) and identification of next steps” and promote the evolution of the Guidelines status to foster improvement of their uptake by IMO Parties;
- (d) promote the application of vessel speed reductions (e.g., slow steaming) as an operational measure that results in multi-environmental benefits, including the reduction of underwater noise and greenhouse gases emissions, as well as the risk of ships strikes, and to promote such measures in the context of the proposal of Particularly Sensitive Sea Area in the North-western Mediterranean;
- (e) take note that the issue of underwater noise pollution from ships can only effectively be addressed through IMO measures and international cooperation, and that applying mandatory measures keeps a level playing field for the private sector;
- (f) invite port authorities to develop incentive programmes to encourage the monitoring of and reduction in underwater noise emissions, and to report regularly all activities generating noise to improve the mapping for Noise Hotspots Report [ref to the Doc];
- (g) engage in trials measuring the impact of speed reduction and other operational measures reducing underwater noise in their waters;
- (h) mandate national responsible institutions to feed data on impulsive noise generating sources from the entire ACCOBAMS Area into the existing International Noise Registry managed by ACCOBAMS;
- (i) mandate national responsible institutions to provide the necessary data to update risk maps and generate maps for the Black Sea by considering relevant target species, especially recalling Resolution 7.13, which foresees that noise hotspot maps shall be developed for the Black Sea, reflecting impulsive and continuous noise generating activities;

6. *Requests* the Joint CMS/ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS Noise Working Group (JNWG) to:

- (a) provide final comments and inputs on the CMS document on Best Available Technology (BAT) and Best Environmental Practice (BET) for three noise sources: shipping, seismic airgun surveys, and pile driving;
- (b) produce a study on the effects of underwater noise generated by the foreseeable increase of wind farms in the ACCOBAMS area, addressing all the phases of wind farm from siting surveys to decommissioning;
- (c) review the Draft Noise Hotspots Report II [ref to the Doc] and provide required additional information, including information about military exercises using active sonars, asking in particular the Industrial Advisory Group to provide any relevant information about impulsive noise-generating activities in the Agreement Area since 2016;
- (d) examine the noise models available in NETCCOBAMS [ref to the Resolution on NETCCOBAMS], also considering recent developments from European Union Marine Strategy Framework Directive-D11C2, in order to compare such noise model with available *in situ* anthropogenic noise recordings made in different points throughout the ACCOBAMS area, and taking into account the different sensitivities of different cetacean species;
- (e) further develop with the Secretariat and the Scientific Committee the concept of “quiet zones” as outlined in Recommendation 10.5 of the Scientific Committee with a focus on a quantitative elaboration and evaluation of the scientific evidence for establishing such areas both in space and time;

7. *Reiterates* the importance for Parties to grant permits, on a priority basis, for activities in their national area to industrial companies employing ACCOBAMS Highly Qualified MMOs/PAM operators;

8. *Encourages* the Secretariat and any stakeholder active in the ACCOBAMS region to promote “Tools ensuring Highly Qualified MMOs/PAM operators in the ACCOBAMS Area” within the private sector;
9. *Requests* the MMO/PAM WG to develop and update the ACCOBAMS HQMMO/PAM training tools.

DRAFT RESOLUTION 8.17
SHIP STRIKES

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

Recalling ACCOBAMS Resolution 7.12 “Ship strikes”,

Taking into consideration Recommendation 14.7 “Ship strikes” from the 14th meeting of the Scientific Committee,

Reaffirming that ACCOBAMS and the International Whaling Commission (IWC) have long ago recognized the problem of ship strikes, particularly of large whales, such as fin and sperm whales, and have been working together to better understand the issue and to develop effective mitigation measures, *inter alia*, within the ACCOBAMS area,

Noting that concerns relate to conservation issues, animal welfare and human safety,

Recalling that mitigation measures for ship strikes with fin whales have been discussed during dedicated IWC-ACCOBAMS workshops (Beaulieu sur Mer, France, 2010; Panama, Panama, 2014; Messinia, Greece, 2019), during which the following recommendations were suggested:

- the most effective measures are those that separate whales from vessels (or at least minimise co-occurrence) in space and time, where such measures are possible (using, *inter alia*, routing schemes);
- where routing to keep whales and vessels apart is not possible, the only demonstrated measure to reduce fatal collisions with most large whales is to reduce speed,

Recalling also that the IWC-IUCN-ACCOBAMS workshop (Messinia, Greece, 2019) recommends that the following steps be undertaken as part of a process to identify high-risk areas for ship strikes based on Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs):

- traffic information (such as on types of vessels, size, speed, flag, etc.): plotting major ship routes to understand if they cross IMMAs, which host significant or high-density populations of species that are threatened by, or vulnerable to, ship strikes,
- species information (such as on relative abundance, status, animal behaviour, seasonality, key lifecycle use of and within IMMAs),
- management and mitigation,

Recalling the ACCOBAMS Cetacean Critical Habitat process,

Recognising the usefulness of data from the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative and available scientific information to support the process for the designation of a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) by the IMO in the North West Mediterranean Sea,

1. *Requests* the Secretariat, the Scientific Committee and its Ship Strikes Working Group to pursue their efforts in obtaining information on both cetaceans and vessel traffic, which will enable a better identification of areas where cetaceans, especially fin and sperm whales, are susceptible (or potentially susceptible) to suffer from ship strikes, based on risk models incorporating information on whale and vessel distribution, as well as prediction of collision rates, by:

- (a) encouraging Parties to report and map vessel movements and shipping density at appropriate geographical scales, including estimates from vessels not required to transmit Automatic Identification System (AIS) signals;
 - (b) collaborating with maritime administrations, companies and vessel operators, involving both bottom-up (i.e., awareness, involvement) and top-down (i.e., regulatory) approaches;
 - (c) mapping the temporal and geographic distribution and abundance of cetaceans in relation to similar information on vessel traffic to identify potential higher risk areas;
 - (d) estimating the numbers of ship strikes, including data:
 - from stranding networks (including detailed necropsies);
 - from photo-identification studies (photographs may contain evidence of non-lethal encounters with vessels);
 - collected by the IWC ship strike database;
 - collected during campaigns at sea;
 - (e) modelling exercises to assess the level of risk and potential conservation implications;
2. *Requests* the Secretariat and the Scientific Committee to pursue communication and cooperation with all stakeholders, through the following means:
- (a) promotion of the issue and the importance of reporting via a number of fora, including specialist marine press;
 - (b) further evaluation and dissemination of information on mitigation approaches;
 - (c) fostering of the development of incentive systems to shipping companies for adopting suggested mitigation measures;
 - (d) additional co-operation with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and its Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC), via the IWC and the secretariats of agreements adopted within the framework of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), as well as through initiatives with IMO member States, as the most appropriate mechanism for IMO action;
 - (e) improved cooperation with the Pelagos Agreement in regard to the organisation and implementation of initiatives carried within the Pelagos Agreement area;
 - (f) improved protocols for the identification of ship strikes via necropsies;
 - (g) investigation of incidence with regard to the nature of ship strike injuries within photo-identification studies (such as through the ship strikes project funded by the Pelagos Agreement);
 - (h) encouraging of studies that improve access to the temporal and spatial distribution of shipping, particularly vessels that do not transmit AIS information;
 - (i) encouraging of studies that improve understanding of temporal and spatial distribution of cetaceans within the region, including telemetry studies;
 - (j) encouraging of studies to develop and evaluate mitigation measures, incorporating, *inter alia*, results from (g) and (h) above, recognizing that appropriate measures will need to be specific to an area, but that changes to shipping may also impact on other areas;
 - (k) capitalization of results from ongoing and further projects addressing ship strikes, such as Sicomar plus and Life CONCEPTU Maris, with maps, collision risk assessments, webGIS implemented with AIS data, and collaboration with shipping companies;
3. *Recommends* Parties to implement, as a matter of urgency, mitigation measures in the following high-risk areas of the ACCOBAMS area, where ship strikes are common, and for the following species:
1. Strait of Gibraltar - fin and sperm whales;
 2. Balearic Islands - fin and sperm whales; Balearic Basin and Catalan Coast – fin and sperm whales;
 3. Eastern Alborán Sea - fin and sperm whales;
 4. Pelagos Sanctuary - fin and sperm whales;
 5. Hellenic Trench, Greece - sperm whales;

4. *Encourages* researchers, scientific institutions and partner organizations engaged in the development of real time cetacean localization projects, which are designed to be used as complementary tools in avoiding ship strikes, to share and report their findings;
5. *Strongly encourages* Parties to submit data to the IWC Global Ship Strikes Database which will both: (i) facilitate the proper evaluation, prioritisation and monitoring of ship strikes as a threat to various populations and regions; and (ii) assist in the development of mitigation measures;
6. *Recommends* Parties to further develop and support the process for the designation of a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) by the IMO in the North West Mediterranean Sea' that includes 'North West Mediterranean Sea Slope and Canyon System' IMMA, plus the eastern portion of the Pelagos Sanctuary and the MPA Cetaceans Migration Corridor in the Mediterranean, and the area between it and the coast, to take into account whale population movements and distribution. Zoning within the area with ship strike mitigation tools (such as speed reduction and routing measures) could be proposed as part of Associated Protective Measures (APMs) within the PSSA. The proposal could take into account a model on acoustic noise (based on AIS data) and risks for sperm whales and Cuvier's beaked whales in order to avoid designation of measures increasing the Cuvier's beaked whale's acoustic risk;
7. *Requests* the Secretariat to encourage the MEPC of the IMO to consider and approve the request to designate the North West Mediterranean Sea as a PSSA together with the proposed Associated Protective Measures in order to mitigate negative impacts of collisions;
8. *Requests* the Secretariat to increase communication with the relevant stakeholders and inform them of the willingness of the Scientific Committee and its Ship Strikes Working Group to provide advice;
9. *Recommends* that the Parties and the Secretariat pursue their cooperation efforts with the IMO, as well as other intergovernmental organizations, national authorities, the shipping industry, port authorities and the whale watching industry in order to implement effective mitigation measures, in particular through the Cetacean Critical Habitat (CCH) identification process, launched by ACCOBAMS, which provides an overview resulting from overlapping information on known existing human threats and IMMAs.

DRAFT RESOLUTION 8.18
COMMERCIAL CETACEAN -WATCHING ACTIVITIES IN THE ACCOBAMS AREA

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

Recalling Article II of the Agreement, according to which the Parties shall prohibit and take all necessary measures to eliminate any deliberate taking of cetaceans, including harassing or attempting to engage in such conduct,

Recalling Section 2 of Annex 2 to the Agreement, according to which Parties shall develop guidelines and/or codes of conduct to regulate or manage activities that create direct and indirect interactions between humans and cetaceans, such as tourist activities,

Aware that ACCOBAMS Resolution 4.7 sets forth Guidelines for Commercial Cetacean Watching Activities in the ACCOBAMS Area and Annex 2 to Resolution 6.20 provides regulations governing use of the collective certification mark "High Quality Whale-Watching®" and the Guidelines for acquiring a label for whale-watching operators in the Pelagos / ACCOBAMS area,

Taking in consideration the Recommendation 14.8 of the Scientific Committee,

Recalling paragraph 130 of outcome document of the Rio+20 Conference, "The Future We Want", which underlines the need to support sustainable tourism activities and relevant capacity-building that promote environmental awareness, conserve and protect the environment, respect wildlife, flora, biodiversity, ecosystems and cultural diversity, and improve the welfare and livelihoods of local communities by supporting their local economies and the human and natural environment as a whole,

Recalling that the ACCOBAMS Area is an important area for a great number of cetacean species, whether as a permanent habitat, a breeding or feeding ground or a migratory corridor, and that the presence of such a diversity of cetaceans has led, over the past decade, to the development of a high number of commercial cetacean-watching activities that need to be regulated,

Acknowledging that commercial cetacean-watching activities, if conducted within a suitable management framework, can foster a valuable educational tool, create direct and indirect economic benefits for many communities and can promote research on cetaceans and their conservation,

Concerned that, if cetacean-watching is carried out in an irresponsible way, it has the potential to become a serious threat to cetaceans that may already be affected by population declines from bycatch, habitat degradation, climate change, and other threats,

Concerned about other potential negative impacts of commercial cetacean-watching activities that have been documented, such as changes in cetaceans swimming behaviour, fast changes in direction, displacement of cetaceans from the area targeted for tourism,

Concerned also by the emergence of dolphin-feeding practices, mainly carried out during cetacean-watching activities, which could change the behaviour of the animals, favouring confidence and proximity,

Stressing that any expansion of cetacean-watching activities in the Agreement area should be carefully managed in order to minimise potential adverse impacts on cetacean individuals and populations,

Desirous of minimizing the risk of negative impacts on cetaceans and of ensuring the sustainable development of cetacean-watching commercial activities through effective management strategies,

Recalling Resolution 11.29 on “Sustainable Boat Based Marine Wildlife Watching”, Resolution 12.16 on “Recreational In-Water Interaction with Aquatic Mammals” and Resolution 12.23 on “Sustainable tourism and migratory species”, adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS),

Recalling the online whale-watching handbook developed by the International Whaling Commission with the CMS Secretariat,

1. *Urges* the Parties to ensure the effective implementation of the existing ACCOBAMS Resolutions on cetacean-watching;
2. *Recommends* the Parties to consider that harassment risk also begins when a vessel is voluntarily closer than the minimum distance identified in rules for commercial cetacean-watching and that, consequently, swim-with-dolphin activities, which imply proximity of the boat to the animals, should be considered as harassment and as presenting risks of animal violent behaviour and transmission of diseases;
3. *Recommends* the Parties not to authorise or grant any exception for direct interactions with cetaceans, such as feeding and swim-with-dolphins, including in the proximity of fish farm activities;
4. *Encourages* the Scientific Committee to continue their consideration, including collation and review of scientific literature, on potential adverse effects of cetacean-watching on cetaceans and means to mitigate them, with an emphasis on population-level impacts, swim-with activities, feeding and use of aerial spotter aircraft, and also on the concept of “carrying capacity”;
5. *Stresses* the need for legally enforceable cetacean-watching regulations to be in place and fully implemented by all the Parties, in line with ACCOBAMS Resolutions 4.7, 6.20 and 7.16;
6. *Acknowledges* the new *Guidelines for the Management of Cetacean Watching Activities in the ACCOBAMS area*, shown in the Annex to this Resolution;
7. *Invites* the Scientific Committee to review and update the ‘Common procedure (data collection system) for whale watching vessels to be implemented in the ACCOBAMS area’, included as Annex 4 to Resolution 6.20;
8. *Recommends* that the Whale Watching Working Group established in 2014 during the Ninth Meeting of the Scientific Committee continue its work and test the revised ‘Common procedure (data collection system) for whale

watching vessels to be implemented in the ACCOBAMS area' in previously identified pilot areas (Ligurian-Provençal Basin, including the Pelagos Sanctuary, Gibraltar Strait, and south of Portugal);

9. *Endorses* the results of the study entitled 'Identifying Whale Watching Hotspots in the ACCOBAMS Area' [ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/InfXX];
10. *Encourages* the Parties to implement specific legislation, in accordance with the 'Guidelines for Commercial Cetacean Watching Activities in the ACCOBAMS Area', to mitigate current and potential pressure put on cetacean populations in the identified cetacean-watching hotspots;
11. *Recommends* to the Scientific Committee that the results of the work to be conducted on the hotspots is used to complement the Cetacean Critical Habitats (CCH) process;
12. Further *encourages* the Parties to promote the objectives of 'The European Green Deal' (Communication of the Commission of 11 December 2019, COM (2019) 640 final), and especially the transition to reduce vessels' CO₂ emissions and noise, in particular, amongst cetacean-watching operators;
13. *Recommends* that the Parties implement and continue to promote and enhance the status of the "High Quality Whale-Watching®" Certificate in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Pelagos Agreement and other relevant intergovernmental organisations and secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements within the ACCOBAMS Area, such as the Barcelona Convention, the Bucharest Convention and the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling;
14. *Also encourages* the Secretariat to disseminate the information collected through NETCCOBAMS;
15. *Asks* the Parties to develop methods to fully inform the general public, including yachtsmen and other boaters involved in opportunistic cetacean watching, about responsible boat behaviour around cetaceans;
16. *Recommends* that the Secretariat continues co-operation with the Secretariats of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals on the evaluation of effects of cetacean-watching and on the review and update of the guidelines for sustainable cetacean-watching;
17. *Decides* that the present Resolution amends Resolution 6.20 and replaces Resolution 7.16.

ANNEX

Guidelines for the Management of Cetacean Watching Activities* in the ACCOBAMS Area

* In the Guidelines annexed, the term Whale-Watching is used as a term that includes all cetaceans – whales, dolphins and porpoises

(to be added at a later stage)

DRAFT RESOLUTION 8.19
MARINE LITTER AND CHEMICAL POLLUTION

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 that heavily affects the Mediterranean Sea, and a recognized threat to the welfare, biology and ecology of marine wildlife, in particular cetaceans, which are being harmed or killed by marine litter ingestion, entanglement and its toxic effects,

Deeply concerned by the fact that such threat heavily affects areas overlapping with the distribution and habitats of several cetacean species, as demonstrated, *inter alia*, by the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative, and strongly impacts on all ecological compartments of the ACCOBAMS area, like the sea-surface, water column, seafloor and coastal shores,

Aware of the related ongoing work under the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), and *recalling* its 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 European Union Marine Strategy Framework Directive and Commission Decision 2017/848/EU, as well as by 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 common best practices for stranding events have been drafted and discussed in several fora, in order to contribute to the evaluation of the current and potential harmful effects of marine litter, including entanglement in abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) and direct ingestion of both macro- and micro-plastics, and other threats posed to cetaceans,

Recalling the joint ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS/SPA-RAC Workshop on Marine Debris and Cetacean Stranding held on 8 April 2018 in La Spezia, Italy, and the joint ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS Workshop on Harmonization of Best Practices for Necropsy of Cetaceans and the Development of Diagnostic Frameworks, held on 24-25 June 2018 in Legnaro, Italy,

Recalling the Workshop on Marine Debris held by the Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission from 13 to 17 May 2013 at the Quisset Campus of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, United States; the International Whaling Commission Workshop on Mitigation and Management of the Threats Posed by Marine Debris to Cetaceans, held on 5-7 August 2014 in Honolulu, United States; and the Workshop on Marine Debris held by the International Whaling Commission on 3-5 December 2019 in La Garriga, Spain,

Aware that chemical contamination is detrimental for cetaceans' health, because it induces negative effects on their immune, nervous and reproductive systems,

Deeply concerned by the high occurrence and concentrations of legacy persistent organic pollutants and emerging contaminants, such as organochlorine pesticides (OCPs), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), polybrominated diphenyls (PBDEs), per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFASs), heavy metals, plastic additives and pharmaceutical and personal care products (PPCPs), in the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea,

Recalling Recommendation 14.9 of the Scientific Committee on marine litter and chemical pollution,

Considering that macro- and micro-plastics represent particularly harmful kinds of marine litter and sources of chemical pollution,

Referring to Resolution 7.14 on best practices on cetacean stranding,

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

Marine litter

1. *Invites* all organizations that are competent in the field of marine pollution, such as the European Union, the International Maritime Organization and the Meeting of the Parties to the Barcelona Convention, to improve and enforce their management measures regarding land- and ship-related litter pollution, considering that its harmful effects on cetaceans are already fully demonstrated and mitigation actions are urgently needed;
2. *Urges* Parties:
 - a) to support the work towards an internationally legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, encompassing both land- and sea-based sources of plastic pollution and the whole life cycle of plastics; and
 - b) to engage all levels of stakeholders, from producers and users to decision-makers, to implement actions that can contribute to address plastic litter at source and stop plastics entering into the Mediterranean Sea, the Black Sea and the contiguous Atlantic area;
3. *Encourages* the Parties:
 - a) to undertake post-mortem investigations according to the best practice guidelines;
 - b) to support:
 - collective scientific efforts on the development of standardized methods to detect the occurrence and effects of marine litter, including micro-plastics, in cetacean species; and
 - the use of standardized formats to report results across the ACCOBAMS area in synergy with existing frameworks and relevant multilateral environmental agreements that request periodic reporting from post-mortem investigations;
 - c) to support the identification of hot-spot areas for marine litter accumulation and, through modelling of exposure to plastic ingestion and entanglement, identify the threat to cetacean species occurring in those areas to design targeted mitigation measures; and
 - d) to propose cetacean species as indicators of marine litter in the ACCOBAMS area, in particular focusing on macro-litter effects on deep-diving species, such as sperm whale and Cuvier's beaked whales, and on micro-plastic effects on filter feeders, such as fin whales;
4. *Invites* the Scientific Committee to consider the results and recommendations from relevant projects, initiatives and workshops, including the Workshop on Marine Debris held by the International Whaling Commission on 3-5 December 2019 in La Garriga, Spain;
5. *Encourages* increased international cooperation on this subject with other bodies, in particular those relevant for cetaceans, as well as regional initiatives on marine litter;

Chemical pollution

6. Asks the Parties:
- a) to develop a transboundary health monitoring network for stranded and free-swimming cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS area, which can facilitate the establishment of a common database on diseases and chemical burdens and cooperation among existing tissue banks for the assessment of the 'Favourable Conservation Status' of marine mammals under the European Union Habitats Directive, and equivalent national and regional legislation;
 - b) to develop an inventory of the institutions and laboratories within the ACCOBAMS area that are willing to receive and analyze samples for legacy and emerging pollutants from those institutions that do not have appropriate facilities and expertise;
 - c) to ensure that existing measures for the mitigation of toxicological contamination in the ACCOBAMS area are enforced, including through full compliance by Parties with the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants; and
 - d) to focus on the assessment of cumulative effects and multiple stressors, including chemicals, marine litter, climate change, and emerging pathogens, on cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS area, including new techniques, taking into consideration the recommendations from the International Whaling Commission Intersessional Workshop 'Pollution 2025' held on 1-4 November 2021.
7. *Decides* that the present Resolution replaces Resolution 7.15.

DRAFT RESOLUTION 8.20
CETACEAN CRITICAL HABITATS (CCH)

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

Recalling the ACCOBAMS Resolutions 3.22 “Marine Protected Areas for Cetaceans”, 4.15 “Marine Protected Areas of Importance for Cetacean Conservation” and 6.24 “New Areas of Conservation of Cetacean Habitats”,

Taking into consideration recommendations from the Cetacean Critical Habitat (CCH) Workshop organized in Cap d’Ail, France, from 10 to 11 March 2022,

Concerned that, although some areas providing additional protection to cetaceans have been established in the ACCOBAMS area, other sites known or supposed to be particularly important for cetaceans still remain unprotected or unmanaged,

Noting that inventories of sites of conservation interest have been initiated in several multilateral instruments and treaties, and in particular:

- as regards sites legally declared by Countries, those listed under the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean to the Barcelona Convention, the ‘Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest’ founded in the context of the Council of Europe, the ‘Natura 2000’ network under the European Union Habitats Directive, and the Fisheries Restricted Areas of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean,
- as regards sites that have identified for their conservation interest, the ‘Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas’ (EBSAs) in the Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea, under a process developed within the framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Cetacean Critical Habitats (CCH) developed by ACCOBAMS and the Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) developed by IUCN,

Taking into consideration:

- Decision IG.25/11 of the Meeting of the Parties to the Barcelona Convention, in particular its Annex 1, ‘Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region (Post-2020 SAPBIO)’
- Decision IG.25/12 of the Meeting of the Parties to the Barcelona Convention, ‘Protecting and conserving the Mediterranean through well connected and effective systems of marine and coastal protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, including Specially Protected Areas and Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance’,
- Decision IG.25/13 of the Meeting of the Parties to the Barcelona Convention, in particular its Annex 1 on the Action Plan for the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea,

Welcoming and acknowledging the continuing efforts undertaken by the Secretariat and the Scientific Committee, in particular the dedicated Task Manager for identifying areas of CCHs (*i.e.*, areas of overlap between cetacean occurrence and human activities that may adversely affect cetaceans) through an up-to-date science-based process [ref to the Doc], taking particularly into account IMMAs identified under the IUCN system,

Recognising the complementarity and synergy between CCHs and IMMAs, as follows:

	IMMA	CCH
Spatial scale	Global tool (but includes targeted areas for the Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea)	Regional tool developed specifically for the Mediterranean Sea and Black Seas
Baseline info given	Baseline info on marine mammal important areas (according to agreed conditions and categories)	Areas important to cetaceans and with potentially high levels of threats from human activities
Role	Identify specific important areas for marine mammals (biocentric)	Identify issues in specific areas for cetaceans and propose management measures (threat-based)
Species covered	All marine mammals	Cetaceans
Process	Focus on areas	Species/area specific
Assessment	Every 10 years	Every 3 years
Relationship	The process of identification of CCH considers IMMAs, candidate IMMAs and Areas of Interest (AoIs) where they are in place, alongside with other baseline data on cetacean distribution and abundance. Identified CCHs may also form a source of information to be considered in future IMMAs identification.	

Recognising the mutual benefits between CCH and Conservation Management Plans (CMPs) as follows: CMPs are focussed on identifying effective targeted management and conservation actions to try to ensure that cetacean populations are maintained at favourable conservation levels; this includes identifying knowledge gaps and monitoring the effectiveness of management actions. These management actions may include the full range of specified populations within the ACCOBAMS region or sub-areas where this is deemed more effective. This work is clearly linked with, and adds on to the work on IMMAs and CCHs, while determining the status and monitoring the effectiveness of management actions is clearly linked with the Long-Term Monitoring Programme (LTMP);

Recognising the usefulness of the LTMP in supporting the CCH process as follows:

- collection of updated and robust information on density and abundance of cetaceans at regular intervals at the basin scale, obtained from coordinated effort with standardized and shared protocols,
 - collection of data on relevant human impact/activities at sea, mainly those not followed by other systems (AIS, VMS),
1. *Takes note* of the report of the Workshop on CCHs [ref of the Document / or annexed to the Res];
 2. *Encourages* Parties to implement relevant conservation and management measures in the already identified CCHs;
 3. *Mandates* the Scientific Committee to create a technical working group for “CCH data/maps on human activities and on species” in collaboration with external experts from relevant entities, such as the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) and Duke University Marine Laboratory, as well as choosing an up-to-date method to elicit expert evaluations (e.g., the Sheffield Elicitation Framework);
 4. *Asks* the Secretariat to:
 - assist Parties, national authorities, the GFCM, the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and other relevant bodies to gather data and maps,

- encourage all ACCOBAMS Partners to participate with their overall data, including the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative (ASI) data, in the analysis process led by the Duke University Marine Lab, and establish a Memorandum of Understanding to get final outputs of surface density modelling (as raster files), as input data for the CCH identification process;
5. *Requests* the Scientific Committee, through its technical working group on “CCH data/maps on human activities and on species”, in collaboration with the Secretariat, to:
- liaise with the IUCN Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force in order to consider synergies and commonalities towards the potential upcoming Mediterranean IMMA workshop in 2026 to consider available information on existing CCHs,
 - pursue efforts in identifying and updating CCHs and IMMAs in the ACCOBAMS area,
 - present updated CCH maps to the Ninth ACCOBAMS Meeting of the Parties (2025),
 - pursue liaising with the SPA/RAC and its Ad hoc group of experts for marine protected areas in the Mediterranean (AGEM).

DRAFT RESOLUTION 8.21
CITIZEN SCIENCE

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

Taking into consideration Recommendation 14.11 “Citizen Science” of the 14th meeting of the Scientific Committee,

Aware that citizen science allows people with diverse motivation and abilities to participate in research and conservation initiatives (such as Cetacean Stranding Networks or observation and data collection at sea), where scientific effort is limited due to, *inter alia*, low budget allocation, reduced staff, limited resources, large area to be covered, and that it is a valid tool to facilitate public awareness on cetaceans and habitat conservation,

Recognizing that the concept of citizen science and specific citizen science projects can complement the collection of scientific data on cetacean sightings and strandings,

Highlighting the increasing value of existing and improving digital technology (websites, mobile apps and social media platforms),

1. *Requests* the Secretariat, the Scientific Committee and the Sub-Regional Coordination Units to pursue efforts to promote awareness and the widespread use of existing digital technology to collect data on cetaceans (websites, mobile apps and social media platforms);
2. *Asks* the Scientific Committee to:
 - a. assist experts in the validation of submitted data in order to allow such data to be incorporated into quantitative assessments of cetacean distribution and occurrence,
 - b. propose a standardization of protocols and methodology used for data collection through citizen science, considering the adequate animal welfare and human safety precautions;
3. *Requests* the Secretariat, in collaboration with the Scientific Committee, to consider how to make the best use of citizen science information.

DRAFT RESOLUTION 8.22
TRIBUTE TO ORGANISERS

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

Recalling the offer of the Government of the Republic of Malta to host the Eighth session of the Meeting of Parties,

Commending the efforts undertaken by the Government of the Republic of Malta in the organisation of this session of the Meeting of the Parties and its financial support to facilitate its preparation,

Aware of the significant efforts required in preparing and organizing the present session of the Meeting of the Parties,

1. *Expresses* its gratitude for the invaluable support of the Government of the Republic of Malta to provide an excellent venue and facilities for the Eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties;
2. *Congratulates* the ACCOBAMS Secretariat for the excellent preparation of the present session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Agreement;
3. *Expresses* its appreciation to all the support provided by the Extended Bureau, the Sub Regional Coordination Units and the Scientific Committee, which contributed to the preparation of the Meeting of the Parties.

DRAFT RESOLUTION 8.23
DATE AND VENUE OF THE NINTH SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES

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

Recalling Article III, paragraph 2, of the Agreement, which states that the Agreement Secretariat shall convene, in consultation with the Convention Secretariat, ordinary sessions of the Meeting of the Parties at intervals of not more than three years, unless the Meeting of the Parties decides otherwise,

Noting that the Eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties was hosted by the Government of Malta, from [28 November to 2 December 2022],

Aware of the benefits of hosting the sessions of the Meeting of the Parties in different regions of the Agreement area, for the Agreement and Parties, particularly for developing countries and those with economies in transition,

1. *Decides* that the Ninth session of the Meeting of the Parties shall take place at the end of 2025;
2. [*Welcomes* and accepts with great appreciation the offer of [.....] to host the Ninth session of the Meeting of the Parties.]