



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

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



REPORT OF THE EIGHTH MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO ACCOBAMS



Malta, 29 November - 2 December 2022

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Introduction

1. The Eighth Meeting of the Parties to the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area (ACCOBAMS) was held in Malta, at the Hilton Malta hotel, from 29 November to 2 December 2022.

Participants

2. Representatives of the following States Party to the Agreement took part in the Meeting: Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Tunisia, Türkiye and Ukraine.
3. One non-Party State, Israel, was represented by an observer.
4. The following inter-governmental Organizations were represented: the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas (ASCOBANS), the Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP), the Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (UNEP/MAP/SPA-RAC), the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (UNEP/MAP/REMPEC), the Black Sea Commission' Permanent Secretariat (BSC PS), the European Commission, the Pelagos Agreement and the RAMOGE Agreement.
5. The following ACCOBAMS Partners were represented: ALNITAK, Archipelagos Institute of Marine Conservation, EcoOcean Institut, International Association of Oil and Gas Producers (IOGP), International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), Marine Mammals Research Association (DMAD), Nature Trust Fee Malta, OceanCare and Tethys Research Institute.
6. Other non-governmental organizations and institutions were represented: EcoMarine Malta, SINAY and the University of Siena.
7. The Secretariat of ACCOBAMS acted as Secretariat for the Meeting.
8. The full list of participants appears as [Annex 1](#) to this report.

AGENDA ITEM 1 – WELCOME ADDRESSES

9. Mr. Fahrettin Ulu, Chair of the Bureau of ACCOBAMS, opened the meeting by welcoming the participants and thanking Malta for its generosity and hospitality in hosting the Meeting.

10. He expressed his gratitude to the Secretariat for its great effort along this triennium during which, despite the difficulties linked to the global pandemic, the Bureau and the ACCOBAMS Secretariat worked fruitfully and cooperatively. He added that in April 2020 Mrs. Susana Salvador was appointed as Executive Secretary of ACCOBAMS in replacement of Mrs. Florence Descroix-Comanducci. The full text of the opening welcome speech of the Chair appears in [Annex 2](#) to this report.
11. Mrs. Melanie Virtue, representing the CMS Executive Secretary, Mrs. Amy Fraenkel, addressed the Meeting on behalf of the CMS Family emphasising that ACCOBAMS in many ways represents the highest aims of the CMS Family: to concentrate conservation efforts on a threatened group of migratory species in places and ways that individual States alone could not, and to do so with enough resources to make a real impact. She congratulated the Secretariat and Parties to the Agreement for their efforts in contributing to this ongoing success. She added that this Meeting is happening in a very important year for marine species conservation; with the UN Ocean Conference having taken place in Lisbon in June, the negotiations on the future treaty on biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, which reconvened in August, the CITES COP which just ended, and, of course, the 15th Meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in the coming weeks, where countries will agree on a new Global Framework for Biodiversity. CMS continues to engage very actively in this process, promoting issues of key importance to migratory species. The full text of the opening speech of Mrs. Melanie Virtue, on behalf of the Executive Secretary of CMS, is shown in [Annex 2](#) to this report.
12. Mrs. Susana Salvador, the Executive Secretary of ACCOBAMS, expressed her profound gratitude to the Government of Malta and to the Environment and Resources Authority, for hosting the Eighth Meeting of the Parties in this beautiful island nation and inspiring location in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. She emphasised that the outcome of the meeting will allow ACCOBAMS to reap the fruits of efforts deployed during a very challenging period of work, which began with worldwide circumstances forcing all to adapt and find ways to pursue collaborative efforts that were remarkable in building on the outbreaking experience of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative (ASI) and its outcome, including a unique knowledge baseline on the state of cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Area, which should remain the point of departure for future assessments. Referring to this Eighth Meeting objectives, she stressed that Parties would be invited to take determining decisions towards improving cetaceans' state and resiliency to climate change and to threats posed by human activities. Furthermore, she considered that, in this context, the communication challenge would come in support of improving ACCOBAMS visibility as an effective regional mechanism striving for the conservation of cetaceans in its area, and not less importantly, as a vital knowledge hub to its Parties, to the scientific community, which is becoming increasingly useful to many other users and interested stakeholders. The full

text of the opening welcome speech of Mrs. Susana Salvador is reflected in [Annex 2](#) to this report.

13. Mr. Darrin Stevens, the Malta ACCOBAMS National Focal Point, welcomed the participants and thanked the Parties and the Secretariat to have accepted the offer of Malta to host this important meeting just few days after the 26th anniversary of this Agreement. He emphasised that Malta is pursuing its efforts for the preservation of the Mediterranean natural heritage and increased substantially during the last years the surface areas of MPAs in its marine zone, including with the support of regional organisations. He added that Malta comprehends the importance of being a Party to ACCOBAMS since 2001 - uniting all relevant countries to achieve one main goal - offer the adequate protection to cetaceans. The full text of the opening welcome speech of Mr. Darrin Stevens is shown in [Annex 2](#) to this report.
14. Ms. Claire Cordina Borg, Deputy Director of the Environment and Resources Authority (ERA) of Malta, welcomed the participants and expressed delight in attending this important Meeting, which brought together national and international experts, marine specialists and stakeholders, partners, as well as observers, to discuss the protection of our seas, specifically cetaceans. Stressing the importance of improving knowledge on cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Area, she emphasised that Malta has participated in several research studies and projects in order to collect relevant data and information on the distribution and abundance of cetaceans. Malta established three Marine Protected Areas (MPA) aimed at further conservation of bottlenose dolphin endowed with conservation measures that complement those put forward as part of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive's (MSFD) Programme of Measures. Additionally, EU funds (EMFF) were also used to implement monitoring methodologies for cetaceans within MPAs in Maltese waters; such results will be used to enable continuous assessment of the status of these species. She concluded by expressing her sincere appreciation to everyone involved in the preparation of the 8th Meeting of the Parties to ACCOBAMS and invited the participants to watch a short video developed by ERA representing the prospective improvement in the conservation of cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Area. The full text of the opening welcome speech of Ms. Claire Cordina Borg is shown in [Annex 2](#) to this report.

AGENDA ITEM 2 – ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES

2.1 – Rules of Procedure for the Meeting of the Parties to ACCOBAMS

15. The Chair informed that the Rules of Procedure for the Meeting of the Parties, as adopted by the Fifth Meeting of the Parties in 2013, were applied to this Eighth Meeting.
16. The Rules of Procedure applicable to the Meeting of the Parties are reflected in [Annex 3](#) to this report.

2.2 – Granting the right to vote

17. The Chair recalled that, according to Article 14.2 of the Rules of Procedure for 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”. He emphasized that Greece and Libya provided formal letters to the Secretariat explaining the exceptional circumstances that led to the delay in payment.
18. The representative of Greece informed the Meeting that the delays in the payment of the ordinary contribution by his country were due to administrative procedures. However, a draft Law had been submitted to the Parliament, and it would be adopted very soon which will allow the payment of all the arrears of Greece.
19. Referring to the difficult political context prevailing in his country, the representative of Libya indicated that the Ministry of Environment was working jointly with other national entities to provide ACCOBAMS with all the arrears accumulated in the ordinary contribution of the country.
20. The Meeting agreed to allow Greece and Libya to exercise their right to vote during this Eighth Meeting of the Parties.
21. The Secretariat was requested to revise the corresponding draft Resolution, which was later adopted as Resolution 8.1 “Granting the right to vote” ([Annex 13](#)).

2.3 – Establishment of the Credentials Committee

22. A Credentials Committee was set up in accordance with Article IV of the Rules of Procedure for the Meeting of the Parties. Tunisia chaired this Committee composed of representatives from France, Lebanon, Romania and Spain. The Secretariat assisted the Committee in their work.

2.4 – Report by the Credentials Committee

23. The representative of Tunisia, as Chairperson of the Credentials Committee, reported that the credential letters received from 19 ACCOBAMS Parties (Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Tunisia, Türkiye and Ukraine) had met the criteria of Article IV of the Rules of Procedure for the Meeting of the Parties.

2.5 – Admission of observers

24. In accordance with Article III, paragraph 4 of the Agreement, the Secretariat presented to the Parties the list of organizations that requested to take part in the Eighth Meeting as observers (ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc06Rev2).
25. The Meeting allowed the participation of all observers who had requested attendance.

2.6 – Election of the Bureau

26. The Chair recalled that pursuant to Article VI of the Agreement and the Rules of Procedure for the Meeting of the Parties to ACCOBAMS, the Meeting shall elect a Bureau for 2023-2025, consisting of a Chairperson and four Vice-Chairpersons of the Meeting of the Parties.
27. The representative of Italy introduced a proposal to amend the Rules of Procedure for the Meeting of the Parties by increasing the number of Vice-Chairpersons up to a maximum of 6, instead of the current 4. He explained that this proposal was aimed at ensuring a better representativity of the Parties in the Bureau taking into consideration the difference in the number of countries in each of the four ACCOBAMS sub-regions.
28. Following the discussion on the proposal of Italy, sixteen Parties were in favour of postponing consideration of this proposal to the next Meeting of the Parties, stressing the need for more time to assess the implications that would result from the proposed change in the composition of the Bureau, while three Parties were in favour of adopting the amendment to the rules as proposed by Italy and to elect the members of the Bureau of this MOP8 on the basis of these amendments.
29. The Meeting mandated the Bureau to consider the proposal made by Italy, in consultation with the Secretariat during the intersessional period, and to submit their recommendation on the subject to the Ninth Meeting of the Parties.
30. The Executive Secretary informed the Meeting that, during the pre-Meeting consultations, the following Parties agreed to be proposed as candidates for the 2023-2025 Bureau of ACCOBAMS: Bulgaria, Italy, Lebanon, Malta, Montenegro and Portugal.
31. The Chair invited the participants to decide on the composition of the Bureau. The delegation of Italy announced that to ease the works of the Meeting on this agenda item, it would withdraw its application, and so the Meeting elected the following members of the Bureau:

- Chairperson: Ms. Marie Therese Gambin (Malta)
- Vice-Chairperson: Ms. Yana Velina (Bulgaria)
- Vice-Chairperson: Mr. Milad Fakhri (Lebanon)
- Vice-Chairperson: Ms. Milena Batakovic (Montenegro)
- Vice-Chairperson: Ms. Marina Sequeira (Portugal)

32. Ms. Marie Therese Gambin, as new Chair of the Bureau, thanked the Meeting for electing her and congratulated the outgoing Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of the 2020-2022 Bureau for their excellent work. She welcomed all participants and wished a fruitful meeting.

2.7 – Adoption of the Agenda

33. The Executive Secretary presented the proposed draft agenda (ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc01Rev02), the draft annotated agenda (ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc02Rev6) and timetable (ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc04Rev3).

34. The Meeting adopted the proposed agenda and timetable. The agenda as adopted by the Meeting is shown in [Annex 4](#) to this report.

AGENDA ITEM 3 – OPENING STATEMENTS

35. The Chair invited Parties and Organizations that wished to make a statement to do so under this Agenda item and asked those that wanted their opening statement to be annexed to the report to provide a copy of the text to the Secretariat, electronically, in English or in French ([Annex 5](#)).

36. The representative of Italy expressed the appreciation of Italy to the Government of Malta for hosting MOP8, as well as to the Secretariat for the organization. He pointed out that Italy had always been committed to cetacean conservation and played a key role in the Mediterranean context in all relevant *fora*, including within ACCOBAMS, the Pelagos Agreement and the Barcelona Convention-related processes. He particularly emphasized a need to strengthen the cooperation in the frame of global and regional initiatives through the maximum transparency and efficiency of their governance tools. In this regard, he explained that Italy is of the opinion that the composition of the ACCOBAMS Bureau and Scientific Committee should be reviewed to strengthen the representation of countries, as a whole and in each sub-region, and that in the future, ACCOBAMS should continue to synergize its efforts with Barcelona Convention and the Black Sea Commission, but also to align with other global and regional initiatives and tools, notably referring to the negotiations of the Agreement on the marine biodiversity conservation beyond national jurisdiction - the BBNJ Treaty - establishment of a global legally binding agreement to combat plastic pollution by 2024 and negotiations for the Post-2020 Global

Framework, which should be adopted at the next COP of the Convention on Biological Diversity, in December 2022.

37. The representative of Tunisia expressed the honour to participate in MOP8. She emphasized the commitment of Tunisia to the conservation of cetaceans, which is demonstrated through their involvement in ACCOBAMS implementation since the first Meeting of the Parties. She thanked the ACCOBAMS Secretariat for its support at all levels, particularly in capacity building, financing projects on bycatch and depredation and strengthening national stranding network.
38. The representative of Türkiye thanked the Government of Malta for hosting MOP8 and for the great hospitality provided. She also praised the ACCOBAMS Secretariat for its devoted work on conservation of cetaceans in the last triennium. She further emphasized the importance that Türkiye attaches to the improvement of the current conservation status of cetaceans and their habitats, both through regional and national efforts.
39. The representative of Ukraine recalled the difficult circumstances Ukraine is currently facing and shared compassion with the Ukrainian people and everyone who is suffering because of Russia's war on Ukraine. He particularly expressed grave concern about the impacts of the war on the environment-related activities. In this regard, he informed about the documented increased mortality of dolphins in the Black Sea in 2022, stressing that scientists link directly this phenomenon to actions of the Russian military ships in the Black Sea, particularly with the underwater noise generated by military sonars. He called upon the ACCOBAMS Parties to take all possible efforts to force Russian Federation to immediately cease its aggression, which is preventing Ukraine from complying their obligations in the framework of ACCOBAMS and other international treaties in order to protect and restore marine ecosystems.
40. Mr. Stavros Antoniadis, representing UNEP/MAP, delivered the opening statement on behalf of Ms. Tatjana Hema, MAP Coordinator. He emphasized that UNEP/MAP and ACCOBAMS have a long-standing successful cooperation, formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2012. In this regard, he highlighted several joint activities, such as a close ongoing collaboration among the Secretariats of ACCOBAMS, UNEP/MAP, GFCM and IUCN-Med, within the Joint Cooperation Strategy on Spatial-based Protection and Management Measures for Marine Biodiversity, and cooperation related to the Mediterranean Quality Status Reports prepared in the framework of the UNEP/MAP Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP) implementation. This important segment of cooperation is the result of more than two decades long joint work of ACCOBAMS and UNEP/MAP Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC), as the ACCOBAMS' designated Sub-Regional Coordination Unit for the Mediterranean Sea. Among all, SPA/RAC has collaborated closely with the ACCOBAMS Secretariat in revising and updating the Action Plan for the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean.

41. Mr. Antoniadis reaffirmed the MAP Barcelona Convention Secretariat's intention to continue and further expand effective collaboration with ACCOBAMS in the following years. The issues of common interest for future cooperation include the contribution of ACCOBAMS to the 2023 MED QSR, exchange of best practices (such as the experience from the ASI project), cooperation on spatial-based protection and management measures for marine biodiversity, collaboration through joint projects and on outreach events. The renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding is also planned to be presented to the next Barcelona Convention Bureau meeting in 2023, and submitted to the MAP Focal Points and to COP 23 for consideration and adoption.
42. Mr. Franck Lauwers, representing UNEP-MAP/REMPEC, thanked the Government of Malta for its hospitality and expressed appreciation to the ACCOBAMS Secretariat for the invitation to attend the Meeting as an observer. He recalled the close cooperation between ACCOBAMS and REMPEC for many years. The recent adoption of Decision IG.25/16 on the Mediterranean Strategy for the Prevention of, Preparedness, and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (2022-2031) at the 22nd Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (COP 22) (Antalya, Türkiye, December 2021) provides impetus for further cooperation. This Strategy is a part of a broader effort undertaken by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), UNEP/MAP and the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to address the crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss in the Mediterranean, while accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. He further informed of several developments within the IMO of direct relevance to both REMPEC and ACCOBAMS, focussing on addressing the anthropogenic underwater noise from commercial shipping and the proposed designation of a Particular Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) in the North-Western Mediterranean Sea to protect cetaceans from international shipping.
43. Mr. David Barthèlemy, representing IOGP, thanked the ACCOBAMS Parties and the ACCOBAMS Secretariat for the invitation to attend the Meeting as an ACCOBAMS Partner. He expressed that IOGP values its ability to engage with the ACCOBAMS Parties and other observer organizations to help to ensure that ACCOBAMS is transparent and inclusive in its decision-making, as well as the ACCOBAMS measures are practicable, realistic and underpinned by sound science and research, in order to facilitate sustainable blue economy activities to take place in the ACCOBAMS Area.
44. Ms. Iryna Makarenko, representing the Black Sea Commission Permanent Secretariat (BSC PS), recalled the BSC role as the ACCOBAMS' Sub-Regional Coordination Unit for the Black Sea, since the conclusion of the first Memorandum of Understanding in 2002. She emphasized the outstanding level of cooperation between the two organizations and BSC solid intention to continue the cetacean conservation efforts in the Black Sea region together with other relevant partners. More details about that cooperation were provided under Agenda item IV.6

(ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc12). Finally, she praised the Republic of Türkiye for an excellent chairmanship and thanked the delegates from Ukraine for sharing their concerns regarding the conservation of the Black Sea cetaceans despite these challenging times.

45. Ms. Jenny Renell, ASCOBANS Coordinator, praised the close collaboration and synergies between the sister agreements ASCOBANS and ACCOBAMS which share three Range States – France, Portugal and Spain. Concrete examples of that cooperation are the Joint Noise Working Group, the Joint Bycatch Working Group and the Common Dolphin Group. In addition, a Marine Debris Workshop is planned together, to take place at the next European Cetacean Society Conference, in 2023. She also informed about the new and updated resolutions adopted at the 9th Meeting of the Parties to ASCOBANS (online, September 2020), which covered a variety of cetacean conservation issues of interest to ACCOBAMS Parties, including marine debris, food availability and resource depletion, bycatch, conservation of the common dolphin and Baltic Proper harbour porpoise, as well as stranding response. She concluded that ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS have a long history of fruitful cooperation and it is important to continue working closely together in the future.
46. Ms. Costanza Favilli, Executive Secretary of the Pelagos Agreement, informed the Meeting about the new Management Plan and Action Plan for 2022-2027 which was adopted at the 8th Pelagos Conference of the Parties (December, 2021). On that occasion, the Parties to the Pelagos Agreement reaffirmed the fundamental importance of collaboration between ACCOBAMS and the Pelagos Agreement. In this context, Ms. Favilli particularly thanked ACCOBAMS for making the ASI data for the Pelagos Sanctuary available. She also pointed out achievements under other areas of cooperation, such as about the issue of collisions between whales and ships, which led to the submission of a proposal for the designation of a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) in the North-Western Mediterranean by France, Italy, Monaco and Spain, the promotion of the ACCOBAMS/Pelagos code of conduct on the observation of cetaceans, as well as the participation of ACCOBAMS representatives in the new Pelagos Working Groups. Concerning future cooperation, the Pelagos Agreement plans to develop targeted communication actions in 2023 aiming to disseminate all the results of the mentioned cooperation actions.
47. The ACCOBAMS Executive Secretary informed the Meeting of two additional written statements received from GFCM and RAMOGE, which are reflected in [Annex 5](#).

AGENDA ITEM 4 – PROGRESS REPORTS OF THE AGREEMENT

4.1 – National Reports

48. The Secretariat introduced the synthesis on the implementation of ACCOBAMS by the Parties, contained in document ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc07, and presented a brief description of

the relevant activities undertaken by ACCOBAMS Parties during the triennium 2020-2022 in the framework of the implementation of the Agreement.

49. The Secretariat informed the Meeting that at present all Parties have National Focal Points, and that the synthesis was based on information provided by the National Focal Points through the online reporting system made available by the Secretariat. The full text of the national reports for the reporting period (2020-2022) is available in document ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf03Rev1.
50. The Chair invited delegates to provide additional information on the activities undertaken by their Countries.
51. The representative of Bulgaria informed the meeting that her country needed more time, until the end of this year, in order to complete the information on their national report.
52. The representative of Greece informed the Meeting that his country submitted their national report in October 2022 and that updates might be made once additional and/or new information is provided by relevant ministries.

4.2 – Report of the Depositary and status of Ratifications

53. The representative of the Depositary of the Agreement - the Principality of Monaco - introduced the "Report of the Depositary and status of ratifications" contained in document ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc08, shown as [Annex 6](#) to this report.
54. She informed the Meeting that since the Seventh Meeting of the Parties, no instrument of accession has been registered by the Department of External Relations and Cooperation of the Principality of Monaco, in its capacity as Depositary. As of 28 July 2022, the Agreement therefore has 24 Contracting Parties.
55. With regard to the Amendments to the text of the Agreement and its Annexes, relating to the extension of the geographical area of ACCOBAMS adopted during MOP4 in 2010, the Depositary registered, since the last Meeting of the Parties in 2019, the deposit of the instrument of approval of Italy on 4 August 2021, and of Malta, on 26 January 2022. Those registrations brought to ten the number of countries that have ratified the Amendment. The representative of the Depositary of the Agreement recalled that 16 ratifications are required for the entry into force of the Amendment.

56. The representative of the Depositary of the Agreement added that, during this triennium 2020-2022, the Depositary has supported the efforts of the Secretariat to sensitize the riparian States to accede to the Agreement and encourage them to approve the pending Amendments.

4.3 – Report of the Bureau

57. Mr. Fahrettin Ulu, Chair of the Bureau during 2020-2022, presented the Bureau report contained in document ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc09. He recalled that the composition of the Bureau under his chairmanship was as follows:

- Vice-Chairperson: Mr. Gaby Khalaf (Lebanon);
- Vice-Chairperson: Mr. Duncan Borg (Malta) replaced by Ms. Marie Therese Gambin since June 2021;
- Vice-Chairperson: Mr. Abdelali Loudrhiri (Morocco);
- Vice-Chairperson: Ms. Elvira Garcia-Bellido Capdevila (Spain).

58. He thanked the Vice-Chairs for their support during the triennium period and the Secretariat in facilitating the work of the Bureau, in particular with the organization of the Bureau meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic. He added that during 2020-2022, the Bureau had to deal in particular with questions related to:

- Recruitment of the new Executive Secretary;
- The 2022 ACCOBAMS Call for proposals for projects to be funded under the Supplementary Conservation Fund;
- The development of the ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy;
- Budgetary issues;
- The development of NETCCOBAMS;
- The question of reporting obligations by Partners;
- The issue of drift nets;
- The implementation of Resolution 4.18;
- ASI sustainability and the ACCOBAMS Long-Term Monitoring Program.

59. The Meeting took note of the report, commended the activities undertaken and congratulated the Bureau members for their efforts along the triennium.

60. The full report of the Bureau appears as [Annex 7](#) to this report.

4.4 – Report of the Secretariat

61. Referring to document ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc10, the Executive Secretary presented an overview of the activities carried out by the Secretariat during the intersessional period. The

report provides details on the status of activities as outlined in the 2020-2022 Programme of Work, which was adopted by the Seventh Meeting of the Parties, in 2019.

62. She highlighted that from early 2020, the triennium activities implementation was impacted by the COVID-19 sanitary crisis. The 2020-2022 programme of work had to be implemented with the necessary adaptations, among which the online organisation of several institutional meetings, scientific workshops and meetings such as the 5th Conference on the Conservation of Cetaceans in South Mediterranean Countries (online, 13-15 April 2021; hosted by Lebanon). Despite this major disturbance, planned activities were successfully implemented and progress was made for all conservation actions.
63. She reminded that 2021 was marked by the 25th Anniversary of ACCOBAMS and brought the occasion to raise awareness and to increase visibility of the collective conservation effort supported by the Agreement. ACCOBAMS actions were also highlighted during the major international events of the IUCN World Conservation Congress in September 2021, and of the UN Ocean Conference in June-July 2022. She reiterated the need to structure and strengthen communication activities in order to meet the key priority of increasing the ACCOBAMS visibility.
64. The Meeting took note of the report, commended the activities undertaken and congratulated the Secretariat for its efforts along the triennium.
65. The full report of the Secretariat is shown as [Annex 8](#) to this report.

4.5 – Report of the Scientific Committee and its Working Groups

66. Mr. Simone Panigada, Chair of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee during the 2020-2022 triennium, introduced document ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc11, which contained the reports of Regional Representatives, Scientific Committee Task managers, chairs of the Working Groups and 11 Recommendations issued by the 14th Meeting of the Scientific Committee (Monaco, 22-26 November 2021).
67. He described the subjects discussed by the Scientific Committee and indicated the topics of the aforementioned Recommendations. He also reminded that these recommendations served as the basis for preparation of draft Resolutions, which will be discussed under Agenda item VII.
68. The Meeting took note of the report and commended the work achieved by the Scientific Committee during the triennium 2020-2022.
69. The full report of the Scientific Committee and the Recommendations is shown as [Annex 9](#) to this report.

4.6 - Reports of the Sub-Regional Coordination Units

70. The representative of the Black Sea Commission Permanent Secretariat (BSC PS), Ms. Iryna Makarenko, representing also the ACCOBAMS Black Sea Sub Regional Coordination Unit ([Annex 10](#)), thanked ACCOBAMS and other relevant partners for the high level of cooperation and assistance provided for several projects and looked forward to continuing these important collaborations.
71. She thanked the ACCOBAMS Secretariat for:
- developing collaboration with UNDP/EC project EMBLAS+ and ANEMONE Project in order to coordinate efforts during the Black Sea cetacean surveys held in summer 2019,
 - for promoting the ACCOBAMS Cetacean conservation module, which was adapted for the Black Sea and translated into Russian language.
72. She informed that BSC PS was taking steps to promote regional cooperation on conservation of cetaceans by establishing partnerships and joint initiatives with ACCOBAMS and other relevant partners (GFCM, CBD Convention, EC etc.) and also explained that support and expertise were expected for drafting and improving relevant documents (i.e. Conservation Plan for Cetaceans, new draft of BSIMAP 2022-2027, short format of BSC annual reporting, dedicated Chapter on Cetaceans in the next State of Environment Report 2015-2022).
73. To conclude, she emphasized that BSC PS was ready to contribute to other relevant ACCOBAMS activities, in particular in the project for MSFD implementation for cetaceans, in assisting dissemination and sustainability of CENOBS Project results and preparation of data on cetaceans for Black Sea Red Data Book.
74. The representative of the Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC), Ms. Lobna Ben Nakhla, representing also the ACCOBAMS Mediterranean Sub Regional Coordination Unit ([Annex 11](#)), informed the Meeting that the Memorandum of Understanding between SPA/RAC and the ACCOBAMS Secretariat had been renewed for the 2020-2022 triennium and included a detailed joint work program.
75. She informed the Meeting of the different aspects developed within the above-mentioned work programme:
- the development of the post-2020 Strategic Action Programme on the Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region (SAPBIO post-2020) adopted by Decision IG.25/11, as well as the evaluation and updating of the Action Plan for the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Mediterranean adopted by Decision IG.25/13 at the COP22 of the Barcelona Convention (Antalya, Türkiye, 2021) (document ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf28);

- the implementation of the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP) within the framework of the Ecosystem Approach, stressing that SPA/RAC has been assisting southern Mediterranean countries since 2021 in the implementation of the monitoring of IMAP "Biodiversity" indicators, including those related to marine mammals. In addition, SPA/RAC has developed the monitoring and assessment scales, assessment criteria, thresholds and reference values for the IMAP Common Indicators 3, 4 and 5 related to marine mammals. This document was reviewed by the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee, discussed by the CorMon on Biodiversity (videoconference, 10-11 June 2021) and endorsed by the 8th Meeting of the Coordination Group on the Ecosystem Approach (videoconference, 9 September 2021) for use in the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Report (2023 Med QSR).
76. She highlighted the participation of ACCOBAMS in the work of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts for Mediterranean MPAs (AGEM), which has contributed to the development of an ambitious and innovative post-2020 strategy for MPAs and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) in the Mediterranean.
77. She also explained the areas of collaboration developed between ACCOBAMS and SPA/RAC in the following projects:
- Monitoring and mitigation of interactions between cetaceans and fishing activities (depredation and bycatch) thanks to the financial support provided by the MAVA Foundation,
 - Mitigation of the impact of noise pollution in the framework of the EU-funded QUIETMED2 project in which the workshop on impulsive underwater noise for French-speaking participants was organised in close collaboration with ACCOBAMS, in December 2020, with the participation of representatives of competent authorities and scientists from Algeria, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia.
78. She finally concluded by recalling the importance of capacity building through joint activities such as the 5th Conference on Cetacean Conservation in the Southern Mediterranean Countries (CSMC5) as well as training on necropsies, live strandings and emergency response in the ACCOBAMS Area.

4.7 - Report of the Follow-up Committee

79. Mrs. Imane Tai, Chair of the ACCOBAMS Follow-up Committee, making reference to document ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc14, presented the main considerations and recommendations issued from the Third Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Follow-up Committee (online 29 - 30 March 2022) ([Annex 12](#)). She also recommended that the Meeting of the Parties take decisions in the

form of *ad hoc* Resolutions based on the conclusions and recommendations of the four submissions that were presented:

- Submission by OceanCare, presented in 2016, on the assessment and control by Greece of military activities around South-East Crete;
- Submission by OceanCare, presented in 2016, on the assessment and control by Spain of petroleum exploration activities around the Balearic Islands;
- Submission by OceanCare, presented in 2016, on the assessment and control by Portugal of petroleum exploration activities in the Algarve and Alentejo basins;
- Submission by OceanCare, presented in 2016, 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.

80. The Chair of the ACCOBAMS Follow-up Committee informed the Parties that the follow-up procedure was declared closed with regard to the involvement of Spain, as there was no evidence that the Spanish authorities authorized noise-producing activities from July 2012 to July 2013, or that they had neglected monitoring in the waters or seabed under Spanish jurisdiction
81. The Chair of the ACCOBAMS Follow-up Committee informed the Parties that the procedure was not declared closed with regard to the control by Greece of military activities around Southeast Crete. The Delegate of Greece informed the Meeting of the Parties that the Greek Navy is now taking into account the effects of military exercises on marine fauna.
82. Portuguese legislation on oil exploration and exploitation activities has been strengthened and improved at the environmental level, to ensure a precautionary approach. All oil exploration and exploitation activities are now subject to the environmental impact assessment regime. These elements have led to the closure of the follow-up procedure with respect to Portugal's involvement.
83. The Chair of the ACCOBAMS Follow-up Committee invited the concerned countries to provide information on specific measures they taken towards the implementation of the Conservation Plan for the Mediterranean short-beaked common dolphin, or on any other measure considered relevant for its protection. She recalled the urgency of implementing this management plan at the national and transboundary levels, especially in light of the recent (December 2021) assessment of the IUCN Red List of species. She recalled that the implementation of the conservation management plans is essential to guarantee the credibility of the mandate of ACCOBAMS as an effective Intergovernmental Agreement for regional cooperation.
84. The Chair of the Follow-up Committee presented the conclusions and recommendations reproduced in document ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc14, from the review that the Follow-up

Committee was requested to make by the Seventh Meeting of the Parties to ACCOBAMS, according to Article 6, paragraph 1d, of the ACCOBAMS Follow-up Procedure, on the legal and technical issues of implementation and follow-up of:

- existing obligations and commitments related to seismic and military activities producing underwater noise,
- interactions between humans and dolphins addressed by Resolution 3.13 (Dolphin interaction programmes).

85. The Meeting endorsed the measures recommended by the Follow-up Committee.

4.8 - Report of the ACCOBAMS Partners

86. The Executive Secretary introduced Document ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc15Rev1 presenting activities undertaken by ACCOBAMS Partners in the framework of the 2020-2022 ACCOBAMS Work Programme, in relation to capacity building, public awareness and research. The Secretariat recalled that ACCOBAMS Partners were requested to complete the ACCOBAMS Partner Report template with a view to presenting their reports to the 5th Meeting of Extended Bureau held in April 2022 and informed the Meeting that from a total of 52 Partners, 23 Partner reports were received and reflected in the document.

4.9 – Budgetary matters

a) Report on incomes and expenditures relevant to the Trust Fund and external contributions for 2020-2022

87. The Executive Secretary presented the report on incomes and expenditures related to the ACCOBAMS Trust Fund for 2020-2022 as reflected in document ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc16Rev1, and indicated that the figures for 2022 covered the period up to 30 June 2022. As of that date, the balance due was of 162 176 €. Late contributions were also received after 30 June. She also presented the state of voluntary contributions and co-fundings received during the triennium.

b) Report on the Supplementary Conservation Grants Fund

88. Regarding the Supplementary Conservation Grants Fund (SCF), the Executive Secretary provided an overview of the incomes and expenditures for the SCF over the triennium, up to 30 June 2022, as reflected in document ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc17. On 30 June 2022, the remaining balance amounted to 13 876 € of which 9 400 € allocated to on-going projects and 4 476 € allocated to support the four projects that were selected through the 2022 ACCOBAMS Call for proposals.

c) Report by the Fund Management Controller

89. In accordance with Annex 3 to Resolution 7.6, the Executive Secretary presented the report of the fund management controller for the triennium 2020-2022 (ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc18Rev1) emphasising that all financial reports of the triennium had been approved by the fund management controller.
90. The Meeting endorsed the three budgetary reports and approved the audited accounts relating to the 2020-2022 period.

AGENDA ITEM 5 – INSTITUTIONAL AND BUDGETARY ARRANGEMENTS**5.1 – Work Programme and Budget for 2023-2025 triennium**

91. The Executive Secretary introduced draft Resolution 8.2 on “Work Programme and Budget for the triennium 2023-2025” emphasising that the proposed Work Programme was prepared based on progress made during the implementation of ongoing activities under the 2020-2022 Work Programme, and according to the priorities identified by the Parties during the Fifth Meeting of ACCOBAMS National Representatives (Online, 12-15 July 2021); the Recommendations issued from the Fourteenth Meeting of the Scientific Committee (Monaco, 22-26 November 2021); the views provided by the Scientific Committee members, as well as recommendations gathered from different workshops and activities carried out during the 2020-2022 triennium.
92. She further explained that the proposed budget indicates the total cost for each action, as well as the secured remaining amounts from Ordinary and Voluntary Contributions, and External Funds. The required additional funds to be provided through External or Voluntary Contributions were likewise indicated.
93. The Executive Secretary presented the explanatory note on draft Resolution 8.2 contained in document ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc19Rev2 and informed the Meeting that the Bureau tasked the Secretariat to prepare and submit to MOP8 three options on the 2023-2025 budget, based on three adjustment levels as compared to the 2020-2022 budget: 0%, 5% and 15%. She added that in order to pave the way for the budgetary discussions at MOP8, the Secretariat took the initiative to facilitate preliminary and informal discussions amongst ACCOBAMS Parties on the proposed budget for 2023-2025, prior to MOP8. Three informal meetings were held on 26 September, 28 October, and 9 November 2022. Following the request by the Extended Bureau Meeting in April 2022, and the discussions held during the three informal meetings, 9 different options were developed by the Secretariat, based on 4 different adjustment scenarios as compared to 2020-2022:
- a scenario 1: adjustment of 15%: 995 000€ (331 667 €/year)

- a scenario 2: adjustment of 5%: 907 000 € (302 333 €/year)
 - a scenario 3: adjustment (0%): 863 800 € (287 933 €/year)
 - a scenario 4: adjustment of 8%: 932 904 € (310 968 €/year)
94. The Executive Secretary emphasised that for the sake of clarity, the corresponding amounts per action under the different scenarios were presented in different colours in the draft Programme of Work for 2023-2025 included in draft Resolution 8.2.
95. The meeting decided to establish a working group coordinated by the representative of the Principality of Monaco in order to review draft Resolution 8.2 on “Work Programme and Budget for the triennium 2023-2025”.
96. The Secretariat revised draft Resolution 8.2, as proposed by the Working Group, which was later adopted as Resolution 8.2 “Work Programme and Budget for the triennium 2023-2025” ([Annex 13](#)).
97. The Meeting requested the Bureau to assess whether the financial support for the participation to ACCOBAMS Meetings of the Parties should be provided for delegates from countries with middle incomes, and to submit its recommendation to MOP9.
98. The Chair thanked the Working Group and its coordinator - the representative of the Principality of Monaco - for the substantive effort made to revise the draft Resolution 8.2.
99. The representative of OceanCare suggested to Parties to include activities addressing matters of urgency within the Work Programme which are currently not yet addressed, such as addressing the consequences of warfare activities on cetaceans in the Black Sea, as well as the impacts of climate change on cetaceans and marine ecosystems in the Agreement area.

5.2 – Scientific Committee for the 2023-2025 triennium

100. The Executive Secretary recalled that according to the provisions of Article VII of the ACCOBAMS Agreement, a Scientific Committee composed of qualified experts in cetacean conservation science, shall be established as an advisory body to the Meeting of the Parties. She added that the same Article stipulates that the Meeting of the Parties entrusts the functions of the Scientific Committee to an existing organization in the Agreement area that assures geographically-balanced representation.
101. Referring to Resolutions adopted by the Parties during previous MOPs, she presented a historical background showing how the composition of the Scientific Committee and the procedure for the nomination of its members have evolved since MOP4 of ACCOBAMS, hosted by the

Principality of Monaco, in November 2010. She emphasised that according to Resolution 7.7 adopted by MOP7, the Scientific Committee consists in principle of the following members, namely:

- Three experts, including the Chair, appointed by the Organisation to which the Scientific Committee has been entrusted by the MOP;
- Three experts, including the Vice-Chair, appointed by the Organisation other than the one to which the Scientific Committee was entrusted;
- Four regional representatives appointed by the Meeting of the Parties from a list of experts submitted by the Parties together with their *curriculum vitae*;
- One representative from the European Cetacean Society (ECS), one representative of the Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and one representative of the Scientific Council of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS);
- Additional members of the Scientific Committee that might be designated by the Parties on a voluntary basis (the cost of their participation to the meetings of the Scientific Committee is not covered by the Agreement's funds).

102. The Executive Secretary informed the Meeting that the Secretariat prepared draft Resolution 8.3 on the establishment of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee for the triennium 2023-2025, further recalling that a proposal on draft Resolution 8.3 was submitted by Italy on 22 November 2022, and circulated by the Secretariat to the Parties.
103. The Chair invited the Executive Secretary to introduce draft Resolution 8.3 prepared by the Secretariat and invited Italy to present its proposal on this draft Resolution.
104. The Executive Secretary recalled the consultation process conducted by the Secretariat with IUCN and CIESM for the nomination of their Experts to the Scientific Committee and presented the list of Experts proposed by both organisations, as well as Experts proposed by CMS, ECS and IWC, and the list of Experts proposed by the Parties to be selected by MOP8 as Regional Representatives.
105. She explained that the amendments proposed to the Rules of the Scientific Committee aimed at providing more flexibility to the Scientific Committee regarding the rule of alternance between CIESM and IUCN, to whom the functions were entrusted since MOP5, according to Article VII of the ACCOBAMS Agreement.

106. Italy introduced their proposal on draft Resolution 8.3 informing that the aim of the proposed amendments to the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee Rules of Procedure is to ensure a wider participation of ACCOBAMS Parties in the governance of this key subsidiary body to ACCOBAMS, by enhancing its stewardship role and ensuring a healthy degree of independence between the Agreement's subsidiary bodies. The proposed changes intend to introduce Rules that align the Scientific Committee set up to current international standards, keeping in mind a number of fundamental principles, including the institutional nature of this subsidiary advisory body to a multilateral agreement on cetacean conservation and the need to guarantee the adherence to universal values (e.g., the transparency of the procedures, geographic and gender representation, cooperation, inclusion, etc.), maintaining a good balance between several seemingly contrasting aspects (e.g., the quality of the scientific and technical advice vs. the comprehension of institutional work, the preservation of the institutional memory of an organisation vs. the need for generational change, etc.) by introducing appropriate weights and counterweights.
107. Italy further referred that these goals are meant to be achieved by: (i) allowing up to 12 regional experts, as Regional Representatives; (ii) having the MOP designating all members of the Scientific Committee, some of which will still be nominated by relevant scientific bodies (*i.e.*, CIESM, IUCN, CMS, IWC, ECS); (iii) having the SC Chair and Vice Chair elected amongst all SC members; and (iv) introducing a fixed-term for the SC Chair, Vice Chair and Task Managers.
108. The Meeting revised draft Resolution 8.3 proposed by Italy, which was later adopted as Resolution 8.3 “Scientific Committee”, as it is shown in [Annex 13](#) to this report.
109. The Meeting agreed that the increase in the number of Regional Representatives is adopted on a trial basis and it will be reconsidered at the next MOP of ACCOBAMS.
110. The participants welcomed the generous offer by Italy to cover the costs related to the participation in the SC meetings of the additional members selected from eligible countries.
111. The representative of the ECS expressed his regret that the Meeting no longer considers the ECS as a member of the Scientific Committee due to its legal status as an association under private law.

5.3 – Procedures for projects

a) Projects submitted for institutional support

112. The Executive Secretary presented draft Resolution 8.4 on the Procedure for projects submitted for institutional support. She explained that in accordance with MOP7 instructions, this draft Resolution was prepared in consultation with the Scientific Committee as an update to the

procedure to address requests for institutional support to project proposals within funding application processes.

113. She added that this draft Resolution aims at ensuring a clear procedure regarding requests received at the Secretariat for letters of support to projects. The procedure annexed to the draft Resolution was prepared to reflect the current practice, which is simple enough to allow the Secretariat to be responsive to requests received at short notice.
114. The Meeting reviewed the draft Resolution which was later adopted as Resolution 8.4 “Procedure for projects submitted for institutional support” ([Annex 13](#)).

b) Projects under the ACCOBAMS Supplementary Conservation Funds

115. The Executive Secretary presented the draft Resolution 8.5 on the “Procedure for the ACCOBAMS call for proposals for projects to be funded under the Supplementary Conservation Grants Fund” which was prepared in accordance with the Bureau’s instruction to revise the procedure in place in order to solve difficulties encountered during the 2022 Call for proposals.
116. She recalled the difficulties that were to be addressed, in particular in regards to the applicants’ eligibility criteria and conflict of interest, to the cases of absence of project endorsement letter from National Focal Point and to the evaluation scoring system and reviewers’ feedback.
117. The Meeting reviewed the draft Resolution which was later adopted as Resolution 8.5 “Procedure for the ACCOBAMS call for proposals for projects to be funded under the Supplementary Conservation Grants Fund” ([Annex 13](#)).

5.4 – ACCOBAMS Partners

a) New requests for partnership

118. The Executive Secretary introduced document ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc22Rev1 presenting pending and new partnership requests from DelTa Association and Delphis NGO, respectively.
119. She recalled that the pending request by DelTa Association was re-examined during the 5th Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Extended Bureau, in April 2022, which decided to postpone its decision until the advice from the Italian National Focal Point was available. She informed the Meeting that a favourable advice had been received as reflected in the document.
120. She further informed the Meeting that the new request by Delphis NGO was received at the Secretariat accompanied with all required paperwork.

121. After considering both applications for ACCOBAMS partnership, the Meeting decided:
- to grant the status of ACCOBAMS Partner to DelTa Association, and
 - to postpone its decision concerning Delphis NGO to further investigate the willingness and ability of the latter to cooperate with the Agreement through their 2023-2025 Programme of Collaboration. The partnership application will be re-examined by the next Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Bureau, in 2023, for decision.

b) Overview of the state of collaboration with Partners

122. The Executive Secretary introduced document ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc23Rev1 prepared by the Secretariat following the Bureau request to list ACCOBAMS Partners by reflecting their reporting contributions to the Agreement. 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. She 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.
123. She also recalled the Meeting that the Bureau had invited the Secretariat to develop a strategy to address the ACCOBAMS Partnership status, as part of the 2023-2025 ACCOBAMS Work Programme.
124. The Meeting noted the information provided.

5.5 – Communication

a) ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy

125. The Executive Secretary presented background information on the development of the Communication Strategy. She stressed that this is considered crucial to strengthening the ACCOBAMS communication means and outreach, with the main purpose of improving ACCOBAMS visibility as an effective regional cooperation mechanism.
126. She explained that the specialised consulting company selected in 2021 through a Call for Applications started with producing a Diagnostic Report of the communication tools used by ACCOBAMS. This phase was followed by the creation of a Communication Steering Group which reviewed and provided guidance on the drafting of the Communication Strategy by the consulting company. The final draft of the Strategy is annexed to draft Resolution 8.6. on the ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy.

127. The Meeting revised the draft Resolution which was later adopted as Resolution 8.6 “ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy 2023-2028” ([Annex 13](#)).

b) NETCCOBAMS

128. The Executive Secretary introduced the progress made in relation to the new version of NETCCOBAMS. The latter has been developed since early 2020 (i) by updating and improving the previous versions of the NETCCOBAMS platform and (ii) by tackling the willingness 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.

129. M. Yanis Souami presented NETCCOBAMS developed by SINAY, as a platform for data management and analysis responding to the wish of the Parties to dispose of a tool for aggregating information. He recalled that the development of NETCCOBAMS has been supported by a Voluntary Contribution of Italy aimed at mapping underwater noise introduction, considering climate change and pollution, by the QUIETSEAS project and by co-financing from SINAY.

130. He gave a short online demonstration of the platform functionalities, showing that the 3 topics initially requested by Italy had been covered and that several other functionalities had been added (e.g. risk analysis tool, a GIS system, national report management tool).

131. The ACCOBAMS Secretariat presented draft Resolution 8.7 NETCCOBAMS, noting that this Resolution provided for the creation of a working group dedicated to analytical tools and approaches for visualizing results.

132. The Meeting revised the draft Resolution, which was later adopted as Resolution 8.7 “NETCCOBAMS” ([Annex 13](#)).

c) ACCOBAMS Logo

133. The Executive Secretary presented the document ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc24 describing proposals for a new or a modernized ACCOBAMS logo. She reminded that the Extended Bureau (April 2022) requested proposals of logo to be developed for consideration of MOP8, in accordance with the recommendations reflected in the draft communication strategy, notably on the advised refreshment of ACCOBAMS logo as an indispensable point of departure for launching the communication strategy.

134. Following the unveiling of the three logo layout proposals developed by a specialized communication company, the discussions led to a vote, which results were as follows: 7 Parties were in favour of changing the ACCOBAMS logo, and 9 were against.
135. The Meeting therefore decided to withdraw the related draft Resolution 8.8 on “ACCOBAMS logo”.

AGENDA ITEM 6 – IMPLEMENTATION OF AND COMPLIANCE WITH ACCOBAMS RESOLUTIONS

6.1 - ACCOBAMS Follow-up Committee

a) Recommendations

136. Pr. Tullio Scovazzi, Legal Advisor of the Secretariat, introduced draft Resolution 8.9rev1 “Follow-up Procedure”, which was revised by the Meeting, and later adopted as Resolution 8.8 “Follow-up Procedure” ([Annex 13](#)).

b) Election of new members

137. Referring to the Rules on the ACCOBAMS Follow-up Procedure adopted through Resolutions 5.4 and 6.8, Legal Advisor of the Secretariat, Pr. Tullio Scovazzi, informed the Meeting that rotation of membership of the Follow-up Committee meant that two of the three members elected by the Parties and one of the two members elected by the Partners together with their alternates had to be replaced.
138. Parties were asked to elect by secret ballot two members from the candidates proposed by Parties as listed in document ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc25.
139. The Heads of Delegations of the 19 Parties that had presented satisfactory credentials were entitled to vote. Cyprus and Morocco were appointed tellers.
140. The election took place according to the procedure set forth in Art. 18 of the Rules of Procedure for the Meeting of the Parties.
141. M. Gaby Khalaf (Lebanon) and M. Bayram Öztürk (Türkiye) obtained the highest number of votes (11), followed by Ms. Sarah Cheniti (Algeria) (10 votes). Ms. Sarah Cheniti (Algeria) will serve as alternate member.
142. Considering that the Partners had only one candidate, Mr. Marian Paiu (MareNostrum NGO), he was declared elected without voting procedure.

6.2 - 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

143. Referring to the relevant provisions of the ACCOBAMS Agreement and Resolution 4.18 on the Guidelines on the granting of exceptions to Article II, paragraph 1 of the Agreement, for the purpose of non-lethal in situ research in the Agreement Area, the Executive Secretary 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.
144. She recalled that the 5th Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Extended Bureau (Monaco, 26-27 April 2022) mandated the Secretariat to address a letter to all National Focal Points, Scientific Committee members, Sub-Regional Coordinating Units, Partners and relevant partner organizations, to recall the applicable procedure for granting exemptions to research activities at sea that are likely to cause harassment of cetaceans. Additionally, the Bureau requested that Parties inform the Secretariat about exemptions that may have been granted over the past five years.
145. The Executive Secretary pointed out that the replies received from National Focal Points following the Bureau's request are reflected in document ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc26.
146. Representatives of some Parties that have not replied to the letter sent by the Secretariat proposed to provide additional information on the exemptions they have granted in the recent years after the Meeting so that ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc26 could be updated accordingly.
147. The Meeting also decided to include a dedicated section on that matter in the national report format and invited the Secretariat to report at MOP9.

6.3 – Driftnets

148. Referring to the ACCOBAMS provisions related to driftnet ban and highlighting the frequent events of whale entanglements in driftnets occurred in recent years in the Mediterranean Sea, the Executive Secretary informed the Meeting on the efforts that have been made by the Secretariat, in consultation with the Bureau, to address this concern throughout the triennium.
149. She recalled that, at its 13th Meeting, in 2020, the Bureau mandated the Secretariat to send a letter to all Parties in order to raise their attention to this issue. The Parties were thus invited to officially notify the Secretariat of every entanglement occurrence due to driftnets and to inform about their legal instruments and measures conceived to nationally enforce the applicable

ACCOBAMS provisions. A Review of Relevant Treaties and National Legislation was then prepared by the Legal Advisor (document ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf11).

150. She explained that the Bureau requested the Secretariat to prepare a draft Resolution on the subject of driftnets to be presented for adoption at MOP8.
151. The Meeting revised draft Resolution which was later adopted as Resolution 8.9 “Driftnets” ([Annex 13](#)).

AGENDA ITEM 7 - IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREEMENT: TECHNICAL AND SCIENTIFIC ISSUES

7.1 - Cetacean population estimates and distribution

152. The Executive Secretary recalled that the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative (ASI) constituted a major achievement for ACCOBAMS and highlighted the importance of replicating it over time. She pointed out the thorough reflection and efforts that have been done on how to turn the ASI into an ACCOBAMS embedded monitoring program.
153. The Secretariat provided details on activities conducted on cetacean population estimates and distribution during the triennium emphasizing that the ASI succeeded in providing a first baseline on cetacean population abundance and distribution in the ACCOBAMS Area. This project brought many outputs, including a macro-regional operational trained task force, the first estimates of abundance and distribution of cetaceans at the Agreement scale, and the large data set which has been made available for conservation use.
154. The Secretariat presented other studies carried out during the triennium so to diversify the monitoring approaches to collect complementary data on cetacean’s distribution and abundance. This includes reports on the use of multidisciplinary surveys, innovative technologies (drones) and the use of ferries as platforms of opportunity to collect data.
155. Introducing draft Resolution 8.11 on “The ACCOBAMS Long Term Monitoring”, the Secretariat highlighted the different steps undertaken to develop the ACCOBAMS Long Term Monitoring Program (LTMP), in consultation with the Bureau and the Scientific Committee. In particular the recommendations of the *ad hoc* Group which considered the budgetary and financial implications of the implementation of the LTMP (ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc27) were highlighted.
156. Several Parties stressed the importance of replicating the ASI over time and expressed their support to the LTMP in that regard. They also highlighted the importance of regional

coordination in view of synchronising future national survey efforts that could contribute to the next basin wide surveys.

157. The Meeting reviewed the draft Resolution which was later adopted as Resolution 8.10 “The ACCOBAMS Long Term Monitoring Program” ([Annex 13](#)).

7.2 – Population structure

158. The Executive Secretary reminded the importance of data collection on cetacean population genetics in the ACCOBAMS Area and pointed out the main activities developed during the 2020-2022 triennium, notably the organization of an “ACCOBAMS Workshop on Data Collection on Cetacean Population Genetics”, held in September 2022, and the development of the “ACCOBAMS Best Practices on Cetacean Population Genetics”.

159. The Secretariat’s experts, Ms. Pauline Gauffier and Ms. Anna Schleimer presented details of the results achieved through the implementation of the aforementioned activities, referring to documents ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf25 and ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf54. They particularly emphasized the identification of knowledge gaps and research priorities for cetacean population genetics, creation of databases of available resources in terms of existing samples and suitable laboratory facilities, the compilation of best practices based on expert knowledge, as well as creation of specific page on the ACCOBAMS website (<https://accobams.org/population-genetics/>), aimed at promoting the dissemination of relevant information to all stakeholders and at encouraging research collaboration in the ACCOBAMS Area. The work done was reflected in draft Resolution 8.25. on “Cetacean Population Genetics”.

160. The Meeting reviewed draft Resolution which was later adopted as Resolution 8.11 “Cetaceans Population Genetics” ([Annex 13](#)).

7.3 – Monitoring cetaceans’ status

a) IUCN Red List

161. Mr. Simone Panigada, Chair of the Scientific Committee, presented draft Resolution 8.12. on IUCN Red List status of cetacean species in ACCOBAMS Area. He pointed out the results of the 2018-2021 IUCN Red List status assessment and changes that occurred since previous assessments.

162. The representative of Ukraine reiterated the concern on the status of three dolphin species in the Black Sea, due to military action, and asked for support of Parties to address this issue, as already pointed out in Ukraine's opening statement presented under Agenda item III.
163. The representative of OceanCare drew attention to the negative conservation status trends for several species, pointing out that such trends clearly called for an improved implementation of the ACCOBAMS Agreement.
164. The Meeting revised draft Resolution, which was later adopted as Resolution 8.12 "IUCN Red List status of cetacean species in ACCOBAMS Area" ([Annex 13](#)).

b) Regional Plans

165. The Chair invited the representatives of the ACCOBAMS Sub-Regional Coordination Units to provide updates on development of cetacean conservation relevant regional plans.
166. Ms. Lobna Ben Nakhla, representative of the SPA/RAC, informed about the preparation and adoption of the latest updated Action Plan for the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea in the framework of the Barcelona Convention. She reminded that species Action Plans under Barcelona Convention constitute mid-term regional strategies that should be updated every five years, based on an evaluation of their implementation at regional and national levels. The first Action Plan for the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea was adopted by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention in 1991 and then revised in 2016. The latest update was done during 2020-2021, in close collaboration with ACCOBAMS. This Plan was adopted by the 22nd Meeting of the Contracting Parties of Barcelona Convention (Antalya, Türkiye, 2021). More detailed information is provided in document ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf28.
167. Ms. Iryna Makarenko, representative of BSC PS, informed about obstacles in development of the Conservation Plan for Black Sea Cetaceans, which halted the conclusion and adoption of this document.

c) National Actions Plans

168. The Chair reminded that national action plans are dedicated policy documents aimed at supporting ACCOBAMS implementation at national level and invited Parties to comment draft Resolution 8.13 "National Action Plans".
169. The Meeting reviewed the draft Resolution which was later adopted as Resolution 8.13 "National Action Plans" ([Annex 13](#)).

d) Conservation Management Plans

170. Mr. Simone Panigada, Chair of the Scientific Committee, introduced draft Resolution 8.14 on “Conservation Management Plans” (CMP). In this regard, he particularly emphasized the ongoing development of four CMPs, regarding Fin whale, Risso’s dolphin, Common dolphin and Bottlenose dolphin and a need for collaborative efforts to finalize these documents. He also stressed the need to expand efforts to other species, notably Mediterranean sperm whales, Mediterranean Cuvier's beaked whale and Black Sea cetaceans.
171. The Meeting reviewed the draft Resolution which was later adopted as Resolution 8.14 “Conservation Management Plans” ([Annex 13](#)).

7.4 – Functional stranding networks and responses to emergency situation

172. The Executive Secretary presented the stranding issue as was one of the priorities of the 2020-2022 triennium and explained that, in accordance with MOP7 request, this had been addressed through several key actions related to marine mammal necropsy training, the promotion of the use of new technology for developing tele-necropsy, a study on the legal status of stranding networks in some ACCOBAMS Countries, as well as the creation of an ACCOBAMS emergency task force.
173. The Secretariat’s experts, Thierry Jauniaux, Sandro Mazzariol and Etienne Levy, provided detailed information, respectively on necropsies workshops to train ACCOBAMS experts biologists and vets to collect information on threats, the emergency task force aimed to assist with emergencies and unusual mortality events, in the Black Sea in particular, and a note on the feasibility of tele-necropsy systems.
174. The representative of Morocco thanked ACCOBAMS for the efforts deployed in reinforcing capacity on necropsies and reaffirmed Morocco’s interest in joining efforts to further develop the innovative approach of tele-necropsies and becoming a pilot country in that regard.
175. The representative of Bulgaria requested that the emergency task force would include experts from each of ACCOBAMS Black Sea Parties.
176. The Meeting reviewed the draft Resolution which was later adopted as Resolution 8.15 “Cetacean Stranding Networks” ([Annex 13](#)).

7.5 - Interactions with fisheries / aquaculture

177. The Secretariat highlighted that the topic of “Interactions between cetaceans and fisheries” became an important part of ACCOBAMS activities over the past few years in particular thanks to the support provided by MAVA Foundation.
178. The Secretariat provided an overview of the achievements of the Depredation project implemented between 2017 and 2022. Implemented with GFCM and SPA/RAC, it supported the monitoring of depredation events, of dolphin population and mitigation measures trials in five sites in the Mediterranean Sea. The regional knowledge and expertise on this issue have significantly increased, supported by international exchange workshops and the publication of two reports of reference: a standardized methodology to collect data on depredation and a Status review on depredation in ACCOBAMS Area both presented to the Meeting by Joan Gonzalvo, Task Manager of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee.
179. The Secretariat also presented an overview of the MedBycatch project that was implemented in five countries: Phase 1 (2017–2019) in Morocco, Tunisia and Türkiye; and Phase 2 (2020–2022), in the three countries of Phase 1 plus Croatia and Italy. To ensure a harmonised approach, the project was coordinated by a steering committee, with activities implemented at local level by national Partners, and technical advice from a Scientific Committee. During the first phase, national observer teams were trained and mobilised to work with fishers on the collection of bycatch data via on-board observations and port-based questionnaires. In the second phase the collection of data was pursued, with an additional focus on testing bycatch mitigation measures. In the framework of the project, a Review of available data on cetacean bycatch in stranding databases from the ACCOBAMS Area was also prepared, which reveals the interest of cetacean stranding data in getting additional insights on bycatch situation.
180. The Secretariat pointed out that considering the successful experience of MedBycatch and Depredation projects, regional and national partners are committed to maintain the positive momentum by building on these achievements, and to continue their collaboration through future projects. Efforts are now undertaken to identify potential sources of funding.
181. Ms. Ayaka Ozturk, Co-Chair of the ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS Joint Bycatch Working Group, presented the report of the Working Group. She highlighted that the first formal meeting of the group was held online between 10 and 12 February 2021, and issued a set of recommendations related to bycatch monitoring and mitigation.
182. She also presented information on the critical situation in the Black Sea regarding the bycatch of harbour porpoises. She stressed the call for urgent measures to refine estimates of porpoise abundance and bycatch, along with measures to reduce bycatch levels.

183. The representative of Tunisia thanked the Secretariats of ACCOBAMS and GFCM as well as SPA/RAC for the support provided since 2016 to the Tunisian research team in the framework of the MAVA-funded Depredation project. She also expressed her country's interest in continuing the work initiated, in particular to evaluate over time the effectiveness of some mitigation measures such as acoustic deterrent devices and to explore new measures such as strengthening the most vulnerable parts of the purse seine.
184. Joan Gonzalvo introduced draft Resolution 8.16 on “Interactions between fisheries and cetaceans”.
185. The Meeting reviewed the draft Resolution which was later adopted as Resolution 8.16 “Interactions between fisheries and cetaceans” ([Annex 13](#)).

7.6 - Anthropogenic noise

186. Ms. Sigrid Lueber, representative of OceanCare and Co-Chair of the joint CMS/ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS Working Group on Noise (JNWG), presented the Report of the JNWG (ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf42). She informed about the extension of the JNWG with 5 new members and emphasized that a considerable work has been done in the last triennium, although some topics still need to be addressed in the future, notably the follow-up on workshops on sonar with navies, the development of “quiet zones”, assistance with preparation of study on the extent and temporal variability of the habitat of particularly vulnerable species (e.g., *Ziphius cavirostris*), support, upon request, to Parties in establishing national noise registries and provision of advice on related underwater noise decisions to be considered by CMS COP14. Ms. Lueber concluded that JNWG has an ambitious Work Plan, but discrepancies between workload and capacities challenge timely coverage of all issues.
187. Mr. Johannes Mueller, representative of OceanCare introduced the Second Noise Hotspots Report: Updated overview of the noise hotspots in the ACCOBAMS Area (ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf43), which was prepared by OceanCare based on data collected by SINAY and in partnership with the ACCOBAMS Secretariat. The report is focused on the Mediterranean Sea and based on impulsive noise data, which were gathered through different sources, including ACCOBAMS Parties, ACCOBAMS Partners and independent research. The preparation of the report was challenged with limited data access, data availability and data reliability. However, data gathered so far shows that a large part of the Mediterranean Sea is exposed to anthropogenic underwater noise pollution, with differences in spatial distribution of impulsive noise-generating activities. It is also evident that impulsive noise-generating activities have taken place in Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs), in Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs) and in Cetacean Critical Habitats (CCHs) as identified by ACCOBAMS in Resolution 4.15. He also pointed out that in contrast to the First Hotspots Report,

the second report does not take into account continuous noise sources and it also does not consider a comprehensive list of industries or activities where seismic surveys are deployed. The ACCOBAMS Parties should keep in mind that, in response to the war by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, and as a result of other ripple effects, there are already signs of increased efforts to explore oil and gas deposits, which in turn may lead to increased noise emissions. He concluded that updating of the report is an ongoing process and that the next report should expand its scope, particularly focusing on noise generated through shipping.

188. Mr. Alessio Maglio, Secretariat's Expert, presented the Methodological guide v3.1: guidance on underwater noise mitigation measures (ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf44), the Final report of the QUIETMED2 project (ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf45) and the Progress report of the QUIETSEAS project (ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf46).

189. He indicated that the Methodological guide document provides guidance to the implementation of operational measures to mitigate the impact of underwater noise generated by human activities at sea. It is intended to be used by industry, scientists, regulators, technicians and other stakeholders involved in the environmental management of such activities. The first Methodological guide was released in 2013, and revised in 2016 and 2019, respectively. This version 3.1. includes the Annex with Deckforms for Marine Mammal Observers and Passive Acoustic Monitoring operators onboard seismic vessels and updates on technologies and mitigation procedures. Mr. Maglio further informed about the implementation of two projects funded by DG Environment of the European Commission in the framework of MSFD implementation:

- The aim of the QUIETMED2 project (2019-2021) was to enhance cooperation among Member States (MS) in the Mediterranean Sea Region to implement the Second Cycle of the Marine Directive and in particular to assist them in the preparation of their MSFD reports, with focus on noise relevant Descriptor of Good Environmental Status: D11C1. The implementation of the project was a joint endeavor of 11 entities from 8 EU Member States and 3 international organizations: ACCOBAMS, SPA/RAC and ICES. Mr. Maglio informed on the main results relevant for ACCOBAMS, including defined risk-based assessment framework for impulsive noise, the methodology developed to find thresholds for GES assessment related to noise, the operational tool developed to support the management of human activities generating impulsive underwater noise pollution related to the conservation of cetaceans at the regional scale, and the increased engagement of Parties and the regional cooperation to address anthropogenic underwater noise.
- The ongoing QUIETSEAS project (2021- 2023) is a follow-up of the QUIETMED2 project. It is aimed to enhance cooperation among EU Member States in the Mediterranean Sea

Region to implement the third Cycle of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and, in particular, to support competent authorities and strength cooperation and collaboration in the Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea regions. The project is implemented in partnership between 10 entities, including ACCOBAMS, SPA/RAC and ICES.

190. The representatives of IOGP referring to document ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf42 stressed the recognition of data limitation by the 14th Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee. As an example, IOGP emphasized that seismic surveys, including those using sparker sources, are not only used for hydrocarbon exploration, but for a wide range of purposes, including low-carbon energies, such as offshore wind farm development and climate mitigation solutions, mostly Carbon Capture and Storage. IOGP also pointed out the confusion between the locations of seismic surveys and license blocks for exploration and the fact that seismic survey locations represent a limited area, usually less than 10% of the exploration block, while some of those mentioned in the report have actually not been conducted.
191. Mr. Yanis Souami, representative of SINAY and Co-Chair of the JNWG, presented draft Resolution 8.17 “Anthropogenic noise”, emphasizing that it incorporates the results of JNWG work. He also suggested additional amending to the draft, particularly with provisions which accentuate the need to improve cooperation between ACCOBAMS and IMO, since the commercial shipping represents one of the major sources of anthropogenic underwater noise.
192. Referring to the scale of existing and candidate IMMAs, the IOGP representative stressed out the energy supply strategic challenges it presents for the Parties and emphasized that paragraph 3 of the draft Resolution is not only putting limitations to exploration of hydrocarbons, but also upon renewable energies technologies, including offshore wind development with the use of sparkers, and climate change mitigation solutions such as Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS).
193. The Meeting reviewed draft Resolution 8.17, which was later adopted as Resolution 8.17 “Anthropogenic Noise” ([Annex 13](#)).

7.7 - Ship Strikes

194. The Chair of the Scientific Committee introduced draft Resolution 8.18 on ship strikes, stressing out the importance of pursuing efforts in addressing ship strikes and presented the main elements of the draft Resolution, emphasizing that it calls for further efforts on data collection, both on cetaceans and on vessel traffic, as well as on further communication and cooperation with all stakeholders, and on measures aimed at mitigating the adverse impact of ship strikes on the concerned cetacean species.

195. Referring to the ongoing projects and initiatives addressing the issue of ship strikes in the Mediterranean Sea, he stressed that the provisions of the draft Resolution are conducive to facilitating their implementation.
196. The Meeting reviewed the draft Resolution, which was later adopted as Resolution 8.18 “Ship Strikes” ([Annex 13](#)).
197. The representative of Italy presented the following joint statement by France, Italy, Monaco and Spain concerning their joint proposal to IMO for the establishment of a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) in the North of the western Mediterranean Basin, and invited Parties to support the proposal:

PSSA proposal in NW Mediterranean Sea: information paper

The risk of collision with ships of Mediterranean fin whales and sperm whales, two species classified as endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), is very high in the North-western Mediterranean. The risk is due to both the intensity of maritime traffic and the concentration of these two species in the region. It has been estimated that the risk of collision in this specific area is three times higher than in other parts of the Mediterranean Sea.

Considering the above, Spain, France, Monaco and Italy have submitted a paper, to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) on September 8, 2022, requesting the designation of a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) in the North-western Mediterranean. The paper proposes the establishment of a PSSA in a well-defined area extending from Spanish waters (covering the Spanish Cetacean Migration Corridor Marine protected area) to Italian waters (Ligurian Sea), including the French and Monegasque Mediterranean coastline, encompassing the whole Pelagos Sanctuary.

The paper is scheduled to be discussed at the 79th Session of the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) of IMO (London, 12-16 December 2022), on Tuesday 13 December, and is already available for consultation on IMO's website (IMODOCS) under document MEPC 79/10. To gather the necessary support from the Countries and facilitate the overall consensus of the Committee it is recalled that the establishment of the PSSA will:

- have a very low economic impact due to the voluntary nature of the proposed measures (establishment of an appropriate safety distance and adoption of a safe speed in the presence of cetaceans, reporting of collisions with cetaceans, dissemination of information and use of infrared binocular to help detection during night hours);
- significantly improve the protection of cetaceans against the risk of collision as well as from ship generated pollution in this area of critical importance for large and medium-sized cetaceans.
- contribute to IMO's objectives in terms of reducing greenhouse gases and air pollutants via voluntary speed reduction measures.

The support of your country at MEPC-79 is crucial at least as a non-objection approach to the PSSA establishment!

More information:

<https://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/Environment/Pages/PSSAs.aspx>

<https://imohq.exposure.co/protecting-vulnerable-seas-from-shipping-and-marine-pollution>

198. The representative of Oceancare, speaking on behalf of OceanCare and the International Fund for Animal Welfare, emphasised that the two organisations appreciate draft Resolution 8.18 on Ship Strikes and that the efforts addressing this issue, especially in the Mediterranean, in order to reduce the risk of collisions are certainly one of the areas where, in recent months, significant progress has been made, in particular also due to engagement by some major players of the shipping sector in reaction to the call to avoid navigating through core habitat of eastern Mediterranean sperm whales, in particular in the Hellenic Trench. He recalled that sperm whales in the Mediterranean Sea are endangered and the population in the eastern Mediterranean, amounting to just around 200 animals and ship collisions is the main single cause of mortality for this species in that region.
199. He further added that in January 2022, one of the world's largest shipping company, publicly announced to re-route according to the proposal of a Coalition of IFAW, OceanCare, Pelagos Cetacean Research Institute and WWF Greece. Also, the German Shipowners Association (VDR) urged all its members (around 150 shipping companies) to re-route accordingly, and in October 2022, the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) communicated the re-routing advice by VDR as a shining example recommended to their global members to follow suit.
200. He informed the Meeting about the successful development of the first real-time acoustic observatory for the localization of sperm whales by Greek scientists, stressing that the ongoing engagement by scientists and research institutions in other areas is proof of progress made to develop complementary measures. He declared that both organisations appreciate the initiative put for by the four countries – France, Italy, Monaco and Spain – to establish the North-Western Mediterranean Sea as a Particular Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) under IMO. In conclusion, he stressed that one of the essence reflecting this progress is the recognition of the important work undertaken by the Scientific Committee and numerous conservation scientists and NGOs in the Agreement area, when e.g. identifying Important Marine Mammal Areas and Critical Habitats, studying regional populations and engaging in solution-oriented activities.

7.8 - Cetacean Watching

201. The Vice-chair of the Scientific Committee, on behalf of the Whale Watching Working Group, presented the results of a study aimed at identifying hotspots of whale-watching activities in the ACCOBAMS Area. The study was prepared following a two-steps process defined with the

Working Group. Phase 1 about status of WW activities and regulations has been conducted through a questionnaire and the results show that while 50% of countries in the ACCOBAMS Area reported having a legal definition of commercial whale watching, only 20% have legally enforceable regulations in place, and just 8% have in place formal licensing for whale watching activities. Within the seven countries with commercial whale-watching, more data were collected through Phase 2 in order to provide maps with an estimated effort (number of WW hours per harbours/ports) and geographical range of the pressure at sea. Management and follow-up research recommendations were provided.

202. She furthermore presented draft Resolution 8.19 related to “Commercial cetacean-watching activities in the ACCOBAMS Area”, which was revised by the Meeting, and later adopted as Resolution 8.19 “Commercial cetacean-watching activities in the ACCOBAMS Area” ([Annex 13](#)).

7.9 - Marine litter and chemical pollution & biological pollution

203. The Chair recalled that 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 due to marine litter ingestion, entanglement and chemical toxic effects. She pointed out that during 2020-2022, the Secretariat has been collaborating with researchers from the University of Sienna, including the Task Manager on Marine Litter & Chemical/Biological pollution of the Scientific Committee, to develop some background material on these issues in the ACCOBAMS Area

204. Ms. Cristina Fossi and Ms. Cristina Panti presented information on:

- The study on the hotspots of interactions between cetaceans and marine litter in the ACCOBAMS Area (ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf49), whose main objective is to describe the current knowledge on the interactions between cetaceans and marine litter in the ACCOBAMS Area and the hotspot accumulation area which can threaten cetacean species. The bibliographic research has been carried out considering mainly peer-reviewed papers, but also reports of projects on these issues and grey literature. An overview on relevant projects and initiatives dealing with marine litter contamination in the Mediterranean area is shown in Annex 1 to the information document, while the most relevant publications on marine litter interaction with cetaceans and on marine litter models in the ACCOBAMS Area are reported in Annex 2 to the document.
- The bibliographic review on the impact of chemical pollution on cetaceans, including the identification of *ad hoc* research projects aimed at assessing chemical pollution on cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Area (ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf50). Its main objective is to describe results regarding the impact of chemical pollution on cetaceans over the last

30 years, including the identification of *ad hoc* research projects aimed at assessing chemical pollution on cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Area. The analysis of the existing literature helped in identifying priorities and knowledge gaps within the ACCOBAMS area in relation to pollution and chemical stress to cetacean populations.

- The guidelines on best practices to assess the impact of chemical pollution on cetaceans and to measure chemical contamination on cetaceans (ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf51), whose methodology follows the methods described in the literature based on the work of responsible bodies, such as IWC and ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS, for monitoring chemical contaminants and micro and macro litter ingested by marine mammals, including recent field progress in the framework of several dedicated projects, like the Interreg Med Plastic Busters MPAs project.

205. The Chairperson thanked the experts for the impressive work carried out.

206. The Meeting then revised draft Resolution 8.20, which was later adopted as Resolution 8.20 “Marine litter and chemical pollution” ([Annex 13](#)).

7.10 – Captivity related issues

207. The Executive Secretary informed that during their 13th Meeting, the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee considered the establishment of a Working Group to support the development of a reference document on marine semi-enclosed facilities and the creation of an Advisory Committee composed of leading experts in the relevant fields. The Terms of Reference for an ACCOBAMS Advisory Committee on semi-enclosed facilities were prepared (ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc29).

208. The Meeting took note of the Terms of Reference for an Advisory Committee on semi-enclosed facilities, which will be established under the remit of the Scientific Committee.

7.11 – Area-based measures for cetacean conservation

209. Ms. Léa David, Task Manager on Protected Areas for Cetaceans of the Scientific Committee of ACCOBAMS, introduced draft Resolution 8.21 on “Cetacean Critical Habitats (CCH)”.

210. The draft Resolution was prepared taking into account recommendations issued by the Cetacean Critical Habitat (CCH) Workshop, held in 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 simultaneously, to continue implementing conservation and management measures in the existing CCH.

211. Referring to draft Resolution 8.21, representatives of Türkiye and Greece made statements as reflected in [Annex 14](#) to this report.
212. The representative of Italy expressed concerns on the legal framework and the scientific robustness of the mechanism proposed in this resolution and emphasized the position of Italy that it is not the moment to accept the proposed draft resolution.
213. Following the proposal of Italy, which was supported by the Chair of the Scientific Committee, the Meeting agreed to withdraw draft Resolution 8.21 and requested the Scientific Committee to give further consideration to the proposed measures, taking into account the already existing mechanisms and tools related to area-based cetacean conservation.

7.12 – Citizen Science

214. The Executive Secretary introduced draft Resolution 8.22 on “Citizen Science” highlighting the importance of the latter, especially in raising awareness on cetacean conservation.
215. The Meeting reviewed the draft Resolution, which was later adopted as Resolution 8.21 “Citizen Science” ([Annex 13](#)).

AGENDA ITEM 8 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

216. The representative of Ukraine made a declaration, as shown in [Annex 15](#) to this report, and invited Parties to support it.
217. Referring to the statement made by the representative of Ukraine, the representative of France, on behalf of the delegations of the EU Member States that are also Parties to ACCOBAMS, and the Principality of Monaco, made the declaration shown in [Annex 16](#) to this report. Georgia supported the declaration made by Ukraine.

AGENDA ITEM 9 – DATE AND VENUE OF THE NINTH MEETING OF THE PARTIES

218. The Chair recalled that it was customary for the Parties to offer or announce their intention to consider the possibility of hosting the next Meeting of the Parties. The Secretariat indicated that

it had contacted the countries on this subject, but so far, proposals had not been made to the Secretariat on this issue.

219. The Meeting requested that the Secretariat pursue contacts with ACCOBAMS countries in order to define, in consultation with the Bureau, the place and date of the next Meeting of the Parties, which should be held in 2025. In case of absence of proposals by the end of 2023, it is foreseen that the Meeting will take place in Monaco.
220. The Secretariat revised the corresponding draft Resolution, which was later adopted as Resolution 8.22 ([Annex 13](#)).

AGENDA ITEM 10 – ADOPTION OF RESOLUTIONS

221. Further to the work of the meeting, the ACCOBAMS Parties adopted the following Resolutions:

Resolution 8.1	Granting the right to vote
Resolution 8.2	Work programme and Budget for the triennium 2023-2025
Resolution 8.3	Scientific Committee for the triennium 2023-2025
Resolution 8.4	Procedure for projects submitted for institutional support
Resolution 8.5	Procedure for the ACCOBAMS call for proposals for projects to be funded under the Supplementary Conservation Grants Fund
Resolution 8.6	ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy 2023-2028
Resolution 8.7	NETCCOBAMS
Resolution 8.8	Follow-up Procedure
Resolution 8.9	Driftnets
Resolution 8.10	ACCOBAMS Long-Term Monitoring Programme (LTMP)
Resolution 8.11	Cetacean Population Genetics
Resolution 8.12	IUCN Red List status of cetacean species in ACCOBAMS Area
Resolution 8.13	National Action Plans
Resolution 8.14	Conservation Management Plans
Resolution 8.15	Cetacean Stranding Networks
Resolution 8.16	Interactions between fisheries and cetaceans
Resolution 8.17	Anthropogenic noise
Resolution 8.18	Ship strikes
Resolution 8.19	Commercial cetacean-watching activities in the ACCOBAMS Area
Resolution 8.20	Marine litter and chemical pollution
Resolution 8.21	Citizen Science
Resolution 8.22	Date and venue of the Ninth session of the Meeting of the Parties
Resolution 8.23	Tribute to organisers

222. These Resolutions were adopted by consensus. However, since there was no consensus on the adoption of Resolutions 8.12 and 8.17, a roll call voting process was conducted, whose results were as follows:

Votes for adopting Resolution 8.12:

- In favour of the adoption: Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Ukraine;
- Against the adoption: Morocco and Tunisia;
- Abstention: Lebanon, Libya and Türkiye;
- Not present in the room: Slovenia.

Votes for adopting Resolution 8.17:

- In favour of the adoption: Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Ukraine;
- Against the adoption: Tunisia;
- Abstention: Libya, Morocco and Türkiye;
- Not present in the room: Georgia and Slovenia.

223. Representatives of Morocco and Tunisia emphasized that their delegations had no mandate to adopt Resolutions 8.12 and 8.17 as they include provisions whose scope goes beyond the conservation of cetaceans and the marine environment, which are the main objectives of ACCOBAMS.

224. The participants wanted to pay tribute to Malta, as the organizer of the Eighth Meeting of the Parties to ACCOBAMS, and for this purpose, they adopted Resolution 8.23 ([Annex 13](#)).

AGENDA ITEM 11– ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE MEETING

225. The Meeting reviewed the draft Report prepared by the Secretariat and adopted it as amended.

AGENDA ITEM 12 – CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

226. After exchanging the usual civilities, the Chair closed the Meeting at 18.00 p.m. on Friday 2 December 2022.

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ANNEX I - LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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ANNEX II

WELCOME ADDRESSES

(addresses are shown in chronological order)

**WELCOME ADDRESS BY MR. FAHRETTIN ULU
CHAIR OF ACCOBAMS DURING THE TRIENNIUM 2020 – 2022**

Distinguished Country Representatives and National Focal Points,
Distinguished ACCOBAMS Executive Secretary,
Distinguished CMS Executive Secretary,
Distinguished Observers,
Distinguished members of the Press,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be with you again after the 7th Meeting of the Parties of the Convention on the Protection of Marine Mammals in the Black Sea and Mediterranean Sea and the Contiguous Atlantic Sea Region (ACCOBAMS) which was hosted by Türkiye on 5-8 November 2019.

In this three years of time, unfortunately, we all tried to survive under pandemic conditions. But, thankfully, we have the chance to meet each other physically during this meeting and wish we shall have a successful meeting at the end.

I am respectfully grateful to you all in this manner and want to thank our host country - Malta for their generosity and the hospitality.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the secretariat for their great effort during my chairmanship. As you all remember, our former Executive Secretary Florence Descroix-Comanducci had left the position and Mrs. Susana Salvador became to be the new Executive Secretary on April 2020 and since then we had the chance to work her and the ACCOBAMS team fruitfully and cooperatively.

To sum up, the importance of protecting the nature, marine environment and in this context, the preservation of marine mammals is increasing globally day by day, as ACCOBAMS constitutes one of the most important international mechanisms for the protection of cetaceans, I wish that the 8th Meeting of the Parties will bring blessings to all parties and to our one and only planet.

**WELCOME ADDRESS BY MRS. MELANIE VIRTUE
ON BEHALF OF MRS. AMY FRAENKEL, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES**

Dear President of the Bureau,
dear Executive Secretary Susana Salvador,
Your Excellencies and distinguished delegates.

It is an honour for me to address all of you on behalf of the CMS Family at the opening of this Meeting of the Parties to the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Seas, Mediterranean and Contiguous Atlantic Area.

My name is Melanie Virtue, I am representing CMS Executive Secretary, Amy Fraenkel, who deeply regrets not being able to be with you this week.

ACCOBAMS, one of the CMS-family Agreements, in many ways represents the highest aims of the CMS Family: to concentrate conservation efforts on a threatened group of migratory species in places and ways that individual States alone could not, and to do so with enough resources to make a real impact. I congratulate the Secretariat and Parties of this Agreement for your efforts contributing to this ongoing success.

The strength of the CMS family is that we can work on these issues together. For both CMS and ASCOBANS cooperation with the ACCOBAMS Secretariat all these years has been a real pleasure. We have planned and strategized together, learned from each other, and worked closely on many issues, including for eg, the Joint Noise Working Group. ASCOBANS also works directly with ACCOBAMS on more targeted activities, which my colleague Jenny Renell will mention in more detail in her report.

At this 8th Meeting of the Parties, the proposed resolutions in front of you illustrate the major threats these animals continue to contend with: interactions with fisheries, anthropogenic noise, ship strikes, commercial whale watching activities, to name but a few. These threats are multiple and cumulative.

The proposed resolutions focus on the ACCOBAMS Area, but they address wider, global problems. Actions agreed by Parties to ACCOBAMS will not only help countries focus their efforts in the ACCOBAMS region alone, but they will also help to highlight these issues on a wider scale and emphasize that tackling them will require global cooperation and collaboration. Together, these proposed decisions can help ensure rich, thriving oceans and seas.

This meeting is happening in a very important year for marine species conservation; with the UN Oceans Conference having taken place in Lisbon in June, the negotiations on the future treaty on Biodiversity Beyond Areas of National Jurisdiction, which reconvened in August, the CITES COP which just ended, and of course the 15th Meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in the coming weeks, where countries will agree on a new Global Framework for Biodiversity. CMS continues to engage very actively in this process, promoting issues of key importance to migratory species, including the need to more effectively address ecological connectivity in this framework.

This framework will also permeate many of the decisions which will likely be put forth at CMS COP14, now scheduled for late October 2023, in Uzbekistan. We look forward to seeing some of you there, and to using that opportunity to continue advancing the cause for cetacean conservation.

I applaud the work of ACCOBAMS Parties, the ACCOBAMS Secretariat, and the Government of Malta as host of this meeting and wish you all a productive few days to come on this lovely island. Thank you.

**WELCOME ADDRESS BY MRS. SUSANA SALVADOR
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF ACCOBAMS**

Dear Chair of the ACCOBAMS Bureau, M. Fahrettin Ulu

Dear Deputy Director of the Environment and Resources Authority in Malta, Ms. Claire Cordina Borg

Dear ACCOBAMS National Focal Point for Malta, M. Darrin Stevens

Dear representative of CMS, Ms. Melanie Virtue

Distinguished Representatives of ACCOBAMS Parties,

Distinguished Partners and Observers,

Dear Colleagues, dear Participants

I would like to express our profound gratitude to the Government of Malta and to the Environment and Resources Authority, for hosting the Eighth Meeting of the Parties in this beautiful island nation. This inspiring location in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea bears witness to a fascinating history and crossroads of a rich cultural heritage, providing the ideal setup for this week's encounter of ACCOBAMS countries and partners.

I believe the outcome of the meeting will allow ACCOBAMS to reap the fruits of efforts deployed during a very challenging period of work, which began with worldwide circumstances forcing all to adapt and find ways to pursue collaborative efforts. Our like-minded regional community share a strong vision towards the objectives enshrined in the Agreement and the ACCOBAMS Strategy for 2014-2025.

Efforts were remarkable in building on the outbreaking experience of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative and its outcome. At present, thanks to the assistance of important Partners, ACCOBAMS own a unique knowledge baseline on the state of cetaceans in its Area, which should remain the point of departure for future assessments.

During this Eighth Meeting, Parties will be invited to take determining decisions, like the Long-Term Monitoring Programme, which is crucially important for the sake of effective conservation efforts in face of a rapidly changing reality. Agreeing the right action is as decisive as finding the necessary means to assess cetaceans' state. Such challenge is accrued by the fact that a major financial partner on whom ACCOBAMS so soundly relied upon for implementing the ASI can no longer provide assistance in this regard. ACCOBAMS is immensely grateful to MAVA Foundation who decisively contributed to the outbreaking ASI.

Pursuing all possible actions to halt biodiversity loss and to improve cetaceans' state and resiliency to climate change and threats posed by human activities remains the only possible way forward, while simultaneously an excellent opportunity for ACCOBAMS to re-affirm its leading role as a trusted regional partner.

The communication challenge thus comes into play in the right context, in support of improving ACCOBAMS visibility as an effective regional mechanism striving for the conservation of cetaceans in its Area, and not less importantly, as a vital knowledge hub to its Parties, to the scientific community, which is becoming increasingly useful to many other users and interested stakeholders.

The proposed program of work aims at ensuring the continuity of ACCOBAMS action initiated during the previous triennium, while launching decisive activities that were agreed beforehand by the Parties, such as the development of a new ACCOBAMS Strategy post-2025.

I wish that the deep blue colour of the Mediterranean combined with the stunning surroundings of Maleth provide the ideal “shelter” to decide the ACCOBAMS course of action for the next three years.

Thank you.

**WELCOME ADDRESS BY MR. DARRIN STEVENS
MALTA ACCOBAMS NATIONAL FOCAL POINT**

Dear ACCOBAMS Executive Secretary
Dear ACCOBAMS Bureau Chair,
Dear CMS representative,
Distinguished Country Representatives,
Partners and other observers,
ACCOBAMS Secretariat and experts,
Colleagues,
Ladies,
Gentlemen,

good morning.

As Malta's current national focal point to ACCOBAMS, it is my greatest pleasure to welcome you all on our Island for the 8th meeting of the Parties to ACCOBAMS. I would like to welcome the ACCOBAMS Executive Secretary, the ACCOBAMS Bureau Chair, Party representatives present here, ACCOBAMS Partners, - all of you that have all come together to hold MOP8. It is an honour for us to be hosting such an important meeting on our island for the very first time.

As most of you are aware, ACCOBAMS is the first agreement binding the countries together for the conservation of marine biodiversity in the Mediterranean and Black Seas. The importance of protecting the marine environment, and preserving marine cetaceans, is increasing day by day. It is within this context that ACCOBAMS is considered as an important tool for the protection of biodiversity at sea. Given the migratory characteristics of cetaceans, it is also important to acknowledge that the Agreement was established under the auspices of the Bonn Convention (UNEP/CMS).

What makes this agreement special is that rather than focusing solely on reducing threats to marine mammals living in our seas, it also dedicates a considerable amount of its work to increase knowledge and expertise of scientists and policy-makers involved in its implementation. I am indeed very appreciative by the extensive work carried out by ACCOBAMS in the past triennium, targeting several conservation actions related to marine litter, underwater noise, incidental catches, and so much more. I am also pleased to note that Malta's voluntary contribution to ACCOBAMS donated during this triennium has been used to organise training sessions on necropsies, together with voluntary contributions from other Parties.

Moving forward, I am also aware that we have another ambitious Work Programme planned for the next three years. In this regard, I encourage everyone to take into account the priorities of the ACCOBAMS' Work Programme, stressing the need to collaborate with each other, encompassing the ecosystem approach. I believe that Malta's contribution given to the implementation of ACCOBAMS is essential, both in terms of its geographical position in the centre of the Mediterranean Sea, as well as its firm approach towards marine conservation.

Being an archipelago, the Maltese Islands depend on the sea that surrounds them for food, freshwater, a stable climate, tourism, transport, as well as other recreational activities. However, with an increase in economic

opportunities, the concern of environmental hazards that may occur with shipping, recreational activities, fishing, waste discharges, and so on, increases. Everything we do has an effect on other life forms, including cetaceans; therefore, it is our duty to protect them.

Cetaceans are important to the ecosystem as being top-level predators, they control the populations of other species and keep control the delicate balance of the whole ecosystem. Given the scientific knowledge presented by experts on the numerous threats that cetaceans encounter, efforts to safeguard these species should be enhanced. It is at this point that we comprehend the importance of being a party to ACCOBAMS since 2001 - uniting all relevant countries to achieve one main goal - offer the adequate protection to cetaceans.

Throughout the years, we have seen a significant increase in the number of legal instruments that aim to enhance the conservation of the marine environment. Malta has focused its attention and energy to keep abreast with the processes emanating from the European Union, other regional and international legal and policy instruments, that target the protection of the marine environment resources, including cetaceans. Testament to this are the number of national and international projects that Malta has participated in, as well as numerous measures established pursuant to several policies that target the protection of marine biodiversity.

To conclude, allow me to once again thank you all for joining this MOP and I would like to wish you all a productive week.

I leave you all in the hands of my colleague Ms Claire Cordina Borg, Deputy Director of the Environment and Resources Authority, who's in charge of several thematic aspects, including the marine and water policy portfolio.

**WELCOME ADDRESS BY MS. CLAIRE CORDINA BORG
DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES AUTHORITY (ERA) OF MALTA**

Distinguished guests,
Dear colleagues,

good morning.

It is also my honour to welcome you all here in Malta. I am delighted to have the opportunity to be with you all.

Today, we have brought together national and international experts, marine specialists and stakeholders, partners, as well as observers, to discuss the protection of our seas, specifically cetaceans. In view of the very particular social behaviour these charismatic species have, it is very easy for us, as well as for the citizens in general, to better understand the conservation efforts required to protect these prominent and essential species. Indeed, their importance is so crucial that they can be considered as one of the key species that can be studied to assess the status of our marine waters.

Improvement of knowledge on cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Area is key. In the past years, Malta has participated in several research studies and projects in order to collect relevant data and information on the distribution and abundance of cetaceans, establishing three sites for the further conservation of the bottlenose dolphin. Conservation measures for these Marine Protected Areas were identified, complementing the measures put forward as part of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive's (MSFD) Programme of Measures. Additionally, EU funds (EMFF) were also used to implement monitoring methodologies for cetaceans within MPAs in Maltese waters; such results will be used to enable continuous assessment of the status of these species.

Malta has been engaged in a coordinated national effort when it comes to the protection of cetaceans. For example, when it comes to stranding, other relevant entities have been involved in the local cetacean stranding network to follow-up rescue and rehabilitation operations.

We need to humbly acknowledge that management of the marine environment is a challenge, given the various activities that compete for space, and the economic and social importance of our seas. Therefore, we need to overcome this challenge by striking the right balance between all the demands we impose on our marine environment and its protection, so as to ensure that these activities do not have a detrimental effect on marine biodiversity, including cetaceans.

We have gathered here today to agree on common approach to protect these priceless animals. Together, we will be going through a number of ACCOBAMS draft Resolutions with the aim of reaching a consensus, while acknowledging the challenges, and assuring we reach our main goal: to create a better environment for these species that are of utmost importance to the marine ecosystem.

Once again, I join Mr Darrin Stevens in wishing you all a fruitful meeting, and I hope your experience on our precious islands will be unforgettable.

I would like to conclude by expressing my sincere appreciation to everyone involved in the preparation of the 8th meeting of the Parties to ACCOBAMS.

If you allow me, I would like to invite you all to watch a short video we developed representing the prospective improvement in the conservation of cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Area. Enjoy and good luck! 😊

ANNEX III
RULES OF PROCEDURE
FOR THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES

RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES

PURPOSE

Article 1

1. These rules of procedure shall apply to any Session of the Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Agreement on the Conservation on Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area, convened in accordance with article III of the Agreement.
2. Insofar as they are applicable, these rules shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to any other meeting held in the framework of the Agreement on the Conservation on Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area.

DATE AND PLACE OF MEETINGS

Article 2

1. Ordinary sessions of the Meeting of the Parties shall be held at intervals of not more than three years.
2. The Meeting of the Parties shall take place in the country chosen by the previous Meeting of the Parties on the basis of a formal invitation that should have been issued to this effect by the responsible authority of that country. If more than one Party issues an invitation to host the next session of the Meeting of the Parties, and two or more invitations are maintained after informal consultations, the Meeting of the Parties shall decide on the venue of the next session by secret ballot.
3. If no invitation has been received, the Meeting of the Parties shall be held in the country where the Secretariat has its seat, unless other appropriate arrangements are made by the Secretariat of the Agreement or the Secretariat of the Convention.
4. Extraordinary sessions of the Meetings of the Parties shall be convened by the Agreement Secretariat on the written request of at least two thirds of the Parties.

DELEGATES, CREDENTIALS, OBSERVERS

Article 3

Representatives

1. A Party to the Agreement (hereafter referred to as a "Party¹") shall be entitled to be represented at the Meeting by a delegation consisting of a Head of Delegation and such Alternative Representatives and Advisers as the Party may deem necessary.

¹ See Articles I, paragraph 3.i), and XIV of the Agreement. A Party is a State which has deposited with the Government of the Principality of Monaco its instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession in due time before the Meeting.

2. The Representative of a Party shall exercise the voting rights of that Party. In his/her absence, an Alternative Representative of that Party shall act in his place.
3. States or regional economic integration organizations that have ratified, accepted or approved the Agreement or have signed it without reservations in respect of ratification, acceptance or approval or have acceded to it are represented at the Meetings of the Parties and exercise their voting rights, even though the Agreement has not yet entered into force for them.
4. Logistic and other limitations may require that no more than four delegates of any Party be present at a plenary session. The Secretariat shall notify Parties, observers and other participants of any such limitations in advance of the Meeting.

Article 4 **Credentials**

1. The Representative or any Alternative Representative of a Party shall, before exercising the voting rights of the Party, have been granted powers by, or on behalf of, a proper authority, such as the Head of State, the Head of Government or the Minister of Foreign Affairs or the head of an executive body of any regional economic Organization, enabling them to represent the Party at the Meeting and to vote.
2. Such credentials shall be submitted to the Secretariat of the Agreement at the beginning of the Meeting.
3. A Credentials Committee of not more than five representatives shall examine the credentials and shall report thereon to the Meeting. Pending a decision on their credentials, delegates may participate provisionally in the Meeting.
4. If credentials are submitted in a language other than one of the working languages of the Meeting (French and English), they shall be accompanied by a suitable translation into one of these two languages to permit their efficient validations by the Credentials Committee.

Article 5 **Observers²**

1. The United Nations, its Specialized Agencies, the International Atomic Energy Agency and any State not a Party to the Agreement may be represented at the Meeting by observers
2. Any Body or Agency technically concerned *inter alia* with the conservation of cetaceans and fisheries management, which is either:
 - a) an international Agency or Body; or
 - b) an international non-governmental Agency or body, or a national governmental Agency or body; or
 - c) a national non-governmental Agency or Body which has been approved for this purpose by the State in which it is located;

² See Agreement, Article III, paragraph 4

and which has informed the Secretariat of the Agreement of its desire to be represented at the Meeting by observers, shall be permitted to be represented unless, for those referred to in paragraph 2b and 2c, at least one-third of the Parties present object.

3. Bodies and Agencies desiring to be represented at the Meeting by observers shall submit the name of their representatives and in the case of Bodies and Agencies, referred to in paragraph 2b and 2c, of this Article, evidence of the approval of the State in which they are located, to the Secretariat of the Agreement prior to the opening of the Meeting.
4. Logistic and other limitations may require that no more than two observers from any non-Party State, Body or Agency be present at the Meeting. The Secretariat shall notify Parties, observers and other participants of any such limitations in advance of the Meeting.

AGENDA

Article 6

1. The Secretariat shall prepare the provisional agenda of each Meeting, in consultation with the Convention Secretariat and the Sub Regional Coordination Units.
2. The provisional agenda of each ordinary session of the Meeting of the Parties shall include, as appropriate:
 - a) Items arising from the articles or the Annexes of the Agreement;
 - b) Items, the inclusion of which has been decided at a previous Meeting or which emanate from decisions taken at a previous Meeting;
 - c) Items referred to in paragraph 6 of the present article;
 - d) Any item proposed by a Party, the Scientific Committee or the Secretariat.
3. The Secretariat shall, in consultation with the Bureau, include any item that has been proposed by a Party and has been received by the Secretariat after the provisional agenda has been produced, but before the opening of the Meeting, in a supplementary provisional agenda.
4. The Meeting of the Parties shall examine the provisional agenda together with any supplementary provisional agenda. When adopting the agenda, it may add, delete, defer, or amend items. Only items, which are considered by the Meeting of the Parties to be urgent and important, may be added to the agenda.
5. The provisional Agenda for an extraordinary session of the Meeting of the Parties shall consist only of those items proposed for consideration in the request for this session. The provisional agenda and any necessary supporting documents shall be distributed to the Parties at the same time as the invitation to the extraordinary session.
6. Any item of the agenda of an ordinary session of the Meeting of the Parties, consideration of which has not been completed at the session, shall be included automatically in the agenda of the next session, unless otherwise decided by the Meeting of the Parties.

DOCUMENTS

Article 7

The documents for each ordinary session of the Meeting of the Parties, as per Article 6 paragraph 5 and proposals received from the Parties, as per Article 12 of the Rules of Procedure, shall be distributed to the Parties in the two working languages by the Secretariat at least sixty days before the opening of the Meeting.

BUREAU

Article 8

1. At opening session of each ordinary Meeting, the acting Chairperson, or in the absence of the Chairperson, a representative of the same Party or in its absence the Head of the Delegation of the host country of the Meeting of the Parties, shall preside until the Meeting of the Parties has elected its Chairperson.
2. At the commencement of the first sitting of each ordinary Meeting³, a Chairperson and a maximum of four Vice Chairpersons shall be elected from among the representatives of the Parties present at the Meeting, based on informal consultations conducted by the Secretariat.
3. The Chairperson shall participate in the Meeting in that capacity and shall not at the same time exercise the rights of a representative of a Party. The Party concerned shall designate another representative who shall be entitled to represent the Party in the Meeting and to exercise the right to vote.
4. If the Chairperson and/or one of the Vice-Chairpersons resign or are otherwise unable to complete the assigned term of office or to perform the functions of the office, a representative of the same Party shall be named by the Party concerned to replace the said officer for the remainder of that office's mandate.
5. For the purpose of the Meeting of the Parties and the Meeting of the Bureau, and throughout session, one of the Vice Chairpersons will be Reporter.

RULES OF ORDER AND DEBATE

Article 9

Powers of Presiding Officer and Vice-Presiding

1. In addition to exercising powers conferred elsewhere in these Rules, the Presiding Officer shall at plenary sessions of the Meeting:
 - a) open and close the session;
 - b) direct the discussions;
 - c) ensure the observance of these rules;

³ See Agreement, Article VI, paragraph 1

- d) accord the right to speak;
 - e) put questions to the vote and announce decisions;
 - f) rule on points of order; and
 - g) subject to these Rules, have complete control of the proceedings of the Meeting and the maintenance of order.
2. The Presiding Officer may, in the course of discussion at a plenary session of the Meeting, propose to the Meeting of the Parties:
- a) time limits for speakers;
 - b) limitation of the number of times the members of a delegation or the observers from a State not a Party, body or agency may speak on any question;
 - c) the closure of the list of speakers;
 - d) accord the right of reply to any delegate after the closure of the speakers;
 - e) the adjournment or the closure of the debate on the particular subject or question under discussion; and
 - f) the suspension or adjournment of the session.
3. Without prejudice to Article 8, paragraph 4, for the debates the Presiding officer may be supply by the Vice-Presiding.

Article 10

Seating, Quorum

1. Delegations shall be seated in accordance with the alphabetical order of the names of the Parties in the French language.
2. A quorum for plenary sessions of the Meeting shall consist of more than one-half of the Parties having delegations at the Meeting. No plenary session shall take place in the absence of a quorum.

Article 11

Right to Speak

1. The Presiding Officer shall call upon speakers in the order in which they signify their desire to speak, with precedence given to the delegations of the Parties.
2. A delegate or observer may speak only if called upon by the Presiding Officer, who may call a speaker to order if the remarks are not relevant to the subject under discussion.
3. A speaker shall not be interrupted except on a point of order. The speaker may, however, with the permission of the Presiding Officer, give way during their speech to allow any delegate or observer to bring complement on a particular point in his speech.
4. The Chairperson of a committee or working group may be accorded precedence for the purpose of explaining the conclusions arrived at by that committee or working group.

Article 12

Submission of Proposals for Amendment of the Agreement and its Appendices

1. As a general rule, subject to any provisions of the Agreement itself,
 - a) proposals shall have been communicated at least 150 days before the session to the Secretariat, which shall have circulated them to all Parties in the working languages of the Meeting⁴,
 - b) proposals arising out of discussion of the foregoing may be discussed at any plenary session of the Meeting provided copies of them have been circulated to all delegations not later than the day preceding the session.

2. The Presiding Officer may also permit the discussion and consideration of urgent proposals arising after the period prescribed with the subparagraph a) of this Article provided that they relate to proposed amendments which have been circulated in accordance with the subparagraph b) of this Article and that their consideration will not unduly inhibit the proceedings of the Meeting. The Presiding Officer may, in addition, permit the discussion of motions as to procedures, even though such motions have not been circulated previously.

3. After a proposal has been adopted or rejected by the Meeting it shall not be reconsidered unless a two-thirds majority of the Representatives participating in the Meeting so decide. Permission to speak on a motion to reconsider a proposal shall be accorded only to a delegate from each of two Parties wishing to speak against the motion, after which the motion shall immediately be put to the vote.

Article 13

Point of Order

1. During the discussion of any matter, a delegate may rise to a point of order, and the Presiding Officer in accordance with these Rules shall immediately decide the point of order. A delegate may appeal against any ruling of the Presiding Officer. The appeal shall immediately be put to the vote, and the decision of the Presiding Officer shall be maintained unless a majority of the Representatives present and voting otherwise decide. A delegate rising to a point of order may not speak on the substance of the matter under discussion.

2. The following motions shall have precedence in the following order over all other proposals or motions before the Meeting:
 - a) to suspend the sitting;
 - b) to adjourn the sitting;
 - c) to adjourn the debate on the particular subject or question under discussion;
 - d) to close the debate on the particular subject or question under discussion.

⁴ See Agreement, Article X, paragraph 2

VOTING

Article 14

Methods of Voting

1. Without prejudice to the provisions of Article 4, paragraph 1, each delegation shall have one vote. Regional economic integration organizations, in matters within their competence, shall exercise their right to vote with the number of votes equal to the number of their member States which are Parties. In such case, the member States of such organizations shall not exercise their right individually⁵.
2. 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.
3. The Meeting shall normally vote by show of hands, but any Representative may request a roll-call vote. The roll-call vote shall be taken in the French alphabetical order. The Presiding Officer may require a roll-call vote on the advice of the tellers where they are in doubt as to the actual number of votes cast and this is likely to be critical to the outcome.
4. All votes in respect of the election of officers or of prospective host countries for the next Meeting shall be by secret ballot and, although it shall not normally be used, any Representative may request a secret ballot for other matters. If seconded, the question of whether a secret ballot should be held shall immediately be voted upon. The motion for a secret ballot may not be conducted by secret ballot.
5. Voting by roll-call or by secret ballot shall be expressed by "Yes", "No" or "Abstain". Only affirmative and negative votes shall be counted in calculating the number of votes cast.
6. Procedural decisions are taken by a simple majority.
7. If votes are equal, a second vote shall be taken. If the vote is also equal, the motion or amendment shall not be carried.
8. The Presiding Officer shall be responsible for the counting of the votes and shall announce the result. Tellers appointed by the Secretariat may assist the Presiding Officer.
9. After the Presiding Officer has announced the beginning of the vote, it shall not be interrupted except by a Representative on a point of order in connection with the actual conduct of the voting. The Presiding Officer may permit Representatives to explain their votes either before or after the voting, and may limit the time to be allowed for such explanations.

⁵ See Agreement, Article III, paragraph 5.

Article 15

Majority

Except where otherwise provided for under the provisions of the Agreement, these Rules or the Terms of Reference for the Administration of the Trust Fund, all votes on procedural matters relating to the forwarding of the business of the Meeting shall be decided by a simple majority of votes cast, while all other decisions shall be taken by a two-thirds majority of votes cast.

Article 16

Procedure for Voting on Motions and Amendments

1. A delegate may move that parts of a proposal or of an amendment be voted on separately. If objection is made to the request for such division, the motion for division shall be voted upon first. Permission to speak on the motion for division shall be accorded only to a delegate from each of two Parties wishing to speak in favour of and a delegate from each of two Parties wishing to speak against the motion. If the motion for division is carried, those parts of the proposal or amendment that are subsequently approved shall be put to the vote as a whole. If all operative parts of the proposal or the amendment have been rejected, the proposal or the amendment shall be considered to have been rejected as a whole.
2. When an amendment is moved to a proposal, the amendment shall be voted on first. When two or more amendments are moved to a proposal, the Meeting shall vote first on the amendment furthest removed in substance from the original proposal and then on the amendment next furthest removed there from, and so on until all amendments have been put to the vote. When, however, the adoption of one amendment necessarily implies the rejection of another amendment, the latter amendment shall not be put to the vote. If one or more amendments are adopted, the amended proposal shall then be voted upon. A motion is considered an amendment to a proposal if it merely adds to, deletes or revises part of that proposal.
3. If two or more proposals relate to the same question, the Meeting shall, unless it decides otherwise, vote on the proposals in the order in which they have been submitted. The Meeting may, after voting on a proposal, decide whether to vote on the next proposal.

Article 17

Elections

1. If in an election to fill one place no candidate obtains the required majority in the first ballot, a second ballot shall be taken restricted to the two candidates obtaining the largest number of votes. If in the second ballot the votes are equally divided, the Presiding Officer shall decide between the candidates by drawing lots.
2. If in the first ballot there is a tie amongst candidates obtaining the second largest number of votes, a special ballot shall be held amongst them to reduce the number of candidates to two.
3. In the case of tie amongst three or more candidates obtaining the largest number of votes in the first ballot, a special ballot shall be held amongst them to reduce the number of candidates to two. If a tie then results amongst two or more candidates, the Presiding Officer shall reduce the number to two by drawing lots, and a further ballot shall be held in accordance with paragraph 1 of this Article.

Article 18**Election of Members of the Follow-up Committee**

1. The election of members of the Follow-up Committee shall be held by secret ballot, unless, in the absence of any objection by one Party, the Meeting of the Parties decides on the members by consensus without taking a ballot.
2. Before the elections begins, the Chairperson shall appoint two tellers from among the delegates. He/she shall hand to them the list of States Parties and of organizations and institutions having the status of ACCOBAMS Partners (hereinafter referred to as "ACCOBAMS Partners") entitled to vote, as well as the lists of candidates nominated respectively by States Parties and ACCOBAMS Partners.
3. The Secretariat shall prepare voting papers with the list of candidates nominated by States Parties and shall distribute them to the States Parties entitled to vote.
4. The Secretariat shall prepare voting papers with the list of candidates nominated by ACCOBAMS Partners and shall distribute them to the ACCOBAMS Partners entitled to vote.
5. Each delegation shall cast its vote by encircling the names of those candidates (three in the case of States Parties and two in the case of ACCOBAMS Partners) for whom it desires to vote.
6. The States Parties and the ACCOBAMS Partners shall deposit their voting papers in the ballot box according to the roll call made by the Chairperson in the alphabetical order.
7. The tellers shall proceed to count the voting papers and to read the names encircled under the supervision of the Chairperson.
8. Voting papers on which more names have been circled than there are seats to be filled shall be considered invalid.
9. The candidates obtaining the greatest number of votes shall be declared elected up to the number of seats to be filled.
10. If there still remain seats to be filled, there shall be another round of voting.
11. If two or more candidates obtain the same number of votes and, as a result, the number of these candidates is greater than the remaining number of seats to be filled, there shall be an additional round of voting restricted to those candidates who obtained the same number of votes. If in this additional round of voting two or more candidates obtain the same number of votes, the Chairperson shall draw lots among them.
12. After each round of voting the Chairperson shall announce the results.

SECRETARIAT

Article 19

1. The Agreement Executive Secretary shall be the Secretary of the Meeting of the Parties.
2. The Secretariat shall provide and direct the staff as required by the Meeting of the Parties.

Article 20

1. The Secretariat shall⁶ :
 - a. Arrange for interpretation at the Meeting;
 - b. Prepare, receive, translate, reproduce and distribute the documents which will be useful during the Meeting;
 - c. Draft the report of the Meeting, under the guidance of the Reporter, for consideration by the Bureau first and for final approval by the Meeting of the Parties;
 - d. Make and arrange for keeping of sound recordings of the Meeting;
 - e. Arrange for the custody and preservation of the documents of the Meeting
 - f. Publish and circulate the official documents which result from the Meeting;
 - g. Generally perform all other work that the Meeting of the Parties may require.

LANGUAGES AND RECORDS

Article 21

Official and Working Languages

1. French and English shall be the official and working languages of the Meetings.
2. The official documents of the Meeting shall be distributed in those two languages.
3. Speeches made in any of the working languages shall be interpreted into the other working language.

Article 22

Other Languages

1. A delegate may speak in a language other than a working language. He shall be responsible for providing interpretation into a working language, and interpretation into the other working language may be based upon that interpretation.
2. Any document submitted to the Secretariat in any language other than a working language shall be accompanied by a translation into one of the two working languages, this translation being trustworthy.

⁶ See Article IV of the Agreement.

Article 23**Report**

1. The report of the Meeting shall be circulated to all Parties in the official languages of the Meeting.
2. Committees and working groups shall decide upon the form in which their report shall be presented.

PUBLICITY OF DEBATES**Article 24****Plenary Sessions**

All plenary sessions of the Meeting shall be open to the public, except that in exceptional circumstances the Meeting may decide, by a two-thirds majority of Representatives present and voting, that any single session be closed to the public.

Article 25**Sessions of Committees and Working Groups**

As a general rule, sessions of committees and working groups shall be limited to the representatives and to observers invited by the Chairpersons of the committees or working groups.

THE BUREAU, OTHER COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS**Article 26**

1. During the Meeting of the Party, the Bureau and the Reporter of the Meeting shall meet as often as necessary on request of his Chairman.

Article 27**Credentials Committee and Working Groups**

1. In addition to the Credentials Committee, the Meeting of the Parties may establish working groups as may be necessary to enable them to carry out their functions. They shall define the terms of reference and composition of each working group, the size of which shall be limited according to the number of places available in assembly rooms.
2. The Meeting of the Parties may decide that any such working group may meet in the period between ordinary Meetings.
3. The Credentials Committee and each working group shall elect their own officers.

4. Insofar as they are applicable, these Rules shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to the proceedings of committee and working groups; however, interpretation may not be provided in sessions of the committee and working groups.

AMENDMENT

Article 28

These Rules may be amended as required by decision of the Meeting.

ANNEX IV - AGENDA

I. Welcome addresses

II. Organizational issues

- 1) Rules of Procedure for the Meeting of the Parties to ACCOBAMS
- 2) Granting the right to vote
- 3) Establishment of the Credentials Committee
- 4) Report by the Credentials Committee
- 5) Admission of observers
- 6) Election of the Bureau
- 7) Adoption of the Agenda

III. Opening Statements

IV. Progress reports of the Agreement

- 1) National Reports
- 2) Report of the Depositary and status of Ratifications
- 3) Report of the Bureau
- 4) Report of the Secretariat
- 5) Report of the Scientific Committee and its Working Groups
- 6) Reports of the Sub Regional Coordination Units
- 7) Report of the Follow-up Committee
- 8) Reports of the ACCOBAMS Partners
- 9) Budgetary Reports
 - a. Report on incomes and expenditures relevant to the Trust Fund and external contributions for 2020-2022
 - b. Report on the Supplementary Conservation Grants Fund
 - c. Report by the Fund Management Controller

V. Institutional and budgetary arrangements

- 1) Work Programme and Budget for the 2023-2025 triennium
- 2) Scientific Committee for the 2023-2025 triennium
- 3) Procedure for projects
 - a. Projects submitted for institutional support
 - b. Projects under the ACCOBAMS Supplementary Conservation Funds
- 4) ACCOBAMS Partners
 - a. New request for partnership
 - b. Overview of the state of collaboration with Partners
- 5) Communication
 - a. ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy
 - b. NETCCOBAMS
 - c. ACCOBAMS Logo

VI. Implementation of and compliance with ACCOBAMS Resolutions

- 1) ACCOBAMS Follow-up Committee
 - a. Recommendations
 - b. Election of new members
- 2) 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
- 3) Driftnets

VII. Implementation of the Agreement: technical and scientific issues

- 1) Cetacean population estimates and distribution
- 2) Population structure
- 3) Monitoring cetaceans' status
 - a. IUCN Red List
 - b. Regional Plans
 - c. National Actions Plans
 - d. Conservation Management Plans
- 4) Functional stranding networks and responses to emergency situations
- 5) Interactions with fisheries / aquaculture
- 6) Anthropogenic noise
- 7) Ship strikes
- 8) Cetacean Watching
- 9) Marine litter and chemical & biological pollution
- 10) Captivity related issues
- 11) Area-based measures for cetacean conservation
- 12) Citizen Science

VIII. Any Other business**IX. Date and venue of the Ninth Meeting of the Parties****X. Adoption of Resolutions****XI. Adoption of the Report of the Meeting****XII. Closure of the Meeting**

ANNEX V

OPENING STATEMENTS

(Statements are shown in chronological order)

STATEMENT BY ITALY
(Delivered by the ACCOBAMS Focal Point)

Mm. Chair and Distinguish Colleagues,

Italy would like to express its appreciation to the Government of Malta for hosting this eighth Meeting of Parties of ACCOBAMS, which is be the occasion to reaffirm our commitments and to boost our efforts in implementing the Agreement, as well as to the Permanent Secretariat for its organization.

Italy has always been committed to cetacean conservation and played a key role in the Mediterranean context in all relevant fora, including within ACCOBAMS, the Pelagos Agreement and the Barcelona Convention-related processes.

Conservation challenges on cetaceans, wide-ranging mammals indifferent to administrative boundaries, require true cooperation between countries. In this context ACCOBAMS represents a key tool to enable us to work together and to successfully solve challenges that transcend borders.

The ACCOBAMS Area encompasses diverse socio-economic contexts and approaches to the conservation and use of the marine environment. Such an extended area offers a unique opportunity for cooperation. An opportunity that should not be lost because of existing difficulties, in particular those we are facing now at international level that risk to undermine multilateralism.

For this reason, it is now even more necessary to strengthen the cooperation in the frame of global and regional initiatives through the maximum transparency and efficiency of their governance tools, which need to grow in parallel with work plans and implementation of relevant activities. To this aim, IT believes that the composition of the Bureau and of the Scientific Committee should be reviewed to strengthen the representation of countries, as a whole and in each sub-region.

Moreover, Italy strongly believes that, to achieve our goals, our effort should be focused on streamlining relevant global and regional policies, capitalising on existing conservation and management tools.

ACCOBAMS should align its action to that of global and regional initiatives and tools, including harmonisation with principles discussed in the negotiations of the Agreement on the marine biodiversity conservation beyond national jurisdiction (the BBNJ Treaty), of the establishment of a global legally binding agreement to combat plastic pollution by 2024 and in the negotiations for the Post-2020 Global Framework that will be luckily adopted at the next COP of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Montreal.

All that, in synergy with Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and Black Sea Commission.

Indeed, global and regional dimensions should proceed in parallel in a continuous streamline and communication mechanism.

I wish you all a successful meeting for the benefit of cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area.

Thank you very much.

STATEMENT BY TUNISIA
(Delivered by the ACCOBAMS Focal Point)

Monsieur le Président, Mesdames et Messieurs, Honorable Assistance,

Tout d'abord je voudrais exprimer mon immense honneur et grand plaisir de participer, en tant que point focal de la TUNISIE, à la huitième Réunion des Parties Contractantes à l'ACCOBAMS.

La participation de la Tunisie dès la première réunion des parties de ACCOBAMS ainsi que ma présence parmi vous aujourd'hui témoigne de l'engagement de mon Pays pour la conservation des Cétacés spécifiquement et sa volonté d'être présente sur la carte mondiale des pays protecteurs du milieu naturel en général.

Pour atteindre cet objectif, la Tunisie a ratifié plusieurs conventions et accords relatifs à la conservation de la diversité biologique et à la gestion durable des ressources naturelles et veille à mettre à jour son cadre réglementaire pour être en conformité avec les recommandations et résolutions issues des Organisations et autres Institutions internationales et régionales dont elle est membre (à titre d'exemple la Tunisie a strictement interdit la pêche des cétacés depuis 1994 et aussi l'utilisation des filets dérivants responsables d'une forte mortalité chez les cétacés, depuis le 01 janvier 2002 ...)

Je saisis cette même occasion pour remercier le secrétariat de l'ACCOBAMS pour leur soutien à tous les niveaux notamment en matière de renforcement des capacités portant par exemple sur la nécropsie, la photo identification et aussi le financement des projets qui ont permis la mise en place d'équipes scientifiques qualifiées en bycatch et déprédation et aussi le renforcement du travail du réseau d'échouage tout en tenant compte des enjeux socioéconomiques excisant.

Finalement, Mesdames et Messieurs, Honorable Assistance, Merci de votre attention et je souhaite plein succès aux travaux de cette Réunion.

STATEMENT BY TÜRKIYE
(Delivered by the ACCOBAMS Focal Point)

Distinguished Chairperson,
Distinguished Delegates and Executive Secretary
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Türkiye is grateful to the Government of Malta for hosting Meeting of Parties and for the great hospitality provided to us. Türkiye would like to express its sincere appreciation to the Secretariat for its devoted work on conservation of cetaceans in the last triennium.

We come together to discuss a set of issues regarding the enhancing of the effective cetacean conservation. Türkiye, which has coasts on both the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, would like to emphasize the importance it attaches to the improvement current conservation status of cetaceans and habitats, also regional and national efforts.

We look forward to a successful meeting that can be achieved through constructive deliberations on important issues of the Agreement, including those on budget and work programme, technical and scientific issues.

Thank you.

STATEMENT BY UKRAINE
(Delivered by the Ukrainian representative)

Mrs. Chair,

Ukrainian delegation would like to make invite ACCOBAMS parties join this statement

Distinguished Delegates,

These are not normal times and our thoughts are with the Ukrainian people and everyone who is suffering because of Russia's war on Ukraine.

We also express grave concern over the growing environmental emergency in Ukraine relating to the ongoing and potential damage of its environment, stemming from the Russian Federation's unprovoked and unjustified aggression.

The Black Sea and the Sea of Azov are the home for numerous species of marine flora and fauna including three species of cetaceans, namely, common dolphin, bottlenose dolphin and harbour porpoise. All these species are under international and national protection of many Range States including the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov riparian countries.

Military activities of the Russian navy because of the its aggression against Ukraine have already caused unprecedented negative impact on coastal and marine biodiversity, destroying plant and animal habitats and led to mortality of living marine creatures.

Here is an alarming statistic of growing number of dead dolphins in the Black Sea this year. The scientists believe that the main reason of this phenomenon is military actions of the Russians military ships including detrimental impact of underwater noise generating by their sonars. Samples of dead and stranded dolphins have been already collected and prepared to be processed and analyzed by relevant laboratories.

While the Russian Federation is not a Contracting Party to ACCOBAMS it is evident that its aggression has a major threat not only to cetaceans but also to the biodiversity of numerous ecosystems including marine fauna and flora thus violating the fundamental principles of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

We recognise the need to assess the environmental consequences of Russia's aggression both in Ukraine and in a wider Black Sea region and affirm our support to Ukraine in reconstruction, including for providing assistance for restoration activities of the damaged habitats and plant and animal populations.

We call upon the Contracting Parties to ACCOBAMS to take every effort to force the Russian Federation to immediately cease its aggression that prevents Ukraine from exercising its obligations under the ACCOBAMS and other international treaties to protect and restore marine ecosystems.

We will forward the text of this statement to the Secretariat

STATEMENT BY UNEP/MAP
(Delivered by Mr Stavros Antoniadis. on behalf of MAP Coordinator Ms. Tatjana Hema)

I would like to thank the ACCOBAMS Secretariat for the invitation of UNEP/MAP Barcelona Convention to this important MOP and convey to the meeting the apologies of the MAP Coordinator Ms. Tatjana Hema for not being able to attend herself, as the meeting of the Bureau of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention is currently held in Greece. I would therefore like to deliver this speech on her behalf.

UNEP/MAP and ACCOBAMS have a long-standing co successful cooperation, formalised through an MoU signed between the two organisations in 2012, which has served as a framework for the delivery of a number of important achievements jointly by the two organisations. Let me highlight some of these:

First of all, there is a close ongoing collaboration among the Secretariats of ACCOBAMS, UNEP/MAP, GFCM, IUCN-Med, within the Joint Cooperation Strategy on Spatial-based Protection and Management Measures for Marine Biodiversity. This collaboration has been very helpful in bringing together important actors in the region for an integrated protection of marine biodiversity and ecosystems.

In addition, an important area of cooperation is related to the Mediterranean Quality Status Reports prepared by MAP in the framework of the UNEP/MAP Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP) implementation.

- In particular, on the assessment of CCIs 23, 26 & 27, ACCOBAMS is providing important information and assessment findings produced within the projects implemented by ACCOBAMS and the elaboration of data from noise register and the Mediterranean Aerial Survey Initiative managed by ACCOBAMS.
- Within the implementation of the cetacean monitoring programmes identified under the EcAp Med III project in the south Mediterranean countries, UNEP/MAP Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC) is calling for experiences issued from ACCOBAMS Survey Initiatives (ASI) and for sharing its data to support the preparation of the 2023 Quality Status report and their dissemination in relevant regional fora.
- Linked to this joint work, UNEP/MAP Information and Communication Regional Activity Centre (INFO/RAC) has developed in close collaboration with ACCOBAMS Data Standards and Data Dictionaries for IMAP Common Indicators 3,4 related to cetaceans, while cooperation is ongoing to ensure a regional reporting into the IMAP Info System on cetaceans as additional data flow besides the Contracting Parties contribution.
- UNEP/MAP looks forward to continuing and further strengthening this cooperation on environmental monitoring and assessment, with a focus on coordinated efforts of setting monitoring and assessment of CCIs 26 and 27, as well as for developing a common methodology for monitoring floating marine litter through aerial surveys.

In relation to biodiversity and ecosystems conservation and restoration:

- For more than two decades, ACCOBAMS and UNEP/MAP-SPA/RAC have been working together to achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for cetaceans, in the spirit of the recommendations of the Barcelona Convention Contracting Parties.
- In this context, the ACCOBAMS Agreement Parties have designated SPA/RAC as Coordination Unit for the Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic Area, in order to facilitate the implementation of the measures prescribed in the Conservation Plan of the Agreement (Annex 2), Article III 7 c.

- As every Biennium, there is a detailed joined work-programme between SPA/RAC and the ACCOBAMS for the period 2021-2022, focusing on:
 - assisting contracting Parties in mitigating the impacts of the interactions occurring between cetacean species and fishing activities mainly bycatch and Depredation
 - supporting the implementation of the National Action Plans for the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean, their elaboration and revision if needed
 - building national capacities to set up and reinforce their national stranding networks
 - promoting achievement and awareness on the anthropogenic noise impacts on cetaceans.
 - organizing conferences and workshops to exchange experiences and information and to consider the best approaches.
- SPA/RAC has collaborated closely with the Secretariat of ACCOBAMS in revising and updating the Mediterranean Action Plan for the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean, which is in line with the evolving regional context regarding cetacean conservation and with the new challenges and priorities as identified by the most recent scientific knowledge.
- Finally, representatives from ACCOBAMS Secretariat and/or its Scientific committee are member of the *ad hoc* Group of Experts on Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (AGEM) and the Advisory Committee of the SPA/BIO post 2020.

A number of other joint actions have been and are being implemented by ACCOBAMS and UNEP/MAP and its Components, including the following:

- ACCOBAMS, Plan Bleu, and SPA/RAC - amongst a total of 12 organisations - organized the pavilion "Mediterranean Solutions" during the IUCN 2020 Congress (Marseille, September 2021).
- ACCOBAMS, Plan Bleu, and SPA/RAC also collaborate as partners of the project ABIOMMED, an EU MSFD support project for the Mediterranean with an important component on biodiversity especially mammals.
- There is also successful cooperation between the two Organisations in the framework of PELAGOS Agreement. In this context, UNEP/MAP (Plan Bleu) wishes to contribute to building capacities to support the implementation of the Pelagos Management Plan regarding the mitigation of environmental impact from cruise, recreational boating, tourism and marine renewable energies sectors.
- Plan Bleu has also offered ACCOBAMS Secretariat to explore how the Med Observatory could be used as a platform for ACCOBAMS information and provide the functionalities of analysis and cross-checking data from different sources; this remains an option to be explored.

The UNEP/MAP Coordinator had on 20 October 2022 a bilateral meeting with the Executive Secretary of ACCOBAMS, Mrs. Susana Salvador, where issues of common interest were discussed, including the contribution of ACCOBAMS to the 2023 MED QSR, exchange of best practices, cooperation on spatial-based protection and management measures for marine biodiversity, possible future collaboration through projects and on outreach events. Both organizations are very keen to continue collaboration including through renewal of the existing MoU. To this end, the UNEP/MAP

Secretariat plans to present to the next Bureau meeting in 2023 a proposal for a new Agreement for submission to the MAP Focal Points and to COP 23 for consideration and adoption.

I would like to thank once again the ACCOBAMS Secretariat for the invitation to this important MOP and wish you a successful meeting and fruitful deliberations. Let me also reaffirm, on behalf of the MAP Barcelona Convention Secretariat, the intention to continue and further expand our effective collaboration in the following years.

STATEMENT BY REMPEC
(Delivered by Mr. Franck Lauwers, representing UNEP-MAP/REMPEC)

Your Excellencies, dear Chair of the Bureau, dear Executive Secretary, distinguished delegates, esteemed colleagues, ladies, and gentlemen, it is a great pleasure for me to represent the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC) at the Eighth Meeting of the Parties to ACCOBAMS.

Allow me first to thank the Government of Malta for its hospitality and to express my appreciation to the ACCOBAMS Secretariat for the invitation to attend this meeting as an observer.

REMPEC is a Regional Activity Centre established within the framework of the Mediterranean Action Plan of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP/MAP), with a view to coordinating the activities of the Mediterranean coastal States related to the implementation of the Protocol concerning Cooperation in Preventing Pollution from Ships and, in Cases of Emergency, Combating Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (the “Barcelona Convention”). The Centre has been based in Malta, hosted by the Government of Malta, and administered by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in cooperation with UNEP/MAP since 1976.

REMPEC and ACCOBAMS have worked in close cooperation for many years. The recent adoption of Decision IG.25/16 on the Mediterranean Strategy for the Prevention of, Preparedness, and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (2022-2031) at the 22nd Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (COP 22) (Antalya, Türkiye, 7-10 December 2021), has created a new impetus for this cooperation.

Indeed, by adopting this Strategy, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (i.e. the 21 Mediterranean coastal States and the European Union) committed to take individual and collective effective measures to address a range of environmental challenges, including pollution, climate change, air emissions, plastic and marine litter, non-indigenous species, protected areas and emerging issues (such as underwater noise). Some of these challenges are of key relevance to the work of ACCOBAMS.

This Strategy is not only a response to environmental challenges, but also a driver of green maritime transport that is a firm basis for a wider sustainable blue economy in the Mediterranean. This is part of a broader endeavour undertaken by IMO, UNEP/MAP and the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to address the triple crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss in the Mediterranean, while accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

As I speak, the First Coordination Meeting on the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) is being held in Malta in parallel to the ACCOBAMS MOP 8. This meeting will enable to discuss an analysis of the needs of countries for the implementation of the actions into which the Strategy translates versus on-going activities and projects carried out by relevant regional stakeholders in the Mediterranean. It will also enable to define concrete synergies and plans through concertation, coordination of activities, definition of responsibilities and directions, to be considered in the preparation of the UNEP/MAP Programme of Work for the period 2024-2025 and beyond.

Since REMPEC is mandated to assist the Mediterranean coastal States in ratifying, transposing, implementing, and enforcing international maritime conventions related to the prevention, preparedness, and response to pollution from ships, allow me to also update the meeting on some of the key recent developments within the IMO of direct relevance to both REMPEC and ACCOBAMS:

1. The 76th session of the IMO's Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 76) (10-17 June 2021) agreed to include in the biennial agenda of the Sub-Committee on Ship Design and Construction (SDC) for 2022-2023 an output on *"Review of the 2014 Guidelines for the reduction of underwater noise from commercial shipping to address adverse impacts on marine life (MEPC.1/Circ.833) and identification of next steps"*, with a target completion year of 2023. The work is advancing well, and the matter is expected to be discussed at the 9th session of the said committee (SDC 9) to be held from 23 to 27 January 2023.
2. Following the request of MEPC 76, IMO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) have joined hands to develop a new technical cooperation project to address the issue of underwater noise from shipping (the "GEF-UNDP-IMO GloNoise Partnership project"). The project will focus on building capacity in developing countries for implementing the IMO Guidelines for the reduction of underwater noise from commercial shipping to address adverse impacts on marine life. The project will further entail assisting developing countries and regions in raising awareness and filling the information gaps to assist the policy dialogue on anthropogenic underwater noise mitigation from shipping.
3. The 79th session of the IMO's Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 79) (London, UK, 12-16 December 2022) will be invited to consider a proposal for the designation of a Particular Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) in the North-Western Mediterranean Sea to protect cetaceans from international shipping, jointly submitted by France, Italy, Monaco, and Spain.

To conclude, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the ACCOBAMS Secretariat for the work it has done ahead of this important meeting.

I wish all fruitful deliberations and a successful outcome at the Eighth Meeting of the Parties to ACCOBAMS.

STATEMENT BY IOGP
(Delivered by Mr. David Barthèlemy)

International Association of Oil & Gas Producers (IOGP) thanks the distinguished ACCOBAMS Contracting Parties and ACCOBAMS Secretariat for the opportunity to be with you this week on behalf of the IOGP as an ACCOBAMS Observer. We value our ability as an ACCOBAMS observer organisation to engage with the ACCOBAMS Contracting Parties and other observer organisations to help to ensure that ACCOBAMS is transparent and inclusive in its decision-making and to ensure ACCOBAMS measures are practicable, realistic and underpinned by sound science and research, to facilitate sustainable blue economy activities to take place in the ACCOBAMS Area.

STATEMENT BY THE BLACK SEA COMMISSION PERMANENT SECRETARIAT (BSC PS)
(Delivered by Ms. Iryna Makarenko)

Thank you Madam Chair and congratulations on being elected.

Your Excellences, Ms. ACCOBAMS Chair, ACCOBAMS Executive Secretary, distinguished participants of the Meeting, ladies and gentleman,

It is a great honour for me to be here today and I would like to extend my gratitude to the Government of Malta and ACCOBAMS Secretariat for hosting and excellent organization of this distinguished meeting and for this chance to be given a floor on behalf of the Black Sea Commission' Permanent Secretariat.

As you may know, the Black Sea Commission was created as an executive body to implement the provisions of the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution also known as Bucharest Convention, and being a Regional Sea Convention, the Black Sea Commission is responsible for promoting the implementation of Bucharest Convention and its Protocols, it was established to, *inter alia*, monitor and assess pollution, control pollution from land-based sources, ensure conservation of biological diversity, address environmental safety aspects of shipping, address environmental aspects of management of fisheries and other marine living resources and, last but not least, promote integrated coastal zone management and maritime policy.

As you may know, since 2002, in accordance with the provisions of the relevant Memorandum of Understanding between the Black Sea Commission and ACCOBAMS, the Permanent Secretariat of the Black Sea Commission (BSC) has an honour to serve as Black Sea Sub Regional Coordination Unit for ACCOBAMS in regards to the conservation of the cetaceans of the Black Sea. It is my pleasure to mark today an outstanding level of cooperation between our organizations and a solid intention to continue our efforts in the Black Sea region together with other relevant partners.

Let me thank the Republic of Türkiye for excellent chairmanship and also my compatriots from Ukraine that despite these challenging times will be sharing with us their concerns regarding the conservation of the Black Sea cetaceans...

I will be given a floor later today to present the report of our sub-regional unit, concluding my address, let me wish every success as well as long years of prosperity and well-being to your distinguished organization. Let me also wish success to this meeting and to our future endeavors aimed at conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea region.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

STATEMENT BY ASCOBANS
(Delivered by Ms Jenny Renell, ASCOBANS Coordinator)

ASCOBANS is the sister agreement of ACCOBAMS in the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas. The mandates the Agreement has for the conservation of cetaceans, bring clear opportunities for close collaboration and synergies with ACCOBAMS.

These are present for example in the Joint Noise Working Group, the Joint Bycatch Working Group, and the Common Dolphin Group. We are also planning a Marine Debris Workshop together, to take place at the next European Cetacean Conference in 2023.

In addition, ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS share some of the Agreement Area; and three Range States - France, Portugal, and Spain.

The 9th Meeting of the Parties to ASCOBANS took place in September 2020, online. Resolutions adopted, that may be of interest to ACCOBAMS Parties, include marine debris, food availability and resource depletion, and the Baltic Proper harbour porpoise.

The ASCOBANS Parties also updated existing resolutions on bycatch, conservation of the common dolphin, and stranding response. With that, Parties adopted the joint ASCOBANS-ACCOBAMS *Best practice on cetacean post-mortem investigation and tissue sampling*, and the *CMS Family Guidelines on EIA for marine noise-generating activities*. The Resolutions are available on the [ASCOBANS website](#).

The 27th Meeting of the Advisory Committee (AC27) was held online in September 2022. It agreed on 27 Action Points and Recommendations, which can be found on the [ASCOBANS website](#). The ASCOBANS Resource Depletion Working Group submitted an extensive report to AC27, which may be of interest to MOP8 participants. AC27 also discussed the recent Nord Stream gas leak, dolphin hunt in the Faroe Islands, and the threat recreational speed crafts pose to small cetaceans.

The meeting agreed to establish a Working Group to identify potential duplication or gaps in cetacean conservation efforts between ASCOBANS and other organisations; and Working Groups to address the rapid growth in offshore renewable energy construction, effects of the Nord Stream gas leak, and recreational speed crafts.

Some other recent activities of potential interest to ACCOBAMS relate to alternative gears to static gillnets, prediction of the cochlear frequency maps of harbour porpoise, developing guidelines for cetacean-friendly marine spatial planning, and status of the Iberian harbour porpoise. These are all projects that started this year, and I hope to be able to share some results by the next ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee meeting.

ASCOBANS celebrates its 30th anniversary this year, and ACCOBAMS celebrated its 25th anniversary last year. ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS have a long history of fruitful cooperation, and I look forward to continue working closely together.

Thank you.

STATEMENT BY THE PERMANENT SECRETARIAT OF THE PELAGOS AGREEMENT
(Delivered by Ms. Costanza Favilli, Executive Secretary of the Pelagos Agreement)

The Permanent Secretariat of the Pelagos Agreement is pleased to inform the ACCOBAMS MOP that, last December at the 8th Pelagos Conference of the Parties, France, Italy and Monaco approved a new Management Plan and Action Plan for 2022-2027. These Plans are aiming to revitalise the strategy and the work of the Agreement by introducing important innovations, in regard to both the governance of the Agreement and the execution and financial support of its activities.

On that occasion, the Parties reaffirmed the fundamental importance they attribute to the collaboration between the ACCOBAMS and Pelagos Agreements in consideration of their objectives and the complementarity of their actions.

Therefore, for the Permanent Secretariat the improvement and continuing of this collaboration constitutes a priority.

In this context, I take this opportunity to thank ACCOBAMS for making ASI data available for the area of the Pelagos Sanctuary. These data, together with data collected in other contexts, will be the basis for the Working Groups on Assessment and Impacts to carry out technical-scientific analyses on few priority species and pressures.

In addition, the participation of ACCOBAMS representatives to the new Pelagos Working Groups is a concrete sign of our cooperation and it will allow our two Agreements to ensure synergies and avoid duplications on topics of mutual interest.

I also want to highlight the work done on the issue of collisions between whales and ships by our two Agreements, which led to the submission of a proposal for the designation of a *Particularly Sensitive Sea Area* in the North-Western Mediterranean by France, Italy, Monaco and Spain. The two Agreements were able to provide, when requested, full support to the Parties, facilitating the organisation of technical and political meetings, funding specific studies and maintaining the level of attention of the public on this concerning issue.

Finally, we continue to be engaged in the promotion of the ACCOBAMS/Pelagos code of conduct on the observation of cetaceans, which is enhanced by HQWW certification process.

Concerning our future cooperative plans, the Pelagos Agreement will develop targeted communication actions aiming to disseminate all results of the above cooperative actions, as early as 2023, through the creation of a dedicated web pages on the new Pelagos website, which will be inaugurated before next summer and a video presenting the cooperation between the two agreements.

To conclude, allow me to thank the Parties to the Pelagos Agreement for their guidance, concrete everyday support and financial contributions that they made available to meet the objectives of our Agreement and of the aforementioned collaboration.

I wish everyone a very fruitful week.

STATEMENT BY GFCM

Dear ACCOBAMS Chairperson, Executive Secretary, Distinguished delegates and participants, Dear colleagues,

On behalf of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, I have the pleasure to address the Eighth Meeting of the Parties in my capacity of newly appointed GFCM Executive Secretary and in light of the tight and productive collaboration between ACCOBAMS and the GFCM over the years.

I would like to congratulate ACCOBAMS for their incredible work and the key role played in the context of conservation actions in the Mediterranean and Black Sea. ACCOBAMS's efforts in improved assessments of cetaceans' populations, enhanced monitoring and mitigation of potential negative interactions with fisheries as well as other valuable contributions towards area-based conservation measures, the reduction of anthropogenic underwater noise, marine litter and other such issues of common interest are crucial for the sustainability of fisheries, biodiversity and livelihoods in our joint area of application.

ACCOBAMS keeps on proving to be an invaluable partner in multiple joint endeavours. The considerable progress achieved in initiatives such as the Medbycatch and Depredation projects have demonstrated once again the added value of such collaboration, and the GFCM plans to keep on relying on the positive mechanisms established to further advance in the monitoring and mitigation of negative interactions between fisheries and the marine environment and ecosystems. A key pillar of the GFCM 2030 Strategy for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, as well as of the recently established MedSea4Fish capacity development programme, cooperation with relevant international organizations aims to exploit the complementarity of mandates to foster multidisciplinary holistic solutions.

I look forward to pursuing our strong collaboration in the years to come and to keep on showcasing through our joint efforts how efficient fisheries management and conservation objectives can go hand in hand in the framework of shared sustainability goals.

I thank you for your attention and wish you all a very productive meeting.

Yours sincerely,

Miguel Bernal

STATEMENT BY RAMOGE

Considérant le développement de la croisière et de la grande plaisance dans la zone RAMOGE, l'Accord a jugé important d'étudier ces activités de façon exhaustive afin d'acquérir des données objectives pour garantir sur le long terme une gestion durable de ces activités.

En effet, la croisière en Méditerranée représentait 14,8 % du marché mondial en 2019, portée par une croissance soutenue d'environ 5 % par an. Malgré la parenthèse relative à la pandémie de la Covid-19, cette activité connaîtra assurément un nouvel essor ces prochaines années. De même, on estime que plus de 3 000 yachts, soit entre 60 à 70 % de la flotte mondiale, fréquentent chaque année le « triangle d'or » situé entre la côte d'Azur, Monaco, la Riviera italienne et la Sardaigne.

Dans ce contexte, RAMOGE a publié en 2021, une étude dressant l'inventaire de l'ensemble des impacts environnementaux de la croisière, ainsi que de la grande plaisance. En outre, ce travail documente aussi le contexte réglementaire pertinent au sein des pays parties à l'Accord, et propose des recommandations et pistes d'amélioration pour limiter au mieux ces impacts.

La croisière et la grande plaisance sont à l'origine de nombreuses nuisances et perturbations pour les mammifères et cétacés, qu'il s'agisse des collisions, des émissions acoustiques, ou des pollutions chimiques. Ainsi, le Secrétariat de l'Accord RAMOGE considère la collaboration avec l'ACCOBAMS comme essentielle pour contribuer à informer et sensibiliser les armateurs, compagnies maritimes, gestionnaires d'aires marines, autorités portuaires, collectivités locales et usagers ; mais aussi relayer et promouvoir des mesures permettant d'agir concrètement sur la limitation des sources de pollution, à l'instar de la charte récemment lancée par la France, « Charte Croisière Durable Méditerranée », visant à encourager les compagnies à mettre en œuvre des pratiques plus soutenables.

Dans la continuité des activités déjà menées en partenariat sur les déchets marins, le Secrétariat de l'Accord RAMOGE se tient à la disposition de l'ACCOBAMS pour réfléchir à une collaboration afin de promouvoir une croisière durable en Méditerranée.

ANNEX VI - REPORT OF THE DEPOSITARY AND STATUS OF RATIFICATIONS¹



The Depositary of the Agreement, the Department of External Relations and Cooperation of the Principality of Monaco, has the honour to submit this report to the States Parties to the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic area (ACCOBAMS).

Since the seventh Meeting of the Parties (MoP7), held in Istanbul from 22 to 25 November 2019, no new ratifications of the Agreement have been registered by the Depositary.

Thus, on 28 July 2022, the Agreement counted 24 Contracting Parties (Table 1).

With regard to the Amendments to the text of the Agreement and its annexes, relating to the extension of the geographical scope of ACCOBAMS adopted at MOP4 in 2010, the Department of External Relations and Cooperation has registered the instruments of ratification of the Republic of Italy, deposited on 4 August 2021, and of the Republic of Malta, deposited on 26 January 2022.

The Department of External Relations and Cooperation did not fail to inform, through diplomatic channels, the signatories and/or Parties to the Agreement, the Council of the European Union, the ACCOBAMS Secretariat and the Secretariat of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) as well as the United Nations Treaty Service.

Thus, as of 28 July 2022, 10 Parties have approved the Amendments (Table 2).

For the record, according to Article X, paragraph 3 of the Agreement, the said amendments shall enter into force on the thirtieth day after the date on which two-thirds of the States Parties to the Agreement, i.e. sixteen (16) Parties, have ratified them.

Furthermore, during this 2020-2022 triennium, the Department of External Relations and Cooperation, in its capacity as ACCOBAMS Depositary, through the intermediary of the various diplomatic agents of the Principality of Monaco, supported the steps taken by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat to raise awareness among the other riparian States with a view to their accession to the Agreement and to encourage them to approve the Amendments.

¹ Monaco le 28/07/2022

Table 1

The following table shows the status of the Contracting Parties to the Agreement as of 28 July 2022.

COUNTRY	SIGNATURES	RATIFICATIONS		ENTRY INTO FORCE
	Dates	Tool	Deposit of the tool	
ALBANIA	24/11/1996	25/05/2001	03/07/2001	01/10/2001
ALGERIA		19/03/2007(AA)	25/09/2007	01/12/2007
BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA				
BULGARIA	16/09/1999	23/09/1999	10/11/1999	01/06/2001
CROATIA	24/11/1996	03/05/2000	10/07/2000	01/06/2001
CYPRUS	24/11/1996	30/01/2006	14/02/2006	01/05/2006
EGYPT		04/03/2010	19/04/2010	01/07/2010
EUROPEAN UNION				
FRANCE	24/11/1996	26/02/2004 (AA)	10/03/2004	01/06/2004
GEORGIA	24/11/1996	30/03/2001	31/05/2001	01/06/2001
GREECE	24/11/1996*	24/11/1996*	24/11/1996*	01/06/2001
ISRAEL				
ITALIA	24/11/1996	10/02/2005	24/06/05	01/09/2005
LEBANON		05/05/2004(A)	13/12/2004	01/03/2005
LIBYAN ARAB JAMAHIRIYA		12/05/2002	18/06/2002	01/09/2002
MALTA	23/03/2001*	23/03/2001*	23/03/2001*	01/06/2001
MONACO	24/11/1996	25/04/1997	30/04/1997	01/06/2001
MONTENEGRO		17/02/2009 (AAA)	18/05/2009	01/08/2009
MOROCCO	28/03/1997	13/05/1999	05/07/1999	01/06/2001
PORTUGAL	24/11/1996	30/09/2004 (A)	15/10/2004	01/01/2005
ROMANIA	28/09/1998	13/06/2000	17/07/2000	01/06/2001
RUSSIA				
SLOVENIA		12/07/2006	25/09/2006	01/12/2006
SPAIN	24/11/1996	07/01/1999	02/02/1999	01/06/2001
SYRIA		07/02/02 (A)	22/03/2002	01/06/2002
TUNISIA	24/11/1996	31/12/2001	15/01/2002	01/04/2002
TÜRKIYE		29/05/2017 (AA)	03/11/2017	01/02/2018
UNITED KINGDOM				
UKRAINE		09/07/2003	23/10/2003	01/01/2004

* Signature valid for ratification

A = Adherence

AA = Approval

AAA= Accession

Table 2

The following table shows the status of the Contracting Parties having approved the Amendments, as of 22 July 2022:

COUNTRY	RATIFICATIONS		ENTRY INTO FORCE
	Tool	Deposit of the tool	
ALBANIA			
ALGERIA			
BULGARIA	08/02/2012 ³	14/03/2012	
CROATIA			
CYPRUS	11/08/2014 ³	22/08/2014	
EGYPT			
FRANCE	15/10/2016 ²	10/11/2016	
GEORGIA			
GREECE			
ITALIA	13/07/2021 ¹	04/08/2021	
LEBANON			
LIBYAN ARAB JAMAHIRIYA			
MALTA	10/01/2022 ³	26/01/2022	
MONACO	24/02/2011 ²	02/03/2011	
MONTENEGRO	03/12/2014 ³	09/07/2015	
MOROCCO			
PORTUGAL			
ROMANIA			
SLOVENIA	09/06/2016 ²	09/06/2016	
SPAIN	26/11/2012 ¹	10/01/2013	
SYRIA			
TUNISIA			
TÜRKIYE			
UKRAINE	26/11/2012 ³	02/01/2013	

¹ = Ratification

² = Approval

³ = Acceptance

NB: 16 approvals are required for the entry into force of the amendments

ANNEX VII - REPORT OF THE BUREAU

During the 2020-2022 triennium the composition of the Bureau was as follows:

- Chairperson: Mr. Fahrettin ULU (Türkiye);
- Vice-Chairperson: Mr. Gaby KHALAF (Lebanon);
- Vice-Chairperson: Mr. Duncan BORG (Malta) replaced by Ms. Marie-Therese GAMBIN since June 2021;
- Vice-Chairperson: Mr. Abdelali LOUDRHIRI (Morocco);
- Vice-Chairperson: Ms. Elvira GARCIA-BELLIDO CAPDEVILA (Spain).

Three Meetings of the Bureau were held during the 2020-2022 triennium, of which the first two were organized online due to the COVID-19 pandemic and followed specific procedures agreed by the Bureau Members:

- The Thirteenth Bureau Meeting (BU13, Online, 9-11 December 2020),
- The Fourteenth Bureau Meeting (BU14, Online, 18-19 January 2022),
- The Fifth Meeting of the Extended Bureau (BUEXT5, Monaco, 26-27 April 2022).

In addition, and in accordance with the Recruitment procedure for the Executive Secretary foreseen in Resolution 7.3, the Bureau acted as Recruitment Committee and met on 10 February 2020 to interview the shortlisted candidates for the position of Executive Secretary. On 7 April 2021 an online Extraordinary Meeting of the Bureau was organized to assess the effectiveness of the first (probation) year of the Executive Secretary appointed in 2020, which was followed by a favourable *advice issued by the Bureau on the continuation of her mandate*. A letter from the ACCOBAMS Chair was circulated to the National Focal Points on the 9th April 2021.

On 1st September 2022 another online Extraordinary Meeting of the Bureau was devoted to a decision-taking on the projects to be selected for funding under the 2022 ACCOBAMS Call for proposals.

All the Meetings of the Bureau were attended by the Bureau Members, as well as by the Advisor to the Bureau Chair (Mr. Aybars ALTIPARMAK), the Chair of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee (Mr. Simone PANIGADA) and by members and experts working with the ACCOBAMS Secretariat.

The Fifth Meeting of the Extended Bureau was also attended by:

- A Country representative: Mrs. Céline IMPAGLIAZZO (Monaco);
- Three experts nominated by the Bureau Members - Ms. Mihaela CANDEA, Mr. Alain JEUDY DE GRISSAC and Ms. Ana ŠTRBENAC;
- The representatives from Sub-Regional Coordinating Units - Ms. Lobna BEN NAKHLA (SPA/RAC) and Ms. Iryna MAKARENKO (BSC).

A report was prepared by the Secretariat after each Meeting. All three reports are presented to the Eighth Meeting of the Parties as reference documents:

- ACCOBAMS-BU13/2020/Doc25,
- ACCOBAMS-BU14/2022/Doc20, and
- ACCOBAMS-BUEXT5/2022/Doc11.

The purpose of the present report is to provide an overview on the main issues addressed by the Bureau during the 2020-2022 triennium.

I. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

1) Recruitment of the new Executive Secretary

Following the adoption of Resolution 7.3 by the Seventh Meeting of the Parties in November 2019, and considering Ms. Florence DESCROIX-COMANDUCCI end of mandate, in December 2019 the Secretariat published on the ACCOBAMS website the vacancy notice for the Executive Secretary, in English and French, upon request of the President of the 2017-2019 Bureau.

Five candidates were selected and invited for a face-to-face interview at the ACCOBAMS Secretariat on 10 February 2020. Acting as Recruitment Committee, the Bureau selected Mrs. Susana SALVADOR for the position of ACCOBAMS Executive Secretary and she was recruited on 12 April 2020.

According to Resolution 7.3, the Executive Secretary is recruited for a period of six (6) years, including the first year on probation. Before the end of the first year, the Bureau prepares an assessment of the effectiveness of the person concerned, in order to issue an advice on the continuation of the mandate. The term of office of six (6) years may be extended for a period of three (3) years.

During BU13, the Bureau agreed to hold a meeting to evaluate the effectiveness of the Executive Secretary before the end of her first year in post. The Bureau members thus met online on 7 April 2021.

A favorable decision regarding Mrs. Susana SALVADOR continuation in post was delivered by the Bureau, based on her recognized competence and high sense of responsibility, as well as on her outstanding capacity in leading an international Secretariat with all it embraces, notably the financial management of the budget allocated by the Parties, the Secretariat human resources, and the ACCOBAMS Program of Work.

2) Budgetary matters

Report on incomes and expenditures:

The Secretariat regularly informed the Bureau about the Trust Fund and the Supplementary Conservation Grant Fund. In accordance with Resolution 7.6, reports on incomes and expenditures were presented for 2019, 2020 and 2021.

The Bureau approved the 2019, 2020 and 2021 accounts that had been properly validated, and commended:

- the financial supports provided by some countries through voluntary contributions offered during the triennium (Italy, Malta and Monaco),
- the work of the Secretariat to develop projects and activities supported through co-funding (EU- and MAVAF-funded projects, collaboration with IUCN).

At BU13 and BU14, the Secretariat presented a list of proposed activities with estimated expenditures (respectively for 2021 and 2022), in accordance with the Work Programme adopted by Parties through Resolution 7.6, taking into consideration relevant budgetary implications. The Bureau agreed with the proposed activities for 2021 and 2022 and the estimated expenditures while encouraging the Secretariat to continue monitoring opportunities for funding and to develop proposals for multilateral projects and co-funded activities.

Unpaid contributions:

At each meeting the Bureau addressed the issue of unpaid contributions and requested the Secretariat to send a reminder to the Parties concerned urging them to swiftly fulfil their obligations towards the ACCOBAMS Trust Fund, in order to enable the implementation of activities relevant to the Agreement before MOP8. In particular, the Bureau advised the Secretariat to contact the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Countries with more than 3 unpaid annual contributions.

Creation of an intersessional Working Group on budgetary provisions:

In accordance with para. 15 of Resolution 7.6, BU13 reviewed the Terms of Reference for an intersessional Working Group to elaborate a proposal of revision of budgetary provisions, such as, but not limited to, the methodology for the calculation of Ordinary Contributions, the modalities of eligibility for funding to attend ACCOBAMS institutional meetings and the different kinds of funds. These Terms of Reference as reviewed by the Bureau Members were circulated to all National Focal Points on 1st February 2021, but no Party has designated a representative.

2022 ACCOBAMS Call for proposals:

In accordance with BU14 decision, a new ACCOBAMS Call for proposals for projects to be funded under the Supplementary Conservation Grants Fund was launched by the Secretariat in February 2022 thanks to voluntary contributions perceived from Italy and Monaco. During BUEXT5, Bureau Members agreed on a temporary modification of 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 also agreed to postpone the deadline of the 2022 ACCOBAMS Call for Projects by one month (until end of May 2022).

In September 2022 a dedicated online meeting of the Bureau was held in order to select the projects to be funded.

Lastly, 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 posed to 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 respective National Focal Point.

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

3) Communication Strategy

In accordance with Resolutions 7.4 and 7.5, as provided by the 2020-2022 Programme of Work, and in consultation with the Bureau a specialized company was recruited in 2020 to develop the draft ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy in view of its presentation for adoption at MOP8.

During BU13, the Bureau agreed to create a Steering Group to liaise with the Secretariat and the company during the drafting of the Communication Strategy and requested the Secretariat to provide all the National Focal Points with this information.

A Diagnostic Report on the examination of the communication tools currently used by ACCOBAMS was presented to BU14.

BU14 appreciated the work undertaken by the company and underlined the importance of having a Communication Strategy and of promoting ACCOBAMS as a brand, in particular to support future fundraising efforts. The Meeting requested the Secretariat to finalise the draft Communication Strategy and to include it in the related draft Resolutions to be submitted to MOP8.

During BUEXT5, recognizing the need to strengthen the ACCOBAMS brand positioning, the Bureau agreed that it would be beneficial to have all conditions in place for an efficient implementation of the Communication Strategy during the next triennium. With that in mind and considering the recommendation by the company to refresh the visual image of the ACCOBAMS brand before launching the implementation of the Communication Strategy in 2023, 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.

4) NETCCOBAMS

During the 2020-2022 triennium, the Bureau was informed of the progress in the development of the new version of the NETCCOBAMS platform (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.

The Bureau welcomed the progress in the development of NETCCOBAMS and requested some adjustments, such as adding projects and a template to be used for national reporting. During BU14, the Bureau requested the Secretariat to provide all National Focal Points with their password and invite them to fill in their National Reports for MOP8 before the end of July 2022.

The Bureau invited the Secretariat to prepare a draft Resolution on NETCCOBAMS to be submitted to MOP8.

5) ACCOBAMS Partners

At each Bureau Meeting the Secretariat presented the requests received for ACCOBAMS partnership.

During the triennium 2020-2022, the Bureau granted the status of ACCOBAMS Partner to 5 organizations:

- The International Association of Oil and Gas Producers (IOGP)
- The Save the Med Foundation
- The NGO KYMA Sea conservation & research
- The Museu da Baleia da Madeira
- The Yacht Club of Monaco (YCM).

The Bureau decided to postpone its decision concerning Delta Association awaiting the advice from the National Focal Point of Italy.

The Bureau also considered the question of reporting obligations by Partners, as provided in Annex 2 (Rules and Commitments of ACCOBAMS Partners) of Resolution 7.9 adopted during the MOP7 - *“ACCOBAMS Partners shall present, at the latest two months after each Meeting of the Parties, a programme of collaboration with the Permanent*

Secretariat during the triennium. The programme shall include all activities carried out in the frame of the partnership and related to the conservation plan and the support to the Permanent Secretariat”.

In total, 23 Partners out of 50 provided their collaboration programmes for the 2020-2022 triennium. While highlighting the importance of collaboration with Partners, the Bureau requested the Secretariat to prepare a list of ACCOBAMS Partners reflecting their reporting contributions to ACCOBAMS.

The state of collaboration of ACCOBAMS Partners was presented to Bureau Members during BUEXT5. It appeared that 8 Partners have neither provided any documental information (programmes of activities or reports of collaboration) nor got involved in any ACCOBAMS activities.

While recalling that the status of ACCOBAMS Partner may be withdrawn at any time following a decision by the ACCOBAMS Bureau, and 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, and to warn them about the likely withdrawal of their current status of ACCOBAMS Partner.

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

6) Driftnets

In view of the frequent events of whale entanglements in illegal driftnets that have occurred in recent years in the Mediterranean Sea, efforts have been made by the Bureau to address this issue throughout the triennium.

At BU13, the Bureau underscored that illegal driftnetting was a major issue for the conservation of cetaceans and for ACCOBAMS and mandated the Secretariat to send a letter to all Parties in order to raise attention on this issue. The Parties were thus invited to officially notify the Secretariat of every entanglement occurrence due to illegal driftnets and to inform about existing legal instruments and measures conceived to nationally enforce the ACCOBAMS provisions on the issue.

At BU14, a review of relevant treaties and national legislation was presented to Bureau Members, based on information provided by the ACCOBAMS Parties that had responded to the consultation launched in March 2021.

The Bureau Members noted the information provided and expressed concern about the few replies received from countries on their implementation of the ACCOBAMS driftnet ban. In order to get additional feedback on such important issue, the Bureau requested the Secretariat to get in touch with the countries that have not yet replied, including through direct contacts - phone calls - with National Focal Points and/or through official contacts with Ministries of Foreign Affairs, as appropriate, so that the Legal Advisor could update his report for MOP8.

As the illegal use of driftnets in the ACCOBAMS Area continues to be a serious cause for concern, the Bureau further requested the Secretariat to prepare a draft Resolution on this issue to be submitted to MOP8. The Bureau also mandated the Secretariat to explore, in collaboration with the Scientific Committee, the finetuning of the definition of driftnets so that related ACCOBAMS provisions become clearer and more precise.

7) Implementation of Resolution 4.18

ACCOBAMS provides 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. Guidelines on the granting of exceptions have been adopted by the Parties in 2010 through Resolution 4.18, in order to provide guidance on their implementation.

Many activities generating harassment within the meaning of these Guidelines are possibly carried out in the ACCOBAMS Area. However, no request for advice has ever been submitted to the Scientific Committee.

During BUEXT5, upon information provided to the Bureau Members, the Meeting concluded 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 them about the applicable procedure for granting exemptions to research activities at sea that are likely to cause harassment of cetaceans, and to invite Parties to inform the Secretariat about exemptions that they may have granted during the five past years.

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 such delay, the requesting Party may consider that the advice of the Scientific Committee is favorable.

8) Preparation of MOP8

At each Meeting of the Bureau, the representative of Malta and the Executive Secretary informed the Bureau Members on the progress made in the preparation of the Eighth Meeting of the Parties (MOP8) in Malta (29 November - 2 December 2022).

II. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREEMENT: TECHNICAL AND SCIENTIFIC ISSUES

At each Meeting of the Bureau, the Secretariat and the Scientific Committee provided the Bureau with an overview of the recent developments and activities of the 2020-2022 Programme of Work. In particular, progress was made on the following topics:

- Cetacean population estimates and distribution
- Population structure
- Monitoring cetacean's status, including the development of Conservation Management Plans (CMPs)
- Functional stranding networks and responses to emergency situation
- Interactions with fisheries
- Anthropogenic underwater noise
- Ship strikes
- Cetaceans stranding
- Cetacean watching
- Interactions with marine litter

- Chemical and biological pollution
- Captivity related issues
- Area-based measures for cetaceans.

The Bureau commended the activities implemented despite the COVID-19 crisis and congratulated the Secretariat and the Scientific Committee for the work undertaken, particularly in collaboration with other organizations, which improved and developed the importance of ACCOBAMS on the international scene. The Bureau recommended to continue this collaborative approach.

The Bureau was informed about the follow-up of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative (ASI) project. The Bureau members commended the importance of the Results Reports and the forthcoming publication "Conserving Whales, Dolphins and Porpoises in the Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea and adjacent areas: an ACCOBAMS status report".

The Bureau recommended to implement a large communication action on the ASI results, as it constitutes an excellent opportunity to increase the visibility on ACCOBAMS and its activities, as well as the collaborative spirit of the Agreement.

While recognizing that it is an important challenge for ACCOBAMS, the Bureau encouraged the Secretariat to continue its efforts, in consultation with the Scientific Committee and the National Focal Points, so to ensure ASI sustainability. At BU14, the Bureau reviewed the reports related to the development of the ACCOBAMS Long-Term Monitoring Program (LTMP) and the roadmap to sustain the financial resources necessary for its implementation, while highlighting the importance of the LTMP in supporting ACCOBAMS mission and objectives.

The Bureau agreed to establish an *ad hoc* group composed of National Focal Points to support the preparation of the draft Resolution on the LTMP in view of facilitating MOP8 discussions and decisions regarding the funding of the LTMP.

The importance of ensuring regular synoptic monitoring operations in the ACCOBAMS Area was emphasized by the Bureau members, as well as of synergies with the relevant EU directives and Regional Seas conventions monitoring frameworks. The Bureau thus recommended that the Secretariat liaises with the European Commission, the Secretariats of the Regional Sea Conventions (Barcelona and Bucharest Conventions), ASCOBANS and IWC to (i) inform them about the results of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative, and (ii) to ensure coordination regarding the development of the ACCOBAMS Long Term Monitoring Program.

ANNEX VIII - REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT

(from November 2019 to September 2022)

Introduction

According to Article IV, paragraph 2, f), at each ordinary session of the Meeting of the Parties, the Agreement Secretariat shall provide a report on the work developed by the Agreement Secretariat, the Sub-Regional Coordination Units, the Bureau, and the Scientific Committee, and on the implementation of the Agreement based on information provided by the Parties and other sources.

This document is a report on activities carried out by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat, based on the Work Programme 2020-2022 adopted during the Seventh Meeting of the Parties in 2019.

The Report was prepared by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat in order to inform the meeting on the status of each action planned under the 2020-2022 Work Program. It describes the activities implemented regarding administrative and scientific issues and on collaboration with other Institutions during the triennium 2020-2022. The report covers the period from November 2019 to September 2022.

From early 2020, the triennium activities implementation was impacted by the COVID-19 sanitary crisis. As it happened with many organisations worldwide, several activities and meetings had to be postponed or organised online. It is only since the end of 2021 that in person meetings could be resumed with all necessary sanitary precautions. Despite this major disturbance, the 2020-2022 programme has been implemented.

The Secretariat attended in person and online meetings and workshops. Each time, the Secretariat took the opportunity to present relevant activities, particularly those that contributed to enhance the Agreement's visibility, as well as to disseminate information material and to explore ways of strengthening relevant cooperation/collaboration for the implementation of ACCOBAMS. These meetings are non-exhaustively indicated in [Annex 1](#).

Lastly, [Annex 2](#) offers a report on the implementation of ACCOBAMS Funding Strategy as required by Resolution 7.5.

MANAGEMENT OF THE AGREEMENT (MA)

MA1	INVOLVEMENT OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS
MA1a	Strengthen involvement of all key stakeholders in ACCOBAMS's operations

Expected outcomes	Involvement of all key stakeholders in ACCOBAMS's operations
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Proposed Action(s)	Means of implementation	<i>Status²</i>	<i>Achievements</i>
<p>Establish/strengthen partnerships and collaborations with all relevant IGOs, NGOs, and international/national entities</p> <p>Strengthen involvement of all riparian Countries to encourage accession to the Agreement of all riparian states and to develop activities with non-Parties</p> <p>Strengthen involvement of national representatives in formulating actions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing MoU • Participating in Coordination Meetings and relevant fora • Working through relevant Joint WG • Developing joint actions / projects • Organizing joint Workshops, in particular with Partners • Linking with relevant marine strategies • Contributing to the determination and monitoring of the GES 	<p>Achieved</p>	<p><u>Liaison with the Depositary and all Riparian Countries</u></p> <p>Liaising with the Depositary was done through a meeting in June 2020 with HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco and His Advisor, where details of the ACCOBAMS PoW and foreseen activities in relation to the ACCOBAMS 25th anniversary in 2021 were discussed.</p> <p>Many other meetings were held with high representatives of the Depositary country, where both the accession and ratification process were discussed as current priorities for ACCOBAMS.</p> <p>The Secretariat was approached by Israel on the accession process foreseen in the Agreement. Being a “range State”, Israel is entitled to become a party to the ACCOBAMS by depositing an instrument of accession with the Depositary, that is the Government of the Principality of Monaco (Art. XVII of the ACCOBAMS).</p> <p>Meetings including at distance were also held with some diplomatic representatives of ACCOBAMS countries and National Focal Points.</p> <p><u>Collaboration with relevant international/national organizations</u></p>

² Possible status regarding the 2020-2022 PoW:

- Partially achieved: actions started or developed but still ongoing
- Achieved: actions finalized as foreseen for the period 2020/2022
- Not achieved: actions not initiated or discontinued during 2020/2022

<p>related to cetacean conservation, according to their national priorities (regional workshops)</p> <p>Reinforce synergy between Partners and harmonize activities</p>	<p>(MSFD) and favourable conservation status (HD)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating in the process of fully developing the Companion Volume for the Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2015-2023 • Liaising with the Depositary to encourage accession to the Agreement of riparian states • Liaising with Sub Regional Coordination Units 	<p>Please refer to:</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc12</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc13</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc15</p>	<p>Liaison and coordination with partner Organizations was done on a regular basis. In particular, several virtual meetings were organized in 2020 to introduce the new Executive Secretary, namely with CMS, IWC, GFCM, SPA/RAC and IUCN, inter alia, to discuss common priorities for collaboration, based on the 2020-2022 ACCOBAMS Program of Work.</p> <p>Between 2020 and 2022, the Secretariat participated in several institutional Meetings organized by other organizations: CMS, ASCOBANS, Barcelona Convention (including SPA/RAC and MedPOL), IWC, European Commission, GFCM, IUCN, Pelagos Agreement, MedPAN.</p> <p>More specifically regarding Barcelona Convention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Since April 2020 the Secretariat strived for a strengthened collaboration with UNEP/MAP for the EcAp-MED III project and the preparation of the 2023 Quality Status Report. Exchanges are ongoing with SPA/RAC and MedPOL to discuss ACCOBAMS contribution. - the Secretariat participated at meetings organised by Barcelona Convention (SPA/RAC FP Meeting, CORMON Meetings, Meetings dedicated to spatial-based protection and management measures for marine biodiversity, SAP BIO Meetings) where strategic priorities and key activities were provided to the organisers. - the Secretariat committed to contribute to the independent evaluation of the implementation of the UNEP/MAP Mid-Term Strategy 2016/2021. - A Memorandum of Understanding between ACCOBAMS and SPA/RAC for the 3-years period 2020-2022 was signed in October 2020. <p>More specifically regarding European Commission:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There was this meeting with the Commissioner on by-catch alarming rates - The Secretariat participated to Meetings of the EU-TG-Noise. The 2 co-chairs of the JNWG are involved in the Advisory Board of the EU funded project called QuietSeas. - The Secretariat participated at meetings of the Marine Expert Group coordinated by DG Environment of the European Commission.
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		<p>The Secretariat was also invited to some national meetings. OFB France: ACCOBAMS – Executive Secretary, Chair and Vice Chair of SC – participated at a workshop in October 2021, promoted by OFB in Paris, on a possible PSSA proposal to be submitted to IMO in 2022.</p> <p><u>Work through relevant Joint WG</u></p> <p>The First Meeting of the Joint Bycatch Working Group of ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS took place from 10 to 12 February 2021. One hundred and fifty participants from 34 countries took part in the meeting organized online. A catch-up meeting was organized on 18 August 2022.</p> <p>A workshop with the JNWG was organized in January 2020 and in February 2022, respectively in the framework of the QuietMed2 project regarding a proposal of a candidate for an impulsive noise indicator in MED Region and in the framework of QuietSeas project to support the implementation and operationalisation of the TG Noise framework methodology and the establishment of threshold values for noise in the Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea region.</p> <p><u>Participation to international events:</u></p> <p>The ACCOBAMS Secretariat participated to the IUCN World Conservation Congress (Marseille, France, 5-8 September 2021) and coordinated a Session in the “Mediterranean stand” supported by MAVA, on 6 September 2021 with several other bodies under the theme “Improving partnership and effective and equitable governance of Mediterranean natural resources”. Together with GFCM, ACCOBAMS showcased the ASI integrated approach and NETCCOBAMS platform, and the collaboration with GFCM with examples of joint mobilisation towards an effective Strategical Alliance on spatial-based protection and conservation measures for marine biodiversity. The ACCOBAMS Secretariat also participated at a Side-event “Contributing into building governance for a transboundary” in North-Western Mediterranean Sea, organised by OFB, France.</p>
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			<p>The ACCOBAMS Executive Secretary attended the UN Ocean Conference (Lisbon, Portugal, 27 June – 1 July 2022) and participated as a panellist at three side-events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “At United by the Sea film sessions” within the side-event “Women with a strong bond with the sea who inspire communities” the ES showcased ACCOBAMS institutional approach towards cetacean conservation, where the video produced following the last ACCOBAMS (25th) anniversary was publicly shared on screen (28 June); - At the Together for the Med side-event “« From user conflicts to sustainable fishing and marine conservation: Mediterranean success stories and best practices sharing » under the theme “promote sustainable fisheries” the ES presented the Mediterranean Sea situation on unwanted interactions, particularly depredation in small-scale fisheries (30 June) - At the “United by the Sea Film Sessions” – under the Overfishing theme, the ES showcased the MAVA funded joint project - MedBycatch – on “Understanding Mediterranean multi-taxa bycatch of vulnerable species and testing mitigation: a collaborative approach” as a partnership between ACCOBAMS, GFCM, SPA/RAC, and other partners; the short fiction film “An Important Job” produced by Vergi Film Productions in the framework of the MedBycatch project was publicly shared on screen, to raise awareness on the important choice that fishers around the Mediterranean make towards a more sustainable future (1 July).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizing ACCOBAMS Institutional Meetings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meeting of the Parties - Scientific Committee Meetings - Bureau Meetings 	<p>Achieved</p> <p>Please refer to:</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc11</p> <p>Committee ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc09</p>	<p><u>Scientific Committee Meetings</u></p> <p>The Thirteenth Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee (SC13) was organized in Cap d’Ail, France, between 26 and 28 February 2020.</p> <p>The Fourteen Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee (SC14) was organized in Monaco from 22 to 26 November 2021, during the week of the 25th anniversary of ACCOBAMS.</p> <p><u>Bureau Meetings</u></p>

	<p>- Meeting of National Representatives to develop the Programme of Work</p>	<p>ACCOBAMS- RW05/2021/Doc08</p>	<p>The Secretariat facilitated the organization of a meeting of the Bureau – acting as Recruitment Committee – on 10 February 2020 to interview the shortlisted candidates for the position of Executive Secretary</p> <p>The Thirteenth Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Bureau (BU13), initially planned to take place at the Oceanographic Museum of Monaco, 9-10 December 2020, had to be organized online, 9-11 December 2020, due to worldwide travel restrictions.</p> <p>The Fourteen Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Bureau (BU14), initially planned to take place in Monaco in December 2021, had to be organized online, 18-19 January 2022, due to sanitary conditions.</p> <p>The Fifth meeting of the ACCOBAMS Extended Bureau was organised in Monaco, 26-27 April 2022.</p> <p><u>Meeting of National Representatives</u></p> <p>The Fifth Meeting of National Representatives was organized online from 12 to 15 July 2021.</p>
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MA2	ENSURE ADEQUATE FUNDING, IN PARTICULAR FOR CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES
MA2a	Mobilizing and diversifying funding sources

Expected outcomes	Additional funds mobilized for conservation actions Regional capacities in project development and fundraising increased
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Proposed Action(s)	Means of implementation	Status	Achievements
Fund projects under the Supplementary Conservation Grant Fund (SCF) related to cetacean conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launching a call for proposals for projects related to cetacean conservation 	<p>Achieved</p> <p>Please refer to:</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf05</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf06</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf07</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf08</p>	<p>Over the three projects selected through the 2018 ACCOBAMS Call for proposals, one has been completed (“Monitoring and mitigation of cetacean bycatch in Bulgarian waters”) and the two others encountered delays and are still ongoing (“Establishing the bank of cetacean tissue samples in Ukraine” and “Mise en place d’un nouveau réseau opérationnel pour le suivi des échouages de cétacés sur le littoral algérien”).</p> <p>The 2022 ACCOBAMS Call for proposals was launched by the Secretariat, in consultation with the Bureau, on 16 February 2022 for 4 projects. Eleven project proposals were received before the deadline (31 May 2022).</p> <p>An Extraordinary Meeting of the Bureau was organized online on 19 September 2022 to decide on the 4 projects to be funded through the Supplementary Conservation Grant Fund.</p>
Monitor funding opportunities and develop (or support the development of) proposals for multilateral projects and co-funded activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing information on funding opportunities Using established partnerships and collaborations with all relevant IGOs, NGOs, and international/ national entities Sharing information on funding opportunities 	<p>Achieved</p> <p>Please refer to:</p> <p>Annex 2</p>	<p>News on funding opportunities is published on the ACCOBAMS website or disseminated via emails as often as possible.</p> <p>A Call for voluntary contributions for the implementation of the Work Programme 2020-2022 was sent to all Focal Points and Bureau Members in July 2020.</p> <p>Phases 2 of MAVA Depredation and MedBycatch projects have been developed in 2020 and funding has been allocated by the MAVA Foundation. ACCOBAMS participates as Partner in the MedBycatch2 project and as Coordinator in the Depredation2 project.</p>
Monitor funding opportunities			
Support the development of capacities in project development and fundraising			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizing a training workshop on project development/fundraising 		<p>Additional support was granted from MAVA for the evaluation of the ASI project, in view of developing an ACCOBAMS long term Monitoring Programme.</p> <p>A small grant was provided by MAVA to capitalize on the experience and knowledge acquired through the MedBycatch project in the implementation of the bycatch observer programs.</p> <p>ACCOBAMS Secretariat participates as Partner in two projects funded by EU under DG ENV/MSFD 2020 Call: Marine Strategy Framework Directive – Support to the preparation of the next 6-year cycle of implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ABIOMMED “Support coherent and coordinated assessment of biodiversity and measures across Mediterranean for the next 6-year cycle of MSFD implementation”; QUIETSEAS “Assisting (sub) regional cooperation for the practical implementation of the MSFD second cycle by providing methods and tools for D11 (underwater noise)”.
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MA3	IMPLEMENTATION OF AND COMPLIANCE WITH ACCOBAMS
MA3a	Improve the level of implementation of and compliance with ACCOBAMS Resolutions as well as the monitoring of its progress

Expected outcomes	Level of implementation and compliance with ACCOBAMS Resolutions improved
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Proposed Action(s)	Means of implementation	Status	Achievements
Implement the mid-term revised ACCOBAMS Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflecting in the Work Programme the revised ACCOBAMS Strategy following the mid-term evaluation of its effectiveness 	Partially achieved	Implementation of the 2020-2022 Working Programme
Propose remedy actions in cases of non-follow-up with ACCOBAMS Resolutions and infringements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convening a Follow up Committee meeting Applying Follow up Procedures 	Achieved Please refer to: ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc14 ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc26 ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf11	<p>The third meeting of the Follow-up Committee was organised in March 2022.</p> <p>Following the submission by OceanCare regarding the failure by ACCOBAMS Mediterranean Countries to implement the ACCOBAMS Conservation Plan for Mediterranean common dolphins, received at the Secretariat on 1st December 2016, the Focal Point from Malta has provided the information in August 2020. This information was provided to the Follow up Committee Members.</p> <p>In 2020, during BU13 meeting, the Secretariat raised the attention of Bureau members on the occurrences of whale entanglements in illegal driftnets. The Bureau underscored that illegal driftnetting is a major issue for the conservation of cetaceans and ACCOBAMS and instructed the Secretariat to send a letter to all Parties on this issue and report back to BU14 on responses received. The Secretariat also tasked the Legal Advisor, Prof. Tullio Scovazzi, to prepare a review of relevant treaties and national legislation related to the use of driftnets in the ACCOBAMS Area for presentation at BU14.</p> <p>In 2022, during BUEXT5, the Secretariat raised the attention of Bureau members on the implementation of Resolution 4.18 related to the granting of exceptions for research activities at sea that are likely to cause harassment of cetaceans. 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</p>

			to remind them about the applicable procedure for granting exemptions to research activities at sea that are likely to cause harassment of cetaceans, and to invite Parties to inform the Secretariat about exemptions that they may have granted during the five past years.
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MA4	ACCOBAMS EXTENSION AREA
MA4a	Ensure implementation of the ACCOBAMS's cetacean conservation standards in the adjacent areas

Expected outcomes	ACCOBAMS's cetacean conservation standards implemented in the adjacent areas
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Proposed Action(s)	Means of implementation	Status	Achievements
Encourage ratification of Amendment for geographical extension of the Agreement area to the Atlantic		Achieved Please refer to: ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc08	<p>The Executive Secretary took opportunities to discuss this issue with several Focal Points and the Depository country.</p> <p>Italy has ratified the Amendment in July 2021 and Malta in January 2022. At present, 10 Parties have ratified the Amendment for geographical extension of the Agreement area to the Atlantic.</p> <p>Contacts with Portuguese authorities were made since mid-2020 and allowed to understand the technical difficulties in relation to the application of Annex 2 (par.1.a) to the overall PT EEZ. These are preventing PT from launching the ratification process of the Amendment regarding the extension of ACCOBAMS geographical area.</p>

CONSERVATION ACTIONS (CA)

CA1	IMPROVE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE STATUS OF CETACEANS
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CA 1 a	Cetacean population estimates and distribution
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Expected outcomes	Improved knowledge of cetacean populations in the ACCOBAMS Area Global distribution and abundance of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea and Black Seas established, based on results of surveys
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Proposed Action(s)	Means of implementation	<i>Status</i>	<i>Achievements</i>
Interpret and disseminate results / subsequent recommendations of the ASI in the Mediterranean and Black Seas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizing workshops dedicated to ASI data analysis/interpretation (CB) • Publishing a report on the ASI results • Disseminating the ASI results and experience in relevant regional/international fora 	<p>Achieved</p> <p>Please refer to:</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf12</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf13</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf14</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf15</p>	<p>3 subregional data analysis ASI Workshops were conducted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Central Mediterranean (18-29 November 2019, Castel Gandolfo, Italy), - Western Mediterranean (14-18 February 2022, Monaco) - Eastern Mediterranean/Black Sea (1-3 March 2022, online). <p>The Black Sea Training workshop was partly conducted online through the CeNoBS project in September 2019 together with a session on the definition of threshold values as well as during the Eastern Mediterranean/Black Sea workshop (March 2022, online).</p> <p>A Consultation Support Group was set up to guide the organisation and development of the ASI Technical Conservation recommendation workshop. On the basis of detailed ToRs, the workshop was prepared by the Secretariat, with support from a consultant, a Moderating Agency and speakers and contributors. Set up in three online sessions, the workshop was held on 11-12 and 14-15 October 2021. The workshop report includes recommendations and outcomes which emerged from this collaborative work.</p> <p>The Data analysis process was finalised for the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea in 2021. Both reports (<i>Estimates of abundance and distribution of cetaceans, marine mega fauna and marine litter in the Mediterranean Sea from 2018 2019 surveys</i> and <i>Estimates of abundance and distribution of cetaceans in the Black Sea from 2019 surveys</i>) were launched during an ASI short online event on 22 April 2021, who gathered around 200 participants. The reports are available online on ACCOBAMS website, as well as the recording of the online event.</p> <p>The ASI results and experience were also shared during different events:</p>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a Black Sea Habitats Workshop, 30 October 2020, - a EC Black Sea Green Diplomacy virtual event, 16 November 2020, - an online workshop organized by the CARIMAM project in the Caribbean Region in November 2020, CeNoBS final workshop, 9-11 June 2021, - CORMON meetings on Biodiversity and Fisheries 10-11 June 2021 and 28-29 March 2022 - IUCN World Conservation Congress, 4-9 September 2021, - UN Ocean Conference, 28 June 2022. <p>Exchanges were held with SPA/RAC, MEDPOL and the Barcelona Convention Secretariat to assess how the ASI data regarding cetaceans/sea turtles/marine litter distribution and abundance could be integrated in the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report. The Secretariat and SC members participated at several meetings in this context, including to the CORMON meetings in December 2020, June 2021 and March 2022 and bilateral meetings with INFO RAC and the SPA RAC on the development of IMAP Info System and data dictionaries.</p> <p>A special issue was opened in the Journal Frontiers for Marine Sciences on the Research topic The ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative (ASI): Implementing Large Scale Surveys for Marine Megafauna the Mediterranean and Black Seas, under supervision of the Editor board. Pre-Selected manuscripts are being prepared and published as they become available.</p>
<p>Support long-term monitoring in the ACCOBAMS Area using the ASI framework (methodology, network, funding mechanism...)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizing coordination meetings at the sub-regional level • Developing a strategy to fund ASI on the long-term • Supporting the development of specific collaborations among scientific entities • Supporting implementation of sub regional surveys 	<p>Achieved</p> <p>Please refer to:</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc27</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf16</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf17</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf18</p>	<p><u>Ensuring ASI sustainability:</u></p> <p>The Secretariat developed an intermediate assessment of ASI project, which is a basis for the work related to the sustainability of monitoring in the Area. In this context, two consultants were recruited in 2020 to assist the Secretariat in:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. defining the ACCOBAMS long Term monitoring programme 2. developing an evaluation of ASI Project and a roadmap to support a long-term monitoring programme, including the identification of funding and institutional mechanisms. <p>Following a request from 14th Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Bureau in January 2022, an <i>ad hoc</i> group composed of National Focal Points was established to support the preparation of the draft Resolution on the LTMP in view of facilitating MOP8 discussions and decision, in particular on budgetary and financial implications. Coordinated by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat and with the support of a consultant, this Ad Hoc Group met on 21 April and 15 June and developed specific provisions for the LTMP draft resolution and additional recommendations to be presented during MOP8.</p>

			<p>In parallel, a brochure on the ASI and the LTMP was finalised in August 2022 to support future fundraising efforts to seek for external funding of the next surveys.</p> <p><u>Strengthening synergies within the MSFD context:</u></p> <p>A Workshop ACCOBAMS/AFB “Towards coordinated marine mammal monitoring programmes for MSFD second cycle 2020-2026” was organized at the World Marine Mammals Conference on 8 December 2019 in Barcelona producing recommendations to foster collaboration and transboundary consultations between existing and upcoming marine mammal monitoring programmes, including MSFD related monitoring programs.</p> <p>The two-year EU-funded ABIOMMED project (‘Support coherent and coordinated assessment of biodiversity and measures across Mediterranean for the next 6-year cycle of MSFD implementation’) started in July 2021. Within this project, the Secretariat is coordinating the Work Package “<i>Streamlining Descriptor’s D1 selected criteria regarding mammal’s species groups (small, toothed cetaceans, deep diving toothed cetaceans and baleen whales) towards coordinated monitoring and assessment in the Mediterranean region</i>”. ACCOBAMS supports in particular the establishment of a working group composed by the researchers/managers appointed by the MSFD national competent authorities for cetaceans monitoring in each EU Mediterranean country, aimed at strengthening the coordination for monitoring cetacean MSFD related criteria, including proposals for regionally harmonized monitoring strategy and thresholds values.</p>
<p>Promote the use of multidisciplinary surveys (such as fisheries / acoustic surveys), innovative technologies (UAV, satellite) and of platforms of opportunity (ferries, whale watching vessels, navy vessels, etc..) to collect data on cetacean’s distribution and abundance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing guidelines / best practices on the implementation of multidisciplinary surveys and on the use of platform of opportunity and innovative technologies to collect data on cetacean’s distribution and abundance • Reviewing the existing surveys/scientific efforts at the national/regional scale that could be used to collect data on distribution 	<p>Achieved</p> <p>Please refer to:</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf19</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf20</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf21</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf22</p>	<p>A feasibility study and experimentation on the use of drones for Cetaceans monitoring in the ACCOBAMS Agreement area was finalized by IMMRAC/University of Haifa and Murdoch University. Reports and results were provided during the summer 2020. Part of this work was published in a peer-review paper in September 2022.</p> <p>In the context of the Sphyrna Odyssey 2019 project, an experiment was conducted with Marine Conservation Research in March 2019 in the South of France to test the feasibility of unmanned surface vehicles in estimating the distribution and abundance of cetacean species.</p> <p>Experts were contracted to work on the use of UAVs, multidisciplinary surveys and platforms of opportunity to collect data on Cetacean distribution and abundance. The results of those 3 studies were presented during to the Fourteenth Scientific Committee meeting in November 2021. In addition, the Secretariat and the SC co-Chair participated in an online Expert Event on the use of drones in the marine environment late 2020 (France – Pôle Méditerranée) and have been following other relevant initiatives on the use of UAVs.</p>

	<p>and abundance of cetaceans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborating with relevant Organisations, such as ICCAT, to collect data on distribution and abundance of cetaceans 	<p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf23</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf24</p>	
<p>Initiate the establishment of a regional repository for data on cetacean's distribution and abundance based on the conclusion of the ASI preparatory study for an information management system for cetacean survey data</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing proposal(s) for a data repository system 	<p>Partially achieved</p>	<p>ASI results related maps were uploaded on NETCCOBAMS for visualisation purposes. Subsequently, a reflection on the use of NETCCOBAMS will be undertaken in the perspective of becoming a repository data system.</p>

CA 1 b	Population Structure
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Expected outcomes	Improved knowledge on population structure in the ACCOBAMS Area and species conservation management plans completed Exchanges of samples facilitated for joint analysis Data exchanges facilitated for basin wide analysis
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Proposed Action(s)	Means of implementation	Status	Achievements
Improve data collection on cetacean populations genetic in the ACCOBAMS Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizing regional trainings on data collection and analysis (CB) Establishing Guidelines / Best Practices 	Achieved Please refer to: ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf25	ACCOBAMS Focal Points and experts were requested to provide the Secretariat with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing cetacean samples within the ACCOBAMS Area Procedure for the exchange of cetacean samples between ACCOBAMS Parties List of genetics laboratories within the ACCOBAMS Area that could process samples for population genetics analysis
Encourage better collaboration between tissue banks to facilitate exchanges of samples for joint analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying and contacting reference laboratories in the ACCOBAMS Area Supporting the development of specific collaborations among scientific entities 	Achieved	The ACCOBAMS Secretariat organized in a 2-part workshop: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The first session was a half day online session on Friday 2nd of September 2022, 9:30-12:30 CEST. The second session is a 2-day in-person session held in Monaco on the 20th & 21st of September 2022.
Improve photo ID data collection and dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entering data in photo ID Catalogues Using Web based databases Organizing regional trainings on photo ID Catalogues (CB) 	Not implemented by the Secretariat	External funds were needed to implement this action

CA 1 c	Monitoring cetacean's status
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Expected outcomes	<p>IUCN threat status of cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Area is assessed</p> <p>ACCOBAMS Status report on the State of Conservation of Cetaceans is updated and made available on IUCN and ACCOBAMS websites</p> <p>Regional conservation plan for cetaceans in the Black Sea is revised and implemented at the national level</p> <p>Conservation management plans for cetacean species are developed and implemented</p> <p>National Action Plans for cetaceans are developed and implemented</p>
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Proposed Action(s)	Means of implementation	Status	Achievements
Contribute to IUCN threat status assessment of cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Area and update it as relevant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertaking species assessments • Organising joint ACCOBAMS–IUCN experts' workshop 	<p>Achieved</p> <p>Please refer to: ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf26</p>	<p>New assessments of the conservation status of Mediterranean and Black Sea cetaceans and update of existing ones according to the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria were launched in 2019 in the context of a dialogue between ACCOBAMS and the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation in Malaga, with the involvement of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee.</p> <p>All new assessments of Mediterranean species were submitted and reviewed by the Red List Authority and were published by IUCN end of 2021. Black Sea species were also submitted and are under final review by the Red List Authority. Iberian harbour porpoises were also assessed.</p>
Update ACCOBAMS Status report on the State of Conservation of Cetaceans, using ASI results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing and publishing an updated ACCOBAMS Status report on the State of Conservation of Cetaceans 	<p>Achieved</p> <p>Please refer to: ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf27</p>	<p>The writing of the book on the Conservation Status of Cetacean in the ACCOBAMS Area started in May/June 2019 (two co-authors contracted under the ASI project). The content was reviewed by the Scientific Committee and shared with NFPs. The book was developed with an Editor and printed versions were delivered for the 25th ACCOBAMS Anniversary. An online version was posted online right after the Anniversary. The publication of the book was done in synchronization with the IUCN Red list reassessment process.</p>
Revise the Regional Conservation Plan for cetacean in Black Sea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertaking the revision of the Regional Conservation Plan for cetacean in Black Sea, in collaboration with the BSC, taking into consideration the IWC Conservation Management Plan. 	<p>Partially achieved</p>	<p>The ACCOBAMS Secretariat coordinated with the Secretariat of the Black Sea Commission the revision of the Conservation Plan for Black Sea Cetaceans. The draft is to be revised by relevant BSC Advisory groups.</p>

<p>Develop/ revise/ implement relevant Conservation Management Plans for cetacean species</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizing ACCOBAMS-IWC-IUCN Experts Workshop(s) to develop/ revise/ conservation Management Plans for cetacean species, taking into account all national conservation plans • Supporting the implementation of relevant actions of the approved Conservation Management Plans for cetacean species with emphasize of coordination actions and organization with stakeholders' workshop • Organize a joint workshop on common dolphin with ASCOBANS during ECS 2021, (depending on Voluntary Contribution or Ext funds) 	<p>Partially achieved</p> <p>Please refer to: ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf29</p>	<p>4 Conservation Management Plans (CMPs) are under drafting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fin whale - Risso's dolphin - Bottlenose dolphin - Common dolphin <p>An ACCOBAMS experts' workshops on Bottlenose / common dolphin CMP took place in Monaco from 7th to 9th March 2022. Scientists involved in the relevant research in the Mediterranean were invited to collaborate towards a draft final CMP for Bottlenose and a draft final CMP for common dolphins.</p> <p>Due to the COVID crisis, the joint workshop on common dolphin with ASCOBANS during ECS 2021 could not be organized.</p>
<p>Facilitate the Development/ revision/ implementation of National or Regional Action Plans for cetaceans</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting the revision / development of two National Action Plans for cetaceans in collaboration with SRCUs and national authorities (Algeria already identified) 	<p>Partially achieved</p>	<p>The National Action plan in Algeria is under finalization.</p> <p>The meeting initially planned in Alger in April 2020 with national authorities, national experts, ACCOBAMS and SPA/RAC representatives was cancelled due to COVID crisis. Several online meetings with national authorities were held in 2021 and Actions and Activities factsheets were presented during SC14.</p> <p>The Secretariat worked in close collaboration with SPA/RAC to update the Mediterranean Action Plan for the Conservation of Cetaceans which was circulated to SC Members for review. The updated UNEP/MAP Action Plan for the Conservation of Cetaceans was adopted by COP22 of the Barcelona Convention in December 2021.</p>

CA 1 d	Functional stranding networks and responses to emergency situation
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Expected outcomes	Official National Stranding networks are established and operating Information on stranding events regularly exchanged among national networks
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Proposed Action(s)	Means of implementation	<i>Status</i>	<i>Achievements</i>
Set up /Reinforce official national stranding networks (with all national institutions concerned) as appropriate, and encourage collaborations among national networks of Parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparing a study on legal/institutional status of National stranding networks in order to assist experts in the establishment of official national stranding network when relevant Organizing trainings on necropsies, live strandings and response to emergency situation in the ACCOBAMS Area following the best practices on causes of death including marine litters, and on the use of relevant databases (CB) Entering relevant national data into relevant databases, such as MEDACES Promoting the use of a database of 	<p>Achieved</p> <p>Please refer to:</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc28</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf30</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf31</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf32</p>	<p>In 2020: The Secretariat supported the participation of 3 experts from Lebanon, Egypt and Montenegro at the marine mammal necropsy workshop, organized by the Department of Veterinary Pathology, University of Liege (Belgium). The workshop was held on 10th July (online marine mammals' <i>post-mortem</i> investigation). The face-to-face marine mammal <i>post-mortem</i> workshop, originally planned from 13th to 15th October 2020 was tentatively postponed to 2022.</p> <p>In 2021: In June and September the Secretariat organized a 5 days-training on necropsies, following the best practices on the investigation of causes of death including incidental catches during fishing operations (bycatch) and marine litter ingestion, entanglement, but also impacts caused by noise, ship strikes and infectious diseases – “Best Practices on cetacean <i>post-mortem</i> investigation and tissue sampling resulted from the harmonization process in ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS”.</p> <p>The training was planned to be subdivided in 2 sessions:</p> <p>(1) A 2-days online marine mammal <i>post-mortem</i> investigation webinar using a videoconferencing system, 28-29 June, followed by an on-line evaluation 5 July. Only experts passing the evaluation would be admitted to the face-to-face training.</p> <p>(2) A 3-days face-to-face marine mammal <i>post-mortem</i> training was foreseen for 27-29 September in Liege and on 12-14 October in Padova, accommodating 20 participants each.</p> <p>After the summer evaluation, and in concertation with the trainers due to the restrictions related to the current COVID situation, it was decided to postpone the practical training especially since not all participants could obtain the green pass/sanitary pass and also in face of the need to quarantine in and out from/to different countries. Nevertheless, additional online demonstrations were assured:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - late September 2021: an online demonstration from Liege on necropsies - late October 2021: an online demonstration from Padua - until November 2021: online asynchronous lessons released from both Liege and Padua Universities

	<p>experts/stranding authorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging the creation of a permanent expert panel on strandings to assist on emergencies and unusual mortality 		<p>- a second questionnaire prepared end of November are to be filled late December: both questionnaires will be considered for final approval allowing also to the persons who did not pass the first to repair</p> <p>Given the stranding of a 19 m fin whale in Calais, north coast of France, Thierry Jauniaux, an ACCOBAMS expert on necropsy, has performed a field necropsy and provided the opportunity to all ACCOBAMS experts to follow the ongoing live necropsy procedures.</p> <p>During CSMC5, participants from southern Mediterranean countries were encouraged to provide their data to MEDACES</p> <p>In 2022:</p> <p>3-days face-to-face marine mammal <i>postmortem</i> trainings were organized:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Padova (Italy)- 22-24 February 2022 – 14 participants - Liege (Belgium) - 22-24 March 2022 and 12-14 July 2022 17 participants <p>The establishment of an ACCOBAMS expert panel on strandings to assist with emergencies and unusual mortality events (Task Force) is ongoing with a specific topic on Black Sea.</p> <p>Moreover, a feasibility study on the development of telenecropsy is ongoing in order to better assist experts during unusual mortality events.</p> <p>ACCOBAMS Focal Points were requested to provide the Secretariat with formal text of measures/legislation which have been adopted in their own Country concerning the establishment of stranding networks in order to prepare a study on legal/institutional status of National stranding networks in order to assist experts in the establishment of official national stranding network when relevant.</p>
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CA2	REDUCE HUMAN PRESSURES ON CETACEANS, IN PARTICULARLY THOSE RELATED TO BYCATCH, HABITAT LOSS AND DEGRADATION (POLLUTION)
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CA 2 a	Interactions with fisheries / aquaculture
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Expected outcomes	Impacts of cetaceans' bycatch and depredation are assessed, and mitigation measures are tested Regional bycatch/depredation strategy is developed Ecotourism activities (whale watching and pescatourism) are promoted as an alternative income source to fishermen impacted by depredation
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Proposed Action(s)	Means of implementation	Status	Achievements
Assess / Monitor the impacts of interactions with fisheries/ aquaculture (bycatch, depredation and prey depletion) and propose alternative best practices measures and / or technics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replicating projects on interactions with fisheries • Implementing on-board observers programme and port questionnaires, and testing mitigation measures in the countries supported by the MAVA funded projects • Assessing /updating the extent of interactions with fisheries/ aquaculture in other countries, including through the use of stranding data • Collaborating with relevant entities, in particular with GFCM and IWC BMI 	<p style="text-align: center;">Achieved</p> <p>Please refer to:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf33</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf34</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf35</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf36</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf37</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf38</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Pilot site report ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf39</p>	<p><u>Bycatch monitoring/assessment/mitigation:</u></p> <p>After the 1st phase initiated in 2018, the 2nd phase of the MAVA-funded MedBycatch project ('Understanding Mediterranean multi-taxa bycatch of vulnerable species and testing mitigation") started in July 2020 and will stop at the end of October 2022. The main objective of Phase 2 was to test mitigation measures taking into consideration Phase 1 monitoring results. The overall coordination was facilitated by Birdlife-Europe through a project Steering Committee composed of all regional partners, including the ACCOBAMS Secretariat. The ACCOBAMS Secretariat was also in charge of facilitating the coordination of the project activities in Morocco with the national partners (INRH, Maritime Fisheries Department and GREPOM).</p> <p>Monitoring activities have been continuing until April-June 2022 in Morocco, Tunisia and Türkiye using the GFCM Methodology for data collection that follows a multitaxon approach with on-board observers and port questionnaires. Some mitigation measures were tested for different fishing gears (testing circular hooks or changes in baits for longlines, modification of the trawls with some excluding devices, use of light in set nets...). Some monitoring and mitigation activities were also carried out in Croatia and Italy with the inclusion of new national partners during Phase 2. Data from phases 1 and 2 are to be centralized in a common database hosted by GFCM. Several activities related to communication and awareness were led by local partners in the countries.</p> <p>An additional grant was provided by MAVA Foundation to capitalize on lessons learnt from the MedBycatch project, mainly through the organization of national workshops with observers and relevant stakeholders. These activities are led by local partners (TUDAV in Türkiye and INRH in Morocco).</p> <p>As data from stranding can be a complementary source of information on bycatch, the Task Managers on Interactions with Fisheries of the Scientific Committee were recruited</p>

		<p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf40</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf41</p>	<p>to prepare a review of available bycatch data in stranding databases. The report of this study was presented at SC14 for review.</p> <p>The ACCOBAMS Secretariat was also involved in the CeNoBS project pilot on cetacean bycatch monitoring carried out in Bulgaria, Romania, Türkiye and Ukraine, facilitating in particular exchanges with GFCM.</p> <p><u>Depredation monitoring/assessment/mitigation:</u></p> <p>After the 1st phase initiated in 2018, the 2nd phase of the MAVA-funded Depredation project (“Mitigating dolphin depredation in Mediterranean fisheries – Joining efforts to strengthen cetacean conservation and sustainable fisheries”) started in October 2020 and will stop at the end of October 2022.</p> <p>Depredation caused by bottlenose dolphins in small pelagic purse seine fisheries is monitored in Morocco and Tunisia, and mitigation measures have been tested (innovative strengthened nets and acoustic deterrent devices, respectively). The Moroccan team (INRH) was trained to photo-ID and visual monitoring methods. Acoustic monitoring training and equipment set up and trials were made with the supports of dedicated experts in Morocco as well as with the Tunisian team (INSTM & INAT).</p> <p>New activities dedicated to a better understanding of the Depredation issue (through monitoring of depredation events, dolphins’ population and behaviours, socioeconomic studies); and to test and propose technical mitigation solutions have been conducted in collaboration with fishers in Italy (Sicily), Malta and Spain (Andalusia) within Phase 2 of the Depredation project. All the results of these field activities are described in dedicated Report from each of the 5 sites, alongside recommendations for the continuation of depredation monitoring/mitigation related activities.</p> <p>In addition, thanks to Phase 2 of the Depredation project, the contract of Julie Belmont (recruited as ASI Project Officer) was extended until December 2022, and thus she took the lead of the Depredation Project in 2021.</p> <p>Two exchange workshops were organized within the framework of MAVA Depredation project to facilitate exchanges of experiences between different national teams and with other projects/initiatives addressing depredation. The first one was organised online in November 2020 and the second one took place in June 2022 in Catania, Sicily. Both events gathered around 40 persons and produced a set of conclusions and recommendations on the issue of depredation.</p>
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			<p>A standardized methodology to collect data on depredation in ACCOBAMS Area was developed by a GFCM expert so to ensure alignment with the bycatch monitoring methodology. This work was presented at the 14th Scientific Committee Meeting and is in its final phase of publication by the GFCM.</p> <p>A Status review on depredation in ACCOBAMS Area was developed by an expert from ACCOBAMS and is under final review by a set of experts. It is planned to be released as a GFCM publication.</p> <p>Communication material has also been developed for awareness raising and sharing for information at the regional level on the issue of depredation. This includes a movie, comics strips and technical briefs of the above-mentioned studies. A brochure on the results of the project and recommendations on mitigation measures is under development.</p> <p><u>Collaboration with other organizations:</u></p> <p>Both MedBycatch and Depredation projects are implemented in collaboration with GFCM and other relevant regional partners such as SPA/RAC.</p> <p>The ACCOBAMS Secretariat also collaborates with the ASCOBANS Secretariat for the Joint Bycatch Working Group of ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS. The first Meeting of the JBWG was held online from 10 to 12 February 2021. Recommendations were presented at SC14. An online catch-up meeting was organized on 18 August 2022.</p> <p>The Secretariat is also involved in the MAVA-funded “Together for the Med” Partnership project aimed at strengthening communication and synergies among the different MAVA partners involved in the MAVA Action Plan related to interactions between fisheries and biodiversity and the preservation of living marine resources. By improving the visibility of the partnership, the objective is also to attract new funding to ensure the sustainability of the partnership after 2022 when MAVA Foundation will come to an end.</p>
Develop a regional strategy on cetaceans’ bycatch and depredation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integration of Cetaceans’ bycatch and depredation issues in the strategy document to be prepared in the MedBycatch project 	Achieved	<p>This action was developed through the MedBycatch project. Instead of developing a single strategy document, project partners agreed that as 2020 was a milestone year for a number of key organizations in the Mediterranean and that multiple Mediterranean countries would be revising/updating their priorities and action plans in view of a post-2020 framework it would be of greatest value to integrate the bycatch issue in these various processes, so that related aspects would be considered and increasing the chances</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborating with relevant entities, in particular with GFCM and IWC BMI 		of being tackled as priority. Bycatch and depredation are then among the priorities of the GFCM 2030 Strategy and the UNEP/MAP Post-2020 SAPBIO .
Provide support to Parties to promote the development of ecotourism activities as an alternative income to fishermen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a Guidance policy document for the development of sustainable ecotourism and whale watching activities • Supporting the identification of areas for the development of ecotourism activities as an alternative income to fishermen 	Partially achieved	In Morocco, in collaboration with the Maritime Fisheries Department, a consultant prepared a draft legal text aimed at defining the regulatory basis for the practice of pescatourism. This draft legal text is being reviewed by other competent authorities (Ministry of Transport).

CA 2 b	Anthropogenic underwater noise
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Expected outcomes	Core anthropogenic activities generating underwater noise are monitored in the ACCOBAMS Area Mitigation measures for anthropogenic activities generating underwater noise are used
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Proposed Action(s)	Means of implementation	Status	Achievements
Encourage the monitoring of anthropogenic activities generating underwater noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizing trainings for national entities on noise monitoring (CB), including analyses of PAM collected data in some identified priority areas • Taking into consideration work achieved and advices provided by the JNWG • Revising/completing impulsive noise hotspots maps of the ACCOBAMS Area using Big Data Platform • Supporting monitoring programmes of impulsive noise impact indicator in particular by managing the regional impulsive noise register, proposing methodology to establish threshold values and implementing pilot studies • Disseminating deliverables of the QuietMed and QuietMed2 projects on guidance for underwater noise monitoring and assessment, • Supporting the development of projects to monitor continuous noise’. • Revising and updating the ACCOBAMS Guidelines on underwater noise 	<p>Partially achieved</p> <p>Please refer to:</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf42</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf43</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf45</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf46</p>	<p>The revision of impulsive noise hotspots maps of the ACCOBAMS Area using Big Data Platform is ongoing by experts recruited by the Secretariat. It was presented during SC14.</p> <p>CeNoBS and QuietMED2 projects finished in 2021 (respectively January and June). Several workshops and training were organized end of 2019 and 2020 in order to build awareness amongst competent authorities on regional impulsive noise register and to propose methodology aiming at defining threshold values.</p> <p>The Secretariat is involved in a new EU funded project QUIETSEAS project” Assisting (sub) regional cooperation for the practical implementation of the MSFD second cycle by providing methods and tools for D11 (underwater noise)”.</p> <p>The Secretariat participated at TG-Noise Meetings in 2020,2021 and 2022 and has been approached by the Chair of the EU-TG-Noise to be involved in the Drafting Group on deliverable 3 (DG DL3): “Assessment framework for EU threshold values for continuous underwater noise”. An ACCOBAMS expert was designated to participate at this Drafting Group.</p> <p>A workshop with the JNWG was organized in January 2020 and in February 2022, respectively in the framework of the QuietMed2 project regarding a proposal of a candidate for an impulsive noise indicator in MED Region and in the framework of QuietSeas project to support the implementation and operationalisation of the TG Noise framework methodology and the establishment of threshold values for noise in the Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea region.</p> <p>The Secretariat was contacted by the Barcelona Convention for contributing to the 2023 MED QSR taking into account the assessment methodologies set in IMAP Guidance Fact Sheets for Candidate Common Indicators 26 and 27.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing cooperation on underwater noise issue with other international Organizations 		<p>The Secretariat is involved, as associated Partner, in a European project Life-PIAQUO, led by Naval Group, which aims at reducing the impact of maritime traffic noise on marine ecosystems.</p> <p>The Secretariat is a member of a French Working Group on noise which aims at identifying priorities to mitigate underwater noise impacts at a national level.</p> <p>The Secretariat was invited by “Monacology” teams to organize a workshop on underwater noise in March 2020. Since the event was cancelled, the Secretariat participated with an article on noise in IMPACT magazine published by Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation.</p> <p>New Terms of Reference for a Joint Noise Working Group of CMS, ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS and Operational Procedures for the Joint Noise Working Group of CMS, ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS were agreed and presented for information during the SC13 Meeting.</p> <p>Moreover, to facilitate consultation with industry experts on the technical feasibility of proposed measures as well as on any alternative measures or solutions, an Industry Advisory Group (IAG) has been created.</p>
<p>Encourage the use of mitigation measures for anthropogenic activities generating underwater noise</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting the ACCOBAMS Highly qualified MMO/PAM operators’ certificate • Granting the status of ACCOBAMS HQMMO Partners to entities for the implementation of the Highly qualified MMO/PAM operators’ certificate • Revising and updating the ACCOBAMS “Guide for Parties to use mitigation measures “ • Developing cooperation on underwater noise issues with other International Organizations 	<p>Partially achieved</p> <p>Please refer to:</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf47</p>	<p>The Secretariat was contacted by IOGP regarding the implementation of a specific training course “ACCOBAMS certification” for Highly qualified MMOs (for a Mediterranean geophysical acquisition project that was initially planned for 2021/2022).</p> <p>On 25th of March 2021 an online MMO/PAM WG workshop took place, aiming at improving the process to better promote the ACCOBAMS Highly qualified MMO/PAM operators’ certificate.</p> <p>Discussions are ongoing with the MMO/PAM WG and Industrials in order to improve the existing training and to develop online training so to overcome the COVID-19 situation preventing face-to-face meetings.</p>

CA 2 c	Ship strikes		
Expected outcomes	Occurrence of ship strikes in high risk areas is reduced		
Proposed Action(s)	Means of implementation	Status	Achievements
Monitor / assess high-risk areas for ship strikes (CCH) in the Mediterranean Sea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging the entry of ship strikes data in relevant databases • Developing a protocol for investigating and documenting ship strikes injuries and mortalities • Identifying high risk areas for ship strikes (CCH) • Developing cooperation on ships strike issue with other International Organizations, such IWC, EMSA (EU) / REMPEC / IMO and contributing in any other relevant initiatives, projects and workshops in the ACCOBAMS Area 	Partially achieved	<p>During the IUCN World Conservation Congress (September 2021), in the framework of the Mediterranean stand, the Secretariat co-organized, in collaboration with French authorities, a specific side-event regarding a proposal for a new PSSA in the north-western Mediterranean.</p> <p>The Secretariat participated at a technical workshop (18-19 October 2022, Paris, France): « Cooperation for a Transboundary PSSA in NW Mediterranean Sea »</p> <p>The Secretariat is involved as an associated Partner in project SICOMAR+ as well as in a French project called “Stop Collision”.</p>
Promote the use of mitigation measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following up on mitigation measures implemented • Promoting the use of relevant mitigation tools/measures (CB) • Pursue the development of a “whale safe” certificate 	Achieved	

CA 2 d	Cetacean watching
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Expected outcomes	Cetacean watching activities are properly conducted in the ACCOBAMS Area
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Proposed Action(s)	Means of implementation	Status	Achievements
Maximize the chance of detecting potential adverse impacts of whale watching activities on individual cetaceans and on populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathering information on cetacean watching activities and identifying potential issues in order to identify the hotspots of WW activities in the ACCOBAMS Area • Testing the proposed common procedure (data collection system) for whale watching vessels in pilot areas and a variety of operation types (e.g. the Liguro-Provençal Basin, Gibraltar Strait, and south Portugal), in collaboration with relevant projects such as EcoStrim • Revising the Guidelines for commercial cetacean-watching in the ACCOBAMS Area (in accordance, if relevant, with the guidance document to be prepared on the development of ecotourism activities as an alternative income to fishermen) 	<p>Partially achieved</p> <p>Please refer to:</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf48</p>	<p>Several virtual meetings of the Whale Watching Working Group were facilitated by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat between March and November 2021. The report of the Whale Watching Working Group was presented at SC14.</p> <p>A consultant (Gianna Minton) was recruited by the Secretariat to conduct:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a study aimed at identifying hotspots of WW activities in the ACCOBAMS Area, based on questionnaires circulated to data collection partners in each country of ACCOBAMS Area. The methodology and the questionnaires were developed under the guidance of the Whale Watching Working Group. The first phase of the data collection process was initiated in November 2020 and the second phase will be concluded in November 2021. A progress report of this study was presented at SC14 for review. - a full revision of the Guidelines for monitoring programs aimed at maximizing the chance of detecting potential adverse impacts of whale watching activities on individual cetaceans and on populations. The draft Guidelines for the management of cetaceans watching activities in the ACCOBAMS Area were presented at SC14 for review.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working in close cooperation with IWC and other relevant International Organizations 		
Support the implementation of the HQWW certificate in the ACCOBAMS Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting the implementation of the HQWW certificate by Parties and in areas -based management measures in collaboration with relevant projects such as EcoStrim • Organizing Trainings on HQWW (CB Parties) • Liaising with relevant tourism Organisations 	Achieved	<p>In 2020 and 2021 the Secretariat provided MIRACETI with a small financial support for the animation of the HQWW label in France and particularly for the training session for operators in February 2021.</p> <p>The Secretariat organised 3 meetings (July and November 2020 and April 2021) with the French authorities and animators of the label, with the purpose of investigating possible ways to improve and better implement the certification system. Consideration was given to the role of ACCOBAMS as the owner of the HQWW® Certificate, which can constitute an important “touch point” in the framework of the future communication strategy.</p> <p>The Secretariat participated with MIRACETI and Pelagos Agreement at the session organised by CARIMAM so to illustrate the example and experience of the ACCOBAMS HQWW® Certificate and certification process.</p>

CA 2 e	Marine litter
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Expected outcomes	The monitoring of marine litter in relation with cetaceans is improved
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Proposed Action(s)	Means of implementation	Status	Achievements
Monitor the impacts of marine litter (ingested marine litter / microplastics / entanglements in ghost nets) on cetaceans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting the implementation of the standardized necropsy protocol including the assessment of ingested marine litter and entanglement in ghost nets • Supporting pilot monitoring activities at the sub regional level through the implementation of the standardized necropsy protocol including the assessment of ingested marine litter and entanglement in ghost nets • Encouraging the report in stranding databases of marine litters data collected during necropsies • Identifying potential hotspot areas for cetacean entanglement and ingestion of marine litter, including through the assessment of entanglements/ingested marine litters during necropsies 	<p>Partially achieved</p> <p>Please refer to:</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf49</p>	<p>A study on the hotspots of interactions between cetaceans and marine litter in the ACCOBAMS Area is being prepared by the Task Manager on Marine Litter and Chemical Pollution (Cristina Fossi) in liaison with relevant experts and scientists from the ACCOBAMS Area. The draft report was presented at SC14 for review.</p> <p>A collaboration with RAMOGE and Pelagos Agreement was established in the framework of the 2020 European Week for Waste Reduction (EWWR) and during the 2021 Monaco Ocean Week. A presentational video of ACCOBAMS, RAMOGE et Pelagos was produced and disseminated on the ACCOBAMS social networks, in order to raise awareness on the impacts of litter in marine environment. The video was also broadcasted at the MedStand during the UICN Congress in September 2021.</p> <p>Exchanges are ongoing with MEDPOL and Barcelona Convention Secretariat to assess how ASI data/results regarding marine litter distribution could be integrated in the 2023 MedQSR. The Secretariat participated in several meetings in this context, in particular CORMON meetings on Marine Litter in December 2020, June 2021 and May 2022.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promoting/ supporting/ liaising with projects, research activities in order to evaluate and assess impact of microplastic on cetaceans using big data platform• Collaborating with relevant Organizations (MEDPOL) and projects, in particular Plastic Busters MPAs, Healthy Seas and Black Sea projects		
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CA 2 f	Chemical & biological pollution		
Expected outcomes	ACCOBAMS collaborates with relevant Organizations on this issue		
Proposed Action(s)	Means of implementation	Status	Achievements
Liaise with relevant other Organizations, such as IWC, to assess the impact of chemical & biological pollution (such as pathogens, invasive species) on cetaceans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a bibliographic review on the impact of chemical pollution on cetaceans • Developing Guidelines on the best practices to assess the impact of chemical pollution on cetaceans with a focus on emerging contaminants • Developing specific collaboration • Participating in relevant Meetings and Side events 	<p>Achieved</p> <p>Please refer to:</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf50</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf51</p>	<p>A bibliographic review on the impact of chemical pollution on cetaceans (including the identification of ad hoc research projects aimed at assessing chemical pollution on cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Area) is being prepared by the Task Manager on Marine Litter and Chemical Pollution (Cristina Fossi). The draft report was presented at Sc14 for review.</p> <p>Guidelines on best practices to assess the impact of chemical pollution on cetaceans / to measure the chemical contamination on cetaceans are being prepared by the Task Manager on Marine Litter and Chemical Pollution (Cristina Fossi). These guidelines are intended to provide simple information on scientific protocols to be implemented for collecting/analysing samples. Draft guidelines were presented at SC14 for review.</p>

CA 2 g	Climate change
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Expected outcomes	ACCOBAMS cooperates with regional initiatives on climate change, taking into account cetacean conservation
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Proposed Action(s)	Means of implementation	<i>Status</i>	<i>Achievements</i>
Contribute to regional initiatives on climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaising with relevant CMS Working Group • Participating in Meetings and side events 	Partially achieved	A consultant was recruited by the Secretariat to conduct a study on the evolution of cetaceans' population with environmental changes over 25 years in the North-Western Mediterranean Sea is ongoing. Results were presented at SC14 in November 2021 for review.

CA 2 h	Captivity related issues
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Expected outcomes	All specimens held in captivity in the ACCOBAMS Area are listed The identification of origin of <i>Tursiops truncatus ponticus</i> bred or kept in captivity is undertaken
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Proposed Action(s)	Means of implementation	<i>Status</i>	<i>Achievements</i>
Identify specimens held in captivity in the ACCOBAMS Area, including the case of reintroduction in accordance with the provision of the Resolution 3.20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updating and completing the overview of specimens held in captivity in the ACCOBAMS Area, including the case of reintroduction in accordance with the provision of the Resolution 3.20 Legal and scientific analysis // Evaluating the situation of semi-captivity in ACCOBAMS Area and providing Guidelines or reference document 	<p>Achieved</p> <p>Please refer to:</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf52</p>	<p>The Secretariat contracted an expert for technical and scientific assistance in the implementation of the work programme activities regarding captivity issues. He produced <i>inter alia</i> an overview of specimens held in captivity across the ACCOBAMS Area.</p> <p>A draft document “Scientific perspective on “potential marine semi-enclosed facilities” in the ACCOBAMS Area” was presented during SC14 for review.</p>
Identify origin of cetaceans bred or kept in captivity /Genetic passport for dolphins in captivity / in order to support the implementation of the CITES decisions 17.299 to 17.301 on bottlenose dolphin (<i>Tursiops Truncatus ponticus</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the development of genetic passport in view of disseminate protocol or methodology for such cases Support the development of a genetic registry for Black Sea bottlenose dolphins by CITES 	Not Achieved	-

CA3	ENHANCE EFFECTIVE CONSERVATION OF CETACEANS CRITICAL HABITATS
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CA 3 a	Area-based measures for cetacean conservation
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Expected outcomes	Cetacean Critical Habitats are updated Implementation of relevant measures are initiated in some pilot Cetacean Critical Habitats
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Proposed Action(s)	Means of implementation	Status	Achievements
Regularly update Cetacean Critical Habitats (CCH) including by identifying priority areas for action to mitigate the known threats (bycatch...) / area-based management measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gathering data, in particular through the organization of regional workshops to update CCH, considering the IMMAs and EBSAs process 	<p>Achieved</p> <p>Please refer to:</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc30</p> <p>ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf53</p>	<p>CCH process is ongoing. A consultant was recruited by the Secretariat to gather data. Progress in revising Cetacean Critical Habitats was presented during SC14.</p> <p>An expert workshop was organised on 10-11 March 2022 for a full review of progress.</p> <p>On 10-11 May 2022 (Barcelona, Spain), the Secretariat and the SC participated to a MSP workshop whose aimed at addressing the compromise between environmental protection strategies and economic development policies through a specific focus on the conservation of marine mammals and the development of several sectors as maritime transport and Offshore Wind Farms.</p>
Support implementation of relevant measures for adequate management in CCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying and promoting relevant management measures in pilot CCH, in collaboration with all stakeholders (CB) Collaborating with other Organizations, such as UNEP-MAP/RAC-SPA, BSC, IMO, IWC, and GFCM, in particular through the Strategic Alliance 	<p>Achieved</p>	<p>The Secretariat led a coordinator's role in organising the IUCN Med Stand sessions under theme 3 – "Improving Partnership and effective and equitable governance of Mediterranean natural resources" – where a global message in relation to the partnership and governance of the Med resources was provided together with other organisations.</p> <p>The Secretariat was involved in the organisation of the 2020 Mediterranean MPA Forum (organized in December 2021) and was involved in 3 other working groups: « Policy and Governance », « Management and Knowledge » et « Capacity and Awareness ».</p> <p>The Secretariat is engaged in the OECM process and showcased ACCOBAMS during the first Workshop webinar "Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) for the Mediterranean", on 14 June 2021.</p> <p>The Secretariat participated at 3 meetings with Barcelona Convention, GFCM, IUCN and SPA/RAC under the Strategic Alliance so to explore synergies and alignment of respective priorities.</p>

CA4	ENHANCE PUBLIC AWARENESS ABOUT CETACEANS
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CA 4 a	Information /Communication / Awareness about cetaceans
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Expected outcomes	<p>All ACCOBAMS Bodies, national focal/contact points, Partners and other relevant national institutions, Organizations and experts are familiar with activities implemented by or relevant for ACCOBAMS and share information accurately</p> <p>General public and other relevant stakeholders are aware about cetaceans and need for their conservation through activities supported by or linked to ACCOBAMS</p>
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Proposed Action(s)	Means of implementation	Status	Achievements
Maintain regular information/ communication about ongoing activities, cooperation and funding possibilities, cetacean conservation scientists and experts operating in the region and other relevant information; facilitate communication among cetacean conservation actors of the ACCOBAMS Area, in particular in Southern Mediterranean countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing an information/ communication strategy 	<p style="text-align: center;">Achieved</p> <p>Please refer to:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Doc24</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf09</p>	<p>The Secretariat recruited an international Consultant to develop an ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy proposal in view of its adoption at the Eighth Meeting of the Parties. Beginning of 2021 this work has started with a diagnosis stage, whose preliminary results were presented to the Fifth Meeting of National Representatives and the 14th SC meeting.</p> <p>A Steering Committee composed of Parties representatives was set up to provide views on the drafting of the Communication Strategy. This Steering Committee met on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1st December 2021, - 9 May 2022, - 11 July 2022. <p>Comments received from the Steering Committee Members were integrated in the different drafts of the Communication Strategy and the final version has been included in a draft Resolution submitted to MOP8.</p> <p>In addition, during BUEXT5, recognizing the need to strengthen the ACCOBAMS brand positioning, the Bureau agreed that it would be beneficial to have all conditions in place for an efficient implementation of the Communication Strategy during the next triennium. With that in mind and considering the recommendation by the company to refresh the visual image of the ACCOBAMS brand before launching the implementation of the Communication Strategy in 2023, 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.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizing a Conference on cetacean conservation in South Mediterranean Countries – CSMC (CB) 	Achieved	CSMC5 was held online in April 2021. Please see the Report of the Fifth Conference on Cetacean Conservation in South Mediterranean Countries.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing the current citizen sciences initiatives in the ACCOBAMS Area and produce basic guidelines on the use and how to gather information Evaluating the relevance of “Citizen Science” input of cetaceans’ sightings in expert-supervised databases Organizing Public awareness events Developing Information material and tools Promoting cetacean conservation actions during national and international events Producing annual newsletter (FINS) Posting on ACCOBAMS Website and social media Posting on NETCCOBAMS 	Achieved	<p>On 24 November 2021, ACCOBAMS celebrated its 25th Anniversary, with the occasion having been officially celebrated on 23/11/2021. A short video on the ACCOBAMS mandate and action was released during this event at the Oceanographic Museum in Monaco and broadcasted later on with the images taken at the ceremony, including those of HSH Prince Albert II unveiling the artistic piece made of recycled plastics that was offered by ACCOBAMS and is displayed in Monaco close to the Oceanographic Museum.</p> <p>The ACCOBAMS Secretariat launched a contest for creating the ACCOBAMS 25 years anniversary logo. The winning design was selected by the ACCOBAMS Bureau Members in December 2020.</p> <p>The Secretariat approached the Stamp Issuing Office in Monaco in order to publish a commemorative stamp as well as a postal flame. The stamp was issued in May 2021 and is available for purchase in any postal office until 31 December 2021. The postal flame is issued periodically over the course of 2021.</p> <p>A consultant was recruited by the Secretariat to review the current citizen sciences initiatives in the ACCOBAMS Area and evaluate the relevance of “Citizen Science” input of cetaceans’ sightings in expert-supervised databases. Results were presented at SC14.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting the functioning of MEDACES 		The Secretariat exchanged with SPA/RAC and the Spanish Focal Point regarding MEDACES support.
Introduce in a new Country / Disseminate the ACCOBAMS Teaching Module courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introducing the Teaching Module in a new country and supporting its dissemination where the module has already been introduced (CB) 	Partially achieved	A collaboration between the Secretariat and MedPAN was established regarding trainings on Conservation and monitoring of cetaceans across Mediterranean MPAs (October 2020).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborating in relevant projects such as the realization of the Master of first level in “Conservation Medicine of Aquatic Animals” and the project “Human Oceans Professional Experts” (HOPE) 		
Enhance public awareness about cetacean’s conservation in the ACCOBAMS Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing the ACCOBAMS Cetacean Day • Delivering a conservation Awards (ECS, Partners) • Producing Press releases • Posting on social media 	Achieved	<p>News and tweets have been regularly posted on the ACCOBAMS website, and ACCOBAMS social networks.</p> <p>Dolphin day celebration together with ACCOBAMS cetacean day, mainly online due to COVID 19 restrictions.</p> <p>The short video produced for the 25th anniversary ceremony was released prior to the official event at the Oceanographic Museum on 23 November and broadcasted in December in social media with the images taken during the ceremony, including those of HSH Prince Albert II unveiling the artistic piece made of recycled plastics that was offered by ACCOBAMS to the hosting Country.</p> <p>A book “Conserving Whales, Dolphins and Porpoises in the Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea and adjacent areas: an ACCOBAMS status report (2021)” was provided to each of the three ECS student award winners (ECS Conference 5-7 April 2022 : Student award)</p>

ANNEX 1
Main meetings attended by the Secretariat in 2020-2022 (up to September 2022)

Dates	Name of the Meeting	Location	Organized by
2020			
16 January	1 st workshop of the French collective on underwater noise in the Mediterranean	Paris, France	Office Français de la Biodiversité
23 January	12 th Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Committee of the Pelagos Agreement	Monaco	Pelagos Agreement Permanent Secretariat
6-7 February	Steering Committee for the 2020 MPA Forum	Marseille, France (online video conference)	MedPAN
10 February	GIAS project workshop on “Sharing best practices for the management of large cetacean carcasses adrift”	Savona, Italy	CIMA Foundation
12-24 May	68th IWC Scientific Committee Meeting	Online	IWC
2 June	15th Meeting of the MSFD Common Implementation Strategy Technical Group on Underwater Noise (TG Noise)	Online	European Commission (DG ENV)
26 June	EU Roundtable on preventing by-catch of common dolphins and harbour porpoises in fisheries (with Commissioner Sinkevicius and DG MARE)	Online	European Commission (DG MARE)
30 June	JONAS - Joint Framework for Ocean Noise in the Atlantic Seas online Underwater Noise Visualisation Workshop	Online	Jonas Project consortium
10 July	Marine mammal <i>post-mortem</i> workshop (1 st part)	Online	University of Liège
7-11 September	ASCOBANS 9 th Meeting of the Parties	Online	ASCOBANS Secretariat
8 September	Kick-off meeting of the PIAQUO project	Toulon, France	Naval Group
23 September	France National Committee meeting for the Pelagos Sanctuary	Saint Jean Cap Ferrat, France	Port-Cros National Park

Dates	Name of the Meeting	Location	Organized by
5-9 October	Training on the conservation and monitoring of cetaceans across Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)	Marine Observatory of the Gulf of Saint-Tropez	MedPAN
6 October	16th Meeting of the MSFD Common Implementation Strategy Technical Group on Underwater Noise (TG Noise)	Online	European Commission (DG ENV)
6- 7 October	EU TG Noise Thematic Sessions on the assessment frameworks for the definition of threshold values for impulsive and continuous noise	Online	European Commission (DG ENV)
26 October	Workshop “Start of MAVA OAP M4/5 phase 2”	Online	MAVA Foundation
27-30 October	Regional Workshop on common approaches to habitats and species conservation in the Black Sea Marine Biogeographical Region	Online	Bulgarian Ministry of Environment and Water
29 October	EU TG-Noise Thematic Session on the assessment framework for the definition of threshold values for continuous noise	Brussel, Belgium	European Commission (DG ENV)
3 November	HQWW Certificate - Working meeting on the future developments of the certificate in France	Online	MIRACETI
3 November	High-level meeting on “Building a new strategy for Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture”	Online	GFCM
1-3 December	Integrated Meetings of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Groups on IMAF Implementation (CORMONS)	Online	UNEP/MAP
8 December	1 st Meeting of the <i>ad hoc</i> Group of Experts for Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (AGEM)	Online	SPA/RAC
2021			
22-23 February	Meeting of the Marine Expert Group	Online	EC DG ENV
22-26 February	Regional Workshop for the Identification of Important Marine Mammal Areas in the Black Sea, Turkish Straits System and Caspian Sea	Online	MMPA Task Force
22-24-26 March	Short course “Science-Policy-Society interactions in ecosystem-based marine resources management and planning”	Online	the Mediterranean Biodiversity Protection Community (MBPC) & the BlueMed CSA

Dates	Name of the Meeting	Location	Organized by
9-11 March	Subregional Committee for the Central Mediterranean (SRC-CM)	Online	GFCM
15-19 March	European Cetacean Society Webinar 2021	Online	ECS
22-27 March	Monaco Ocean Week	Online	Monaco
31 March - 1 April	First Meeting of the Working Group of Experts on Upgrading the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management	Online	MED POL Programme
7 April	Meeting of the Online Working Group on marine mammals	Online	SPA/RAC
3-4 May 2021	2 nd Meeting of the <i>ad hoc</i> Group of Experts for Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (AGEM)	Online	SPA/RAC
5 May	Post-2020 SAPBIO 3rd Advisory Committee Meeting	Online	SPA/RAC
27 April – 15 May	68th IWC Scientific Committee Meeting	Online	IWC
18 May	ASCOBANS Workshop on Management of MPAs for Small Cetaceans	Online	ASCOBANS Secretariat
19-20 May	Final event of the EcoSTRIM project	Online	CIMA Foundation
31 May – 2 June	14th Meeting of REMPEC National Focal Points	Online	REMPEC
4 June	MBPC project workshop on “Mediterranean solutions towards zero pollution impacts on biodiversity and health”	Online	ETC-UMA
10-11 June	Correspondence Group on IMAP implementation (CORMON) on Biodiversity and Fisheries	Online	SPA/RAC
7-10 June	ASCOBANS Workshop on Management of MPAs for Small Cetaceans - conservation measures	Online	ASCOBANS Secretariat
14 June	Workshop Webinar 1- Mediterranean Marine OECMs: Virtual Workshop Series on catalyzing identification, recognition and reporting of OECMs in the Mediterranean	Online	IUCN Med
21 June	Celebration of 100 th anniversary of International Hydrographic Organization	Monaco	IHO
23-25 June	15th Meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points	Online	SPA/RAC

Dates	Name of the Meeting	Location	Organized by
5 & 9 July	Extraordinary meeting of the Scientific and Technical Committee of the Pelagos Agreement	Monaco / Online	Pelagos Agreement Permanent Secretariat
9 July	High-level meeting on “A new vision for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea “	Online	GFCM
28-30 July	Ninth Meeting of the Working Group on the Black Sea (WGBS)	Online	GFCM
9-10 September	2021 Virtual Special Meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC)	Online	IWC
4-9 September	IUCN World Conservation Congress – Mediterranean solutions Stand	Marseille, France	IUCN
10-17 September	Meeting of the UNEP/MAP Focal Points	Online	UNEP/MAP
25 September	Forum de la Mer, Bizerte, Tunisia & online	Online	Tunisia
30 September	Gala dinner of Annual Meeting of OSPAR Commission	Lisbon, Portugal	OSPAR
18-19 October 2021	Technical Workshop “Cooperation for a transboundary PSSA in NW Mediterranean Sea”	Paris, France	French Ministry for ecological transition
2-6 November	GFCM 44 th Session of the Commission	Online	GFCM
8-12 November	ASCOBANS 26 th Meeting of the Advisory Committee	Online	ASCOBANS
28 November – 1 December	Mediterranean MPA Forum	Monaco & Online	MedPAN, SPA/RAC, WWF, the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation
15-16 December	Pelagos Agreement MOP	Online	Pelagos Agreement Permanent Secretariat
17 December	Workshop on the PSSA proposal for the North-Western Mediterranean	Online	Italian Presidency in the framework of the 8th Meeting of the Parties of the Pelagos Agreement

2022			
12 January	Final event of the SICOMAR plus project	Livorno, Italy & online	SICOMAR plus project
1 February	Virtual training course on the identification and handling of vulnerable species incidentally caught during fishing operations (marine mammals)	Online	GFCM
3 February	Meeting of the Online Working Group on marine mammals	Online	SPA/RAC
7-10 February	MAVA OAP M4/M5 Steering Committee meeting and fundraising workshop	Malaga, Spain & online	MAVA Foundation
16-17 February	FAO/GFCM Expert Meeting on fisheries-related other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) in the Mediterranean	Online	FAO/GFCM
28 February	Opening event of the Life CONCEPTU MARIS Project	Online	ISPRA
20-21 March	Monaco Blue Initiative	Monaco	Monaco
21-26 March	Monaco Ocean Week	Monaco	Monaco
28-29 March	SPA/RAC CORMON meeting on Biodiversity and Fisheries	Online	SPA/RAC
5-7 April	ECS Conference 2022	Israel - Online	ECS
19-22 April	GFCM Subregional Committee for the Western Mediterranean (SRC-WM) 19-22 April 2022	Online	GFCM
9-12 May	MSPMED project workshop "Underwater noise assessment for decision support in MSP and related policies"	Barcelona, Spain	IEO
20 May	SPAMI Day 2022 special event	Monaco	SPA/RAC
24 May	21 st Meeting of Technical Group on Underwater Noise (TG-Noise)	Online	European Commission (DG ENV)
31 May	CORMON Marine Litter	Online	MED POL Programme
21-24 June	23rd Session of the GFCM Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC)	Online	GFCM
23-24 June	EU Marine Expert Group Meeting	Online	EC DG ENV

27 June – 1 July	UN Ocean Conference	Lisbon, Portugal	UN
6 July	5th Meeting of the Regional Cooperation Platform on Marine Litter in the Mediterranean	Online	MED POL Programme
27-28 September	GFCM Working Group on Fishing Technology	Online	GFCM
28-30 September	27th Meeting of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee (AC27)	Online	ASCOBANS Secretariat
29 September – 1 October	IUCN-Med 20 th anniversary	Malaga, Spain	IUCN-Med

ANNEX 2

Report on the implementation of the ACCOBAMS Funding Strategy

The ACCOBAMS Funding Strategy was adopted at the Seventh Meeting of the Parties in 2019 through Resolution 7.5. The Secretariat is expected to report on progress on this Funding Strategy to each Meeting of the Parties. The progresses presented below follow the key actions of the ACCOBAMS Funding Strategy.

a) Monitor external funding opportunities

The Secretariat kept a watch on funding opportunities that could be of interest to support ACCOBAMS priority themes of the Program of Work. During the triennium 2020-2022, the Secretariat coordinated proposals (or collaborated to the development of proposals) under the following calls for proposals:

- The call for proposals “DG ENV/MSFD 2020” - Marine Strategy Framework Directive: Support to the preparation of the next 6-year cycle of implementation

Two project proposals in which ACCOBAMS Secretariat participated as Partner were submitted under this call:

- ABIOMMED “Support coherent and coordinated assessment of biodiversity and measures across Mediterranean for the next 6-year cycle of MSFD implementation”;
- QUIETSEAS “Assisting (sub) regional cooperation for the practical implementation of the MSFD second cycle by providing methods and tools for D11 (underwater noise)”.

Both projects were selected for funding.

- A call launched by MAVA Foundation in October 2020 “Keeping nature at the heart of post-COVID recovery”

Two proposals were developed by ACCOBAMS Secretariat:

- Assist stakeholders in determining a recovery strategy for shipping industries, that includes sustainable practices to mitigate pressures from vessel traffic to the marine environment, by analyzing vessel traffic data and their effects;
- Promoting the High-Quality Whale-Watching® certificate as a model tool in the post-COVID era for improving sustainability of marine wildlife watching tourism industry in the Mediterranean.

None of the proposals was selected.

In addition, the ACCOBAMS Secretariat participated to the MAVA-funded project “Together for the Med” aimed at ensuring the sustainability of the partnership established by MAVA since 2017 through their Action Plans related to interactions between fisheries and biodiversity, and the preservation of living marine resources. The main objective being to maintain communication and coordination amongst different partners, and to improve partnership visibility, in order to attract new funding after 2022, when MAVA Foundation will come to an end. Several fundraising dedicated actions were carried out by the “Together for the Med” team with the support of MAVA, like a side-event organized during UN Ocean Conference, or a donor fair in Tunis, July 2022, to present different projects. In this framework, efforts were initiated in June 2022 to start developing a project proposal that would ensure continuity to activities undertaken through MAVA-funded MedBycatch and Depredation projects, with all partners involved in the latter. No donors have yet been identified. This partnership emerges as an excellent platform for exchange of information in relation to funding opportunities.

b) Encourage development of multilateral/transboundary project

In line with the above efforts to explore external funding opportunities, the ACCOBAMS Secretariat supported the development of a potential consortium of partners to develop a project proposal under the call issued by Biodiversa+

(European Biodiversity Partnership) on “Supporting the protection of biodiversity and ecosystems across land and sea”. Unfortunately, the too short time frame unable the development of a sound proposal and partners decided to refrain from submitting a project proposal.

c) Build capacities in project development/management

This activity was foreseen in the 2020-2022 Programme of Work through the organization of a training workshop on project development/fundraising, but no voluntary contribution was targeted to implement this activity.

d) Strengthen the mobilization of voluntary contributions from ACCOBAMS Parties, including for the Supplementary Conservation Funds

Calls for Voluntary Contribution were considered as a necessary step in facilitating the mobilization of voluntary contributions from Parties for the organization of specific actions.

In July 2020 a Call for voluntary contributions for the implementation of the Work Programme 2020-2022 was issued to all National Focal Points and Bureau Members. Four Parties provided voluntary contributions to support specific actions under the 2020-2022 Work Program: Malta, Monaco, Italy and Spain.

The ACCOBAMS Funding Strategy also encourages Parties to continue providing support through voluntary contributions to the ACCOBAMS Supplementary Conservation Funds, considering its significant role in supporting cetaceans’ conservation initiatives in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. Thanks to voluntary contributions provided by Italy and Monaco during 2020-2022 a call for proposals was launched in 2022 in order to financially support 4 projects.

e) Develop or strengthen relationships with donors

Meeting donors, organizing meetings or round tables with potential donors was identified as a way to raise interest and attention on ACCOBAMS work, and constitute opportunities to present project ideas. The participation of ACCOBAMS Secretariat in high-level events organized in the region, such as the IUCN World Conservation Congress in 2020, the UN Ocean Conference in 2022, the Monaco Blue Initiative every two years, were good opportunities to initiate contacts with potential donors.

In addition, in the framework of efforts to replicate the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative, a list of potential donors to be approached was elaborated and will be used as a roadmap for contacts by the Secretariat in future fundraising efforts.

f) Animate and mobilize the ACCOBAMS community

The ACCOBAMS Partners network was identified by the ACCOBAMS Funding Strategy as a structuring support for the ACCOBAMS community. The animation of this network, including the “recruitment” of new partners, can contribute to the development of new collaboration settings and joint projects and initiatives.

5 organizations have been given the ACCOBAMS Partner Status during 2020-2022.

g) Strengthen communication and outreach on ACCOBAMS

The development of an ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy was identified as a key step for strengthening ACCOBAMS visibility and reputation, being mindful of the virtuous cycle between communication, outreach and fundraising.

In consultation with the Bureau, a specialized company was recruited in 2020 in order to develop a draft ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy. The finalized draft ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy is presented at MOP8 for adoption through draft Resolution 8.6. Allocating sufficient means in the next future is necessary to ensure a concrete and efficient implementation of the ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy.

h) Collaboration, key success factor in fundraising

Strengthening collaborations and ensuring synergies with relevant organizations are fundamental to avoid duplication of efforts and to contribute to increase visibility on ACCOBAMS activities. This also contributes to reinforce sustainability of actions undertaken under ACCOBAMS auspices and to "reassure" potential funders on the non-duplication of funding.

i) Develop partnerships with the private sector

No progress to report on that matter.

j) Engage in crowdfunding

No progress to report on that matter.

k) Explore innovative financing mechanisms

No progress to report on that matter.

ANNEX IX

REPORT OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE AND ITS WORKING GROUPS

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (by the SC Chair & the SC Vice-Chair)

The 'ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative' - ASI - a basin-wide survey to estimate cetacean density and abundance has been now completed. A final technical online workshop was organized by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat, where participants had the opportunity to discuss and present a list of conservation recommendations stemming from ASI results. A detailed document has been prepared, with the final goal to establish a Long-Term Monitoring Program (LTMP) to facilitate regular and systematic basin-wide survey with shared research and logistic protocols. Effort has also been devoted to planning an ASI Special Issue to be published in *Frontiers of Marine Science*. Ideally, most of the scientists involved in ASI would access the dedicated online platform and consider submitting a manuscript, considering how this Special Issue will be important to disseminate results, proposed conservation actions and recommendations of the ASI and CeNoBS projects. The deadline for receiving manuscripts has been set to the end of 2022 and a few contributions have been submitted, covering different aspects of the ASI.

The ASI results have also allowed further effort to elucidate cetacean population structure within the ACCOBAMS Area, facilitating the reassessment, under the **IUCN Red List** criteria, of all species occurring in the ACCOBAMS region, including those which were listed as Data Deficient and those which had not been previously assessed. The final results of this effort, carried out in cooperation with the IUCN Office in Malaga and the Red List Authority are 3 subspecies assessed in the Black Sea, all three belonging to a threatened status. 13 subpopulations of 9 species have been assessed for the Mediterranean Sea: 10 are threatened, 1 is Near Threatened and 2 are Least Concern. The new Red List assessments have been published on the IUCN Red List portal in December 2021.

Chemical pollution, as well as the presence of **plastic debris** throughout the Basin, still represents a substantial source of concern for cetaceans in the Agreement area, with macro, micro and nano-plastics very high on the international agenda. Proposals from the SC to evaluate ways to remove plastics from the sea, together with a significant reduction of plastics coming from land have been discussed. Rather than collecting new data, the SC as well the ASI recommendation workshop stressed there is an urgent need to take concrete actions so to reduce the impact on cetacean populations.

In regard to **Cetacean captivity issues**, a reference document on Potential Semi-Enclosed Facilities in the ACCOBAMS Area has recently been produced. Concern for the welfare of cetaceans in captivity has increased, especially over the last decades, in line with concern for other animals in captive settings. Some dolphinariums are closing either because their facilities became obsolete and did not comply with legal requirements relating to the keeping of wild animals, or because of a decline in business and a shift in public opinion. Consequently, there is a lack of appropriate destinations for their dolphins. This document aims at contributing to the development of international standards for cetacean holding facilities related to the creation of marine semi-enclosed facilities for cetaceans, referred to as REFUGES (not "sanctuaries", to prevent any confusion with the "Pelagos Sanctuary", which has a completely different nature and goal) in the ACCOBAMS Area. A Dolphin Refuge may be a valid option not only for dolphins currently in dolphinariums but also for stranded dolphins in need of prolonged rehabilitation. Moreover, the document proposes the creation for future consultancy of an Advisory Committee composed of experts in a variety of fields including ecology and behaviour of odontocetes, odontocete husbandry, veterinary medicine focused on marine mammals, strandings, rescue, captive rehabilitation and release techniques, public education and awareness.

Place-based and threat-based approach also played an important role over the last triennium, with reference to the ongoing process carried out by the IUCN Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force to identify Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) within the Mediterranean and Black Seas, and the ACCOBAMS effort to overlap existing maps of reference for the ACCOBAMS region of densities of cetaceans (from Mannocci et al., 2018 and ASI), taking into account IMMAs, with maps of human pressures to delineate **Cetaceans Critical Habitats**.

Eleven new **IMMAs** (Important Marine Mammal Area) are part of 14 new IMMAs for the marine mammals of the Black Sea, Turkish Straits System, and Caspian Sea, which were elaborated at the IMMA online regional workshop organized in February 2021 by the IUCN SSC-WCPA Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force. The workshop resulted in the identification of 23 new candidate Important Marine Mammal Areas (cIMMAs). Following an independent review, 14 IMMAs, one candidate IMMA (cIMMA) and 11 areas of interest (AoI) were approved.

II. REPORTS OF SC REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

1. Report on the conservation status of cetaceans and relevant activities in Western Mediterranean and contiguous Atlantic area

- Countries of the region: Algeria, France, Italy (Western coast), Monaco, Morocco, Portugal, Spain.
- Overview of activities in the Region in 2020-2022

Algeria: CNRDPA research officer attended several meetings and technical workshops;
Signature of a new operational network for monitoring cetacean strandings on the Algerian coast;
Adoption of the Draft National Monitoring Plan for Cetaceans along the Algerian coast.

France: Implementation of several projects aimed at 1) protection and sustainable management of bottlenose dolphins, 2) assessing the pressure of whale watching activities, 3) reducing ship strikes.

Italy: Project EcoSTRIM (establishment of guidelines for the labelling of tourist activities tourism and Implementation of the High Quality Whale-Watching® label in Italy)

Morocco: Implementation of several projects aimed at 1) developing a sustainable and well managed whale watching activity, 2) testing different measures aimed at reducing the interactions between cetaceans and fisheries; 3) reinforcement of the national stranding network;

Portugal: Implementation of several projects aimed at 1) monitoring of cetaceans, 2) monitoring and assessment of the potential impacts of whale watching in cetaceans; 3) evaluating the level of interactions of coastal artisanal fisheries and cetaceans and testing the use of acoustic alarms; 4) reinforcement of the national stranding network; 5) monitoring of the interactions between killer whales and sailing boats (together with Spain).

Spain: Implementation of several projects aimed at: 1) assessing the main threats to cetaceans in the Mediterranean Cetacean Migration Corridor; 2) reinforcement of the marine animal strandings network of the Valencian community; 3) MEDACES.

- Major issue(s) or main threats or “hot” topics that have emerged during the said period for the Region:

France: Awareness raising, and training of professionals has been made very complicated with COVID-19.

- Recommendations / suggestions for conservation Improvement

France: 1) Encourage and improve regional and cross-border cooperation on the issue of collisions and whale-watching in order to adopt a global and common strategy on the development of mitigation measures; 2) Encourage the sharing of experience and the capitalization of existing tools at regional level.

2. Report on the conservation status of cetaceans and relevant activities in Central Mediterranean

- Countries of the region: Albania, Croatia, Italy (Adriatic coast), Libya, Malta, Montenegro, Slovenia, Tunisia.

- Overview of activities in the Region in 2020-2022

Research in the region has been carried out via a number of approaches, including local boat-based photo-identification studies, land-based surveys, dedicated line-transect aerial surveys, surveys from passenger ferries, passive acoustic monitoring, biopsy sampling, strandings and *post-mortem* investigations, and the use of unmanned aircraft (“drones”), focusing on several regular species in this region. While some parts of the region are well studied, with good understanding of cetacean conservation status, large portions of the region remain poorly covered, with limited information on cetacean presence, abundance, status or threats. The northern part of the region is much better studied, with substantial information gaps from the southern portion of the region, where additional focused research and capacity building effort is needed. There is evidence that southern Mediterranean waters may contain important habitats for several species, including beaked whales.

New IUCN Red List assessments were published for cetacean species inhabiting the Mediterranean and Black Seas in 2021. All but two species in the region were listed into one of the threatened categories.

- Major issue(s) or main threats or “hot” topics that have emerged during the said period for the Region:

Main issues in the region are ongoing and well-known threats, including bycatch in fishing gear and other interactions between cetaceans and fisheries, disturbance from recreational boating, shipping and other sources of underwater noise, chemical pollutants and marine litter. Bycatch is a known issue for cetaceans in the region, but much needed robust estimates of bycatch are lacking. A noteworthy emerging issue of concern pertains to the increased incidence of marine litter originating from the personal protective equipment (PPE) and single-use plastics, both related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, while the policy on paper largely appears adequate, a substantial lack of enforcement of ACCOBAMS provisions has been noted in several parts of the region and in relation to several types of threats.

- Recommendations / suggestions for conservation Improvement

- Capacity building is needed in some areas, to improve data collection and data analysis capabilities, in order to better inform conservation.
- Robust estimates of bycatch are needed, both regionally and across the Mediterranean basin.
- Better compliance and enforcement of ACCOBAMS provisions are needed in relation to several types of threats.

3. Report on the conservation status of cetaceans and relevant activities in Eastern Mediterranean

- Countries of the region: Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, Lebanon, Syria, Türkiye (Mediterranean coast).

- Overview of activities in the Region in 2020-2022

Cyprus: In 2019, submission of the Oceanid Marine area in the Natura 2000 sites under the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (SCI). The proposed area was adopted in the Natura 2000 areas in 2021 and it protects 12 species of the Nature Directives including bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*). Moreover, the Department of Fisheries and Marine Research (DFMR) has implemented a Citizens science scheme to gather information on cetaceans. DFMR has created a mobile app called CY-FIS for the recording of Fishing Activities by professional and recreational fishermen, as well as other related activities for the purpose of managing fishery resources by the DFMR. Moreover, sightings of protected species can also be provided to the DFMR through the app. Cyprus also participated to the QUIETMED 2 project and the Quiet seas project.

Egypt: Participation to the 5th Conference on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the South Mediterranean Countries (CSMC5) that was held online from 13 to 15 April 2021.

Greece: Through a survey on the national cetaceans stranding networks in 2017/2018, data were provided to the ACCOBAMS permanent Secretariat. The data bank and tissue bank are available through the Pelagos Cetacean Research Institute. The country is working on the death origin, dynamic mapping, just spotted specimens, marine debris in necropsies and necropsies.

Lebanon: The country is trying to implement a tissue bank by collecting organs and tissues of stranded cetaceans. Every time a stranded animal is reported, a team from the National Centre for Marine Sciences intervene in order to perform the dissection, and therefore collecting organs and tissues. In addition, the National Centre for Marine Sciences (CNRS-L) hosted the 5th Conference on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the South Mediterranean Countries (CSMC5) that was held online from 13 to 15 April 2021. Experts, researchers and students from Lebanon participated to the conference.

Syria: Experts, researchers and students from Syria participated to the CSMC5.

Türkiye (Mediterranean coast): Organization of two scientific expeditions in Finike (Anaximander) Seamounts Special Environment Protected Area (SEPA) in May and September 2021, within the scope of protection and monitoring activities for Cetacea diversity. In addition, DMAD (Marine Mammals Research Association) has conducted research traditional visual surveys combined with passive acoustic monitoring between Marmaris and Anamur in the Levantine Sea since 2018 with ongoing survey effort, under the name of the project "Giant Guardians of The Deep Seas II". Moreover, the project "Understanding Mediterranean multi-taxa 'bycatch' of vulnerable species and testing mitigation- a collaborative approach "(Bycatch project) took place in Türkiye which aims to support UNEP/MAP Barcelona Convention, and specifically the southern and eastern Mediterranean Contracting Parties (Morocco, Tunisia and Türkiye), to identify and test measures to reduce impact of fisheries on marine mammals, birds, turtles and elasmobranchs.

- Major issue(s) or main threats or "hot" topics that have emerged during the said period for the Region:

There are difficulties in implementing the Agreement in some regions for the following reasons:

- Lack of highly qualified personnel
- Lack of equipment
- Lack of adequate funding

- Difficulties in convincing public opinion of the interest of the agreement and conservation of cetaceans
- Episodically tense security situation not making it possible to carry out research and awareness-raising missions on a continuous basis

Moreover, Continuous oil and gas related activities (seismic surveys, drilling) in the region have been observed with no concrete mitigation and legislation in place (obligation to hire an MMO during their activities) at a national level in order to assure the monitoring and conservation of cetaceans.

- Recommendations / suggestions for conservation Improvement

Capacity building is needed in the region in order to improve the implementation of the agreement.

4. Report on the conservation status of cetaceans and relevant activities in Black Sea

- Countries of the region: Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Türkiye, Ukraine.

- Overview of activities in the Region in 2020-2022

The activities have undertaken for continuous data acquisition in link with comprehensive cetacean population estimate and distribution, habitat use, passive acoustic monitoring, bycatch monitoring and mitigation trial with pingers, establish tissue bank, microplastics, stranding networks and events for the three species inhabiting the Black Sea (*Delphinus delphis ponticus*, *Tursiops truncatus ponticus* and *Phocoena phocoena relicta*). The 11 new IMMAs (Important Marine Mammal Areas) are part of 14 new IMMAs for the marine mammals of the Black Sea, Turkish Straits System, and Caspian Sea, which were elaborated at the online regional workshop organized in 2021. The assessment of the status of the three Black Sea subspecies in the IUCN Red List has been updated and now in the review process.

- Major issue(s) or main threats or “hot” topics that have emerged during the said period for the Region:

The result of CeNoBS bycatch assessment (2021) showed that the bycatch of the harbor porpoise in the Black Sea exceeds the threshold for the sustainability of the population and poses a significant threat for this subspecies. The main tasks for the future activities are updating fleet and effort assessments, enhancing the bycatch reporting and observation coverage, mortality analysis, validation of data, elaborating background for time-space closure measures, and, most importantly, developing techniques for bycatch mitigation, with consideration of local specific features.

In spring-summer 2022, unusual increase of cetacean strandings and bycatches (mostly common dolphins and harbor porpoises) were observed on the coast of the Black Sea. In total, more than 600 deaths have been observed since the beginning of 2022 on the coasts of Bulgaria, Romania, Türkiye and Ukraine. The Russia’s war against Ukraine escalated in February 2022 puts the entire Black Sea basin under a huge threat. Military activities in the marine and coastal areas may affect the marine biota in the region, including cetaceans. All the experts in the Black Sea are trying to collect data and samples to find out the cause of these deaths in the Black Sea. Besides, in some areas, boat surveys have been difficult due to the potential danger posed by drifting mines.

- Recommendations / suggestions for conservation Improvement

The bycatch in turbot fishery and the high seasonal mortality of harbor porpoises, threatening the viability of the subspecies, it is of an urgent matter to refine and monitor estimates of porpoise abundance, population dynamics and bycatch level, as well as to develop measures to reduce bycatch.

III. REPORTS OF SC TASKS MANAGERS

In accordance with the core priorities of the 2020-2022 Working Programme, the Scientific Committee decided to designate the following Task Managers:

1. Species Conservation Management Plans

- Composition

- Task Manager: Greg DONOVAN
- Vice-Task Manager: Simone PANIGADA
- Support Group: Ayaka Amaha OZTÜRK, Joan GONZALVO, Aurélie MOULINS and CMP coordinators.

- Overview of relevant activities on this topic during the 2020/2022 triennium

ACCOBAMS-MOP6/2016/Res.6.21 consolidated earlier work on specific conservation plans and endorsed the guidelines and process for developing Conservation Management Plans (CMPs) with an initial focus on Mediterranean fin whales and bottlenose dolphins. This approach was in accord with one developed by the IWC and the value of consistency of approach and jointly endorsed CMPs where appropriate was recognized. Subsequently, the Scientific Committee was asked to add Risso's dolphins and common dolphins in the Mediterranean to the development process.

CMPs aim to ensure the good long-term conservation status of a species in an area in light of human activities. They are living documents consolidating the best available scientific, conservation and management expertise to guide and co-ordinate effective management efforts amongst all stakeholders at the international, national level and local level. Work, although delayed by the Covid-situation has continued on all four species culminating recently (March 2022) in a workshop on CMPs for bottlenose dolphins and common dolphins. Considerable work was achieved, and special effort was and is being made to focus on ensuring consistency amongst species where appropriate especially when linking actions that may require similar expertise, personnel and resources. These four drafts are being revised and the next step is to hold a series of stakeholder workshops within the next two years using the drafts as the basis in order to finalize the first six-year iteration of each CMP and present the CMPs to the MOP in 2025 for endorsement and implementation. The CMPs will then be reviewed and revised regularly (about every 6 years) in the light of progress made.

The Scientific Committee has also recommended that work begins on CMPs for sperm and Cuvier's beaked whales in the Mediterranean Sea.

2. Interactions with Fisheries and aquaculture

- Composition

- Task Manager: Joan GONZALVO
- Vice-Task Manager: Souad LAMOUTI
- Support Group: Members of the JBWG (Marina SEQUEIRA and Fiona READ have been added in the list of JBWG Members)

- Overview of relevant activities on this topic during the 2020/2022 triennium

The Task Manager (TM) reports the following activities:

1 – Participation at the Fourteenth Meeting of the Scientific Committee in Monaco (22-26 November 2021). A cetacean carcass, can provide valuable information, including evidence that could be used as reliable indicators of bycatch such

as net marks, amputations, nets found in the stomach. However, no evaluation of the data collected by the stranding networks had been made in the ACCOBAMS Area in order to assess bycatch levels. In 2021, a review of available data on cetacean bycatch in national stranding databases and MEDACES was produced by Mr. Joan Gonzalvo and Mrs. Souad Lamouti, Task and Vice-Task Managers on Interactions with Fisheries of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee, respectively. This review aimed at collecting the available information on stranded cetaceans whose causes of death had been related to interactions with fishing gears, assess the methods used to determine the causes of death, and to identify the gaps to be covered in order to improve the future data collection. The resulting document was presented during the SC14.

2 – Depredation by cetaceans – when they partially or completely remove catches from fishing gear – is a growing cause for concern in several Mediterranean fisheries. The socio-economic impacts of damaged fishing gears and lost catches create conflicts between fishers and dolphins, undermining the conservation and sustainability efforts promoted by regional organizations such as ACCOBAMS and the GFCM (General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean). The project ‘Mitigating dolphin depredation in Mediterranean fisheries – Joining efforts for strengthening cetacean conservation and sustainable fisheries’ (Depredation Project 2) is coordinated by ACCOBAMS and the GFCM, in collaboration with SPA/RAC and the LIFE platform. In the context of the project a standardized monitoring methodology of depredation impact has been developed, with a view to providing a harmonized framework to increase knowledge on depredation in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. In this same context a Review of Available Information on Depredation by Cetaceans in Fishing Gears in the Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea, and Contiguous Atlantic Area has taken place also. At the moment of producing this report, these two resulting documents are going through the editing process and should be available shortly.

- Recommendations / suggestions for conservation improvement

Cetaceans Stranding Networks (CSNs) are an important source of data to determine cetacean causes of death, including bycatch events. Results of the review of available data on cetacean bycatch in stranding databases from the ACCOBAMS Area are to be shared with Parties and relevant organizations. The current situation of cetacean stranding monitoring varies greatly among countries. Some of them have well-established official national CSNs and keep databases encompassing either all or part of their coast, while others are highly depending on the enthusiasm of few individuals working largely independently with quite limited resources. CSNs vary widely based on the scientific requirements, political drivers, resources, infrastructure and personnel experience. A tiered approach to carcass triage allows investigations to be conducted at a number of levels, depending on the resources, facilities or experience of the stranding network. Whilst an ideal ‘gold standard’ around a thorough and detailed *post-mortem* investigation conducted by well-resourced and experienced veterinary pathologists is desirable, it is not often the case. The tiered approach offers a framework for data collection and interpretation appropriate and optimized to the resources available. Making sure that all CSNs are able to conduct their examinations up to Tier 3 level (postmortem examination with diagnostic aims, which can allow to determine the role of the fishery interaction in the death of the animal) should be considered a high priority.

The protocol “Dolphin depredation in Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries: Methodology for data collection” aims to support regional monitoring programmes and provide a framework for the development and implementation of an efficient, standardized data collection and monitoring system for depredation events. The collection of these data should offer a harmonized basis of knowledge, information and evidence for following decision-making.

3. Marine litter & chemical and biological pollution

- Composition

- Task Manager: Cristina FOSSI
- Vice-Task Manager: Céline MAHFOUZ
- Support Group: Tilen GENOV, Pine PIERANTONIO

The Task Manager (TM) reports a series of strategic activities that involved the participants of the TM and the Support Group, on the specific issue of Marine litter & chemical and biological pollution in the 2020/2022 triennium:

1 – Participation to the last SC (SC14, 2021). During the meeting several discussions were undertaken among the participants and among the members of the support Group on the topic of impact of Marine Litter and Chemical Pollution. In detail the task Manager, Cristina Fossi, presented documents she had jointly developed, in this specific topic, with Cristina Panti. The TM summarize the ongoing study on interaction hotspots between cetaceans and marine litter in the ACCOBAMS Area as in ACCOBAMS-SC14/2021/Doc30. The document describes interactions between cetaceans and marine litter (ML) in the ACCOBAMS Area, identifying hotspots and risk areas. The document reviews the global dimension of marine litter, and then it focuses on the Mediterranean Sea and contiguous areas, as well as the sources and driving forces of ML distribution in the ACCOBAMS Area. Regarding the bibliographical research on ML interaction with cetaceans (including both ingestion and entanglement), from the 10 peer-reviewed papers available for the ACCOBAMS Area, sperm whale appears to be both the most studied and the most affected species. The Task Manager also described a bibliographic review on the impact of chemical pollution on cetaceans, including the identification of *ad hoc* research projects aimed at assessing chemical pollution on cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Area, as reflected in ACCOBAMS-SC14/2021/Doc31. Globally, as apex predators with long life spans, cetaceans are particularly sensitive to contaminants, in particular heavy metals, PCBs, PBDEs, DDTs, and emerging pollutants such as Plastic Additives. About 60 papers were identified as analyzing the contaminants load and interaction with cetacean species in the Mediterranean area revealed that the striped dolphin is the most investigated species, and that PCBs are the most measured contaminants so far. Identification of *ad hoc* research projects aimed at assessing chemical pollution on cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Area has also been performed, pointing out the reduced number of *ad hoc* projects on this topic in the area.

During the SC the TM in agreement with Support Group identified a draft of best practices Guidelines to assess chemical pollution impact on cetaceans to measure chemical contamination levels on cetaceans (ACCOBAMS-SC14/2021/Doc32). The document further provides protocols to measure chemical contamination of cetaceans in ACCOBAMS Area. Concerning stranded organisms, relevant information has been integrated from the Joint ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS document “Best practice on cetacean postmortem investigation and tissue sampling” (Lonneke L. IJsseldijk, Andrew C. Brownlow, Sandro Mazzariol, 2019). Standardized protocols for the examination of free-ranging organisms relevant information has been integrated by the “Marine Mammals Ecotoxicology” book edited by Fossi and Panti (2018). A scheme and workflow description will be shared amongst ACCOBAMS Parties in order to provide a useful toolkit both for sampling and the different ecotoxicological analysis.

2- The SPA/RAC Representative, suggested the importance of this topic and that both studies results be shared with MED POL – the UNEP/MAP Programme for the Assessment and Control of Marine Pollution in the Mediterranean - for its consideration, in particular to complement the work carried out in the definition of IMAF Candidate Indicator 24 “Trends in the amount of litter ingested by or entangling marine organisms focusing on selected mammals, marine birds, and marine turtles”.

3- The TM underline the synergies between the ASI initiative and the Med-Interreg project Plastic Busters MPAs, and other initiatives. A risk assessment methodology will be used to define the Cetaceans risk assessment, related to hotspot ML areas (in the Pelagos Sanctuary as a key study area) using ASI data in a collaborative endeavor between UNISI, IFREMER and LaMMA Consortium. An inventory of available projects, both finished and ongoing, will also help identifying research needs, as well as current research actions in this field.

4- The IWC Scientific Committee (Greg Donovan communication) has developed two valuable tools related to chemical pollution and cetaceans. The first on the Effects of Pollutants on Cetacean Populations (SPoC) Model3, a web application allowing users to explore those potential effects through simulating the effect of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) on potential population growth through (a) maternal PCBs, and likelihood of calf survival, and (b) on immune function and host resistance. The second tool is a Contaminant Mapping Tool4 that displays published data on concentration of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and mercury in cetacean tissues, on a global scale. It allows researchers to explore visually concentrations trends of commonly monitored contaminants over time.

5 -The Task Manager and representatives of the Support Group participated at the Intersessional Workshop Pollution 2025 Cumulative Effects and Multiple Stressors (2021) The workshop will review: (i) Relevant studies on new information on cumulative effects and multiple stressors; (ii) Approaches to analyze and identify the causes of these effects, the mechanisms of the stressor's action and the interaction between stressors and the organism. (iii) New methods available for assessing cumulative effects of multiple stressors. (iv) Cumulative effects at the population level. (v) Case studies on specific species and populations and the transferability of the approaches to other species and populations.

The Task Manager participated at several online meetings of the *ad hoc* Group of Experts for Marine Litter and chemical pollution at Mediterranean level and at global scale.

- Recommendations / suggestions for conservation improvement

Several recommendations and suggestions on this topic come from the activities of the SC14 and are summarized below:

a) **Marine Litter**

1. Given the particularly high levels of marine litter in all ecological compartments of the ACCOBAMS Area and the overlap with distribution and habitat of several cetacean species shown by inter alia the results from the ASI and EU projects, and given the recognized deleterious effects of marine litter ingestion and, the last Scientific Committee strongly urges that all competent organizations on pollution issues (e.g., EU, Barcelona Convention, IMO) urgently improve and enforce their management measures regarding land- and ship-related pollution; there is no need to wait for additional information on cetaceans before taking mitigation action.

2. The Group in agreement with the SC suggest to: (a) work towards a global agreement on plastics, targeting both land- and sea-based sources of plastic pollution and the whole life cycle of plastics; and (b) engage all levels of stakeholders from producers, users to decision-makers to implement actions which can contribute to address plastic litter at source and stop plastics entering the Mediterranean, Black Sea and contiguous areas and to facilitate collaboration among science and policy to tackle marine litter issues.

3. In order to improve our knowledge of marine litter and cetaceans, the Scientific Committee: (a) encourages the undertaking of postmortem investigations according to the best practice guidelines (Ijsseldijk, Brownlow, and Mazzariol, 2019, see the Recommendation 14.4 on Cetacean Stranding Networks) and supports • collective scientific efforts on the development of standardized methods to detect the occurrence and effects of marine litter (including microplastics) in cetacean species and • the use of standardized formats to report results across the ACCOBAMS Area in synergy with existing frameworks (e.g., MSFD and IMAP indicators, GESAMP) and relevant MEAs (e.g., the Barcelona Convention, CMS, IWC, etc.) that request periodic reporting from postmortem investigations; (b) supports 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 (c) proposes cetacean species as indicators of marine litter in the ACCOBAMS Area, in particular focusing the attention on deep-diving species for macro-litter (e.g., sperm whale and Cuvier's beaked whale) and filter feeders for micro-plastic (fin whale).

b) **Chemical pollution** - Given the high occurrence and concentrations of legacy and emerging in the Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea and given that the chemical contamination is detrimental for cetacean health since it can induce

negative effects on the immune, nervous and reproductive systems of cetaceans, the Group in agreement with the SC recommends: (a) the development of a transboundary health monitoring network for stranded and free-swimming cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Area – this could also facilitate the development of a common database of data on diseases and chemical burdens and cooperation among existing tissue banks to share tissues and data and contribute such data for the assessment of the “Favorable Conservation Status” of marine mammals under the EU Habitats Directive and equivalent national/regional legislation; (b) the development of an inventory of the institutions or laboratories within the ACCOBAMS Area that are willing to receive and analyze samples for legacy and emerging pollutants from those institutions which do not have appropriate facilities and expertise; (c) that existing measures for the mitigation of toxicological contamination in the ACCOBAMS Area should be enforced e.g., through full compliance by member states with the Stockholm Convention; and (d) future attention should focus on the assessment of cumulative effects and multiple stressors (including chemicals, marine litter, climate change, and emerging pathogens) on cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Areas, including new techniques (such as -omics techniques, epigenetics and lab-on-chip), taking advantage of consideration of recommendations (once available) from the IWC intersessional Workshop on Pollution 2025 cumulative effects and multiple stressors” (November 2021).

4. Protected Areas for Cetaceans

- Composition
 - Task Manager: Léa DAVID
 - Vice-Task Manager: Loriane MENDEZ
 - Support Group: Simone PANIGADA, Joan GONZALVO, Souad LAMOUTI, Tilen GENOV, Aurélie MOULINS, Vasileios PETROPOULOS, Costanza FAVILLI

- Overview of relevant activities on this topic during the triennium 2020/2022

The task manager gathered existing layers of data, followed and improved the technical process to obtain Cetacean Critical Habitats on two case_studies (i) large cetacean species *versus* large commercial vessels, on one hand, and (ii) small delphinids *versus* fishery activities, on the other.

Those results were presented and limits, questions, gaps were discussed with scientists and experts during several workshops:

- 1) Before and during the ASI technical workshop (online, June 2021), maps of pressure, obtained with the data on human activities collected during the ASI aerial survey and other sources, were compared. Discussion followed on how to obtain representative maps of human activities at sea that are not automatically registered geographically, as sailing vessel or small fisher boats.
- 2) The CCH process and first results were presented during the MedPan forum and discussion about linking EBSAS and other identification processes of important areas at the Mediterranean scale were discussed (November 2021, Monaco)
- 3) The case study on large cetacean species *versus* large commercial vessels, helping to identify risk areas for ship strikes, were presented during two workshops on the possible designation of a PSSA in the north-western Mediterranean Sea (Paris, October 2021 and Rome, December 2021)
- 4) A dedicated workshop was realized in March 2022 in Monaco, after the Terms of Reference were agreed by the 14th Scientific Committee meeting. For three days, members of the SC, experts in Geographic Information System, Conservation and colleagues from GFCM and MedPan discussed about how to fill gaps of knowledge, the best choices to frame the use of such maps and their interpretation, rules and decision about limits of polygons and buffer among other points.
- 5) Terms of Reference for the creation of a working group on data and maps for the CCH process was one of the outputs of the workshop

6) The CCH process and case studies were presented in a workshop on Marine Spatial Planning in the Mediterranean Sea (May 2022, Barcelona)

The task manager participated at several online meetings of the *ad hoc* Group of Experts for Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (AGEM) in the frame of the SPA/RAC.

- Recommendations / suggestions for improvement of the conservation

The Scientific Committee encouraged the continuation of the process towards developing representative maps of favorable habitat by species, taking into account information provided by IMMAs and anthropogenic pressure maps, as well as the information provided by ongoing projects in ACCOBAMS Area, in order to define new CCHs, since it facilitates the development of adequate conservation and management measures in the region.

It encourages also the task manager to update document ACCOBAMS-MOP6/2016/Doc35 (Evaluation of the effectiveness of place-based conservation for cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Area a handbook).

IV. REPORTS BY THE CHAIRS OF THE WORKING GROUPS

1. Joint By-Catch Working Group

ACCOBAMS is also very active in assessing bycatch and depredation issues and has been joining efforts with SPA-RAC and GFCM within the framework of MAVA Bycatch Project. The ACCOBAMS-ASCOBANS Joint Bycatch Working Group organized the first meeting, which took place online during 10-12 February 2021 to exchange and share the experience between two agreement areas. More than 150 participants from 31 countries produced a series of recommendations on general aspects, monitoring and mitigation of bycatch. The publications of both bodies have been shared and updates on recent development regarding bycatch have been made.

In summer 2021 a review of available data on cetacean bycatch in national stranding databases was conducted. A questionnaire was distributed among 24 countries and a compiled questionnaire was received from 18 of them. The current situation of cetacean stranding monitoring varies significantly among countries. Some have well-established official national Cetacean Stranding Networks (CSNs) and maintain databases encompassing either all or part of their coast, while others are less structured and operate with limited resources. This review showed that in many strandings the cause of death is not identified, which indicates that there is still substantial room for improvement. Training and funding were the most frequently claimed needs by those contributing to the review.

2. Joint Noise Working Group

The issue of **noise** has been high among the SC priority actions, in order to make sure that adequate attention is used when planning, *inter alia*, seismic or military activities, stressing the importance of conducting dedicated and rigorous Environmental Impact Assessments. The newly developed on-line **platform NETCCOBAMS** has been thoroughly revised, with online tools to map cetacean habitats and potential threats, such as noise hotspots and traffic data, through AIS signal processing.

3. Working Group on Ship Strikes

Ship strikes have also been addressed and mitigation measures suggested. The existing collaboration with the International Whaling Commission and the effort to gather information on ship strikes globally has facilitated the identification of high-risk areas within the Mediterranean Sea. ACCOBAMS is joining international effort to further develop and support the process for the designation of a PSSA at a scale that includes the North-West Mediterranean Sea, Slope and Canyon IMMA, plus the Eastern portion of the Pelagos Sanctuary and the Spanish corridor, to take into

account whale population movements and distribution. Zoning within the area with ship strike mitigation tools (e.g., speed reduction and routing measures) could be proposed as part of Associated Protective Measures within the PSSA.

4. Working Group on MMO

The Working Group on ACCOBAMS HQMMO/PAM includes scientists, MMO/PAM professional and representants of Oil&Gas industries. Members met online, built a program of work in order to update and improve the training and associated tools in March 2021. Since then, revisions were made considering the format, the content, the definition, the evaluation, the forms. No training could be implemented, due to the COVID-crisis. A meeting with several members was realized in May 2022 to set up an online training course for professional MMO/PAM that are not certified by ACCOBAMS yet. Technical and financial aspects are still under discussion, limiting the deployment of such tool on the ACCOBAMS website until now. Work is ongoing in order to finalize the updates of the training tools, launch the online platform and link with other certification organism outside the Mediterranean Sea (e.g. JNCC).

5. Working Group on NETCCOBAMS

Terms of Reference were adopted during the 14th Scientific Committee meeting for the creation of a Working Group on NETCCOBAMS including scientists, managers, stakeholders and Parties. This group should be helpful for the definition of rules on how to use the online platform, in terms of data to upload until advice for conservation and uses of the outputs.

6. Working Group on semi-captivity “centers” in the ACCOBAMS Area

Mr. Joan Gonzalvo, the Chair of this WG, created during the Thirteen Meeting of ACCOBAMS the Scientific Committee (February 2020, Cap d’Ail, France), produced the reference document *“Potential Marine Semi-Enclosed Facilities” in the Accobams Area*, together with the updated overview of specimens held in captivity in the ACCOBAMS Area, which was presented during the 14th Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee. This document aims solely at contributing to the development of international standards for cetacean holding facilities by providing a scientific point of view on the following matters related to the creation of marine semi-enclosed facilities for cetaceans (i.e., *refuges*), in particular for odontocetes, in the ACCOBAMS Area:

- Legal issues;
- ecology and behavior of odontocetes; their ecological and ethological requirements, e.g., in terms of space, depth, seasonal temperature range, water quality (salinity, purity), ambient noise, social structure, activity patterns;
- odontocete husbandry (e.g., food, medical care, handling, transportation);
- veterinary medicine focused on cetaceans;
- structural, functional and logistic aspects of the prospective hosting facility;
- ecological impact assessment of affected marine environments;
- economic assessment of the sustainability of the proposed project and the operational costs of the center, once established;
- development of educational, awareness and research potential offered by the facility;
- relationships with the main stakeholders: public administration, enforcement, human health issues, environmental issues, legal issues.

7. Whale Watching Working Group (WWWG)

The WWWG carried several activities in the period 2020-2021 aimed at testing the data collection system and at assessing the impacts of whale watching activities in the ACCOBAMS Area. The group discussed and updated the proposal for data collection from commercial whale watching vessels that was submitted to the SC in 2014, as well as

the list of species that was reviewed according to the geographical area considered. Tests were carried out in France and Italy and showed that trained and dedicated crew members can be a good choice for regular data collection by whale watching companies. In Italy, data collection was performed by using IlogWhales app developed within the framework of EcoSTRIM project.

An expert was recruited by the Secretariat to develop a study aimed at identifying hotspots of WW activities in the ACCOBAMS Area, and to revise Guidelines for monitoring programs aimed at maximizing the chance of detecting potential adverse impacts of whale watching activities posed to individual cetaceans and populations.

The study aims at mapping potential pressures on cetacean populations that are targeted for whale watching activities throughout the ACCOBAMS Area, and is being conducted in two phases. During Phase I, volunteer data compilers from each of 26 ACCOBAMS range countries were asked to provide metadata on the estimated number of commercial whale watching operators in their country, alongside with the number of ports or harbors from which commercial whale watching takes place, and whether or not legal frameworks are in place to regulate whale watching activity. During Phase II, countries that had reported some level of commercial whale watching activity were asked to provide detailed information on location, nature, frequency and duration of tours. This data is being compiled, analyzed and mapped to provide visual and quantitative depictions of comparable measures of the potential pressure that cetacean watching may exert on local cetacean populations.

The document 'Draft guidelines for the management of cetacean watching activities in the ACCOBAMS Area' was presented (technically the document is an update to ACCOBAMS-COP6/2016/Doc37/Annex12/Res6.20, Annex 3) and the Whale Watching Working Group and ACCOBAMS Secretariat agreed that a more general document also containing management advice was required, and not just research aspects to detect impacts. As such, this new document includes background, strategies and tools, as well as recommendations related to nine broad areas which are relevant to regulate and manage cetacean watching:

- Measures to assess target populations and potential impacts of tourism, including the concept of 'carrying capacity'
- Monitoring and adaptive management
- Development of effective management teams (stakeholder involvement)
- Licensing or certification measures
- Measures to regulate approaches, frequency, length and type of exposure in encounters with cetaceans
- Monitoring and Enforcement
- Time/Area closures to provide additional protection
- Promoting education and awareness raising
- Whale watching as a platform of opportunity for scientific data collection.

The representative of CIMA Foundation informed on the EcoSTRIM project activities in support of the implementation of the High-Quality Whale-Watching® Certificate in Italy, in particular in Liguria, Tuscany and Sardinia. The project's outputs include:

- maps of commercial whale-watching operators in Liguria, Tuscany and Sardinia;
- training of whale-watching operators (face-to-face and online) to disseminate best practices;
- the kit "High Quality Whale-Watching®" with the "whale-risk" flag and a game of cards (<https://www.ligurianseatrails.com/whale-risk>) intended to raising awareness on cetacean conservation needs among young public;
- promotion of the High-Quality Whale-Watching® Certificate through a dedicated webpage, informative totems distributed to Ligurian coastal cities and a video of certified operators (<https://www.ligurianseatrails.com>);
- development of smartphone IlogWhales app based on ACCOBAMS form, available on <https://play.google.com>, in order to support cetacean data collection;
- compliance audit of High Quality Whale-Watching® certified companies;
- a new regional professional qualification for certified guided marine tours.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS ISSUED BY SC14

RECOMMENDATION 14.1 - THE ACCOBAMS LONG-TERM MONITORING PROGRAMME (LTMP)

1. Recognizing the great success of the ASI (and CeNoBS) projects in providing baseline abundance summer estimates for cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS region, the Scientific Committee **recommends** that the Parties endorse and fully commit to facilitating the implementation of the ACCOBAMS Long-Term Monitoring Programme (LTMP – see ACCOBAMS-SC14/2021/**Doc09**), that focuses primarily upon obtaining robust estimates of cetacean abundance and distribution (and identifying changes in these over time), as well as some other megafauna and human activities, in the context of providing advice on achievement of conservation and management objectives.
2. This programme 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. These may include the Barcelona Convention Ecosystem Approach/Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (EcAp/IMAP), the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the EU Habitats Directive. Given this fundamental importance of the LTMP, the Scientific Committee **recommends** that the Parties and the Secretariat begin immediately to establish a funding model/strategy for the LTMP (see discussion in ACCOBAMS-SC14/2021/**Doc10**).
3. The LTMP comprises several components (and see Fig. 1 at end) that will require development and updating over time by the Scientific Committee and/or the Permanent Secretariat. The Scientific Committee **recommends** the LTMP and its components below to the Parties and highlights the need for the Secretariat, in co-operation with the Scientific Committee, to review, consolidate and update the LTMP overview document (ACCOBAMS-SC14/2021/**Doc09**) at regular intervals, as well as each of its components.

COMPONENT 1. Development and implementation of a simulation framework to examine the performance of different future survey strategies (synoptic, regional/national)

4. The Scientific Committee **agrees** that it should work as expeditiously as possible with relevant modelling experts to develop a simulation framework to examine the ability of different survey strategies (including frequency and geographical extent) to obtain robust abundance estimates and detect trends (in abundance and distribution) and determine whether ACCOBAMS conservation objectives are being met. This framework should also be used to examine how and where vessels of opportunity (e.g., ferries – ACCOBAMS-SC14/2021/**Doc12**) and multidisciplinary surveys (see ACCOBAMS-SC14/2021/**Doc11**) can contribute to the LTMP. Ultimately, it will enable both the synoptic and regional/national based components of the LTMP (see Component 4) to be as effective and cost efficient as possible. The results of this work will also be valuable as input to any quantitative ACCOBAMS Risk Assessment framework that might be developed (e.g., by contributing to the simulation of feedback procedures to evaluate mitigation approaches).

COMPONENT 2. Undertaking periodic (preferably every six years, see Component 1) synoptic basin-wide surveys in the Mediterranean and Black Seas (cf the ASI) with a focus on abundance and trends

5. The Scientific Committee **agrees** that it should 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 analyze data. It is recognized that this review is directly relevant to protocols for regional/national data collection and analyses (see Component 4). Especially in light of the experience gained during the ASI, the review will include consideration of:

- (a) national and other management needs (e.g., reporting and data organization for other commitments, Risk Assessments, etc.) when designing strata to obtain abundance estimates;
- (b) survey design, methods and analytical approaches that may better account for different habitat preferences/availability by species (e.g., coastal habitat for species such as bottlenose dolphins, acoustic methods for deep divers such as sperm and beaked whales);
- (c) increased coverage in some regions (e.g., eastern Mediterranean) and consideration of ways to try to account for areas that might not be able to be covered for political/safety reasons (including consideration of use of vessels of opportunity and multidisciplinary surveys - ACCOBAMS-SC14/2021/**Doc11** and ACCOBAMS-SC14/2021/**Doc12**);
- (d) field and analytical approaches that correct for availability and perception bias;
- (e) improved training protocols/methods *inter alia* on species identification/school size (e.g., use of high speed/resolution cameras), general survey procedures and protocols, including the collection of selected data on other megafauna and selected human activities;
- (f) appropriate incorporation of ship-based surveys, including acoustic and biopsy sampling components, that take into account *inter alia* identified needs in CMPs; and
- (g) regular review of the use of new technology/AI data processing (e.g., unmanned vehicles such as drones - see ACCOBAMS-SC14/2021/**Doc13**) in the context of the LTMP whilst ensuring that long-term comparability of datasets is maintained.

COMPONENT 3. Development of an implementation protocol to address logistic, bureaucratic and funding issues surrounding regular basin-wide surveys

6. The logistical and other issues surrounding the implementation of ASI posed as much of a challenge to its success as the scientific issues and this is likely to be the case in the future. To minimise this, the Scientific Committee **recommends** that in cooperation with the Scientific Committee as needed, the Secretariat creates and regularly updates a protocol for administrative/logistic/bureaucratic activities related to undertaking basin-wide synoptic surveys based upon the experience gained from ASI. This will include preparing a long-term plan for ultimate approval by the Parties that will include a roadmap (e.g., see ACCOBAMS-SC14/2021/**Doc10**) and agreed procedures for:
- (a) designating active and knowledgeable national officers/representatives to ensure that national administrative procedures are followed to facilitate *inter alia* obtaining necessary permits (e.g., research, aviation and ship permits, visas, insurance);
 - (b) maintaining a current list of information on any restrictions that might affect the survey design and logistics (e.g., areas, equipment and personnel);
 - (c) sharing the draft survey design (at least one year ahead of the surveys) with pilots and relevant national authorities to discuss possible improvements, difficulties and ways to overcome those difficulties;
 - (d) identifying appropriate research platforms (e.g., certification, insurance, endurance and visibility, crew with offshore experience and, for pilots, experience with flying at low altitudes, willingness to take part in the survey); and
 - (e) strategies for obtaining funding (see ACCOBAMS-SC14/2021/**Doc10**).

COMPONENT 4. Facilitating synergies of regional and national programmes with ASI (including methods, timing and frequency)

7. The Scientific Committee will integrate information from Components 1 and 2 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.
8. The Scientific Committee **recommends** that Parties ensure that the relevant authorities share plans for their long-term national/sub regional cetacean monitoring programmes (including ongoing activities under the HD, MSFD and EcAp/IMAP) to facilitate synergy where possible and to ensure that they use consistent methods endorsed by the Scientific Committee, wherever possible. They should ask the national coordinators to provide information on the design of such programmes (the Committee is willing to provide advice) and report their results to the Scientific Committee. The Committee will also assist in identifying synergies and potential collaborations in existing or proposed programmes.
9. In this regard, the Scientific Committee highlights the importance of (and its willingness to assist in) the following:
- (a) investigating (in conjunction with Component 1) the use of vessels of opportunity and/or 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 even on presence absence, are available
 - non-summer occurrence and
 - 'local' trends in abundance/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 consideration of the use of passive and active acoustic monitoring for specific areas and species e.g., sperm and Cuvier's beaked whales, in line with the ongoing monitoring plans, such as those under the MSFD and EcAp/IMAP, including the Eastern Basin.

COMPONENT 5. Data archiving, use and sharing

10. The Scientific Committee **stresses** the great long-term value of the ASI dataset and future data collected under the LTMP to ACCOBAMS and wider conservation efforts. Given the importance of properly archiving the data collected under ASI and the LTMP, and making its availability widespread for the benefit of the conservation science community, the Scientific Committee **recommends** that (in conjunction with the Scientific Committee) the Parties and the Secretariat:
- (a) work to optimize data archiving and sharing, including ensuring the interoperability of ASI Data Sets with other relevant databases (e.g., NETCCOBAMS, EMODnet, IMAP Info System) and organizations for data exchange;
- (b) 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) the Parties and the Secretariat work to identify 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, encourage the widest use possible of existing analyses to contribute towards decision making on conservation matters (e.g., the PSSA proposal in the north-western Mediterranean Sea), as well as to encourage further analyses of ASI (and future) data to meet conservation and management needs at the cetacean and ecosystem level,
 - provision of sufficient resources to make best use of ASI data throughout the ACCOBAMS Area e.g., through financial support for mentorship schemes, training and joint publications,
 - encouraging larger future participation in LTMP research and conservation activities, development of joint actions and working relationships between specialists and Parties' administrations in the context of the broad LTMP programme.

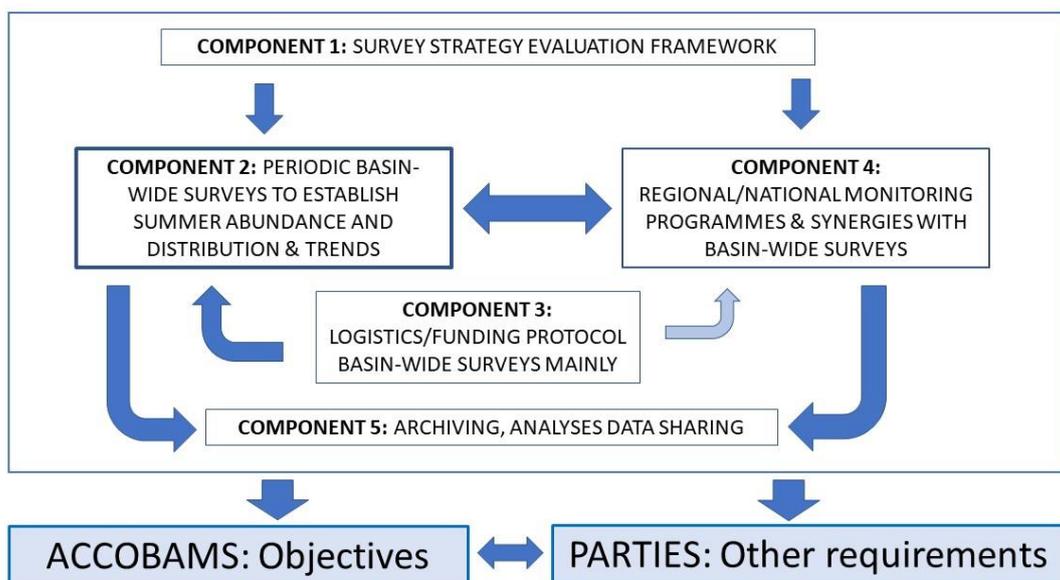


Fig.1 Schematic of the links amongst the five components of the LTMP

RECOMMENDATION 14.2 - IUCN RED LIST

1. The IUCN Red List³ provides a simple way of classifying the status of species (or in some cases what it terms as 'sub-populations' or occasionally smaller units) into one of nine categories: Not Evaluated, Data Deficient, Least Concern, Near Threatened, Vulnerable, Endangered, Critically Endangered, Extinct in the Wild and Extinct.
2. All cetaceans regularly present within the Mediterranean and Black Seas have now been assessed or re-assessed since 2018 – those assessed in 2021 have been published on the Red List website in December 2021. Thus, the Scientific Committee has completed the work assigned to it in Resolution 6.15. This ambitious task was greatly assisted by the data from the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative, as well as other data collected since the previous assessments in 2008-2011. A summary is provided below and in [Table 1](#).
 - A. *Conservation status improved since the last assessment*
 3. The status of two species in the Mediterranean Sea (the striped and common bottlenose dolphins) has improved from Vulnerable to Least Concern.
 - B. *Conservation status remained unchanged*
 4. The status of the three Black Sea species⁴ has 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.
 - C. *Conservation status worsened*
 5. The status of the Mediterranean fin whale has worsened from Vulnerable to Endangered.
 - D. *Conservation status assessed for the first time (including those that were originally Data Deficient)*
 6. Mediterranean rough-toothed dolphins have been assessed as Near Threatened. Mediterranean Cuvier's beaked whales were assessed in 2018 as Vulnerable – in 2006 they had been classified as Data Deficient. Risso's dolphins, assessed as Data Deficient in 2012, have now been assessed as Endangered.
 7. In terms of smaller units, Mediterranean long-finned pilot whales are now considered two units - inner Mediterranean long-finned pilot whales are Endangered whilst those in the Strait of Gibraltar are Critically Endangered. Four smaller local units of other species have also been agreed and assessed: Gulf of Corinth common dolphins – Critically Endangered; Gulf of Ambracia common bottlenose dolphins - Critically Endangered; Gulf of Corinth striped dolphins – Endangered (in review); Strait of Gibraltar killer whales – Critically Endangered.
 8. The Scientific Committee draws attention to the fact that throughout the Agreement Area, only two 'sub-populations' are considered of Least Concern. Despite the good work undertaken over the last 25 years, this highlights that considerably more work and efforts are needed for ACCOBAMS and its Parties to meet its conservation objectives. The Committee notes that there are four draft CMPs that are close to completion (see Recommendation 14.3 on CMP). It **recommends** that the draft CMP for common dolphins pays special attention to the Gulf of Corinth animals that have been newly designated 'Critically Endangered'.

³ <https://www.iucnredlist.org/>

⁴ At present these classifications are provisional as the assessments are under review by IUCN

9. The Scientific Committee **reiterates** that numerous conservation measures have been developed and recommended by the Scientific Committee over the years and many of them have been endorsed and adopted by the Parties in different Resolutions. Therefore, the priority objective **remains** for Parties to implement, comply with, and enforce these conservation actions towards a favourable conservation status of the species within the Agreement Area. Furthermore, Non-Party Range States are encouraged to make use of the recommended conservation actions developed within the ACCOBAMS framework.
10. The Committee **strongly urges Parties and Non-Parties** to pay particular attention to those ‘sub-populations’ that have been assessed as Critically Endangered (all small local units) and Endangered and to take appropriate conservation actions. As well as strongly supporting and implementing conservation actions in the relevant draft CMPs, many of the Critically Endangered and Endangered sub-populations do not yet have CMPs and it is not appropriate to wait until these can be developed before actions are taken.

Table 1- Summary of the 2018-21 assessments of cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS region.

Red List Classification
Critically Endangered
Common dolphins in the Gulf of Corinth
Common dolphins in the Gulf of Ambracia
Killer whales in the Strait of Gibraltar
Long-finned pilot whales in the Strait of Gibraltar
Endangered
Black Sea Bottlenose dolphins
Common dolphins in the inner Mediterranean
Fin whales in the Mediterranean
Black Sea Harbour porpoise
Long-finned pilot whales in the inner Mediterranean
Risso’s dolphins in the Mediterranean
Sperm whales in the Mediterranean
Striped dolphins in the Gulf of Corinth
Vulnerable
Black Sea Common dolphin
Cuvier’s beaked whales in the Mediterranean
Least concern
Bottlenose dolphins in the Mediterranean
Striped dolphins in the Mediterranean

RECOMMENDATION 14.3 - CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLANS (CMPs)

1. In accordance with ACCOBAMS Resolution 6.21, the Scientific Committee has devoted significant effort during the past triennium (2020-2022) to develop draft CMPs for Mediterranean fin whales, Risso's dolphins, common dolphins and bottlenose dolphins. Despite delays due to Covid-19, the drafts will be completed from the perspective of the Scientific Committee at a workshop in March 2022.

Some of the key components of CMPs include:

- (a) support of national authorities;
 - (b) involvement of stakeholders;
 - (c) recognition that conservation management plans complement existing measures without replacing them;
 - (d) overview of present status of species;
 - (e) clear and achievable objectives;
 - (f) practical and prioritized mitigation and other actions;
 - (g) regular monitoring and reporting;
 - (h) clear governance structures to co-ordinate the engagement of key stakeholders.
2. The Committee **highlights** the importance of full-time CMP coordinators acting under the guidance of CMP Steering Groups that represent key stakeholders. The need for stakeholder workshops to finalise each CMP is an essential part of the process since reaching agreement amongst the primary stakeholders is key to the effectiveness of CMPs and the successful implementation of the actions.
 3. The Scientific Committee **recommends** that Parties support the holding of such workshops, if possible before the 2022 MOP or soon after that. Participation should include relevant IGOs, especially the IWC who developed the CMP approach, local and national authorities, industry and NGOs.
 4. The Scientific Committee recognises that whilst ideally there would be CMPs for all species and coherent units of the ACCOBAMS regions, priorities must be set. The Committee draws attention to recent IUCN Red List assessments in this context (Recommendation 14.2 on IUCN Red List). Based upon this, the Committee **recommends** that the Parties consider the following as species/populations that would benefit from CMPs for the coming triennium and **recommends** that the relevant range states consider proposing them through ACCOBAMS for the CMP process:

(a) Mediterranean sperm whales

These are considered as 'Endangered' in the Red List and the IWC Scientific Committee has recommended in 2020 and 2021 that these be treated as a 'priority population' for the purpose of the CMP development process. In addition to ship strikes, anthropogenic noise, and bycatch, it has been noted that sperm whales may be also particularly vulnerable to marine litter. The range states include Albania, Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Libya, Malta, Monaco, Morocco, Spain, Tunisia, Türkiye.

(b) Mediterranean Cuvier's beaked whales

These are considered as 'Vulnerable' in the Red List and threats 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 Türkiye.

(c) Black Sea cetaceans

Harbour porpoises and bottlenose dolphins in the Black Sea are listed as 'Endangered' in the IUCN Red List, and common dolphins are considered 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. The threats include bycatch (particularly for the harbour porpoise), habitat degradation (including prey depletion), illegal takes of bottlenose dolphin from the wild to captivity and consequences of bio-invasions by alien species. Range states include Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Türkiye and Ukraine.

5. The Committee noted that the 2020-2022 ACCOBAMS Programme of Work (Resolution 7.6) also emphasised the need for improved data collection related to cetacean population genetics in the ACCOBAMS Area (and see discussion under Item 3.2.3). Where needed, draft CMPs can incorporate actions involving such data collection (including areas and methods), as well as incorporating the actions considered by the health monitoring network proposed under item 3.3.5.

RECOMMENDATION 14.4 - CETACEAN STRANDING NETWORKS (CSNS)

1. Cetacean Stranding Networks (CSNs) are recognized as an important source of complementing data on cetacean mortality, including bycatch events. CSNs vary widely based on the 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 analysed by the existing CSNs the cause of death could not be identified, which indicates that there is still room for expertise improvement.
2. The need for appropriate training and adequate funding are frequently reported as one of the main causes preventing the optimal functioning of a CSN. The use of new technologies increases the possibility of remote training, support and advice in case of cetacean strandings by using virtual reality and tele-necropsy. The Scientific Committee **recommends** that these approaches and technologies are tested in order to implement a continuous training programme, connecting experts with local scientists dealing with cetacean strandings, to ensure a standardized approach to *post-mortem* investigations, data collection, tissue sampling, and analyses.
3. The Scientific Committee also **encourages** further study using postmortem investigations on stranded animals by using dedicated diagnostic framework to assess bycatch mortality, such as the use of carcass drifting models.
4. The Scientific Committee **stresses** the need for improvement of data collection on cetacean population genetics and pathology and **recommends** capacity building effort in developing tissue banks and **encourages** further collaboration at a regional level between tissue banks to facilitate the exchanges of tissue samples for joint analyses.

RECOMMENDATION 14.5 - BYCATCH

1. The Scientific Committee **strongly reiterates** that bycatch in fishing gear is a widespread and significant threat to cetaceans across the Agreement Area, although robust estimates are lacking for most areas and the region as a whole. It is essential that an improved understanding of bycatch levels is developed as soon as possible. Together with the results of ASI, 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.
2. Despite the need for better estimates, the Scientific Committee **urges** that mitigation efforts are intensified immediately throughout the region and especially in areas/populations identified as Critically Endangered or Endangered in the IUCN Red List (See Recommendation 14.2 on IUCN Red List).
3. The Scientific Committee **recognizes** that Cetaceans Stranding Networks (CSNs) are an important source of data to determine cetacean causes of death, including bycatch events. It **takes note** of the results of the review of available data on cetacean bycatch in stranding databases from the ACCOBAMS Area and **invites** the Secretariat to share these results with Parties and relevant organizations. It also **encourages** further studies investigating the use of stranding data to assess bycatch mortality, such as the use of carcass drifting models, whilst recognising that analyses of strandings data almost always underestimate bycatch to an unknown degree.
4. Mortality caused by ingestion of fishing gear related to depredation is also a cause of concern and studies on behaviour of animals during interactions with fisheries are important in the development of effective mitigation measures.
5. The Scientific Committee **endorses** the recommendations (https://accobams.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/SC14.Inf10_JBWG1-Recommendations.pdf) on monitoring and mitigation from the first Meeting of the ACCOBAMS-ASCOBANS Joint Bycatch Working Group organized in February 2021 and **urges** Parties to implement them as soon as possible.

The Black Sea

6. The Scientific Committee **expresses great concern** over the bycatch problem in the Black Sea. The results of the CeNoBS project (<https://www.cenobs.eu/content/deliverables>), including the aerial survey and the pilot study on bycatch in turbot nets, as well as those of other recent local surveys 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 subspecies. The Committee, therefore, **strongly recommends** that the relevant authorities implement as a matter of urgency continuous actions to develop and apply measures to reduce bycatch levels, improve mandatory monitoring schemes (e.g., those run under the EU Data Collection Framework) and make available official fishing effort data of turbot fishery.
7. In addition, the mandatory monitoring schemes and availability of reliable fishing effort referred to above will allow robust estimates of the fleet size and the total length of nets involved, enabling the refinement of estimates of total bycatch in the Black Sea. Cooperation with fishers and fisheries controlling authorities for enhancing the bycatch reporting will be crucial in this effort, as well as the overall bycatch monitoring by on-board observers, questionnaires to fishers and/or by other available technical means, such as Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM).
8. The Committee **stresses** that strong enforcement of existing laws and regulations is needed in the region to minimize IUU fishing.

9. Retrieval of bycaught animals from vessels should be encouraged by the relevant authorities in order to obtain biological data, including tissue samples, for a wide range of analyses to understand the status and demographic characteristics of the affected populations.
10. The Committee **encourages** further testing and development of bycatch mitigation measures in the Black Sea, accounting for specific local features (e.g., assessment of effectiveness of pingers specifically for the Black Sea porpoises). Without delaying the implementation of immediate mitigation actions (including the use of pingers which have been proven to be effective elsewhere for harbour porpoises), the potential long term negative effects of pingers, such as habituation and habitat exclusion, should be carefully considered, and an ecological and economical cost/benefit analysis should be carried out. Other potential mitigation measures should also be identified and tested in collaboration with fishers; spatial-temporal closure of fishing should be considered where other mitigation measures are not possible.
11. In conclusion, the Committee **urges** the ACCOBAMS Parties in the Black Sea to facilitate the creation of an Emergency Task Force with the full participation of the European Commission, ACCOBAMS Secretariat and the SC, GFCM and the Secretariat of the Black Sea Commission to identify and implement the best fishery management measures.

The Mediterranean Sea

12. The situation in the Mediterranean Sea also remains a cause for concern. The Scientific Committee **reiterates its concern** that the use of illegal driftnets for large pelagic species continue to cause mortality of several species of cetacean (in particular the Endangered sperm whale) and **recommends** that existing legislation related to the ban of such fishing gear be fully enforced by the Parties in the Mediterranean Sea.
13. The Scientific Committee **highlights** the need for urgent consideration of the upcoming (expected by mid-2022) results from the MedBycatch project that has been implemented in 5 Mediterranean countries since 2017 and includes more than 2 years multi-taxa (including cetacean) bycatch data collection and science-based bycatch mitigation trials. The MedBycatch has shown the value of onboard and questionnaire observer programmes to widely collect bycatch data, define the main bycatch interactions sources and help decision makers and scientists to design science-based multi-taxa bycatch mitigation measures including gear modification, spatial-temporal measures, and legal instruments.
14. The Scientific Committee also noted that to date, few models of pingers have been tested in Tunisia in the context of the MAVA Depredation project and **stresses** that more research is needed on the effectiveness of this mitigation tool in both the short- and the long-term basis.
15. Overall, the Scientific Committee **recommends** the continuation of such studies in the Mediterranean to monitor and assess bycatch and depredation to ensure that mitigation measures are working.

RECOMMENDATION 14.6 - NOISE

The Scientific Committee **reiterates** that anthropogenic noise pollution remains of significant concern within the ACCOBAMS region and **highlights** that the Black Sea has been poorly investigated in terms of underwater noise monitoring despite an increasing number of activities that produce underwater noise and the presence of acoustically sensitive resident species.

The Scientific Committee therefore:

1. **recognises** that the NETCCOBAMS online platform provides new information about the propagation of shipping noise in context to cetacean habitats - it uses 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;
2. **recognises** 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 - 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;
3. **reiterates** the importance of stakeholder engagement in developing and implementing mitigation measures;
4. **expresses** concern 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 EU waters between 2014 and 2019;
5. **takes note** of the Draft Noise Hotspots Report II (ACCOBAMS-SC14/2021/**Doc21**) and recognises the need for additional data on impulsive noise generating activities to generate a more complete dataset;
6. **acknowledges** the work done to develop the methodology for computing the draft acoustic risk maps (ACCOBAMS-SC14/2021/**Doc23**) presented during the meeting which will provide, when completed, new insight on the extent of disturbance to cetaceans, and that such methodology is relevant for the CCH process;
7. **urges** Parties to avoid the introduction of potentially harmful impulsive noise, such as those produced by airguns, sparkers, active sonars within areas of importance for cetaceans such as the Pelagos Sanctuary, marine protected areas and IMMAs;
8. **asks** the Secretariat in conjunction with the Scientific Committee to:
 - (a) disseminate, when completed, the information on the NETCCOBAMS online platform on acoustic risk areas (see Recommendation 14.10 on NETCCOBAMS),
 - (b) 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 ASCOBANS Secretariat to explore the potential for joint outreach efforts to national navies and NATO to mitigate noise from military activities,
 - (c) develop joint projects/initiatives for simulating mitigation measures, such as speed reductions, and related benefits, with the aim of reducing the impact of noise on cetacean habitats.

9. encourages Parties to

- (a) 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;
- (b) 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;
- (c) 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 GHG emissions, as well as the risk of ships strikes, and to promote such measures in the context of the proposal of PSSA in the North-western Mediterranean;
- (d) 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;
- (e) 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 (SC14.Doc21);
- (f) engage in trials measuring the impact of speed reduction and other operational measures reducing underwater noise in their waters;
- (g) 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;
- (h) 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.

10. asks the JNWG:

- (a) to 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 driving⁵;
- (b) to 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) to review the Draft Noise Hotspots Report II (ACCOBAMS-SC14/2021/Doc21) and to provide much needed additional information, including information about military exercises using active sonars and in particular to ask the Industrial Advisory Group to provide any relevant information about impulsive noise-generating activities in the Agreement Area since 2016;

⁵ https://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/cms_cop13_inf.9_noise-bat-bep_e.pdf

- (d)** to examine the noise models available in NETCCOBAMS (see Recommendation 14.10 on NETCCOBAMS), also considering recent developments from EU MSFD-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 account the different sensitivities of different cetacean species.

RECOMMENDATION 14.7 - SHIP STRIKES

1. ACCOBAMS and the International Whaling Commission (IWC) have long recognized the problem of ship strikes, particularly of large whales such as fin and sperm whales and have been working together to develop a better understanding of the issue and to develop effective mitigation measures, *inter alia*, within the ACCOBAMS Area. These concerns span the issues of conservation, animal welfare and human safety.
2. The Scientific Committee **recommends** that the ACCOBAMS Ship Strikes WG liaise with riparian nations and others to keep obtaining information concerning both cetaceans and vessel traffic, that will enable it to better identify areas for cetaceans (especially fin and sperm whales) where they are (or are potentially) susceptible to ship strikes (based upon models of risk that incorporate information on whale and vessel distribution and predictions of collision rates).
This shall be achieved by:
 - (a) reporting and mapping of vessel movements and shipping density at appropriate geographical scales, including estimates from vessels not required to transmit AIS signals;
 - (b) collaboration with maritime 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) estimation of 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;
 - obtained during campaigns at sea
 - (e) modelling exercises to assess the level of risk and potential conservation implications.
3. The work carried out by the SC and WG shall lead to the creation of a Mediterranean network, including ACCOBAMS Range States, ACCOBAMS Partners, the IWC, different research institutes, and concerned shipping companies to contribute to the central database on ship strikes developed by the IWC (<https://iwc.int/ship-strikes>), to facilitate information exchange and data sharing.
4. Key components of the work of the IWC and ACCOBAMS involve better communication with stakeholders (e.g., shipping companies), direct involvement of shipping in mitigation initiatives, and increased reporting of collision incidents via regional initiatives and especially the global ship strikes database. This will lead to an increased effort in this regard within the ACCOBAMS Area.
Such efforts shall include:
 - (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) foster the development of incentive systems to shipping companies adopting suggested mitigation measures;
 - (d) additional co-operation with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) (and its MEPC) both via IWC and CMS agreements, but also through initiatives with member states (the most appropriate mechanism for IMO action);

- (e) improve the cooperation with the Pelagos Agreement in regard to the organisation and implementation of any initiative carried within the Pelagos Agreement Area;
 - (f) improved protocols for the identification of ship strikes via necropsies;
 - (g) investigation of incidences with regard to the nature of ship strike injuries within photo-identification studies (e.g., ship strikes project funded by the Pelagos Agreement);
 - (h) encourage studies that improve access to the temporal and spatial distribution of shipping, particularly vessels that do not transmit AIS information;
 - (i) encourage studies that improve our understanding of the temporal and spatial distribution of cetaceans within the region, including telemetry studies;
 - (j) encourage 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) capitalize results from ongoing and further projects addressing ship strikes (e.g., Sicomar plus and Life *conceptu maris*, with maps, collision risk assessment, webGIS implemented with AIS data and collaboration with shipping companies).
5. The SC **recognizes** the following High-Risk Areas, where ship strikes are common in the ACCOBAMS Region, and **recommends** that mitigation measures are implemented as a matter of urgency:
1. *Strait of Gibraltar - fin and sperm whales*
 2. *Balearic Islands - fin and sperm whales*
 3. *Balearic Basin and Catalan Coast – fin and sperm whales*
 4. *Eastern Alborán Sea - fin and sperm whales*
 5. *Pelagos Sanctuary - fin and sperm whales*
 6. *Hellenic Trench, Greece - sperm whales*
6. Mitigation measures for ship strikes with fin whales have been discussed during dedicated IWC-ACCOBAMS workshops (Beaulieu sur Mer, 2010; Panama, 2014; Messinia, 2019), during which different recommendations were discussed and suggested. Measures that separate whales from vessels (or at least minimise co-occurrence) in space and time to the extent possible are the most effective, where this is possible (e.g., 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.**
7. The SC encourages researchers, scientific institutions and partner organizations, engaged in the development of real time cetacean localization projects, which are designed to be complementary tools in avoiding ship strikes, to share and report their findings. The SC encourages that the developed real-time systems are integrated to strengthen their efficiency.
8. Emphasis should also be placed on the collection and reporting of 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.
9. The latest IWC-IUCN-ACCOBAMS workshop (Messinia, 2019) **recommends** that the following steps are undertaken as part of a process to identify High Risk Areas for Ship Strikes based on IMMAs:

- (a) Traffic information (e.g., types of vessels, size, speed, flag, etc.): plotting major ship routes to see if they cross IMMAs which host significant or high-density populations of species that are threatened and/or vulnerable to ship strikes.
- (b) Species information (e.g., relative abundance, status, animal behaviour/seasonality/key lifecycle use in and within IMMAs).
- (c) Management and mitigation.

- 10.** The SC **recommends** that the Parties further develop and support the process for the designation of a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) by IMO at a scale that includes the North-West Mediterranean Sea, Slope and Canyon IMMA, plus the Eastern portion off the eastern border of the Pelagos Sanctuary and the Spanish corridor, to take into account whale population movements and distribution. Zoning within the area with ship strike mitigation tools (e.g., speed reduction and routing measures) could be proposed as part of Associated Protective Measures within the PSSA. The proposal should take into account the 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.
- 11.** Co-operation with IMO, other IGOs, national authorities, the shipping industry, port authorities and the whale watching industry is essential if effective mitigation is to occur. For example, through the CCH process, launched by ACCOBAMS, overlapping ongoing and known human threats and Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs). The Scientific Committee **recommends** that the Parties ask the Secretariat to increase communication with the relevant stakeholders and inform them of the willingness of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee and Ship Strikes WG to provide advice.

RECOMMENDATION 14.8 - COMMERCIAL WHALE WATCHING ACTIVITIES⁶

1. Over the past decade, the presence of a great diversity of cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS region has led to the development of high number of commercial whale watching operators.
2. When conducted responsibly, whale watching activities have the potential to generate income and livelihoods for coastal communities, as well as contribute to public awareness and better understanding on the presence and distribution of whales, dolphins and porpoises and, ultimately, their conservation needs. However, when the industry develops too fast, or operators engage in irresponsible practices, whale watching also has the potential to become a serious source of concern for wild cetacean populations that may already be suffering decreased fitness or population declines from bycatch, habitat degradation, climate change, and other threats.
3. Aware that ACCOBAMS Resolution 4.7 sets forth clear guidelines for commercial cetacean watching in the ACCOBAMS Area, and Resolution 6.20, Annex 2, expands this advice by providing a detailed description of the standards associated with the High-Quality Whale Watching (HQWW)[©] Certificate, and the code of conduct operators must follow to obtain that label;
4. The ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee:
 - (a) In line with previous ACCOBAMS resolutions (Res. 4.7, Res. 6.20 and Res. 7.16) **reiterates** the need for legally enforceable whale watching regulations to be in place and fully implemented by all of the ACCOBAMS Parties.
 - (b) **Endorses** the new version of the *Guidelines for the Management of Cetacean Watching Activities in the ACCOBAMS Area (ACCOBAMS-SC14/2021/Doc29)*.
 - (c) **Agrees** that the proposed data collection form for commercial whale watching vessels included as Annex 4 of Resolution 6.20 needs to be reviewed and updated.
 - (d) **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 activity in the previously identified pilot areas (Ligurian-Provençal Basin, including the Pelagos Sanctuary, Gibraltar Strait, and south Portugal).
 - (e) **Endorses** the results of the study aimed at identifying hotspots of Whale Watching activities in the ACCOBAMS Area (ACCOBAMS-SC14/2021/Doc28).
 - (f) **Encourages** Parties to implement specific legislation (in accordance with ACCOBAMS Guidelines) to mitigate the potential pressure on cetacean populations in the identified whale watching hotspots.
 - (g) Further **encourages** Parties to promote the objectives of the European Green Deal and in particular the transition to reduce vessels' CO2 emissions and noise, in particular, amongst the whale watching operators.
 - (h) **Recommends** that the results of the work to be conducted on the hotspots will be used to complement the Cetacean Critical Habitats (CCH) process.
 - (i) **Recommends** that Parties implement and continue to promote and enhance the status of the "High Quality Whale-Watching[®]" Certificate in collaboration with the Pelagos Agreement and other relevant Intergovernmental Organisations and Multilateral Environmental Agreements within the Agreement Area (e.g., the Barcelona Convention, the Black Sea Commission and the International Whaling Commission).

⁶ According to IWC Whale watching is a term that includes all cetaceans – whales, dolphins and porpoises- please refer to Parsons, E.C.M. & Fortuna, Caterina Maria & Ritter, Fabian & Rose, N.A. & Simmonds, Mark & Weinrich, Mason & Williams, R. & Panigada, S. (2006). Glossary of whale watching terms. *Journal of Cetacean Research and Management*. 8. 249-251

RECOMMENDATION 14.9 - MARINE LITTER AND CHEMICAL POLLUTION

Marine litter

1. Given the particularly high levels of marine litter in all ecological compartments of the ACCOBAMS Area (sea-surface, water column, seafloor and coastal shores) and the overlap with distribution and habitat of several cetacean species shown by inter alia the results from the ASI , and given the recognized deleterious effects of marine litter ingestion and entanglement (and toxic effects) on wildlife welfare, biology and ecology, the Scientific Committee **strongly urges** that all competent organizations on pollution issues (e.g., EU, Barcelona Convention, IMO) urgently improve and enforce their management measures regarding land- and ship-related pollution; there is no need to wait for additional information on cetaceans before taking mitigation action

2. In this regard the Scientific Committee also **urges** Parties to:
 - (a) work towards a global agreement on plastics, targeting both land- and sea-based sources of plastic pollution and the whole life cycle of plastics; and
 - (b) engage all levels of stakeholders from producers, users to decision-makers to implement actions which can contribute to address plastic litter at source and stop plastics entering the Mediterranean, Black Sea and contiguous areas and to facilitate collaboration among science and policy to tackle marine litter issues.

3. In order to improve our knowledge of marine litter and cetaceans, the Scientific Committee:
 - (a) **encourages** the undertaking of postmortem investigations according to the best practice guidelines (IJsseldijk, Brownlow, and Mazzariol, 2019, see the Recommendation 14.4 on Cetacean Stranding Networks) and **supports**:
 - collective scientific efforts on the development of standardized methods to detect the occurrence and effects of marine litter (including microplastics) in cetacean species and
 - the use of standardized formats to report results across the ACCOBAMS Area in synergy with existing frameworks (e.g., MSFD and IMAP indicators, GESAMP) and relevant MEAs (e.g., the Barcelona Convention, CMS, IWC, etc.) that request periodic reporting from postmortem investigations;
 - (b) **supports** 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
 - (c) **proposes** cetacean species as indicators of marine litter in the ACCOBAMS Area, in particular focusing the attention on deep-diving species for macro-litter (e.g., sperm whale and Cuvier's beaked whale) and filter feeders for micro-plastic (fin whale).⁷

Chemical pollution

4. Given the high occurrence and concentrations of legacy and emerging contaminants (OCs, PAHs, PBDEs, PFAS, Heavy metals, plastic additives, PPCPs, etc.) in the Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea and given that the chemical contamination is detrimental for cetacean health since it can induce negative effects on the immune, nervous and reproductive systems of cetaceans, the Scientific Committee **recommends**:

⁷ Please refer to the Report of the IWC Workshop on Marine Debris: The Way Forward, 3-5 December 2019, La Garriga, Catalonia, Spain (SC/68B/REP/03)

- (a)** the development of a transboundary health monitoring network for stranded and free-swimming cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Area – this could also facilitate the development of a common database of data on diseases and chemical burdens and cooperation among existing tissue banks to share tissues and data and contribute such data for the assessment of the “Favorable Conservation Status” of marine mammals under the EU Habitats Directive and equivalent national/regional legislation;
- (b)** the development of an inventory of the institutions or laboratories within the ACCOBAMS Area that are willing to receive and analyze samples for legacy and emerging pollutants from those institutions which do not have appropriate facilities and expertise;
- (c)** that existing measures for the mitigation of toxicological contamination in the ACCOBAMS Area should be enforced e.g., through full compliance by member states with the Stockholm Convention; and
- (d)** future attention should focus on the assessment of cumulative effects and multiple stressors (including chemicals, marine litter, climate change, and emerging pathogens) on cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Areas, including new techniques (such as -omics techniques, epigenetics and lab-on-chip), taking advantage of consideration of recommendations (once available) from the IWC intersessional Workshop on Pollution 2025 cumulative effects and multiple stressors” (1-4 November 2021).

RECOMMENDATION 14.10 - NETCCOBAMS

1. The Scientific Committee **commends** the NETCCOBAMS online Platform (accobams.sinay.fr⁸) to Parties as a source of valuable information on pressures and threats and encourages them to support its further development and improvement. To this end the Scientific Committee **agrees** to establish an expert Working Group including scientists, managers, stakeholders and Parties with 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 use⁹;
 - (b) the analytical tools to be used for the various datasets;
 - (c) appropriate visualisation approaches (including those relevant to CCH) and associated advice to Parties and others on the interpretation of outputs; and
 - (d) the future development of the NETCCOBAMS online Platform (e.g., to take into account other threats, to facilitate data entry and validation) to assist in the provision of conservation advice on cetaceans and their habitats – some priority should be given to developing a module for AIS data analysis by providing information in a specific selected area using the results of existing projects or online platforms (e.g., type of vessel, density, speed, waiting time, etc.) – Ref to the Recommendation 14.7 on ship strikes.

2. Furthermore, the Scientific Committee **recommends**:
 - (a) those relevant stakeholders (including ACCOBAMS Partners and industry bodies) should be encouraged by Parties and the Secretariat to submit relevant data and information on cetaceans and anthropogenic activities to NETCCOBAMS (in accord with Working Group advice) to improve the value and application of the online platform in the provision of management advice over time;
 - (b) that the NETCCOBAMS WG should liaise with the Joint Noise WG regarding (a) the definition of potential quantitative targets in terms of reduction of risk (b) improvements in the robustness of model outputs (incorporating model uncertainty, *in situ* verification at selected sites); and (c) the development of new features including simulated scenarios of noise (and risk) reduction in response to potential mitigation approaches to evaluate their likely effectiveness;
 - (c) that the NETCCOBAMS WG should liaise with the other WG when the platform will implement other features.

3. Finally, the Scientific Committee requests that the Secretariat disseminates information on the value of the NETCCOBAMS online platform (including its contribution to achieved mitigation measures) to national and international *fora*, managers, stakeholders (e.g., shipping companies, ports and IMO) to increase the visibility of the work done and encourage its use and the submission of data.

⁸ To create a NETCCOBAMS account, please contact the ACCOBAMS Secretariat

⁹ e.g., validated abundance and/or habitat maps, partner's reports, documentation about the work of ACCOBAMS and its Committees, Parties and Partners

RECOMMENDATION 14.11 - CITIZEN SCIENCE

Citizen science allows people with diverse motivation and abilities to participate in research and conservation initiatives (e.g., Cetacean Stranding Networks or observation/data collection at sea) where scientific effort is limited due to low budget allocation, reduced staff, limited resources, large area to be covered, etc. It is also a valid tool in facilitating public awareness of cetaceans and habitat conservation.

The ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee:

1. **recognises** that the concept of citizen science and specific citizen science projects can complement the collection of scientific data on cetacean sightings and strandings;
2. **highlights** the increasing value of existing and improving digital technology (websites, mobile apps and social media platforms). This has created a breakthrough in terms of data collection and validation and the Committee **commends** effort to promote their widespread use;
3. **stresses** that the validation of the submitted data by experts is a crucial step to allow such data to be incorporated into quantitative assessments of cetacean distribution and occurrence; and
4. **welcomes and encourages** expert effort towards the standardization of the protocols and methodology for data collection via citizen science, with all appropriate animal welfare and human safety precautions.

ANNEX X - REPORT OF THE BLACK SEA SUB-REGIONAL COORDINATION UNIT

INCLUDING ACTIVITIES FROM NON-PARTIES



Since 2002, in line with the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Black Sea Commission and ACCOBAMS (revised in 2012), the Permanent Secretariat of the Black Sea Commission (BSC PS) exercises its role of the Black Sea Sub Regional Coordination Unit for ACCOBAMS regarding the conservation of the cetaceans of the Black Sea.

During the past triennium the following main activities were implemented:

- Participation in relevant BSC-ACCOBAMS meetings, regular inter-secretarial meetings, inter alia, in 12-14 ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee meetings and all relevant online meetings of the CENOBs Project;
- Cetacean conservation activities were included in all relevant regional strategic documents for the Black Sea (draft BSIMAP 2017-2022), draft BS SoE Report, revised annual reporting format etc.);
- The issue of “Specimens of Black Sea bottlenose dolphins in captivity” was introduced into the BSIMAP for 2017-2022, as well as list of fisheries indicators for annual reporting to the Black Sea Commission;
- With the support of ACCOBAMS, the BSC PS introduced the “Cetacean conservation” modules in the existing postgraduate programs and enrolled the English-speaking universities of the ACCOBAMS Area (workshop for teachers and PhD students at Istanbul University was held in 2019);
- The elaboration of Chapter “Conservation of Cetaceans” of the State of Black Sea Environment Report (BS SoE Report) is being supported by ACCOBAMS Secretariat; new publications on cetaceans in Black Sea are published. In relevant resolution the BSC supported the efforts of ACCOBAMS Secretariat on underwater noise;
- ACCOBAMS Cetaceans’ Day was celebrated in the Black Sea area back-to-back with Black Sea Day on 31st October every year;
- BSC PS participated in Joint initiatives with GFCM (High-level meeting on Black Sea fisheries, BlackSea4Fish Project), CBD Convention (Joint RSCs & RFOs meetings, EBSA workshops etc.), EC (projects, ocean governance, MSFD directive, UNEP (SDG 14) etc.);
- With assistance of ACCOBAMS Secretariat, the draft Conservation Plan for Black Sea Cetaceans (2019-2022) was revised and aligned in line with BSC documents and was recommended for consideration at BSC Regular Meeting;
- Participated as partners in call of proposals lead by ACCOBAMS for implementation of MSFD for cetaceans;

- Supported efforts of the ACCOBAMS Permanent Secretariat in implementing the “ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative”, an unprecedented large-scale activity coordinated by ACCOBAMS and involving Black Sea countries to estimate cetacean populations abundance and distribution in the Black Sea in Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Georgia and Türkiye in summer 2019;
- Support to CeNoBS project and the EU-UNDP EMBLAS+ project to implement aerial cetacean survey, including supporting pilot monitoring activities in Romania, Bulgaria, Türkiye and Ukraine in the view of completing gaps on distribution, intensity and effects of bycatch pressure on cetaceans;
- Results of the ongoing data analysis presented and will be used by the Black Sea Commission and its partners, to initiate the definition of thresholds values for cetaceans related indicators and criteria on abundance and distribution in particular;
- Overall, BSC PS is sharing the same objective with ACCOBAMS on improving the availability and quality of data on the biological status of the Black Sea and improve the countries’ ability to perform marine environmental monitoring, in line with expected MSFD and Black Sea Strategic Action Plan needs.

ANNEX XI - REPORT OF THE MEDITERRANEAN SUB-REGIONAL COORDINATION

Implementation of Actions By UNEP- MAP SPA/RAC For the Conservation of Cetaceans in The Mediterranean
(September 2019 - September 2022)



Mediterranean
Action Plan
Barcelona
Convention



The MoU between SPA/RAC and the ACCOBAMS Secretariat for the period 2021-2022 has been signed by the two organisations after its review by the MAP Coordination Unit. It included a detailed joint work programme.

1. EVALUATION AND UPDATED OF THE ACTION PLAN FOR THE CONSERVATION OF CETACEANS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

The updated Action Plan for the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea has been adopted by Decision IG.25/13 during COP22 (Antalya, Türkiye 2021). Its evaluation and update has been done in close collaboration with the Secretariat of ACCOBAMS

2. ECOSYSTEM APPROACH/ INTEGRATED MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT PROGRAMME (IMAP)

- SPA/RAC is assisting the southern Mediterranean countries in the implementation of the IMAP on biodiversity cluster. Indicators on marine mammals are considered (CI3, 4 and 5 on species distributional range, Population abundance and Population demographic characteristics respectively) in at least two monitoring areas, one in a low-pressure area (e.g., marine protected area/ Specially Protected Area of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMI) and one in a high-pressure area from human activity.
- SPA/RAC developed the Monitoring and Assessment Scales, Assessment Criteria, Thresholds and Baseline Values for the IMAP Common Indicators 3, 4 and 5 related to Marine Mammals. This document was revised by the Scientific committee of the ACCOBAMS, discussed by the CorMon on biodiversity (Videoconference, 10-11 June 2021) and endorsed by the 8th Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group meeting (Videoconference, 9 September 2021) for its use for the purpose of the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (2023 Med QSR).
- SPA/RAC discussed the data standards and data dictionaries for the IMAP Common indicators 3,4 and 5 for their use for the purpose of the 2023 MedQSR.

3. THE POST-2020 SAPBIO

The Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region (Post-2020 SAPBIO), has been adopted by the Decision IG.25/11 of the COP 22 (Antalya, December 2021) , as a Mediterranean action oriented marine and Coastal Biodiversity Conservation Policy aiming at contributing to the achievement of the good environmental status, to the Sustainable Development Goals and their respective targets, and the CBD Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework through the optic of the Mediterranean context.

The elaboration of the Post-2020 SAPBIO has been based on needs and priorities identified in a participatory way during a bottom-up process with the Mediterranean Countries at national level.

Twenty-one (21) national documents on Mediterranean marine and coastal biodiversity preservation beyond 2030; Four Post-2020 SAPBIO sub-regional orientation documents were prepared to ensure a high level of coordination and a smooth passage of information from the national process to the elaboration of the Post-2020 SAPBIO. The draft Post-2020 SAPBIO document was submitted for consultation to the Advisory Committee and reviewed by two meetings of SAPBIO National Correspondents.

4. ENHANCING OF EFFECTIVE CONSERVATION ON CETACEAN CRITICAL HABITATS

- An ambitious and transformational post-2020 strategy for marine protected areas (MPAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) in the Mediterranean, in line with the post-2020 global biodiversity framework of the CBD and other regional and global processes, has been prepared by SPA/RAC in consultation with SPA NFPs, relevant global and regional organizations, and adopted by the Contracting Parties at their COP 22 (Decision IG.24/6): It aims to 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
- The SPAMI Day has been organised on 20 May 2022, with the participation of the H.S.H. Prince Albert II of Monaco in the Oceanographic Museum of Monaco to strengthen collaboration between managers and award the SPAMI certificates.
- The 2020 MPA Status Report is under finalization, in view to its submission to UNEP edition board after summer.

5. EXTERNAL FUNDED PROJECTS

SPA/RAC is collaborating with the ACCOBAMS secretariat for the implementation of the following Projects and programmes:

I. Reduction of human pressures on cetaceans

“Mitigating dolphin depredation in Mediterranean fisheries – Joining efforts for strengthening cetacean conservation and sustainable fisheries:

It focuses on the priorities identified in the context of the Tunisian pilot action “Dolphin and seabird interactions with purse seine small-pelagic fisheries in Kelibia”. It aims to ensure a technical follow-up of the monitoring activities and experiments – the reinforced seine and the acoustic repellents – and to improve, in parallel, the understanding of the behaviour of bottlenose dolphins and their interactions with the fisheries and with aquaculture.

With its second component that aims at promoting the development of ecotourism activities to reconcile the conservation of endangered marine species and practice of the fishing activity (pesca-tourism activities, discovery of the marine environment and observation marine wildlife following responsible principles and practices). SPA/RAC supported the Tunisian NGO Notre Grand Bleu to implement a pilot action carried out during May 2022 in Monastir Bay with the participation of the main stakeholders, fishermen and general public.

“Understanding Mediterranean multi-taxa bycatch of vulnerable species and testing mitigation – a collaborative approach” The project is jointly implemented by SPA/RAC, ACCOBAMS, GFCM, IUCN Med, BirdLife International (Project coordinator) and MEDASSET. Started in September 2017 and will end in October 2022. Within this project, SPA/RAC:

- supported the implementation of a multitaxon bycatch data collection programme in Tunisia as well as the elaboration of a first national Bycatch report through a field observation programmes (on-board, at landing site and through self-sampling) across different fishing gears together with training, awareness raising, and identification and testing of mitigation techniques: bycatch data collection programme held (November 2020-January 2022) : 872 onboard observation, 1450 questionnaire, 135 stranding animal data and 28 bycatch self-sampling by fishers. Data analysis starts and a national data analysis report for Tunisia is under finalisation.
- has provided support to for the harmonization and interconnection between the Post-2020 SAPBIO and the new GFCM Mediterranean and Black Sea Fishery and aquaculture strategy to ensure that both are tackling in a aligned way the mitigation of the incidental catches of vulnerable species in the Mediterranean.
- contributed to the elaboration of the online Mediterranean database portal on bycatch data collection by the FAO/GFCM within the MAVA MedBycatch project, phase 2.
- participation and contribution to the Know-how webinar - Bycatch & Depredation - Monday 16th May and to the bycatch event on 14th June during Birdlife Ocean Week in Brussels; participation and contribution to the 23rd GFCM SAC Meeting at FAO headquarters, Rome, Italy, 21-24 June 2022.

“Support mechanism for filling key knowledge gaps for vulnerable species (marine mammals, seabirds, sea turtles and elasmobranchs) impacted by fisheries in selected areas of the Mediterranean” species project: The Project is coordinated by SPA/RAC in collaboration with ACCOBAMS, BirdLife International, MEDASSET, and IUCN Med. The project started on 1 January 2018 and will end in October 2022. Through 9 small projects, information on the fisheries operating within the Mediterranean areas has been gathered as well as their movements with these vulnerable projects has been selected. A focused study “From Small Cetaceans to the Great Whales of the East the Turkish” has been achieved by the NGO Marine Mammals Research Association.

II. Mitigating the impact of acoustic pollution

The EU funded Project “Joint Programme for GES assessment on D11-noise in the Mediterranean Marine Region” QUIETMED2: is a project developed by a consortium made up of 11 entities including SPA/RAC, ACCOBAMS and coordinated by the CTN-Marine Technology Center del Mar. It Started in Feb 2019 and ended in February 2021. Within this project, SPA/RAC has drawn up the “manual for monitoring anthropogenic activities generating impulsive noise at sea”. This manual is intended for the competent authorities of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention. It provides basic notions on the issue of underwater noise, its impact, legal framework and reporting methods at national and international levels (example: the register set up by ACCOBAMS).

The EU funded Project “Assisting cooperation for the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive on underwater noise” QUIETSEAS: aims to support Member States and Competent Authorities providing methods and tools to facilitate Descriptor 11-Underwater noise management. The project started on February 2021 and will end during the first semester of 2023.

Within this project, SPA/RAC is promoting the cooperation in the Mediterranean Sea and fostering cooperation between EU and non-EU Member States.

III. Improvement of capacity on national organizations and experts

- Within the framework of the MAVA MedBycatch project-phase II, SPA/RAC with project partners support, implemented an online training (3-5 May 2021) for Tunisian Fisheries and Environmental stakeholders and particularly Bycatch observers and Fishing guards related to the FAO/GFCM Mediterranean Bycatch data collection protocol, identification of vulnerable species (Sharks, rays, Cetaceans, Seabirds and Sea turtles) as well as fishing gears and bycatch mitigations measures.

- Within the framework of the EU funded QuietMed 2 project, SPA/RAC organized in close collaboration with ACCOBAMS, the French-speaking workshop on impulsive noise at sea, in December 2020, having seen the participation of representatives of the competent and scientific authorities from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Lebanon.
- The 5th Conference on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the South Mediterranean Countries (CSMC5), hosted by the National Centre for Marine Sciences of Lebanon (CNRS-L), was held online from 13 to 15 April 2021. This Conference was organised by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat, in close collaboration with SPA/RAC and was financially supported by the Principality of Monaco.

6. CETACEANS MONITORING

- **InterMed Project**, aims to increase knowledge about the presence of Cetaceans in the Mediterranean basin. Within this project, SPA/RAC is coordinating a field research campaign located in the Strait of Sicily, and more precisely in the waters facing the coasts of Tunisia (Gulf of Tunis and neighbouring areas comprised within the continental shelf) following the agreed IMAF indicators and using the appropriate protocols as adopted by the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group (Athens, Greece, 9 September 2019).
- SPA/RAC is supporting a field work on the marine water of Garraf (Spanish Cetacean Corridor) which is an important feeding ground for the fin whale toward its designation of as an important marine mammal's area (IMMA)"

7. MEDACES

SPA/RAC, in collaboration with the secretariat of ACCOBAMS support the update of the Mediterranean database on cetaceans stranding (MEDACES) through its promotion among the SPA/BD and ACCOBAMS national focal points. Indeed, SPA/RAC has supported the set up and the reinforcement of the national stranding Network of Marine turtles in Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia, this Network can serve for the monitoring of the stranded cetacean.

8. MEETING & WORKSHOP

Within the 2020 MPA Forum, held from 28 November to 1 December 2021 in Monaco, SPA/RAC and ACCOBAMS organized a workshop on "A showcase of initiatives for mobile species conservation": where Robust information on Mobile species occurrence, distribution and ranges has been presented as baseline to perform any further in-depth investigation and to gain insights on the conservation status of the target populations.

SPA/RAC took part to the following ACCOBAMS meetings:

- Thirteenth Meeting of the Scientific Committee, Cap d'Ail, France 26-28 February 2020
- MAVA DEPREDATION Project partners meeting (online), 10 November 2021
- Second exchange workshop of the MAVA DEPREDATION PROJECT, Catania, Sicily, 8-10 June 2022

ANNEX XII - REPORT OF THE ACCOBAMS FOLLOW-UP COMMITTEE

The ACCOBAMS Follow-up Committee was created by the ACCOBAMS Parties at MOP5 through the adoption of the Resolution 5.4.

1- COMPOSITION

For the 2020- 2022 period, the composition was the following:

Members nominated by Parties

Moustafa FOUDA	Full term: 2017-2022
Clément PAYEUR	Full term: 2017-2022
Imane TAI	Full term: 2020-2025
Zurab GURIELIDZE	Alternate

In October 2021 Mr. Clément PAYEUR left the French Ministry. **Mr. Zurab GURIELIDZE**, the alternate for members nominated by Parties, became member (full term: 2020-2025).

Members nominated by ACCOBAMS Partners

Aurélie MOULINS	Full term: 2020-2025
Tilen GENOV	Full term: 2017-2022
Dimitar POPOV	Alternate

The Third Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Follow-up Committee took place online on Tuesday 29th and Wednesday 30th March 2022.

The Follow-up Committee decided by consensus to elect Mrs. Imane TAI as President, and Mrs. Aurelie MOULINS as vice President.

2- Follow-up of the Committee's recommendations and involvement of ACCOBAMS Meeting of the Parties

Members agreed to recommend the Meeting of the Parties to take decisions in the form of *ad hoc Resolutions* in what concerns the recommendations issued by the Follow-up Committee on the existing submissions. This is reflected in Resolution 8.8A.

3- Consideration of submissions

Four submissions, all by one ACCOBAMS Partner that has reservations about a Party's follow up with its obligations under the Agreement, were still opened at the beginning of the 2020-2022 period.

- Submission by OceanCare on the assessment and control by Greece of military activities around South-East Crete

The Follow-up Committee recommended that the Meeting of the Parties, on the basis on the findings and the motivations of the Follow-up Committee, adopts a Resolution:

- recalling that the follow-up procedure is a non-confrontational procedure that requires the co-operation by the ACCOBAMS Parties;
- inviting Greece 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;
- requesting the Follow-up Committee **to remain seized of the submission.**

These recommendations are reflected in Resolution 8.8B

- Submission by OceanCare on the assessment and control by Spain of petroleum exploration activities around the Balearic Islands

The Follow-up Committee recommended that the Meeting of the Parties, on the basis on the findings and the motivations of the Follow-up Committee, adopts a Resolution:

- finding 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;
- declaring the **follow up procedure closed** as regards the implication of Spain;
- requesting 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”.
- stressing 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.

These recommendations are reflected in Resolution 8.8C

- Submission by OceanCare on the assessment and control by Portugal of petroleum exploration activities in the Algarve and Alentejo basins

The Follow-up Committee recommended that the Meeting of the Parties, on the basis of the findings and the motivations of the Follow-up Committee, adopts a resolution:

- recalling that ACCOBAMS Parties are bound, inter alia, to apply the precautionary principle (Art. II, para. 4. ACCOBAMS), 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”;
- taking 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;

- believing 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 Committee;
- appreciating 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;
- inviting the Secretariat to transmit these considerations and recommendations to the Meeting of the Parties, as well as to the Party and the Partner concerned;
- declaring the **follow-up procedure closed**.

These recommendations are reflected in Resolution 8.8D

- Submission by OceanCare on the failure by Albania, Algeria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Slovenia, Spain, Syria, Tunisia to implement the ACCOBAMS Conservation Plan for Mediterranean common dolphins

The Follow-up Committee recommended that the Meeting of the Parties, on the basis on the findings and the motivations of the Follow-up Committee, adopts a Resolution:

- recalling that the follow-up procedure is a non-confrontational procedure that requires the co-operation by the ACCOBAMS Parties;
- recalling "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";
- inviting Albania, Algeria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Monaco, Montenegro, Slovenia, Syria and Tunisia to provide information to the 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;
- inviting the Secretariat to share the information received from Parties with the Scientific Committee;
- inviting the Secretariat to transmit these considerations and recommendations to the Meeting of the Parties, as well as to the Parties and the Partner concerned;
- regretting 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, and 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;
- considering 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;
- stressing 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;
- reserving to make further recommendations on the replies submitted by Malta, Morocco and Spain, at a later stage, when more national replies will be collected;
- requesting the Follow-up Committee **to remain seized of the submission**.

These recommendations are reflected in Resolution 8.8E.

4- Review general issues of implementation and follow up under the agreement as requested by MOP7

- Existing obligations and commitments related to seismic activities producing underwater noise

Members of the Follow up Committee were invited to review the legal and technical issues of implementation and follow up of existing obligations and commitments related to seismic activities producing underwater noise.

They adopted the following conclusions:

- 1- When referring to impact assessment, the Committee **recommends** to use best available impact assessment tools, such as Environmental Impacts Assessment under European Union instruments, the CMS EIA Guidelines, the ESPOO procedure or any other tools as appropriate, such as the ACCOBAMS qualified Marine Mammals Observers / Passive Acoustics Monitoring operators. The Committee also recommends to share information about practices used by the Parties.
- 2- The Committee **considers** that seismic activities fall under “industrial activities” category, and therefore:
 - a. Parties have to collect, analyze and report data on direct and indirect interactions between humans and cetaceans in relation to such activities. In that context, the noise register that is being developed under Resolution 6.17 is relevant.
 - b. Parties should implement the relevant ACCOBAMS Guidelines for seismic surveys (Annex 2 of the Resolution 7.13).
- 3- The Committee **recommends** that Parties are encouraged to:
 - a. avoid or minimize producing noise in marine protected areas, as well as, in particular, in areas containing critical habitat of cetaceans likely to be affected by man-made noise (paragraph 16 of the Resolution 7.13);
 - b. exchange information on the actions taken by Parties.
- 4- The Committee **recommends** that all elements mentioned in Article 4 (Research and monitoring) of ACCOBAMS Annex 2 shall be taken into consideration in connection with seismic activities.
- 5- The Committee **recommends** Parties to provide data to the noise register, with the Secretariat’s technical assistance, if need be.
- 6- The Committee **recommends** Parties to:
 - a. implement Resolutions 4.16 and 7.14 and Scientific Committee recommendation 14.4;
 - b. provide data to MEDACES (Mediterranean Database of Cetacean Strandings).
- 7- The Committee
 - a. **considers** that seismic activities can determine “exceptionally unfavorable or endangering conditions” leading to emergency situations and, therefore, emergency responses should be considered;
 - b. **recommends** Parties to exchange information on codes of conduct already implemented and data collected during emergency situations, in particular when a link with seismic activities is suspected.

- Existing obligations and commitments related military activities producing underwater noise

Members of the Follow up Committee were invited to discuss ACCOBAMS Parties obligations and commitments related to **military activities**

They adopted the following conclusions:

- 1- The Committee **understands** that military activities are in principle within the scope of application of the ACCOBAMS, as there is no provision in the Agreement that excludes its application to such activities. Military activities are consequently not allowed if they result in the “taking” of cetaceans, as defined under article 1, para I, of the Bonn Convention, meaning “taking, hunting, fishing, capturing, harassing, deliberate killing, or attempting to engage in any such conducts”.
- 2- The Committee **is fully aware** of Article 236 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which states: *“The provisions of this Convention regarding the protection and preservation of the marine environment do not apply to any warship, naval auxiliary, other vessels or aircraft owned or operated by a State and used, for the time being, only on government non-commercial service. However, each State shall ensure, by the adoption of appropriate measures not impairing operations or operational capabilities of such vessels or aircraft owned or operated by it, that such vessels or aircraft act in a manner consistent, so far as is reasonable and practicable, with the said Convention”*. In this regard, the Committee notes that the second sentence of Article 236 obliges the UNCLOS Parties to operate State vessels and aircraft in the manner consistent with UNCLOS, so far as reasonable and practicable and without impairing operations or operational capabilities. Moreover, Article 237 of the UNCLOS does not prejudice agreements, such as ACCOBAMS, which may be concluded in furtherance of the general principles of UNCLOS. Such principles include the general principle of preservation and protection of the environment.
- 3- When referring to impact assessment, the Committee **recommends** the use of best available impact assessment tools, such as the ACCOBAMS noise Guidelines, and CMS EIA Guidelines. It is also recommended to share information about practices used by Parties in connection with impact assessment related to different military activities.
- 4- The Committee **encourages** Parties to provide information on military activities relevant to human-cetacean interactions, in particular those producing underwater noise, and report them to the noise register, in accordance with paragraph 11 of Resolution 7.13.
- 5- The Committee **recommends** encouraging Parties engaged in military activities, to:
 - a. avoid or minimize producing noise in marine protected areas, as well as in particular in areas containing critical habitat of cetaceans likely to be affected by man-made noise, in accordance with paragraph 16 of Resolution 7.13;
 - b. exchange information on the actions taken by Parties;
 - c. address impacts that such activities may have in the cetacean acoustic habitat.
- 6- The Committee **considers** that military activities can determine “exceptionally unfavourable or endangering conditions” leading to emergency situations and, therefore, emergency responses should be considered.

- Interactions between humans and dolphins addressed by Resolution 3.13 (Dolphin interaction programme)

Participants were invited to discuss ACCOBAMS Parties obligations and commitments related to **interactions between humans and dolphins**.

They adopted the following conclusions:

- 1- The Committee **recommends** that, as advised by the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee, the Meeting of the Parties considers establishing an ACCOBAMS Advisory Committee on semi-enclosed facilities that should provide guidance, based on best scientific evidence, to interested Parties on all the questions related to semi-enclosed facilities for cetaceans, taking also in consideration the studies "*Taking of cetaceans, dolphinarium and quasi-dolphinarium: a legal analysis relating to ACCOBAMS Parties*" - [ACCOBAMS-MOP7/2019/Inf_09](#) and « *Scientific perspective on "potential marine semi-enclosed facilities" in the ACCOBAMS Area* » - [ACCOBAMS-SC14/2021/Doc34](#);
- 2- The Committee **recommends** that the ACCOBAMS Advisory Committee on semi-enclosed facilities should be composed of leading experts in different fields, including:
 - Ecology and behavior expertise on odontocetes, primarily on bottlenose dolphins;
 - odontocete husbandry (e.g., food, medical care, handling, transportation);
 - veterinary medicine focused on marine mammals;
 - stranding, rescue, captive rehabilitation and release techniques and procedures;
 - structural, functional and logistic aspects of the prospective hosting facility;
 - ecological impact assessment of concerned marine environments;
 - assessment of the economic sustainability of any proposed project and the operational costs of the center, once established;
 - educational, awareness and research design;
 - relationships with the main stakeholders.

The **Terms of Reference** for an ACCOBAMS Advisory Committee on semi-enclosed facilities are presented in MOP/2022/Doc29.

ANNEX XIII - RESOLUTIONS

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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,

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, although Greece and Libya 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 shall exercise their right to vote at the Eighth Meeting of the Parties.

RESOLUTION 8.2
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* 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, excluding countries with arrears of more than three years of contribution to the Trust Fund;
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 and in compliance with national legislation;
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. *Requests* the Secretariat to use the amount of 10 000€ from the expected remaining amounts, in order to replenish the secured funds mentioned in paragraph 19 of Annex 3 on the Terms of Reference for Administration of the Budget;
11. *Requests* the Bureau to:
 - a. monitor the accrual of unspent funds on the ACCOBAMS budget with a view to providing the Secretariat with guidance to prevent the accumulation of unspent funds or, as appropriate, on their timely utilization;
 - b. propose to the Meeting of the Parties a procedure concerning the management and the recovery of the long term pending contributions;
 - c. monitor the maintenance by the Secretariat of an adequate secured fund, and the application of paragraph 19 of Annex 3 to Resolution 8.2 on the Terms of Reference for Administration of the Budget.
12. *Invites* Parties, Range States and organisations to consider the feasibility of providing personnel for the ACCOBAMS Secretariat;
13. *Also invites* Parties and 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;
14. *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;
15. *Entrusts* the ACCOBAMS Secretariat with the task of exploring the availability of appropriate external funds to support the implementation of the Agreement;
16. *Adopts* the Programme of Work for 2023 – 2025, as presented in [Annex 6](#) to the present Resolution;
17. *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;
18. *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;
19. *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, if necessary;
20. *Urges* Parties and specialized international and national organizations to develop international cooperative projects for implementation of the Work Programme and to keep the ACCOBAMS Secretariat fully informed of progress;
21. *Further urges* Parties and *encourages* national and international organizations and 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;

22. *Asks* Parties, non-Parties, Partners, all relevant organizations and experts to share all relevant information regarding their activities in NETCCOBAMS;
23. *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;
24. *Calls on* the Scientific Committee to further promote cooperation with scientific Institutions of the ACCOBAMS Area;
25. *Requests* the ACCOBAMS Secretariat to strengthen co-operation and develop activities with other relevant bodies;
26. *Instructs* the ACCOBAMS Secretariat to:
 - a. prepare a zero nominal growth scenario and a real nominal growth scenario to be included as reference scenarios in the draft Programme of Work and Budget for the triennium 2026-2028, to be submitted to MOP9;
 - b. 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;
 - c. 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](#): Overview of expected incomes and expenses & Annual contributions of Parties to the ACCOBAMS Trust Fund 2023-2025

[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 Meetings of the ACCOBAMS Parties

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

ANNEX 1 - BUDGET 2023 -2025

Table 1- BUDGET OC - 2023 - 2025 based on a non-decrease amount for conservation actions (in €/euros)

		Approved budget - OC 2020-2022	Proposed budget – OC	Secured from Remaining	Additional required funds	LB1101	LB1102	LB1103	LB1104	LB1201	LB1202	LB 1203	LB 1300	LB 1400	LB1501	LB1502	LB1600	LB2100	LB2200	LB2300	LB2400	LB2500	LB52	LB53	LB54			
General Management and Administrative support																												
General Management ¹⁰ (Administrative staff, Administrative Assistance, Bank fees, Hospitality)		379 200	432 900			36 000	150 000	150 000	75 000	3 000	6 000	9 000	1 500	2 400														
MA1a	Strengthen involvement of all key stakeholders in ACCOBAMS's operations	227 600	214 000	5 000	41 000										3 600	39 400		61 000	49 000	25 000						36 000		
MA2a	New funding possibilities	0	0		75 000																							
MA3a	Improve the level of implementation of and compliance with ACCOBAMS Resolutions	5 000	20 000		56 000												0				15 000	5 000						
MA4a	Ensure implementation of the ACCOBAMS's cetacean conservation standards in the adjacent areas	0	0																									
triennium budget General Management and Administrative support		611 800	666 900	5 000	172 000	36 000	150 000	150 000	75 000	3 000	6 000	9 000	1 500	2 400	3 600	39 400	0	61 000	49 000	25 000	15 000	5 000	0	0	36 000			
				843 900																								
Conservation actions																												
CA1a	Cetacean population estimates and distribution	20 000	36 400	148 600	3 127 000																					36 400		
CA1b	Population Structure	0	0	0	96 000																							
CA1c	Monitoring cetaceans status	42 000	0	42 000	47 000										0											0		
CA1d	Functional stranding networks and responses to emergency situation	17 000	26 000	11 000	121 000										6 000											20 000		
CA2a	Interactions with fisheries / aquaculture	11 000	18 000	2 000	750 000																					18 000		
CA2b	Anthropogenic underwater noise	24 500	26 000	17 000	132 000																					26 000		
CA2c	Ship strikes	10 000	8 000	6 000	32 000																					8 000		
CA2d	Cetacean watching	7 000	0	12 000	203 000																							
CA2e	Marine debris	11 500	17 000	16 000	82 000																					17 000		
CA2f	Chemical & biological pollution	0	0	10 000	40 000																							
CA2g	Climate change	0	0	0	2 000																							
CA2i	Captivity related issues	0	0	15 000	0																							
CA3a	Area-based measures for cetacean conservation	61 000	0	44 000	18 000																					0		
CA4a	Information /Communication / Awareness about cetaceans	48 000	65 500	22 500	181 500																					65 500		
triennium budget Conservation Actions		252 000	196 900	346 100	4 830 500										6 000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	69 000	56 400	65 500
				5 373 500																								
TOTAL triennium budget		863 800	863 800	351 100	5 002 500	36 000	150 000	150 000	75 000	3 000	6 000	9 000	1 500	2 400	9 600	39 400	0	61 000	49 000	25 000	15 000	5 000	69 000	56 400	101 500			
				6 217 400																								
Triennium budget by year & Budgetary Line (LB)						LB1101	LB1102	LB1103	LB1104	LB1201	LB1202	LB 1203	LB 1300	LB 1400	LB1501	LB1502	LB1600	LB2100	LB2200	LB2300	LB2400	LB2500	LB52	LB53	LB54			
2023						12 000	50 000	50 000	25 000	1 000	2 000	3 000	500	800	3 200	15 000	-	-	20 000	7 000	-	-	29 000	20 000	40 000			
2024						12 000	50 000	50 000	25 000	1 000	2 000	3 000	500	800	3 200	14 000	-	3 000	29 000	7 000	15 000	5 000	20 000	20 000	35 000			
2025						12 000	50 000	50 000	25 000	1 000	2 000	3 000	500	800	3 200	10 400	-	58 000	-	11 000	-	-	20 000	16 400	26 500			

¹⁰ See table 1. below on the description of budget lines

Table 2. Budget Lines

General Management and Administrative support		2020-2022	2023 -2025 Scenario 0% (from OC)	2023 -2025 Scenario with non-decrease for conservation actions thanks to remaining amounts
General Management				
1100	Administrative staff			
1 101	Executive Secretary Housing Allowance	34 000	36 000	36 000
1 102	Programme & Project Officer 1	133 500	150 000	150 000*
1 103	Programme & Project Officer 2	133 500	150 000	150 000*
1 104	Accounting and Programme Assistant (50%)	60 000	75 000	75 000*
1200	Administrative Assistance			
1 201	Translators	3 000	3 000	3 000
1 202	Fund management controller	2 000	6 000	6 000
1 203	External Assistance	5 300	9 000	9 000
1300	Bank fees	2 400	1 500	1 500
1400	Hospitality	1 500	2 400	2 400
Administrative support				
1 501	Coordination Units	21 600	9 600	9 600
1 502	Secretariat staff travels	50 000	39 400	39 400
ACCOBAMS Strategy				
1 600	Evaluation and ACCOBAMS Strategy	0	0	0
Institutional Meetings				
2100	Meeting of the Parties	61 000	61 000	61 000
2200	Scientific Committee	49 000	49 000	49 000
2300	Bureau	32 000	25 000	25 000
2400	Meeting of National Representatives	21 000	15 000	15 000
2500	Follow-up Committee Meeting	5 000	5 000	5 000
Support to Conservation actions				
52	Human-cetacean interactions / Emergency situations	51 000	69 000	77 000 (including 8 000€ from remaining)
	Interactions with fisheries / aquaculture			
	Anthropogenic underwater noise			
	Ship strikes			
	Cetacean watching			
	Marine litter			
	Chemical & biological pollution			
	Climate change			
	Captivity related issues			
53	Habitats / Research and monitoring	133 000	56 400	97 000 (including 40 600€ from remaining)
	Cetacean population estimates and distribution			
	Population Structure			
	Monitoring cetaceans' status, including Species conservation plans			
	Functional stranding networks & responses to emergency situation			
	Area-based measures for cetacean conservation			
54	Information/ Communication/Public awareness	61 000	101 500	106 000 (including 4 500€ from remaining)
	NETCCOBAMS			
	Communication Strategy			
	Citizen Science			
	ACCOBAMS teaching Module			
	Promotion and dissemination			

* Increased amount due to the correction of miscalculated wages for the 2020-2022 period, and to the update foreseen on social charges for 2023-2025.

ANNEX 2
OVERVIEW OF EXPECTED INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2023-2025

Expected Income 2023-2025	
Expected total Remaining amounts as of 31/12/2022	380 000
<i>including the secured fund</i>	<i>18 800</i>
Available remaining amounts for 2023-2025 triennium	361 200
Ordinary contributions (OC) for 2023-2025 triennium	863 800
Voluntary contributions (VC) and external funds (EF)	0
Financial revenue	100
Host Country Contribution	636 000
TOTAL	1 861 100

Expected Expenditure 2023-2025	
General Management and Administrative support from OC budget	666 900
General management from remaining amounts	5 000
General management from external funds	-
Increase of the secured fund through remaining amounts	10 000
General Management from Host Country Contribution	636 000
Conservation actions from OC 2023-2025 triennium	196 000
Conservation actions from remaining amounts	346 100
Conservation actions from additional VC or EF	0
TOTAL	1 860 000

**ANNUAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF PARTIES TO THE ACCOBAMS TRUST FUND
2023-2025**

Parties	UN scale 2023-2025	ACCOBAMS Key 2023-2025	Ordinary Contributions (in euros) 2023-2025
Albania	0,008	0,80	2 304
Algeria	0,109	1,50	4 328
Bulgaria	0,056	0,80	2 304
Croatia	0,091	0,92	2 661
Cyprus	0,036	0,80	2 304
Egypt	0,139	1,42	4 086
France	4,318	23,16	66 712
Georgia	0,008	0,80	2 304
Greece	0,325	4,40	12 662
Italy	3,189	22,49	64 769
Lebanon	0,036	0,80	2 304
Libya	0,018	1,17	3 360
Malta	0,019	0,80	2 304
Monaco	0,011	0,80	2 304
Montenegro	0,004	0,80	2 304
Morocco	0,055	0,80	2 304
Portugal	0,353	3,66	10 538
Romania	0,312	1,72	4 947
Slovenia	0,079	0,80	2 304
Spain	2,134	19,70	56 732
Syrian Arab Republic	0,009	0,80	2 304
Tunisia	0,019	0,80	2 304
Türkiye	0,845	9,50	27 370
Ukraine	0,056	0,96	2 769
TOTAL		100	288 582

ANNEX 3
TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR ADMINISTRATION OF THE BUDGET

1. The terms of reference for administration of the budget of ACCOBAMS shall refer to the financial years beginning 1st January 2023 and ending 31st December 2025.
2. The budget shall be administered by the Executive Secretary according to these Terms of reference.
3. The financial resources of the budget shall originate from:
 - (a) Contributions from the Parties according to Annex 2, as well as contributions from new Parties, and
 - (b) Voluntary contributions from Parties, contributions from States not Party to the Agreement, other governmental, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organisations and other sources.
4. All contributions to the budget shall be paid in Euros.
5. With regard to contributions from States that become Parties after the beginning of the financial period, the initial contribution (from the first day of the third month after the deposit of the instrument of ratification, acceptance or accession, until the end of the financial period) shall be determined *pro rata* on the basis of the contributions of other Parties according to the adopted scale of assessments and depending on the remaining annual financial exercise.
6. Contributions by all Parties throughout the triennium 2023-2025 are calculated on the basis of the United Nations scale of assessments applicable for 2022, with the modifications needed to adapt it to the ACCOBAMS Parties.
7. The contributions are due on 1st January 2023, 1st January 2024 and 1st January 2025, and shall be paid into the following account:

<i>Account holder</i>	<i>Swift code</i>	<i>IBAN code</i>
ACCOBAMS	CFMOMCMX	MC 02 1273 9000 7001 0702 3000 M76

8. For convenience of the Parties to the Agreement, the Executive Secretary shall notify them as soon as possible regarding their calculated contributions for each year of the financial period.
9. Voluntary contributions received into the budget and not immediately required for financing activities shall be invested at the discretion of the Executive Secretary, in consultation with the Bureau, and any generated income shall be used to implement the Agreement.
10. The budget shall be audited by a fund management controller.
11. The budget estimates of income and expenditures for each calendar year of the financial period shall be prepared in Euros and submitted to the Meeting of the Parties to the Agreement.
12. The estimates for each calendar year covered by the financial period shall be divided into sections and objectives of expenditure, be specified according to budget lines, be consistent with the programmes of work to which they relate, and be accompanied by information as may be required by or on behalf of the contributors.

13. The proposed budget, including all necessary information, shall be dispatched by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat to all Parties at least 90 days before the date established for the opening of the Meeting of the Parties.
14. The budget shall be adopted by consensus at the Meeting of the Parties.
15. The ACCOBAMS Secretariat can, if needed, transfer funds up to 20% from one budget line of the approved budget, to another budget line within the same budget section. If the needed transfer of funds within the same budget section is higher than 20% of the budget line from which the transfer is made, the Secretariat shall request the authorization of the Bureau.
16. Should the ACCOBAMS Secretariat anticipate a shortfall in resources over the financial period, the ACCOBAMS Secretariat shall consult the Bureau about priorities for expenditure.
17. Commitments against the resources of the budget may only be made if they are covered by sufficient income.
18. No transfer of funds shall be authorized from the ordinary contributions of the Trust Fund to the Supplementary Conservation Fund.
19. A secured fund is created, equivalent to 30% of the administrative budget.
20. At the end of each calendar year of the financial period, the ACCOBAMS Secretariat shall submit the annual accounts to the Bureau. These shall include details of actual expenditures and comparisons with the original provisions for each budget line.
21. The ACCOBAMS Secretariat shall provide the Bureau an estimate of proposed expenditures for the coming year, and simultaneously, or as soon as possible, the communication of the accounts and reports referred to in the preceding paragraphs.
22. The ACCOBAMS Secretariat shall present the audited accounts for the financial exercises to the Meeting of the Parties.
23. The present terms of reference shall be implemented by the Executive Secretary.

ANNEX 4
GUIDELINES FOR ACCEPTING VOLUNTARY FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

1. General rules

No voluntary contribution, gift or donation for a specific purpose may be accepted if considered incompatible with the policies and aims of the Agreement, or the UNEP/CMS.

2. Approval of donors

2.1 Donors who are not governmental institutions of Parties or economic integration organizations or riparian States not Party to the Agreement, must be approved as such by the Bureau before their contributions are accepted by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat.

2.2 Sources known to have been involved in interests or activities which conflict with the aims of the Agreement or the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals and any organisation or individual who has deliberately brought, or might bring, the Agreement into public disrepute, shall be excluded. The same shall apply where there is a risk that a source might try to influence the decisions of any organ of the Agreement where, in the opinion of the Scientific Committee, this source has, or has had in the past, an environmentally unfriendly attitude.

3. Acceptance of Voluntary contributions

3.1 Voluntary contributions shall only be accepted when the purpose is consistent with the policies and aims of the Agreement.

3.2 No voluntary contributions shall have an immediate or ultimate financial liability for the Agreement Trust Fund without the prior consent of the Parties or the Bureau.

3.3 If indirect costs occur, in relation to administrative support of the activity implemented through a voluntary contribution, including financial and information resources management, and not included in the project budget targeted by the voluntary contribution, then the Secretariat can retain a percentage up to 4% of the dedicated voluntary contribution, up to 50.000 €, and of 7% for the dedicated voluntary contribution of more than 50.000 €. The Secretariat is asked to report on the application of this provision to the Bureau and to the Meeting of Parties.

3.4 All monetary contributions shall be paid in freely convertible currency; exceptions may, however, be made for special projects if the currency in question can effectively be used.

3.5. Voluntary contributions in kind may be accepted, provided that they are used to cover activities approved by the Meeting of the Parties. These may include, *inter alia*, direct or indirect involvement in a joint project, free office accommodation, equipment, or the secondment of staff.

ANNEX 5
ELIGIBILITY FOR FUNDING TO ATTEND MEETINGS OF THE ACCOBAMS PARTIES

Based on the scale of middle and low incomes of the World Bank in 2022, the ACCOBAMS Secretariat is authorised to cover, upon budget availability, travel and accommodation fees of the representatives of the following Parties for the Meetings of the Parties of ACCOBAMS (one delegate/Party):

- Albania
- Algeria
- Bulgaria
- Egypt
- Georgia
- Lebanon
- Libya (pending on settlement of unpaid pledges)
- Montenegro
- Morocco
- Romania
- Syrian Arab Republic (pending on settlement of unpaid pledges)
- Tunisia
- Türkiye
- Ukraine

ANNEX 6 - DRAFT PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR 2023-2025

MANAGEMENT OF THE AGREEMENT (MA)

MA1		INVOLVEMENT OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS							
MA1a		Strengthen involvement of all key stakeholders in ACCOBAMS's operations							
Expected outcomes									
Proposed Action(s)	Priority	Action led by and in cooperation with	Means of implementation	Total Budget (€)	OC 2023-2025	Funds secured (€)			Required additional VC/EF (€)
						OC 2020-2022	VC	EF	
Ensure ACCOBAMS institutional functioning / governance / process Strengthen involvement of all riparian Countries to encourage accession to the Agreement	Main	Secretariat, Parties, Non-Party Range States, Scientific Committee Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizing ACCOBAMS Institutional Meetings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meeting of the Parties - Scientific Committee Meetings - Bureau Meetings Inviting Observers, including riparian Countries Non-Parties, and relevant experts to ACCOBAMS Meetings Liaising with the Depositary to encourage accession to the Agreement of riparian states 	138 600 €	61 000 € LB 2100 49 000 € LB 2200 25 000 € LB 2300 3 600 € LB 1501				
Establish/strengthen partnerships and collaborations with all relevant IGOs, NGOs, and international/national entities Establish synergies with the European Union policies (MSFD, HD), Barcelona Convention, Bucharest Convention and other relevant Agreements and Organizations strategies	Main	Secretariat, Parties, Non-Party Range States, Scientific Committee Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing MoU with relevant IGOs, government bodies, scientific organizations, Universities, NGOs and relevant organizations. Participating in relevant Meetings, fora and WG Contributing to the development of relevant regional policies documents / reports Ensuring dialogue between regional Conventions to facilitate the reporting by Countries in the framework of other Conventions 	39 400 €	39 400 € LB1502				
Enforce communication within the ACCOBAMS community and strengthen exchanges of information on national and regional projects / activities / initiatives		Parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using NETCCOBAMS platform as sharing/consultation tool - Exchange of information on national reports and regional projects / activities / initiatives 	72 000 €	36 000 € LB54				36 000 €
Reinforce synergies with and between Partners		Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Considering new applications for ACCOBAMS Partnership Organizing meetings of ACCOBAMS Partners in order to share expertise/ knowledge / information Reviewing the ACCOBAMS Partners status 	10 000 €		5 000 € remaining LB54			5 000 €
TOTAL MA1a - Strengthen involvement of all key stakeholders in ACCOBAMS's operations				260 000 €	214 000 €	5 000 €	-	-	41 000 €

MA2	ENSURE ADEQUATE FUNDING, IN PARTICULARLY FOR CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES
MA2a	Mobilizing and diversifying funding sources

Expected outcomes

Proposed Action(s)	Priority	Action led by and in cooperation with	Means of implementation	Total Budget (€)	OC 2023-2025	Funds secured (€)			Required additional VC/EF (€)
						OC 2020-2022	VC	EF	
Fund projects under the Supplementary Conservation Fund (SCF) related to cetacean conservation	Main	Secretariat, Parties, Non-Party Range States, Scientific Committee Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launching a new ACCOBAMS call for proposals for projects related to cetacean conservation 	45 000 € New call under SCF					45 000 €
Diversify funding sources to develop projects /actions in line with ACCOBAMS priorities			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launching call for voluntary contributions Exploring and examining international funding opportunities for cetacean conservation projects in the framework of partnership with donors Developing proposal for a sponsorship program Organizing encounters with relevant potential donors Leveraging existing partnerships and collaborations with all IGOs, NGOs, and international/ national entities Securing national funds to be used as cofundings to support project proposals developed by national organizations 	<i>Budget from other actions</i>					
Strengthen national capacities in cetacean conservation project development and fundraising			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing information on funding opportunities Organizing training workshop for FPs and relevant national stakeholders on project development and fundraising 	30 000 €					30 000 €
TOTAL MA2a - Mobilizing and diversifying funding sources				75 000 €	-	-	-	-	75 000 €

MA3	IMPLEMENTATION OF AND COMPLIANCE WITH ACCOBAMS
MA3a	Improve the level of implementation of and compliance with ACCOBAMS Resolutions as well as the monitoring of its progress

Expected outcomes

Proposed Action(s)	Priority	Action led by and in cooperation with	Means of implementation	Total Budget (€)	OC 2023-2025	Funds secured (€)			Required additional VC/EF (€)
						OC 2020-2022	VC	EF	
Revise the ACCOBAMS Strategy (2018-2025) and propose a new one after evaluating overall Agreement's effectiveness	Main	Secretariat, Parties, Scientific Committee Partners, SRCUs, Non-Party Range States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluating the overall Agreement's effectiveness Preparing an ACCOBAMS Strategy (2026-2037) in collaboration with all ACCOBAMS bodies 	50 000 €	0 €				50 000 €
Reinforce the involvement of National Focal Points	Main	Secretariat, Parties, Non-Party Range States Scientific SRCUs, Committee Partners,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminating the guide on the role of the ACCOBAMS National Focal Point Providing regular update on the implementation of Resolutions by Parties Organising the Meeting of National Representatives with sub-regional meetings to develop the 2026-2028 Programme of Work by identifying actions related to cetacean conservation, according to national priorities 	21 000 €	15 000 € LB2400				6 000 €
Propose remedy actions in cases of non-follow-up with ACCOBAMS Resolutions and infringements	Main	Follow up Committee Secretariat, Parties, Scientific Committee Partners, SRCUs, Non-Party Range States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convening a Follow up Committee meeting Applying Follow up Procedures 	5 000 €	5 000 € LB 2500				
TOTAL MA3a- Improve the level of implementation of and compliance with ACCOBAMS Resolutions as well as the monitoring of its progress				76 000 €	20 000 €	-	-	-	56 000 €

MA4	ACCOBAMS EXTENSION AREA
MA4a	Ensure implementation of the ACCOBAMS's cetacean conservation standards in the adjacent areas

Expected outcomes

Proposed Action(s)	Priority	Action led by and in cooperation with	Means of implementation	Total Budget (€)	OC 2023-2025	Funds secured (€)			Required additional VC/EF (€)
						OC 2020-2022	VC	EF	
Promote the ratification of Amendment for geographical extension of the Agreement area to the Atlantic	Main	Secretariat Depositary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaising with the Depositary to encourage relevant national authorities to ratify the Amendment for geographical extension of the Agreement area to the Atlantic Providing all Focal Points with explanatory note on the Amendment Providing support to National Focal Points to solve problems regarding the ratification of the Amendment through the organisation of trilateral meetings between the National Focal Point, the Secretariat and an ACCOBAMS legal advisor 	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL MA4a - Ensure implementation of the ACCOBAMS's cetacean conservation standards in the adjacent areas				-	-	-	-	-	-

TOTAL MANAGEMENT OF THE AGREEMENT (MA)	Total Budget (€)	OC 2023-2025	Funds secured (€)			Required additional VC/EF (€)
			OC 2020-2022	VC	EF	
	411 000 €	234 000 €	5 000 €	-	-	172 000 €
TOTAL MANAGEMENT OF THE AGREEMENT (MA) including General Management & Administrative Support (432 900 €)	843 900 €	666 900 €	5 000 €	-	-	172 000 €

CONSERVATION ACTIONS (CA)

CA 1 a	Cetacean population estimates and distribution
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Expected outcomes	<p>Improved knowledge of cetacean populations in the ACCOBAMS Area</p> <p>Global distribution and abundance of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea and Black Seas established, based on results of surveys</p>
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Proposed Action(s)	Priority	Action led by and in cooperation with	Means of implementation	Total Budget (€)	OC 2023-2025	Funds secured (€)			Required additional VC/EF (€)
						OC 2020-2022	VC	EF	
Promote the implementation of the Long-Term Monitoring Programme, taking into consideration monitoring and reporting obligations of countries (MSFD, Barcelona Convention, Bucharest Convention)	Main	Scientific Committee Secretariat Parties, Non-Party Range States Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure funds for implementing ASI2, including by investigating the existence of possible funding at national / regional levels Development and implementation of a simulation framework to examine the performance of different future survey strategies (synoptic, regional/national) Undertaking synoptic basin-wide surveys in the ACCOBAMS Area with a focus on abundance and trends in 2024/2025 (ASI2) with the support of an ASI Contact Group to define the implementation conditions/protocol related to logistics (research platform, human means, equipment, training...) and administration (survey restrictions, permits,...), and of the SC to review and update as necessary the field and analytical protocols Promoting synchronization and standardization of existing monitoring efforts to contribute to LTMP purpose (coordination meetings at the sub-regional level, Working Group on cetaceans monitoring...) Collaborating with relevant organizations, such as the Barcelona Convention (EcAp-Med III), the Bucharest Convention and the European Commission (MSFD), 	<p style="text-align: center;">80 000 €</p> <p style="text-align: center;">15 000 €</p> <p style="text-align: center;">3 000 000 €¹¹</p> <p style="text-align: center;">30 000 €</p> <p style="text-align: center;">5 000 €</p>	18 000 € LB53	+ 2 000 €	80 000 € (savings from ASI)	30 000 € (ABIOMMED project)	3 000 000 €
Promote the use of ASI data by increasing the visibility of ASI (and future) datasets and related results and encourage further analyses	High	Scientific Committee Secretariat SRCUs Parties, Non-Party Range States Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing NETCCOBAMS functionalities to create a repository system for ASI data Promoting ASI data and results in relevant fora, also through the Special Issue in Frontiers of Marine Science Sharing ASI data following received requests in accordance with ASI Terms of use and archiving/monitoring of the requests 	<p style="text-align: center;">12 000 €</p> <p style="text-align: center;">20 000 €</p>	3 400 € LB53	+ 1 600 €	15 000 € VC Italy (LB 6602)		12 000 €

¹¹ As estimated in ACCOBAMS/MOP8/2022/Doc27

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collecting outputs of work and analysis conducted following ASI full dataset requests to be used by the SC to give best scientific advice 						
Promote data collection at sub-regional and national levels (in coherence with ACCOBAMS survey methodologies)	Main	Scientific Committee, Secretariat, Parties, Non-Party Range States, Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitating exchanges and coordination between Parties on sub-regional surveys Organizing training activities on monitoring methods/protocols and data analysis for smaller-scale surveys (at local, national and sub-regional levels) Develop handbooks on standardized monitoring methods (aerial surveys, boat-based surveys, acoustic surveys,...) Collaborating with relevant organizations, such as Barcelona Convention (EcAp-Med III), the Bucharest Convention and the European Commission (MSFD) 	50 000 €	5 000 € LB53				65 000 €
Promote data collection from multidisciplinary surveys (such as fisheries / acoustic surveys), innovative technologies (UAV, satellite) and of platforms of opportunity (ferries, whale watching vessels, navy vessels, etc..)	High	Scientific Committee Secretariat Parties, Non-Party Range States Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertaking activities in pilot areas to collect data using multidisciplinary surveys (such as fisheries / acoustic surveys), innovative technologies (UAV, satellite) and platforms of opportunity (ferries, whale watching vessels, navy vessels, etc..) based on recommendations of previous studies Initiating collaboration with existing regional fisheries surveys (MEDITS, MEDIAS) and relevant organizations such as GFCM and ICCAT Collaborate with relevant existing networks (FLT) and initiatives/projects (ex. CONCEPTU MARIS Life project) Organizing meetings/workshops to discuss possible synergies and shared methodology and data analysis Developing protocols on standardized monitoring methods for multidisciplinary surveys/ Ferries Update the "Guidelines for the Monitoring of the Range of Cetaceans, Abundance and Demographic Characteristics of Populations" Regularly review « Best Available Technologies » and assess potential contribution to LTMP 	55 000 €	10 000 € LB53	20 000 € Remaining LB53			50 000 €
TOTAL CA1a - Cetacean population estimates and distribution				3 312 000 €	36 400 €	23 600 €	95 000 €	30 000 €	3 127 000 €

CA 1 b		Population Structure							
Expected outcomes		<p>Improved knowledge on population structure in the ACCOBAMS Area and species conservation management plans completed</p> <p>Exchange of samples is facilitated for joint analysis</p> <p>Data exchange is facilitated for basin wide analysis</p>							
Proposed Action(s)	Priority	Action led by and in cooperation with	Means of implementation	Total Budget (€)	OC 2023-2025	Funds secured (€)			Required additional VC/EF (€)
						OC 2020-2022	VC	EF	
<p>Improve photo ID data collection and dissemination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Update and harmonize protocols on data collection for photo ID - Share photo ID data 	High	Scientific Committee Secretariat Parties, Non-Party Range States Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizing experts meeting for best practices guide on how to collect data for comparison • Organizing regional experts trainings on analysis on photo ID including AI (Artificial Intelligence)– draft ToR to facilitate exchanges or an harmonized relevant databases • Facilitating data sharing and the creation of large scale photo-id catalogues for in-depth analysis 	<p>10 000 €</p> <p>35 000 €</p>					45 000 €
<p>Improve data collection on cetacean populations genetic in the ACCOBAMS Area</p> <p>Development of genetical identification of population structure (particularly for Mediterranean), including e.g eDNA</p>	High	Scientific Committee Secretariat Parties, Non-Party Range States Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing and promoting a common protocol on data collection on cetacean populations genetic • Facilitating the creation of a general data-base/archive/inventory on existing samples/tissues in ACCOBAMS Area • Disseminating databases and guidelines to stakeholders • Facilitating analysis of existing tissue samples (including those from biopsies) to address questions on stock structure and genetic diversity • Organizing workshop about genetic population structure (including e-DNA) for marine mammals in the framework of international scientific events or meetings • Collaborating with relevant organizations (CITES, ABS Nagoya Protocol,...) 	<p>6 000 €</p> <p>30 000 €</p> <p>15 000 €</p>					51 000 €
TOTAL CA1b - Population Structure				96 000 €	-	-	-	-	96 000 €

CA 1 c		Monitoring cetaceans status							
Expected outcomes		<p>Regional conservation plans (Med and BS) for cetacean are promoted at the national level</p> <p>Relevant conservation management plans are developed and implemented</p> <p>National Action Plans are developed and implemented in several Countries</p>							
Proposed Action(s)	Priority	Action led by and in cooperation with	Means of implementation	Total Budget (€)	OC 2023-2025	Funds secured (€)			Required additional VC/EF (€)
						OC 2020-2022	VC	EF	
Support in implementing Regional Conservation Plans for cetaceans (in Black Sea and in Mediterranean Sea)	Main	SRCUs Parties Non-Party Range States Secretariat Scientific Committee, Partners,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting the BSC in the revision of the Regional Conservation Plan for cetacean in Black Sea, taking into consideration the IWC Conservation Management Plan. Supporting the SPA/RAC in the implementation of the Mediterranean Action Plan for Cetaceans adopted by Parties to the Barcelona Convention 	2 000 €	0	+ 2 000€			
Develop/ revise/ implement relevant Conservation Management Plans for cetacean species	Main	Scientific Committee Secretariat, Parties Non-Party Range States, Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizing Experts Workshop(s) to develop/ revise/ Conservation Management Plans for cetacean species, taking into account all national conservation plans Initiating focus on Black Sea with preliminary document Supporting the implementation of relevant actions of the approved Conservation Management Plans for cetacean species with emphasize of coordination actions and organization of stakeholders' workshop Starting the development of CMP for other Mediterranean species such as Cuvier's beaked whales and sperm whales Derived CMP actions are cross-cutting and considered in the framework of other specific activities 	80 000 €	0	+ 20 000 € 4 000 € Remaining LB53	5 000 € VC France (LB 6350) 4 000 € VC Monaco (LB 6900)		47 000 €
Facilitate the Development/ revision/ implementation of National Action Plans for cetaceans	High	Parties Non-Party Range States, Secretariat, SRCUs Scientific Committee, Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting the revision / development of National Action Plans for cetaceans in collaboration with SRCUs and national authorities, through participatory process involving all relevant organizations (NGOs, associations, national partners...) Establishment of national Working Groups or Councils in the framework of National Actions Plan 	7 000 €		5 000 € Remaining LB53	2 000 € VC Italy (LB 6600)		
TOTAL CA1c - Monitoring cetaceans status				89 000 €	0 €	31 000 €	11 000 €	-	47 000 €

CA 1 d		Functional stranding networks and responses to emergency situations							
Expected outcomes		Official National Stranding networks are established and operating Information on stranding events is regularly exchanged among national networks							
Proposed Action(s)	Priority	Action led by and in cooperation with	Means of implementation	Total Budget (€)	OC 2023-2025	Funds secured (€)			Required additional VC/EF (€)
						OC 2020-2022	VC	EF	
Set up /Reinforce official national stranding networks (with all national institutions concerned and relevant international agreements)	Main	Parties, Non-Party Range States, Scientific Committee, Secretariat, Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminating study on legal/institutional status of National stranding networks in order to assist experts in the establishment of official national stranding network when relevant Assistance in the preparation of a legislative framework to settle the national coordination network Organizing trainings on necropsies, response to live strandings and emergency situation in the ACCOBAMS Area, and on the use of relevant databases 	48 000 €	6 000 € LB 1501		3 000 € VC Italy (LB 6600)		39 000 €
Encourage collaboration among national networks of Parties	Main	Scientific Committee Secretariat Parties, Non-Party Range States Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminating the procedures on Best Practices on cetacean postmortem investigation and tissue sampling resulted from the harmonization process in ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS 	3 000 €	3 000 € LB53	+ 3 000€			5 000 €
Perpetuate mutualization of stranding protocols between Parties			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating Regional Task Force for stranding events (exchange photos/ advice / scientific explanations even in the field) including strandings of non-common species taking into account national legislations in order to support national network to deal with non-common events 	30 000 €	17 000 € LB53	5 000 € Remaining LB53			54 000 €
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing tele-necropsy in the ACCOBAMS Area (workshops and trainings) Entering relevant national data into relevant regional databases, such as MEDACES Supporting and financing of MEDACES Creating a network to exchange information on sampling through NETCCOBAMS Platform 	54 000 €					20 000 €
Communicate simply and efficiently on uncommon situations in the ACCOBAMS Area (Example of killer whales in 2019/2020)	High	Scientific Committee Secretariat Parties, Non-Party Range States Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of a task force for the management of uncommon situations, including monitoring of uncommon species in the ACCOBAMS Area, taking into account national legislations 	3 000 €	-				3 000 €
TOTAL CA1d - Functional stranding networks and responses to emergency situations				158 000 €	26 000 €	8 000 €	3 000 €	-	121 000 €

CA 2 a		Interactions with fisheries / aquaculture								
Expected outcomes		Impacts of cetaceans' bycatch and depredation are assessed and reduced								
		Ecotourism activities (whale watching and pescatourism) are proposed as an alternative income source to fishermen impacted by depredation								
Proposed Action(s)	Priority	Action led by and in cooperation with	Means of implementation	Total Budget (€)	OC 2023-2025	Funds secured (€)			Required additional VC/EF (€)	
						OC	VC	EF		
Support countries in monitoring and mitigating depredation and bycatch situations, with urgent focus on harbour porpoise bycatch in the Black Sea	Main	Secretariat, Parties, Scientific Committee (JBWG), Non-Party Range States, Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving data collection on interactions with fisheries (implementation of on-board observers programs and port questionnaires...) and testing mitigation measures Sharing experience and results, including from past projects on interactions with fisheries (workshops, field visits...) Investigating the use of stranding data to assess bycatch mortality (using drifting models) Collaborating with relevant entities, in particular with GFCM, EC (DG MARE and DG Environment), Barcelona Convention (EcAp-Med III project) and IWC BMI Establishing an Emergency Task Force with EC, GFCM and BSC to address the porpoise bycatch critical issue in the Black Sea 	600 000 € 15 000 € 30 000 € 10 000 € 15 000 €	18 000 € LB52	+ 2 000 €				650 000 €
Provide support to Parties to promote the development of ecotourism activities as an alternative income to fishers (pescatourism and whale watching)	High	Secretariat, Parties Scientific Committee, Non-Party Range States, Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting the development of sustainable ecotourism activities in pilot sites Considering socio-economic aspects of alternative solutions 	100 000 €						100 000 €
TOTAL CA2a - Interactions with fisheries / aquaculture				770 000 €	18 000 €	2 000 €	-	-	-	750 000 €

CA 2 b	Anthropogenic underwater noise
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Expected outcomes	Main anthropogenic activities generating underwater noise are monitored in the ACCOBAMS Area Use of mitigation measures for anthropogenic activities generating underwater noise
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Proposed Action(s)	Priority	Action led by and in cooperation with	Means of implementation	Total Budget (€)	OC 2023-2025	Funds secured (€)			Required additional VC/EF (€)
						OC 2020 - 2022	VC	EF	
Encourage the monitoring of anthropogenic activities generating underwater noise	Main	Scientific Committee including through the JNWG Secretariat, Parties Non-Party Range States, Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raising awareness amongst countries by organizing an awareness & consultation workshop at national level with different stakeholders, especially at ministerial level, Involving different national stakeholders (coordination by National Focal Points) and identify an entity that can centralize information at the national level, Inviting 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, Organizing trainings for national entities on noise monitoring (CB), including analyses of PAM collected data in some identified priority areas, Taking into consideration work achieved and advices provided by the JNWG, Managing the regional noise register, Feeding data on impulsive noise generating sources from the entire ACCOBAMS Area into the existing International Noise Registry managed by ACCOBAMS, Providing necessary data to update risk maps and generate maps for the Black Sea by considering relevant target species, Reviewing the Noise Hotspots Report II, Revising and updating the ACCOBAMS Guidelines on underwater noise taking into account outcomes from recent projects, Producing a study on the effects of underwater noise generated by the foreseeable increase of wind farms in the ACCOBAMS Area, Developing cooperation on underwater noise issue with other international Organizations, such as Barcelona Convention (ECAP) and EU (MSFD) and collaboration with other regional projects on noise issues 	<p>15 000 €</p> <p>30 000 €</p> <p>8 000 €</p> <p>60 000 €</p> <p>8 000 €</p> <p>15 000 €</p> <p>6 000 €</p>	20 000 € LB52	+ 2 000 € 6 000 € Remaining LB52	5 000 € VC Malta (LB 6356) 4 000 € VC Monaco (LB 6900)		105 000 €

Encourage the use of mitigation measures for anthropogenic activities generating underwater noise	Main	Scientific Committee including through the JNWG Secretariat, Parties Non-Party Range States, Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving enhanced training of regulators on the appropriate application of the CMS Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and ACCOBAMS Noise Guidelines Producing common minimum requirements for appropriate national legislation and other regulations regarding underwater noise impacts on cetacean Promoting the ACCOBAMS Highly qualified MMO/PAM operators' certificate Supporting the development and update of the ACCOBAMS HQMMO/PAM training tools Granting the status of ACCOBAMS HQMMO Partners to entities for the implementation of the Highly qualified MMO/PAM operators' certificate Revising and updating the ACCOBAMS "Guide for Parties to use mitigation measures " Developing joint project/initiatives for simulating mitigation measures such as speed reduction and related benefits Developing cooperation on underwater noise issues with other International Organizations 	18 000 €	6 000 € LB52				12 000 €
Exchange of relevant information with competent authorities before military activities / exercises	High	Scientific Committee including through the JNWG Secretariat, Parties Non-Party Range States, Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular information letter from the Secretariat to NATO and to national Navy forces to raise attention of impacts on noise on cetaceans and to propose mitigation measures Workshop/meeting with national Navy forces and NATO members 	15 000 €					15 000 €
TOTAL CA2b - Anthropogenic underwater noise				175 000 €	26 000 €	8 000 €	9 000 €	-	132 000 €

CA 2 c		Ship strikes							
Expected outcomes		Reduction of ship strikes in high risk areas							
Proposed Action(s)	Priority	Action led by and in cooperation with	Means of implementation	Total Budget (€)	OC 2023-2025	Funds secured (€)			Required additional VC/EF (€)
						OC 2020- 2022	VC	EF	
Monitor / assess high-risk areas for ship strikes (CCH) in the Mediterranean Sea and adjacent Atlantic Area	High	Scientific Committee Secretariat, Parties, Non-Party Range States, Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraging the entry of ship strikes data in relevant databases such as the IWC central database on ship strikes Improving protocols for the identification of ship strikes via necropsies in collaboration with the Pelagos Agreement Identifying high risk areas for ship strikes (CCH) by encouraging studies that improve understanding of temporal and spatial distribution of shipping and of cetaceans (IMMAs), and supporting interactive map of areas with high risk of ship strikes for crews of relevant ships Developing cooperation on ships strike issue with other International Organizations, such IWC, EMSA (EU) / REMPEC / IMO/ Pelagos Agreement and contributing in any other relevant initiatives, projects and workshops in the ACCOBAMS Area Follow and assist Parties in the PSSA project process in collaboration with the Permanent Secretariat of the Pelagos Agreement 	4 000 € 30 000 € 4 000 €	8 000 € LB52				30 000 €
Promote the use of mitigation measures	High	Secretariat, Scientific Committee Parties, Non-Party Range States, Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening cooperation between countries that share marine areas with high risk of collision for cetaceans in order to develop a joint and coherent management for these areas Fostering the development of incentive systems to shipping companies adopting suggested mitigation measures Supporting national or regional projects in order to reduce the risk of collision (FLT network / REPCET system...) Evaluation the efficiency of implemented or proposed new mitigation measures 	8 000 €	0 €	+ 4 000 € 2 000 € Remaining LB52			2 000 €
TOTAL CA2c - Ship strikes				46 000 €	8 000 €	6 000 €	-	-	32 000 €

CA 2 d		Cetacean watching							
Expected outcomes		Cetacean watching activities are properly conducted in the ACCOBAMS Area							
Proposed Action(s)	Priority	Action led by and in cooperation with	Means of implementation	Total Budget (€)	OC 2023-2025	Funds secured (€)			Required additional VC/EF (€)
						OC 2020-2022	VC	EF	
Monitoring status of whale watching activities in the ACCOBAMS Area and their potential adverse impacts on individual cetaceans and on populations	High	Scientific Committee through the WWWG, Parties, Secretariat Non-Party Range States, Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revising the Guidelines for commercial cetacean-watching in the ACCOBAMS Area Analysis of existing national legislations related to whale watching regulation Implementing a pilot study to define the whale watching 'carrying capacity' in a targeted geographical area where commercial whale watching is intensively practiced Collaborating with relevant organizations, such as IWC and Pelagos Agreement 	5 000 € 5 000 € 150 000 €		10 000 € Remaining LB52			150 000 €
Promote the use of whale watching vessels as platforms of opportunity	High	Scientific Committee through the WWWG, Parties, Secretariat Non-Party Range States, Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing and updating the data collection form for commercial whale watching vessels and test the revised common procedure for whale watching activity in identified pilot areas (e.g. the Ligurian-Provençal Basin, including the Pelagos Sanctuary, Gibraltar Strait, and south Portugal) Organizing photo-ID and data collection training for whale watching operators, with the final goal of sharing the collected data 	50 000 €					50 000 €
Support the implementation of the HQWW certificate in the ACCOBAMS Area	High	Secretariat, Partners Parties Non-Party Range States, Scientific Committee SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting the implementation of the HQWW certificate by Parties and in areas -based management measures in collaboration with relevant projects/ organizations Organizing Trainings on HQWW (CB Parties) Liaising with relevant tourism Organizations 	5 000 €		2 000 € Remaining LB 52			3 000 €
TOTAL CA2d - Cetacean watching				215 000 €	-	12 000 €			203 000 €

CA 2 e	Marine litter
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Expected outcomes	Improved monitoring of marine litter in relation with cetaceans.
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Proposed Action(s)	Priority	Action led by and in cooperation with	Means of implementation	Total Budget (€)	OC 2023-2025	Funds secured (€)			Required additional VC/EF (€)
						OC 2020-2022	VC	EF	
Monitor the impacts of marine litter (ingested marine litter / microplastics / entanglements in ghost nets) on cetaceans	High	Scientific Committee Secretariat, Parties Non-Party Range States, Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting pilot actions to implement the best practice guidelines for cetacean <i>post-mortem</i> investigation, including the assessment of ingested marine litter and entanglement in ghost nets 	50 000 €	17 000 € LB52		16 000 € VC Italy (LB 6600)		82 000 €
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting/ supporting/ liaising with projects, research activities in order to develop standardized methods to detect the occurrence and effects of marine litter, including micro-plastics, in cetacean species 	10 000 €					
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying hot-spot areas for marine litter accumulation and identifying threat to cetacean species occurring in those areas 	30 000 €					
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing a proposal to use cetacean species as indicators of marine litter in the ACCOBAMS Area 	10 000 €					
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborating with relevant Organizations (ASCOBANS, IWC, MEDPOL, IMO, FAO) including through joint activities Promoting campaigns on the ban of single-use plastics 	15 000 €					
TOTAL CA2e – Marine litter				115 000 €	17 000 €	-	16 000 €	-	82 000 €

CA 2 f	Chemical & biological pollution
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Expected outcomes	Improved monitoring of chemical & biological pollution on cetaceans.
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Proposed Action(s)	Priority	Action led by and in cooperation with	Means of implementation	Total Budget (€)	OC 2023-2025	Funds secured (€)			Required additional VC/EF (€)
						OC 2020-2022	VC	EF	
Monitor the impact of chemical & biological pollution (such as pathogens, invasive species) on cetaceans	Medium	Scientific Committee Secretariat, Parties Non-Party Range States, Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing an inventory of institutions or laboratories within the ACCOBAMS Area able to analyze samples for legacy and emerging pollutants Establishing a common database on diseases and chemical burdens 	5 000 €			10 000 € VC Italy (LB 6601)		40 000 €
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessing cumulative effects and multiple stressors, including chemicals, marine litter, climate change, and emerging pathogens, on cetaceans in ACCOBAMS Area 	25 000 €					
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminating the best practices to assess the impact of chemical pollution on cetaceans with a focus on emerging contaminants Organize training on the best practices to assess the impact of chemical pollution 	20 000 €					

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborating with relevant Organizations, initiatives and projects • Encouraging Parties to follow existing protocols to minimize the introduction of pollutants in the marine environment 						
TOTAL CA2f - Chemical & biological pollution				50 000 €	-	-	10 000 €	-	40 000 €

CA 2 g	Climate change
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Expected outcomes	ACCOBAMS cooperates with regional initiatives on climate change, taking into account cetacean conservation
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Proposed Action(s)	Priority	Action led by and in cooperation with	Means of implementation	Total Budget (€)	OC 2023-2025	Funds secured (€)			Required additional VC/EF (€)
						OC 2020- 2022	VC	EF	
Contribute to regional initiatives on climate change	Medium	Scientific Committee Secretariat, Parties Non-Party Range States, Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaising with relevant CMS Working Group • Participating in Meetings and side events 	2 000 €					2 000 €
Total CA2g - Climate change				2 000 €	-	-	-	-	2 000 €

CA 2 i	Captivity related issues
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Expected outcomes	All specimens held in captivity in the ACCOBAMS Area are listed Advisory Committee on captivity issues and semi-enclosed facilities is operational
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Proposed Action(s)	Priority	Action led by and in cooperation with	Means of implementation	Total Budget (€)	OC 2023-2025	Funds secured (€)			Required additional VC/EF (€)
						OC 2020- 2022	VC	EF	
Identify specimens held in captivity in the ACCOBAMS Area	High	Scientific Committee Parties Non-Party Range States, Secretariat Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing an ACCOBAMS Advisory Committee on semi-enclosed facilities that should provide guidance, based on best scientific evidence, to interested Parties on all the questions related to semi-enclosed facilities for cetaceans on the basis of the conclusion of the Follow-up Committee related to “interactions between humans and dolphins by resolution 3.13 (dolphin interaction programme) • Updating the overview of specimens held in captivity in the ACCOBAMS Area in collaboration with international organizations (such as CITES) • Reinforcing collaboration with NFP / NGO/ ACCOBAMS Partners / CITES authorities in each country • Developing a template of genetic passport for different cetacean species kept in captivity, in collaboration with the ACCOBAMS Advisory Committee on Captivity related issues 	15 000 €			15 000 € CV Italy (LB 6602)		
TOTAL CA2i - Captivity related issues				15 000 €	-	-	15 000 €	-	0 €

CA 3 a		Area-based measures for cetacean conservation							
Expected outcomes		Cetacean Critical Habitats are updated IMMAs are updated and new ones are identified Implementation of relevant measures are initiated in some pilot Cetacean Critical Habitats							
Proposed Action(s)	Priority	Action led by and in cooperation with	Means of implementation	Total Budget (€)	OC 2023-2025	Funds secured (€)			Required additional VC/EF (€)
						OC 2020- 2022	VC	EF	
Regularly update Cetacean Critical Habitats (CCH) and Important Marine mammal Areas (IMMAs), as appropriate, including by identifying priority areas for action to mitigate the known threats (bycatch...) / area-based management measures	Main	Scientific Committee Secretariat, Parties Non-Party Range States, Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gathering data, in particular through the organization of regional workshops to update CCH, taking into account IMMAs and EBSAs process) Gathering data on human activities and cetaceans, in particular through the organization of regional workshops with relevant regional organization (GFCM, maritime organization...), taking into account the IMMAs and EBSAs process and upcoming regional study from Duke Marine Lab. Launching a working group in order to review the best metrics to use considering the CCH aim 	36 000 €	-	28 000 € remaining LB53			8 000 €
Support implementation of relevant measures for adequate management in CCH	Main	Scientific Committee Secretariat, Parties Non-Party Range States, Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying and promoting relevant management measures in pilot CCH, in collaboration with all stakeholders, including network of MPAs managers Raising Parties' awareness on CCHs, on their added value during online workshops, on the use of existing IMMAs to identify and to declare new MPAs or MPAs network Collaborating with other Organizations, such as UNEP-MAP/ SPA-RAC, BSC, IMO, IWC, and GFCM, and in particular through the Strategical alliance 	26 000 €	0 €	+ 14 000 € 2 000 € Remaining LB53			10 000 €
TOTAL CA3a - Area-based measures for cetacean conservation				62 000 €	0 €	44 000 €	-	-	18 000 €

CA 4 a		Information /Communication / Awareness about cetaceans							
Expected outcomes		All ACCOBAMS Bodies, national focal/contact points, Partners and other relevant national institutions, Organizations and experts are familiar with activities implemented by or relevant for ACCOBAMS and share accurately information General public and other relevant stakeholders are aware about cetaceans and need for their conservation through activities supported by or linked to ACCOBAMS							
Proposed Action(s)	Priority	Action led by and in cooperation with	Means of implementation	Total Budget (€)	OC 2023-2025	Funds secured (€)			Required additional VC/EF (€)
						OC 2020- 2022	VC	EF	
Maintain regular information/ communication about ongoing activities, cooperation and funding possibilities, cetacean conservation scientists and experts operating in the region and other relevant information; facilitate communication among cetacean conservation actors of the ACCOBAMS Area, in particular in Southern Mediterranean countries	Main	Secretariat Parties Scientific Committee Non-Party Range States, Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing the ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy, in particular: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - defining ACCOBAMS as brand - upgrading communication products - improving presence on social networks - assessing the effectiveness of the Communication Strategy Development of NETCCOBAMS Platform (MA1a) Promoting the use of the HQWW label (CA2d) Linking conservation with culture (UNESCO/ Ocean decade) by initiating joint natural history exhibitions and offering expertise and knowledge 	61 000 € 60 000 € 26 500 5 000 €	60 000 € LB54	8 000 € Remaining LB54			84 500 €
Promote citizen sciences uses		Secretariat Parties Scientific Committee Non-Party Range States, Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview of initiatives and tools already in place / in order to mutualize efforts in particular at the level of young people Workshop on how to collect data and data exchanges through citizen apps (standardization of the protocols and methodology for data collection) in the context of proposed analytical techniques 	21 000 €					21 000 €
Introduce in a new Country / Disseminate the ACCOBAMS Teaching Module courses		Secretariat Parties Scientific Committee Non-Party Range States, Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introducing new teaching module in universities dealing with cetacean conservation Translation of the Teaching Module on national languages of ACCOBAMS Parties 	30 000 €			10 000 € CV Italy (LB 6602)		20 000 €
Promote and disseminate project results and tools		Secretariat Parties Scientific Committee Non-Party Range States, Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizing a Conference on cetacean conservation in South Mediterranean Countries - CSMC Disseminating projects tools such as “whale risk” Special ACCOBAMS issue in a scientific review Encouraging publications of national experts in international journal with handbooks with simple and standardized methods and specific trainings and workshops 	40 000 € 20 000 € 6 000 €	5 500 € LB54	+ 4 500 €			56 000 €
TOTAL CA4a - Information /Communication / Awareness about cetaceans				269 500 €	65 500 €	12 500 €	10 000 €	-	181 500 €

TOTAL CONSERVATION ACTIONS (CA)	Total Budget (€)	OC 2023-2025	Funds secured (€)			Required additional VC/EF (€)
			OC 2020-2022	VC	EF	
	5 373 500 €	196 900 €	+ 55 100 € 92 000 €	169 000 €	30 000 €	4 831 500 €

TOTAL BUDGET (MA + CA)	Total Budget (€)	OC 2023-2025	Funds secured (€)			Required additional VC/EF (€)
			OC 2020-2022	VC	EF	
	6 217 400 €	863 800 €	152 100€	169 000 €	30 000 €	5 002 500 €

RESOLUTION 8.3
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,

Considering that it is appropriate to amend the Annex to Resolution 7.7 (Rules of the Scientific Committee), in particular to align the Scientific Committee Rules of Procedures to international standards,

Commending the participation in the Scientific Committee of the Regional representatives and experts 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 increasing the number of Regional Representatives,

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. *Appoints* the experts nominated by CIESM and IUCN for the period 2023-2025, as follows:

- **CIESM:**

- Loriane MENDEZ,
- Ayaka Amaha OZTÜRK,
- Simone PANIGADA.

- **IUCN:**

- Rimmel BEN MESSAOUD,
- Léa DAVID,
- Cristina FOSSI,
- Simone PANIGADA.

2. *Asks* the Scientific Committee to appoint, at its first Meeting of the triennium, a Chair and a Vice-Chair, as well as "Task Managers";

3. *Recommends* that the new Chair and Vice-Chair of the Scientific Committee are not experts nominated by the same Organization and that gender and geographical balance are also considered;

4. *Invites* the outgoing Chair and Vice-Chair to assist the Secretariat in the preparation of the 15th Meeting of the Scientific Committee;
5. *Appoints* regional representatives, up to three members per sub region, as follows:
 - Souad LAMOUTI, Giancarlo LAURIANO and Mohamed Naoufal TAMSOURI, representing the Western Mediterranean and contiguous Atlantic area,
 - Drasko HOLCER, Caterina FORTUNA and Tilen GENOV, representing the Central Mediterranean,
 - Celine MAHFOUZ, representing the Eastern Mediterranean,
 - Dimitar POPOV and Mehmet Arda TONAY, representing the Black Sea;
6. *Requests* the Bureau to examine any additional candidate for the Scientific Committee Regional Representatives, in order to fill the vacant positions in the relevant sub-regions, before the next Scientific Committee meeting;
7. *Appreciates* the offer by Italy to provide for the triennium 2023-2025, and on an experimental basis, a voluntary contribution to cover the expenses of participation to the Scientific Committee meetings of up to 8 regional representatives from eligible Countries,
8. *Appoints* the representatives nominated by CMS, and IWC for the period 2023-2025, as follows:
 - Mark SIMMONDS, representing the Scientific Council of the CMS,
 - Greg DONOVAN, representing the Scientific Committee of the IWC;
9. *Thanks* CIESM, CMS, IUCN and IWC for bearing the financial responsibility for their experts' participation;
10. *Decides* to amend the Rules of procedure of the Scientific Committee, as [annexed](#) to this Resolution,
11. *Agrees* that the present Resolution replaces Resolution 7.7.

ANNEX - RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

GENERAL FUNCTIONS

Article 1

1. The Scientific Committee, established in accordance with Article VII of the Agreement, provides scientific advice and information to the Meeting of the Parties or to the Parties through the Secretariat.
2. The functions of the Scientific Committee are defined in Article VII, paragraph 3, of the Agreement.

COMPOSITION

Article 2

1. The Scientific Committee shall consist in principle of the following members, namely:
 - Three experts proposed by CIESM;
 - Three experts proposed by IUCN;
 - Up to three representatives for each Region defined in the Appendix, appointed by the Meeting of the Parties;
 - One representative from the Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and one representative the Scientific Council of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS).
2. The above organisations may propose to support more than three experts. In this case, such offer will be examined by the Bureau, which will notify it to the Parties 120 days before the Meeting of the Parties, with its recommendation. If no objections to the Bureau recommendation arise in the following 30 days, the offer will be considered accepted, pending the final designation of all experts by the Meeting of the Parties.
3. The Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Scientific Committee are elected by the members of the Scientific Committee, at the first Meeting of the triennium, among all designated experts.
4. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Scientific Committee shall not be experts nominated by the same Organization. Gender, geographical balance, and alternation in all roles of the Scientific Committee should be considered.
5. Additional members of the Scientific Committee may be designated by the Parties on a voluntary basis. The cost of their participation to the meetings of the Scientific Committee shall not be covered by the Agreement's funds.

SELECTION OF THE MEMBERS AND TERMS OF OFFICE

Article 3

1. The selection of the Scientific Committee members must take into consideration the following criteria, finalized by the Extended Bureau in accordance with the Work Programme proposed to the Parties:
 - a) To be experts in one or more fields relevant to cetacean conservation science;
 - b) To possess an appropriate level of quality, relevance, productivity and originality in activities related to cetacean conservation and research, as demonstrated through scientific publications and technical reports, communications to conferences, participation in working groups or committees at national or international levels;

- c) To be available to participate in the work of the Scientific Committee, attend its meetings and contribute to the working groups, with the required continuity;
 - d) To be proficient in one of the Agreement's two working languages (English and French) and have a sufficient knowledge of the other.
2. All criteria above will be ascertained through the evaluation of their *curricula vitae*. An evaluation by the Scientific Committee Chair and Vice-Chair will also be submitted to the Meeting of the Parties.
 3. The qualified experts proposed by the CIESM and IUCN are nominated in close consultation with the Bureau, who reports on the outcome of these consultations to the Meeting of the Parties.
 4. The priorities set up in the Work Programme for each triennium, as well as the need to ensure a balanced geographical representation, shall be taken into account in selecting the members of the Scientific Committee by the Meeting of the Parties.
 5. At its first Meeting, four "Task Managers" are designated by the Scientific Committee among its members. As far as necessary, these appointments can be modified during the triennium upon decision of the Chair of the Scientific Committee in consultation with the Vice-Chair and the Bureau.

Article 4

1. The terms of office of the members shall expire at the closure of the ordinary Meeting of the Parties following the one at which they were appointed.
2. Starting from 2025, all leading roles (i.e.: Chair, Vice-Chair and Task Managers) will have a maximum of two consecutive terms.

MEETINGS

Article 5

1. The Chair shall preside over the meetings of the Scientific Committee, prepare the provisional agenda in consultation with the Secretariat, and liaise with members between meetings of the Committee. The Chair may represent the Committee as required and carry out other functions as may be delegated to him/her by the Committee, within the limits of the Committee functions.
2. The Vice-Chair shall assist the Chair. He/she shall preside at meetings of the Scientific Committee in the absence of, or in the event of the Chair being unable to act. He/she shall on those occasions exercise the powers and duties prescribed for the Chair.
3. At its first meeting after the Meeting of Parties, the Scientific Committee shall assign specific topics for each Task Manager taking into account the priorities set up in the Work Programme for the triennium. Each Task Manager, in addition to his/her role as member of the Scientific Committee, shall coordinate the works of the Scientific Committee concerning the topics that he/she has been assigned by the Scientific Committee. Each Task Manager shall provide a report to the meetings of the Scientific Committee on the topics he/she is in charge of.
4. Regional representatives of each region shall work together to provide a report to the meetings of the Scientific

Committee on the conservation status of cetaceans and relevant activities in the region he/she has the responsibility of.

Article 6

1. The Scientific Committee may establish *ad hoc* working groups as needed to deal with specific tasks. It shall define the terms of reference and composition of each working group.
2. The meetings of the working groups shall be held, where possible, in conjunction with other events or intersessionally via remote tools.
3. The Scientific Committee may consider reports from other relevant meetings and working groups established under the Agreement, when necessary.
4. These Rules shall apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to the meetings of working groups.

Article 7

1. The Chair may decide to invite other experts, including experts in legal and socio-economic matters, to attend meetings (in person or remotely) as observers, with no additional cost for the Trust Fund, as deemed necessary. If their participation requires funding from ACCOBAMS, the Bureau will decide on their attendance, in consultation with the Secretariat.
2. ACCOBAMS Partners may participate as observers to the Meeting of the Scientific Committee.

Article 8

1. Notices of meetings, including date and venue, shall be sent to all Parties, to the members of the Scientific Committee and to ACCOBAMS Partners, by the Secretariat at least 45 days in advance and, in the case of extraordinary meetings, at least 14 days in advance.
2. The Secretariat of the Agreement, with the support of the Sub-Regional Coordination Units, shall undertake secretarial tasks during the meetings of the Scientific Committee and of its working groups and shall provide administrative and logistical support.
3. A report of each Meeting shall be prepared by the Secretariat as soon as possible and shall be communicated to all members and observers of the Scientific Committee, to all Parties and ACCOBAMS Partners.
4. The report shall be posted on the ACCOBAMS website.

Article 9

1. Recommendations by the Scientific Committee shall be adopted by consensus.
2. If consensus cannot be reached regarding an issue, all positions expressed about it during the meeting shall be included in the meeting report.

Article 10

1. The Meeting of the Scientific Committee shall be convened once a year during the first two years of the triennium

by the Secretariat of the Agreement in consultation with the Chair.

2. Extraordinary meetings may be convened if the Bureau so agrees.

COMMUNICATION PROCEDURE

Article 11

1. In application of Article II, paragraph 2, of the Agreement, when a Party asks for advice on exceptions to the prohibition on deliberate taking of cetaceans, the Secretariat shall immediately communicate the request to the Chair and to the members of the Scientific Committee for advice.
2. Within 30 days, the Chair takes a decision on the request also on the basis of the advice received from the other members of the Scientific Committee and communicates it to the Secretariat for immediate communication to the requesting Party.

Article 12

1. Between sessions, any member of the Scientific Committee or the Sub-Regional Coordination Units, through the Secretariat, or the Secretariat directly, may submit a written proposal to the Chair for a decision within the limits of the functions of the Scientific Committee.
2. The Chair shall forward the proposal to the Scientific Committee members. Comments shall be submitted within 30 days from the date of that communication to all members of the Scientific Committee and to the Secretariat.
3. If no comments nor objections on a proposal are received from a member of the Scientific Committee, the proposal shall be considered as adopted. Its adoption shall be notified to those who have made the proposal. If any member of the Scientific Committee objects to a proposal within the deadline, the proposal shall be referred to the next meeting of the Scientific Committee.

Article 13

When, in the opinion of the Scientific Committee, an emergency arises, requiring the adoption of immediate measures to avoid deterioration of the conservation status of one or more cetacean species, the Chair may ask the Secretariat to contact the relevant Parties urgently.

WORKING LANGUAGES

Article 14

1. The working languages of the Scientific Committee shall be English and French.
2. Simultaneous translation in English and French may be provided for the plenary sessions of the meetings of the Scientific Committee if funding is available.
3. Working documents shall be made available in English or in French and may be translated if funding is available.

REPORT

Article 15

The Chair of the Scientific Committee shall submit to each ordinary Meeting of the Parties and to each meeting of the Bureau a written report on the Scientific Committee's work since the previous ordinary Meeting of the Parties.

FINAL PROVISIONS

Article 16

These Rules shall apply immediately upon their adoption by the Parties.

Article 17

These Rules may be amended as required by a decision of the Meeting of the Parties.

Appendix

Article 1

In order to ensure a balanced geographical representation in the Scientific Committee, the geographical scope of the Agreement is divided into four regions.

Article 2

For the purpose of facilitating Scientific Committee members' nomination, the regional distribution of Parties is as follows:

Region	Parties
Western Mediterranean and contiguous Atlantic area	Algeria, France, Italy, Monaco, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia
Central Mediterranean	Albania, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Libya, Malta, Montenegro, Slovenia, Tunisia
Eastern Mediterranean	Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, Lebanon, Syria, Türkiye
Black Sea	Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Türkiye, Ukraine

RESOLUTION 8.4
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 as 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 non-governmental 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 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 National 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

Letters of support are an important part of a project funding application process. They demonstrate the credibility of the applicant, their credentials, and the reasons why the project proposal is best fit for the funding.

Aim

The procedure is aimed at ensuring that project proposals supported by ACCOBAMS through a support letter from the Secretariat are in line with ACCOBAMS' provisions and priorities and are technically and scientifically relevant.

Procedure

Any request for an ACCOBAMS support letter should proceed as follows:

- 1) The applicant provides a summary document (3 pages maximum) to the ACCOBAMS Secretariat on the project proposal, with at least the following information on the project:
 - a. Objectives of the project and activities foreseen, with a brief statement as to how they relate to ACCOBAMS objectives and priorities;
 - b. Methodology and a brief statement that it follows any relevant guidelines and/or best practice adopted within the framework of ACCOBAMS;
 - c. Information on the applicant and other project partners (if any);
 - d. Expected outputs and a statement that they will be provided, within a reasonable timeframe, as information (e.g. as project report) to the Scientific Committee of ACCOBAMS and data logged in relevant databases, if applicable;
 - e. Time frame.
- 2) The Secretariat assesses if the project proposal is in line with the ACCOBAMS provisions and priorities identified both in the ACCOBAMS Strategy and ACCOBAMS Programme of Work.
- 3) If that is the case, the summary document is sent to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Scientific Committee for their confirmation on the technical and scientific relevance of the project proposal. In case of conflict of interest (if the Chair or Vice-Chair is involved in a project proposal to be submitted under the same call for proposal, for example), another member of the Scientific Committee should be consulted, preferably a Task Manager of relevance to the project main topics.
- 4) If the project proposal is considered to be technically and scientifically relevant, the Secretariat elaborates a letter of support to the project and sends it over to the applicant.
- 5) In case the conditions foreseen in this procedure are not fulfilled, the applicant will be accordingly informed by the Secretariat that no letter of support will be provided.
- 6) Applicants receiving a letter of support should inform the Secretariat on the outcome of the funding application process.

RESOLUTION 8.5
PROCEDURE FOR THE ACCOBAMS CALLS FOR PROPOSALS FOR PROJECTS TO BE FUNDED UNDER THE
SUPPLEMENTARY CONSERVATION GRANTS FUND

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 IX, paragraph 3, of the Agreement, which provides that “the Meeting of the Parties may establish a supplementary conservation fund from voluntary contributions of Parties or from any other source in order to increase the funds available for monitoring, research, training and projects relating to the conservation of cetaceans”,

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

Recalling that many fundamental obligations of Parties require actions which may significantly benefit from small scale funding, but often do not meet the eligibility criteria of national or international project funds,

Reiterating its conviction that, in some countries, the implementation of the Agreement is severely constrained by the lack of adequate financial resources,

Considering Resolutions 1.7 and 2.4, relating to the Supplementary Conservation Grants Fund (SCF), and Resolutions 3.6 and 7.8, relating to the procedure for submission of projects,

Appreciating the successful operation of the SCF which has attracted both a significant number of project proposals as well as additional voluntary contributions,

Thanking the financial support from the Governments of Italy and Monaco for the replenishment of the SCF during the 2020-2022 triennium,

Taking into account similar procedures established by other International Organisations,

Recognising the need to improve the procedure on the basis of lessons learned from the previous calls for proposals,

Desirous to establish a fully transparent and efficient procedure for the evaluation and the selection of project proposals,

1. *Decides* that the goals and objectives of the SCF are as follows:

- to catalyze the development and implementation of concerted or cooperative actions that should clearly contribute to the implementation of the Agreement and the priorities adopted by the Parties;
- to support applied conservation projects;
- to provide seed money to initiate long-term projects that have a multiplying impact well beyond the funding period;

- to stimulate dialogue and cooperation at the local and regional level in order to improve the conservation status of the cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Area;
 - to assist in the development of national capacities to conserve cetaceans and their habitats;
 - to raise awareness on the conservation and management needs of cetaceans and their habitats;
 - to make small funds available to communities and other conservation stakeholders with limited access to alternative funding sources;
2. *Decides* that the Fund is financed through voluntary contributions according to Resolution 8.2, Annex 4;
 3. *Urges* Parties and donor Organisations to provide voluntary contributions to the SCF;
 4. *Agrees* to transfer to the SCF, if appropriate, the unspent balance of previous triennium fund concerning voluntary contributions under the Trust Fund and *mandates* the Bureau to set the amount thereof on the basis of recommendations by the Secretariat;
 5. *Notes* that the SCF will be implemented within the Agreement area;
 6. *Encourages* transboundary projects between countries Party to ACCOBAMS;
 7. *Instructs* the Secretariat to:
 - manage and coordinate the SCF;
 - launch calls for proposals of projects to be funded under the SCF, in consultation with the Bureau of the Parties and the Scientific Committee;
 - inform the ACCOBAMS National Focal Points, the members of the Scientific Committee of ACCOBAMS, the ACCOBAMS Partners and other relevant Organisations, about the launch of a call for proposals;
 - inform the applicants about the results of the selection, and the Focal Point(s) of the countries in which the selected projects will be carried out;
 8. *Authorises* the Secretariat to facilitate contacts between potential applicants in order to establish partnerships;
 9. *Authorises* the Bureau to select the project proposals, taking into account the procedure for the ACCOBAMS calls for proposals for projects to be funded under the SCF and the budget available;
 10. *Adopts* the procedure for the ACCOBAMS calls for proposals for projects to be funded under the SCF in [Annex](#) to this Resolution;
 11. *Decides* that the present Resolution amends Resolution 3.6 and replaces Resolution 7.8.

ANNEX**Procedure for the ACCOBAMS calls for proposals for projects to be funded
under the Supplementary Conservation Grants Fund****Content**

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1. Introduction

The Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS) is an intergovernmental legal instrument that aims to achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for cetaceans through the implementation of coordinated conservation measures. Signed in Monaco in 1996 and entering into force in 2001, ACCOBAMS aims to reduce threats to cetaceans and improve knowledge on them.

The geographical scope of the Agreement is constituted by all the maritime waters of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean and their gulfs and seas, and the internal waters connected to or interconnecting these maritime waters, and of the Atlantic area contiguous to the Mediterranean Sea at the west of the Strait of Gibraltar.

Taking into account Article IX, paragraph 3, of the Agreement, the Parties to ACCOBAMS decided to establish, at their First Meeting (Monaco, 28 February – 2 March 2002), a Supplementary Conservation Grants Fund (SCF) from voluntary contributions of Parties or from any other source in order to increase the funds available for monitoring, research, training and projects relating to the conservation of cetaceans in the Agreement area.

The SCF became operational as of the Second Meeting of the Parties (Palma de Mallorca, Spain, 9-12 November 2004) and has been playing a significant role in supporting ACCOBAMS conservation initiatives in developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

2. Functioning of the Supplementary Conservation Grants Fund

The goals and objectives of the voluntary contributions to the SCF are as follows:

- To catalyze the development and implementation of concerted or cooperative actions that should clearly contribute to the implementation of the Agreement and the priorities adopted by the Parties;
- To support applied conservation projects;
- To provide seed money to initiate long-term projects that have a multiplying impact well beyond the funding period;
- To stimulate dialogue and cooperation at the local and regional level in order to improve the conservation status of the cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Area;
- To support development of national capacities to conserve cetaceans and their habitats;
- To raise awareness on the conservation and management needs of cetaceans and their habitats;
- To make small funds available to communities and other conservation stakeholders with limited access to alternative funding sources.

Projects to be funded under the SCF are submitted in the framework of calls for proposals launched by the Secretariat, in consultation with the Bureau of the Parties and the Scientific Committee.

The cycle for launching calls for proposals depends on the funding accrued for this purpose. Therefore, the ACCOBAMS Secretariat shall take into consideration the amount available for projects funding when informing the ACCOBAMS National Focal Points, the members of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee, the ACCOBAMS Partners and other relevant organisations, about the launch of a call for proposals.

3. Eligibility criteria and submission conditions

a. Eligible applicants

Only projects covering activities to be implemented in the Agreement area of low- and middle-income countries as classified by the World Bank that are Parties to ACCOBAMS, except countries more than three years in arrears with their ordinary contributions to the ACCOBAMS Trust Fund, shall be eligible for funding.

Project proposals must be submitted by Organisations legally based in the country where the activities are implemented.

In case of a transboundary project¹² that includes a non-eligible country, funding granted from the SCF will be devoted only to activities carried out in the eligible country.

List of ACCOBAMS National Focal Points, list of eligible countries, deadlines for project proposal submission and any restriction depending on the requirements set by the respective funding body will be communicated by the Secretariat through the ACCOBAMS webpage dedicated to the call for proposals and after consultation with the Bureau of the Parties.

Governmental institutions, research institutes and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) may submit proposals. Projects shall be submitted through entities that are legally established and have among their objectives the study, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

Projects can receive a maximum grant of €15.000. No more than 10% of the requested funds can be allocated to project personnel expenses.

Projects that can demonstrate that co-funding is available, either provided by the applicants themselves or from another sources, will be favored.

Partnership and collaboration with Governmental Institutions, research institutes and NGOs from other Parties to ACCOBAMS are encouraged, provided that the amount of budget allocated to the partner(s) does not exceed 30% of the requested grant.

The maximum duration of projects shall be two years.

The data produced by the project will be public and, if relevant, will be communicated through NETCCOBAMS, OBIS-SEAMAP and MEDACES databases upon completion of the project.

Proposals from Organisations having among their employees, including as volunteers, or board one or more members of the ACCOBAMS Secretariat are not eligible.

Applicants shall submit a declaration of non-conflict of interest.

¹² Transboundary projects are defined as projects which include activities that are implemented in at least two countries Party to ACCOBAMS. Involvement of a partner from a country different from the applicant's one does not necessarily mean that the project is transboundary.

In the event that an Organisation, to which one, or more members, of the Scientific Committee or the Bureau belong as staff, volunteers or board members, submits a proposal as applicant or partner, the concerned members of the Scientific Committee or of the Bureau shall not be involved in any way in the selection procedure.

b. Submission

Project proposals can be submitted in English or in French.

Applicants are encouraged to submit their project proposal in English for facilitating the evaluation by the Scientific Committee. However, submitting proposals in French will not be a disadvantage.

Application must include the following documents:

- Doc 1: the Concept Form completed (Appendix 1);
- Doc 2: the Project Presentation Form completed (Appendix 2);
- Doc 3: a cover letter addressed to the Executive Secretary of ACCOBAMS;
- Doc 4: the CV of the team leader;
- Doc 5: a Declaration signed by the ACCOBAMS national Focal Point¹³ from the country where the project is proposed to be implemented (Appendix 3). In the case of a transboundary project, the application should include Declarations from each ACCOBAMS national Focal Point of the countries where the proposed project will be implemented¹⁴ (Appendix 3);
- Doc 6: a Conflict of Interest Declaration Form (Appendix 4).

An Organisation is allowed to be involved in a maximum of two proposals on a given call as applicant or partner. No more than one project submitted by a given applicant shall be selected for the same call.

4. Selection procedure

The Secretariat will check the project proposals' eligibility upon their submission.

The eligible proposals will be sent to the Scientific Committee to be evaluated using the evaluation sheet (Appendix 5) and the scoring scale described hereafter:

Scores must be in the range 0-5. Half marks may be given.

- **0:** The proposal is not relevant.
- **1:** Poor. The quality of the proposal is poor as essential information is missing.
- **2:** Fair. The relevance of the proposal is very limited and the quality of the proposal is low.
- **3:** Good. The proposal is relevant and of good quality.

¹³ The List of Focal Points is available on the web site of ACCOBAMS. Declarations by any Focal point acting on or after the date of the publication of the call for project shall be considered.

¹⁴ Applicants are encouraged to contact respective Focal Points and invite them to provide the signed Declaration. If this document is not provided with the application, the Secretariat shall send, by email, the proposed project document to the relevant Focal Point(s) seeking her/his/their opinion(s) whether the proposed project deserves to be financially supported by the SCF. The opinion expressed by the Focal Point and its justification shall be considered by the Bureau in the selection of projects. However, if no written objection is received from the Focal Point within two weeks following the email from the Secretariat, the proposed project shall be considered for evaluation.

- **4:** Very good. The proposal is very relevant and of very good quality.
- **5:** Excellent. The quality of the proposal is very high, addressing properly all issues required.

The Chair of the Scientific Committee will organise the evaluation of project proposals by establishing and coordinating an evaluation group composed of Scientific Committee members.

The composition of the evaluation group shall be decided by the Chair of the Scientific Committee in consultation with the other Members of the Scientific Committee. Each project proposal should be assessed by at least three members of the evaluation group. To ensure a fair evaluation process, all proposals should be assessed by the same number of members of the evaluation group.

The final decision about the projects to be financially supported by the ACCOBAMS SCF will be made by the Bureau of the Parties, taking into account the eligibility check performed by the Secretariat, the scientific and technical evaluation of project proposals by the Scientific Committee, as well as the consistency and the sustainability aspects of the proposal.

The final decision shall be communicated to the National Focal Points.

If necessary, and upon Bureau request, the Secretariat requests further information to applicants, based on comments and suggestions by Scientific Committee Members when evaluating the project proposals.

5. Transfer of funds and reporting

Once a project is approved and funding has been granted by the Bureau of the Parties, the ACCOBAMS Secretariat shall prepare the Small-Scale Funding Agreement with the selected applicant.

During the project implementation, each recipient Organisation shall provide:

- a mid-term Progress Report on the implementation of the funded project, including a financial report, not later than 12 months after receipt of the initial payment for projects with duration of up to 24 months, and not later than 6 months for projects with duration up to 12 months.
- a Final Report, not later than three months after completion of the project. The Final Report shall include a statement of expenditure for the funds provided and copies of any materials produced under the project.

The exact deadlines for submission of both reports will be specified in the Small-Scale Funding Agreement.

Progress and Final Reports shall be sent to the relevant ACCOBAMS National Focal Points and to the Secretariat.

6. Terms of Small-Scale Funding Agreement to be concluded with Selected Applicants

In the Small-Scale Funding Agreement to be concluded between the ACCOBAMS Secretariat and the recipient Organisation, the following shall be specified:

- a) the extent and purpose of the funding granted;
- b) the obligations of the recipient towards the implementation of the project;
- c) the obligation of the recipient to display the ACCOBAMS logo on all correspondence or material produced in connection with meetings or activities financed under the project (such as invitations, announcements, agendas, reports, etc.) and to refer to the activity as being sponsored by ACCOBAMS;
- d) the obligation of the recipient to reimburse to ACCOBAMS any portion of any cash advance remaining unspent or uncommitted on completion of the activities of the Small-Scale Funding Agreement, within one month of presentation of the expenditure report.

7. Reporting to ACCOBAMS and other donors

Final Reports of the projects shall be presented to the Meeting of the Parties. They are also to be posted on the ACCOBAMS website.

The ACCOBAMS Secretariat shall provide donors with summary reports of project results, prepared on the basis of the Final Reports provided by the recipients, highlighting the effective results of the projects and of their contribution to the ACCOBAMS objectives and Work Programmes.

Appendix 1: Project Concept Form

Reserved to ACCOBAMS Secretariat
Form reference:

Title of the project:

Project category: Research and monitoring Capacity building Public awareness

Project topic(s):

[Project topics will be defined for each call]

Project amount (Euro):

Project duration:

Geographical area of the project:

[List of eligible countries at the launch of calls for proposals.]

Partnership if relevant:

Date:

Signature and Organisation stamp:

Appendix 2: Project Presentation Form*Reserved to ACCOBAMS Secretariat*

Form reference:

A. THE APPLICANT**1. Identity**

Full legal name	
Acronym	
Legal status	
Official address	
Contact person	
Telephone number	
Fax number	
E-mail address	

2. Description of applicant

2.1. When was your Organisation founded, and when did it start its activities?

--

2.2. What are the main activities of your Organisation?

--

2.3. Will the project be implemented in collaboration with a partner organisation?

Yes No

If Yes, please indicate:

- the identity of the partner:

Full legal name	
Acronym	

Legal status	
Official address	
Contact person	
Telephone number	
Fax number	
E-mail address	

- the role of the partner:

--

B. THE PROJECT**1. Description****1.1. Title****1.2. Coordination**

Provide here a brief description of how the project coordination will be ensured - e.g., description of the project team, roles and functions of the different partners (if any), communication with external stakeholders, ...

1.3. Location

Provide here a brief description of the area in which the project will be carried out (Please attach a map to this document).

1.4. Duration**1.5. Countries participating in the project****1.6. Objectives (maximum 150 words)****1.7. Justification**

Please indicate how the activities contribute to ACCOBAMS objectives, with special reference to the ACCOBAMS Conservation Plan and reference of the appropriate ACCOBAMS Resolutions (maximum 250 words).

1.8. Activities to be carried out and timetable

1.9. Expected outputs and methodology (maximum: 400 words)

1.10. Impacts and sustainability

Please describe the expected impacts that the project will have and the plan to sustain and build upon them (maximum: 400 words).

1.11. Budget estimates

Please provide for each activity a breakdown of

- personnel
- non-consumable equipment
- consumables
- travel
- field work
- other (specify).

Please provide all budget costs in Euros. If the financial arrangements for the project include any other financial support for an extra-funding, please provide detailed information on the amount(s), the donor(s) and the relevant commitments. Please also indicate any “in-kind” contributions to the project and their value.

Activities	Categories	Applicant		Partner	
		Budget requested to ACCOBAMS	Co-funding (in-kind or from other sources)	Budget requested to ACCOBAMS	Co-funding (in-kind or from other sources)
Activity 1	Personnel <i>(Please specify)</i>				
	Non-consumable equipment <i>(Please specify)</i>				
	Consumables <i>(Please specify)</i>				
	Travel <i>(Please specify)</i>				
	Field work <i>(Please specify)</i>				
	Other <i>(Please specify)</i>				
Activity 2	Personnel <i>(Please specify)</i>				
	Non-consumable equipment <i>(Please specify)</i>				
	Consumables <i>(Please specify)</i>				
	Travel <i>(Please specify)</i>				
	Field work <i>(Please specify)</i>				
	Other <i>(Please specify)</i>				
...					
	Total				
	GRAND TOTAL				

1.12. Issues relevant to transfer of technology/capacity building

The project should include the concept of transfer of technology or capacity building, with detailed proposals. Please provide information.

1.13. Links with other initiatives

(*Remark:* the Secretariat might consult with other organisations to check if the Project activities were submitted to them for funding or are complementary to activities having received funding from them).

Please indicate here if the proposed activities:

(i) were presented for funding under other initiatives/organisations:

Yes

No

If Yes please indicate the initiative/organisation.

- (ii) have direct links or are complementary to other activities having received funding from other organisations:

Yes

No

If Yes please indicate such link or complementary.

C. DECLARATION OF THE APPLICANT

“The information submitted in this application is true, to the best of my knowledge, information and belief. Should any significant developments arise after this application is made, I shall notify the ACCOBAMS Secretariat. I consent to the information contained in this application being held on computer and circulated to the National Focal Point, the Bureau, the Scientific Committee and other relevant bodies.”

Date, Signature

Appendix 3: National Focal Point Declaration

This declaration is to be completed and signed by the ACCOBAMS National Focal Point from the country where the project is proposed to be implemented (host country). In case of transboundary projects, application should include declarations from each ACCOBAMS National Focal Point from countries where the project is proposed to be implemented.

The List of Focal Points is available on the web site of ACCOBAMS. Declarations by any Focal point acting on or after the date of the publication of the call for projects shall be considered.

Applicants are encouraged to contact the relevant Focal Points and invite them to provide the signed Declaration. If this document is not provided with the application, the Secretariat shall send, by email, the proposed project document to the relevant Focal Point(s) seeking her/his/their opinion(s) whether the proposed project deserves to be financially supported by the SCF. The opinion expressed by the Focal Point and its justification shall be considered by the Bureau in the selection of projects. However, if no written objection is received from the Focal Point within two weeks following the email from the Secretariat, the proposed project shall be considered for evaluation.

Host country:

Project title:

Organisation submitting the application:

Title and name of the ACCOBAMS National Focal Point:

Contact details:

I have read the procedure for the ACCOBAMS calls for proposals for projects to be funded under the Supplementary Conservation Grants Fund of ACCOBAMS and reviewed the above-mentioned project.

I declare that this project deserves to be financially supported by the ACCOBAMS Supplementary Conservation Grants Fund.

Date:

Signature

Appendix 4: Conflict of Interest Declaration Form

This form is to be completed and signed by the applicant.

Subject: Declaration related to the conflict of interest

I, _____ the undersigned, representative of _____ submitting a project proposal for funding under the SCF in respect of the situation of conflict of interest, hereby confirm:

- that the submitted project proposal does not constitute a situation of conflict of interest;
- that the submitted project proposal may constitute a situation of conflict of interest because (*name(s) of the staff, volunteer(s) or board member(s) of the applicant or partners*) is a (are) member(s) of the Scientific Committee / Bureau of ACCOBAMS. I acknowledge that she/he/they shall not be involved in any way in the selection procedure for this call for projects.

Signed:

Date signed: _____

Appendix 5: Project Evaluation Form

Reserved to ACCOBAMS Secretariat
Form reference:

Project Title:

Applicant:

Do you have a collaborative relationship or conflict with the applicant or with its staff or the proposed project team?

Yes

No

If yes, please explain why.

1. Are the project objectives in line with the objectives of ACCOBAMS?

Yes

No

2. Will the proposed project clearly contribute to the implementation of the Agreement and the priorities adopted by the Parties?

Yes

No

If no, please explain why.

3. Do the proposed activities duplicate or overlap with previous or ongoing projects?

Yes

No

If yes please give details

4. General appreciation

The project is acceptable

The project needs improvements

Please specify

The project cannot be accepted

Please explain

5. Other suggestions and/or comments (if any)

To summarise:

Keeping in mind the goals and objectives¹⁵ of the Supplementary Conservation Fund, please provide an overall rating of the project proposal:

0	0.5	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5
---	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---

Please include here a short rationale for the rating

Name of the evaluator:

Date:

¹⁵ As defined in Resolution 8.5, the goals and objective of the SCF are as follows:

- to catalyze the development and implementation of concerted or cooperative actions that should clearly contribute to the implementation of the Agreement and the priorities adopted by the Parties;
- to support applied conservation projects;
- to provide seed money to initiate long-term projects that have a multiplying impact well beyond the funding period;
- to stimulate dialogue and cooperation at the local and regional level in order to improve the conservation status of the cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Area;
- to assist in the development of national capacities to conserve cetaceans and their habitats;
- to raise awareness on the conservation and management needs of cetaceans and their habitats;
- to make small funds available to communities and other conservation stakeholders with limited access to alternative funding sources.

RESOLUTION 8.6
ACCOBAMS COMMUNICATION STRATEGY 2023-2028

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 at the sub-regional and Agreement level, with support from 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 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 specific 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 Black Sea, Mediterranean, and contiguous Atlantic area,

Taking into account Resolution 8.21 on Citizen Science,

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 Aichi Biodiversity Targets adopted by the Tenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, in particular with regard 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 for 2023-2028, as shown in the [Annex](#) to this Resolution;
2. *Requests* the Secretariat to work on its implementation, including mid-term and final assessments of its effectiveness in 2025 and 2028 respectively, in cooperation with the Bureau and the Scientific Committee, and in collaboration with relevant partner organizations;
3. *Requests* Parties to provide voluntary contributions towards the implementation of the ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy for 2023-2028, with priority to the communication activities proposed in the Programme of Work of the concerned triennium;
4. *Invites* all ACCOBAMS Parties, partners and relevant stakeholders to actively assist through in-kind support the implementation of the ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy.

ANNEX

ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy for 2023-2028

Introduction

1. ACCOBAMS overall objective, as a daughter Agreement of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), is to achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for cetaceans in the Agreement area, notably by improving knowledge on their populations and by implementing protective and conservation measures in areas considered critical habitats.
2. The efforts implemented since its entry into force in 2001 made ACCOBAMS an international recognized organization in cetacean conservation, at the national and regional levels, as well as at the global level.
3. The majority of the communication actions developed so far were targeted towards ACCOBAMS community (National Focal Points, ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee, Sub-regional Coordinating Units, ACCOBAMS Partners and other partner organizations with which ACCOBAMS collaborates) to inform them of Agreement's activities and encourage them to disseminate this information. Many communication actions targeted towards a wider non-ACCOBAMS audience were also carried out on an opportunistic basis, in the framework of projects such as the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative, or during special events, such as IUCN World Conservation Congresses or Monaco Ocean Weeks.
4. ACCOBAMS has a high potential in terms of communication, in particular considering how much cetaceans are emblematic species, alongside with the vitality of the Agreement and its community. From a strategic communication perspective, ACCOBAMS should strengthen its brand and assure homogenic visual aspects of its communication products while adapting the messages to convey according to the different audiences targeted, and thus boosting the echo to the ACCOBAMS action.
5. The implementation of an ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy is a key step for increasing visibility of the work being carried out under ACCOBAMS, highlighting its activities and outcomes, as well as improving the Organization's reputation.
6. Effective and better-targeted communication will help ACCOBAMS reaching its objectives. In particular, making ACCOBAMS more visible will help in disseminating experience and good practices but also in raising awareness on cetacean conservation issues.
7. Highlighting the actions carried out by ACCOBAMS and communicating its impacts will also contribute to enhancing the image of ACCOBAMS, making ACCOBAMS more reliable, and better able to attract new opportunities for partnership and funding, as highlighted in the ACCOBAMS Funding Strategy adopted through Resolution 7.5.
8. This Communication Strategy is designed to enable ACCOBAMS to plan, manage and focus the institutional communication process and it should be considered as a leverage tool to support the implementation of the overall ACCOBAMS Strategy¹⁶ and to strengthen its effectiveness.

¹⁶ The current ACCOBAMS long-term Strategy covers the period 2014-2025 and was adopted by Resolution 5.1 and completed by ACCOBAMS Resolution 7.4.

9. This Communication Strategy is an overarching framework providing main orientations for the Communication plans to be developed at each triennium. It is not intended to provide details on specific activities and financial resources needed to ensure its implementation. Those are to be specified in the Programmes of Work for each triennium presented for adoption by Parties.

I. Communication Strategy

I.1 Goal and specific objectives of the Communication Strategy

10. The overarching goal of the ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy is to enhance the visibility of ACCOBAMS' activities and achievements in promoting cetacean conservation in the Black Sea, Mediterranean and adjacent Atlantic area.

11. More specifically the ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy aims to:

- Highlight the actions being taken to accomplish ACCOBAMS' Mission and Vision;
- Strengthen ACCOBAMS' reputation as an efficient and reliable regional cooperation organization for cetacean conservation;
- Engage key stakeholders in the implementation of ACCOBAMS provisions, guidelines, and best practices;
- Raise awareness about cetacean ecology and biology, their conservation status, and threats affecting them;
- Inform and mobilize various audiences on the need to improve efforts for cetacean conservation in the Black Sea, Mediterranean and adjacent Atlantic area.

12. From an operational perspective, implementing the ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy helps to:

- Maintain regular communication within the ACCOBAMS community and improve communication with external audiences;
- Improve quality and consistency in the dissemination of information materials;
- Increase quality, consistency and quantity of media coverage, through regular communication tools, based on a well-structured communication plan.

I.2 Audiences

13. Audience identification is vital to any communication strategy. ACCOBAMS must talk to the right people, making best use of resources - budget, time and human power - by targeting different "publics".

14. The way the messages are delivered depends on the target audience, as different audiences have:

- different levels of awareness on ACCOBAMS,
- different perceptions of what ACCOBAMS is and does,
- different needs and motivations when dealing with ACCOBAMS as an organisation.

15. Internal and external audiences should be distinguished. Internal audiences are those who are familiar with / involved in ACCOBAMS, as members of the different ACCOBAMS bodies or through close collaboration with ACCOBAMS (such as the organizations with whom Memorandum of Understanding are signed): CMS Family members, Bureau Members, National Focal Points, Scientific Committee Members, Sub-regional Coordinating Units, ACCOBAMS Partners, IGO partners and other international Agreements and Conventions.

16. External audiences are not (yet) familiar with and involved in ACCOBAMS, but they are interested in cetacean conservation: national public managers, professional organizations, researchers, university students, journalists, youth and general public, in particular of the Agreement Area. Their interests are different from each other, and they may need different levels of background information which would be unnecessary when communicating with internal audiences.

17. Internal and external communication does not have the same objectives, communication messages should be then adapted.

I.3 Key messages

18. To improve ACCOBAMS positioning and avoid communication and resources dispersion, ACCOBAMS communication should follow three main orientations:

- Who ACCOBAMS is (vision, mission and positioning)
- What ACCOBAMS does (activities)
- What the outcome of ACCOBAMS action is (achievements)

19. The messages to broadcast should be aligned with these main communication orientations. Here are some examples targeted to external audience:

What ACCOBAMS is:

- ❖ ACCOBAMS is the only organization in the world specially focused on protection and conservation of whales and dolphins in the geographical area of the treaty: the Black Sea, Mediterranean and contiguous Atlantic area.
- ❖ ACCOBAMS is an agreement and a commitment between 24 countries to protect whales and dolphins since 1996.
- ❖ ACCOBAMS is the collaborative exchange of human knowledge and international cooperation aiming to protect and conserve cetacean life.
- ❖ ACCOBAMS is a collective effort to engage and communicate externally.
- ❖ ACCOBAMS is a coordination tool that maximizes the individual efforts towards cetaceans' protection.

What ACCOBAMS does:

- ❖ ACCOBAMS is a cooperation tool that relies on the production and exchange of information and knowledge in order to help countries, organisations and individuals to protect cetaceans and their habitats.
- ❖ ACCOBAMS thoroughly researches and monitors cetaceans, their habitats and the impact of human activity, developing measures to mitigate the threats caused by it.
- ❖ ACCOBAMS aids people and organisations helping cetaceans and protecting the environment surrounding these animals, through training and education.
- ❖ ACCOBAMS responds to emergency situations involving cetaceans, by providing knowledge and guidelines to tackle those occurrences.

What the outcome of ACCOBAMS activity is/will be:

- ❖ More and better means to improve the lives and habitats of cetaceans, not only in the Agreement Area, but around the globe.
- ❖ A hub of knowledge exchange amongst people and institutions interested in making sure we respect cetaceans, whom we share the same planet with.
- ❖ Cetaceans playing an important part in our present and in our future.

20. Internal communication is all about promoting effective communications among the ACCOBAMS community. It involves producing and delivering messages on ACCOBAMS activities, results and achievements, as well as facilitating dialogue with and among the people who contribute to the functioning of the organization.

II. Implementing the Communication Strategy

II.1 Definition of a corporate identity: the ACCOBAMS brand, signature and style

21. The diagnostic phase that supported the development of the Communication Strategy highlighted that one of the main weaknesses in ACCOBAMS communication is the lack of corporate identity and positioning.

22. ACCOBAMS needs to have a corporate identity and thus to be looked at as a brand, with a set of values and a specific positioning, so to be relevant to different audiences.

II.1.1 The brand ACCOBAMS

23. ACCOBAMS develops a series of activities that are branded, yet not in a consistent manner, which assume different graphical expressions, different moods, and a low brand consistency. The corporate identity or brand is the starting point of any Communication Strategy, and it influences the way in which ACCOBAMS will communicate in the future.

24. The brand of an organization is based on their defined Mission and Vision, and on how they envisage their future. The ACCOBAMS Mission and Vision¹⁷ are the foundations of its brand or corporate expression:

The ACCOBAMS Mission	The ACCOBAMS Vision
ACCOBAMS promotes and facilitates active regional cooperation at all levels, providing best expertise and standards and propelling implementation of all necessary measures for conserving cetaceans in the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic Area.	Cetacean populations in the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic Area will be in a favourable conservation status, expressed as healthy populations and habitats with minimised adverse human impacts, with ACCOBAMS having a role of key regional player as an Agreement applied on a large scale in areas of great interest for cetaceans, including the adjacent Atlantic areas.

¹⁷ ACCOBAMS Mission and Vision were adopted in Resolution 5.1 on the ACCOBAMS Strategy for the Period 2014 – 2025

II.1.2 The ACCOBAMS positioning

25. ACCOBAMS has its purpose well defined, yet it has not been converted into a brand positioning, which is important in order to define how ACCOBAMS intends to be perceived by its various audiences. Nonetheless, in social media, specifically on Facebook, the central message already displayed encapsulates the core message “dolphin and whale conservation”.
26. An ACCOBAMS positioning will provide the brand strategic pillars to position ACCOBAMS amidst other organisations that operate in similar, related or complementary fields.
27. The proposed ACCOBAMS brand positioning was developed based on a positioning model which comprises some of the following elements:

Uniqueness	The only IGO exclusively devoted to protecting and improving the life of cetaceans in its specific geographical area
Brand values	Regional cooperation; Knowledge sharing; Protection; Respect; Collective action
Brand purpose	Taking coordinated measures to achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for cetaceans
Positioning statement	ACCOBAMS is a legal conservation tool where 24 countries cooperate towards cetaceans’ conservation
Brand in two words	Healthy Cetaceans

28. The recommended brand positioning for ACCOBAMS is “*knowledge and regional cooperation to protect cetacean lives*”.

II.1.3 The ACCOBAMS Brand mood and style guide

29. ACCOBAMS style for internal documentation is relatively well-embedded in the routines of the Secretariat. Nonetheless, ACCOBAMS lacks a consistent brand style and a coherent brand mood. Brand mood means the way the brand presents itself graphically and the tone it uses when communicating, as brands use specific tones - friendly, formal, down to earth, inquisitive, serious, amongst many other.
30. Currently, ACCOBAMS doesn’t have a consistent brand mood, which makes it difficult to be publicly recognised. The more consistent the mood is, the more recognizable and visible the brand will be. The colour blue and the sea are the two common elements of most ACCOBAMS communication, and they can be considered as part of its current brand mood. Yet, other elements are still lacking in order to define a coherent brand mood, such as the same font type, design style, brand properties, tone of voice, in sum, a brand style that contributes to form a unique identity that, in time, will be associated to ACCOBAMS brand.
31. A brand style needs to be established so to provide ACCOBAMS publications with a consistent expression of text and pictures used, based on, and projecting beyond its corporate brand or logotype. The development of a brand style guide will enable brand consistency across different platforms, partnership activities, and communication channels. A design advice is necessary so to apply the same brand style to all communication products.

II.2 Communication tools

II.2.1 The ACCOBAMS website

32. Consistent communications within the ACCOBAMS community are a strength of the organisation. However, the way in which the website is structured seems to have been planned to be more directed to internal audiences.
33. The ACCOBAMS website already centralizes an important and huge repository of information and knowledge.
34. The direct access to the NETCCOBAMS through the ACCOBAMS site would be advantageous so to promptly accede to this knowledge platform, which provides the visualization of different layers of information and offers a communication channel with internal and external communication targets.
35. The “High Quality Whale Watching” label will be promoted through a dedicated page in the ACCOBAMS website.
36. Although a bit dated in terms of design, the desktop version of the current ACCOBAMS website provides a relatively easy access to find information, as opposed to its mobile version, not easy to navigate on. Also, while currently disposing of a huge image repository, ACCOBAMS website displays a basic image library, which may be boosted and used consistently.
37. The ACCOBAMS website should be easier and more fluid to navigate on, to search and find appropriate information, both for internal and external audiences, including for users with little background in cetacean conservation.
38. An essential is to promptly provide information to target audiences, the solution being to apply a user-friendly access in a new style website, presenting updated images and reshaped content.
39. The website being a component of brand communication and an expression of positioning, it is the ACCOBAMS best and most important “touch point” to ACCOBAMS various audiences and stakeholders.
40. Thus, ACCOBAMS online presence should be modernized and include a more outer directed approach. Also, a “Media section” could be used as part of a Public Relations (PR) programme in order to increase awareness on ACCOBAMS activities and events.

II.2.2 Media outreach

41. To date, ACCOBAMS media activity has been focused on providing information, with rare press briefings or press releases on significant ACCOBAMS initiatives or events. Few proactive stories have been initiated, neither have specific press briefings been held.
42. It is advisable to broadly plan media content on a yearly basis, and to consider any necessary quarterly adjustments depending on the concrete activities developed and on the communication priorities, in case they evolve differently from the initial planning.
43. Regarding branding social media channels, ACCOBAMS currently uses Facebook and Twitter. However, publishing

the same content in both channels should be avoided as channels audiences are different and motivated by unlike topics. Twitter should be used for internal communication, with relevant topics for internal audiences, while Facebook, for external communication, featuring less “technical” information.

44. Currently used social channels target mainly adult audiences. If younger or professional audiences are to be considered as part of the strategy, a 3rd (or 4th) social media channel could be considered, like Instagram or LinkedIn, respectively. Adding more channels would require more resources (internal or external) as they would imply using a different approach and tone to the topics.
45. The posting frequency is a much-debated subject as it relates to social media budget, and depends on the channels, the subject and the audience. Environmental activists, for example, are more aware of subjects regarding the environment and probably search for it on a weekly or daily basis.
46. ACCOBAMS internal audiences will probably be open to have regular weekly information about different activities and subjects, while external audiences could find exhausting to receive daily posts about main topics. One to two weekly posts in Facebook and one to three weekly posts in Twitter are recommended.

II.2.3 Printed material and video

47. The ACCOBAMS offline communication activity should contain a key message, or a set of central messages, reflecting what the organization stands for. The printed material should also be graphically homogeneous, and specific activities should be communicated based on such messages.
48. The ACCOBAMS offline material currently follows a number of constant elements, like colour palette or images of the sea, but a number of rules should be set in order to define a consistent brand style, given that the brand communicates directly to its audiences, on its own.
49. It is advisable to apply and consistently follow an established brand style guide to the different offline materials, which would also help graphic designers or/and web developers to respect the unified vision of the ACCOBAMS brand.

II.2.4. Presential events

50. ACCOBAMS is regularly invited to participate in national events, such as conferences, forums, fairs, awareness raising activities organized by local organizations with which ACCOBAMS collaborates. When budget and time allow, participation in such events is a good way to make ACCOBAMS more visible, to share information about the role and activities of ACCOBAMS with wider audiences.
51. Participation in international meetings, such as official meetings of IGOs with which ACCOBAMS collaborates, and international events is also a way to make ACCOBAMS visible, especially to stakeholders working in the field of environmental conservation and sustainable development. Beyond the official statements in session, the organization or participation in side events on these occasions contribute to highlight the actions of ACCOBAMS.

II.3 Communication Content Planning

52. Communication content is all information produced by ACCOBAMS (and some specific 3rd parties) that can be conveyed to various audiences.
53. The determination of the communication content helps planning in advance the themes to be included in the ACCOBAMS communication calendar, and so pre-defining when and where to communicate them.
54. Content planning has an impact on social media strategy, on the Public Relations (PR) strategy, and eventually on website content, if ACCOBAMS makes use of a dynamic news section.
55. It is advisable to plan in advance ACCOBAMS communication content on a yearly basis, and to define the detailed content each quarter, always working one quarter ahead. This will allow considering those content pieces that became relevant although they had not been initially planned.

II.4 Resources needed

56. Properly implementing the ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy requires both human and financial resources. The details of specific activities to be carried out to achieve the overall objectives of the Communication Strategy are not detailed in the Strategy itself. Rather, they are specified in the Work Program for each triennium, along with information on the required budget. For some of these activities, costs can be externalized, while those related to systematic communication activity could be provided in-house by a Communication Officer, upon availability of resources.

II.5 Monitoring and assessment of the implementation of the Communication Strategy

57. Key implementation tools that will be necessary to put in place the Communication Strategy will on their own offer the means to monitor and assess outreach and effectiveness.
58. Subject to establishing baselines and quantitative indicators, from which an assessment of the effectiveness of the Communication Strategy can be done, notably through quarterly performance reports, evaluation means may include those already existing (FINS) and/or in development (NETCCOBAMS), as well as those related to the online and offline presence of ACCOBAMS, as shown, non-exhaustively, hereafter:

website	number of visits, of page-views, time per visit, most-visited pages
social media	number of followers, positive feedback, number of republication/retweets
online and offline material and newsletter (FINS)	number of requests to be added to the mailing list, comments received, number of favourable feedbacks
offline material	number of printed materials distributed
NETCCOBAMS	number of national reports introduced by countries in NETCCOBAMS
	number of projects introduced in NETCCOBAMS
Face-to-face events/International meetings	Number of national/international events & meetings attended

59. Monitoring the implementation of the Communication Strategy can be made internally by the Secretariat who can

report every year to the Bureau and every three years to the Meeting of the Parties.

60. The assessment of the implementation and the effectiveness of the Communication Strategy should be made externally and should include both a mid-term assessment in 2025 and a final assessment in 2028. Outcome of the mid-term and final assessments will be also useful in the framework of the revision of the Communication Strategy (see below).

II.6 Duration and revision of the Communication Strategy

61. This Communication Strategy is planned for an initial period of 6 years, from 2023 to 2028.

62. Being considered as a leverage tool in support of the implementation of the ACCOBAMS overall Strategy, the ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy shall be revised when updating the ACCOBAMS Strategy. A revision of the later is expected for 2023-2025 leading to the adoption of a revised ACCOBAMS overall Strategy at the Ninth Meeting of the Parties in 2025. In face of that, a revision of the Communication Strategy may be necessary in 2025 to align it with the revised ACCOBAMS overall Strategy.

II.7 Synergy with the ACCOBAMS Funding Strategy

63. As highlighted in the ACCOBAMS Funding Strategy adopted through Resolution 7.5, 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. Strengthening communication to targeted donors will be then support and facilitate the efforts to liaise with them.

64. Finally, keeping in mind how emblematic cetaceans are, a well-structured, dynamic and effective communication could support the launching of sponsorship programs and/or crowdfunding campaigns.

RESOLUTION 8.7
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: <https://hub.sinay.ai/accobams/home>¹⁸ 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 information on activities through NETCCOBAMS;
2. *Welcomes* the establishment by the Scientific Committee 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 use¹⁹,
 - 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 account of data collected and reported under Resolution 8.18 on “Ship Strikes”;
3. *Requests* the Working Group to report on its work to the Ninth Meeting of the Parties;
4. *Invites Parties and instructs the Secretariat* to encourage relevant stakeholders, including ACCOBAMS Partners and industry bodies, to submit relevant data and information on cetaceans and on anthropogenic activities to NETCCOBAMS, according 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;
5. *Asks* the Scientific Committee to instruct the Working Group to:
 - a. 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,

¹⁸ To create a NETCCOBAMS account, please contact the ACCOBAMS Secretariat.

¹⁹ Such as validated abundance and habitat maps, Partner’s reports, documentation on the work of ACCOBAMS and its Committees, Parties and Partners.

- 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;
- b. liaise with the other relevant Working Groups when the platform will implement additional features;
6. *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 increase the visibility of the work done in this context, to encourage the platform's utilization, and the submission of data.

RESOLUTION 8.8
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. *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);

2. *Adopts* the following Resolutions:

RESOLUTION 8.8.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 8.8.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 of the ACCOBAMS Parties,

1. *Finds* that:

- the second part of the submission is not admissible and not founded;
- the first part of the submission is admissible;
- it is likely that the atypical mass stranding of beaked whales brought to its attention through 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;

2. *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 information received from the Party concerned with the Scientific Committee;

3. *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 8.8.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 8.8.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. *Takes also note* that, under the new legislation published in Portugal in 2021 (Law No. 98/2021), the granting of new concessions for the prospection or exploration of hydrocarbons within the national territory is prohibited;
4. *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;

5. *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;
6. *Declares* the follow-up procedure closed;
7. *Requests* the Secretariat to transmit this Resolution to the Party and the Partner concerned.

RESOLUTION 8.8.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*:
 - the 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 take 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.

RESOLUTION 8.9
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 incidental catches,

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

Acknowledging the competences on fisheries matters that pertain in the ACCOBAMS Area to the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, the European Union and national fisheries authorities,

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 vessels will be authorized to keep on board or to use any drift nets”,

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 information provided by Parties by legal consultants appointed by the Secretariat,

Conscious that international, regional and national instruments are based on different definitions of the technical characteristics of drift nets to be prohibited,

Aware that different types of drift nets consistent with conservation measures adopted by other international and regional regulatory instruments are still legally used in the Agreement’s area,

Worried by the fact that drifts nets most impacting on cetaceans, especially those targeting large pelagic fish, even if prohibited by other international instruments are still being used illegally, even in marine protected areas especially established for the protection of cetaceans,

Aware that effective measures against illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing still occurring in the ACCOBAMS Area, is a prerequisite for successfully addressing the link 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,

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

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 only be addressed through a 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,

1. *Strongly reiterates* that bycatch in fishing gear 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 drift nets that are not in compliance with relevant legal provisions continue to cause mortality of several species of cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Area, and *urges* that national legislation regulating such fishing gear be timely implemented and enforced by 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, in accordance with national legislations;
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, as well as the use of modern technologies aimed at tracing the use of 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;
8. *Mandates* the ACCOBAMS Secretariat, in collaboration with the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee, to continue liaising with relevant regional fisheries management organizations in order to provide a common definition of the technical characteristics of drift nets that pose a major threat to cetaceans, and to report on that matter at the Ninth Meeting of Parties.

RESOLUTION 8.10
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 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 relevant reporting cycles of European Union legal frameworks, inter alia the Habitats and Marine Strategy Framework Directives, 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),

Taking into consideration the Recommendations from the Ad Hoc Group established to provide guidance on financial aspects related to the ACCOBAMS 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 relevant legal frameworks, inter alia the Habitats and Marine Strategy Framework Directives, 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 and 2019 in the Mediterranean Sea, Contiguous Atlantic Area and 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,

Expressing its gratitude to the European Commission for financing 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 Good Environmental Status (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 Barcelona Convention Mediterranean Quality Status Report, in particular in regards to quantitative results on the distribution and abundance of cetaceans, other marine megafauna species and floating marine litter,

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* the Recommendation 14.1 of the Scientific Committee on the ACCOBAMS Long-Term Monitoring Programme as annexed to the Report of the 14th Meeting of ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee (ACCOBAMS-SC14/2021/Doc40);
2. *Invites* Parties 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;
3. *Tasks* the Scientific Committee and the Secretariat, in collaboration with the ASI Steering Committee and other relevant experts, to prepare, for the next synoptic basin wide survey, a detailed technical document in the form of a project proposal, with a description of the different work packages, time-frame, budget and a SWOT analysis;
4. *Urges* the Parties and the Secretariat, given the fundamental importance of the LTMP, to secure funding for its implementation, taking into consideration, as appropriate, the recommendations of the ACCOBAMS *ad hoc* Group LTMP (ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/27);

5. *Invites* the Parties to provide voluntary contributions in 2023 so to meet the expected internal funding in view of undertaking synoptic basin-wide surveys in the ACCOBAMS Area in 2024-2026;
6. *Mandates* the Secretariat to undertake fundraising efforts so to meet the expected external funding in view of undertaking synoptic basin-wide surveys in the ACCOBAMS Area in 2024-2026;
7. *Strongly encourages* the Parties to commit to providing in-kind support for the next synoptic basin-wide surveys in the ACCOBAMS Area in 2024-2026, and implementation of the whole programme cycle 2023-2027;
8. *Asks* the Secretariat to explore funding opportunities within the framework of the EU relevant financial mechanisms, inter alia European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF), LIFE and Interreg programmes;
9. *Mandates* the Secretariat to evaluate the feasibility of innovative targeted funding mechanisms to sustain the ACCOBAMS LTMP in line with the ACCOBAMS Funding Strategy adopted through Resolution 7.5 and to elaborate specific strategies and operational guidelines for their implementation, as well as to approach targeted donors in view to secure the LTMP budget in the nearest future;
10. *Invites* the ACCOBAMS Parties and range States to appoint a national contact person to participate in a LTMP 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;
11. *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;
12. *Asks* the Secretariat, in conjunction with the Scientific Committee, given the huge 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;

13. *Invites* Parties to foster, with the support of the Secretariat, co-operation and partnerships between experts throughout the Agreement's range, including by:
 - a. increasing the visibility of ASI datasets, 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;
 - b. 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

14. *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;
15. *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 relevant legal frameworks, inter alia the Habitats and Marine Strategy Framework Directives, EcAp/IMAP and other programs such as Action Plan for the Conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea;
16. *Asks* the Scientific Committee and the Sub-Regional Coordination Units to assist in identifying synergies and potential collaborations in existing or proposed programmes;
17. *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;
18. *Asks* the Scientific Committee to advice on methods and protocols for smaller-scale regional and national existing and new programmes for the monitoring of abundance, distribution and trends, in light of information that will be received from periodic basin-wide summer synoptic surveys;
19. *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;
20. *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 relevant legal frameworks, inter alia the Habitats and Marine Strategy Framework Directives and EcAp/IMAP, including the Eastern Basin.

21. *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****Contents**

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Background

The main objective of ACCOBAMS being to achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for cetaceans in the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area, the Agreement requests the Contracting Parties to undertake, individually and through collaboration, a series of conservation and management measures for the species and to develop cooperation for research and monitoring to fully implement them. The development of monitoring is clearly designated by the Agreement among the most recommended ways to enhance the knowledge about the biology, ecology, and population dynamics of cetaceans in order to identify and implement conservation measures.

In accordance with the ACCOBAMS strategic objective on improving the understanding of the conservation status of cetaceans at the macroregional level, the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative (ASI) Project²⁰, a collaborative initiative aimed at establishing an integrated and coordinated monitoring system for cetaceans, was launched in 2016 during the Sixth Meeting of the Parties to ACCOBAMS (Monaco, 22-25 November 2016).

After the successful implementation in 2018/2019 of the surveys over the Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area within the framework of the ASI Project, a survey in a large part of the Black Sea was conducted during the summer of 2019 through the CeNoBS²¹ and EMBLAS-Plus²² Projects.

Building on the experience gained so far through the development and the implementation of the ASI, the Secretariat of ACCOBAMS initiated the elaboration of the ACCOBAMS Long Term Monitoring Programme (ACCOBAMS LTMP) for estimating abundance and distribution of cetaceans and assessing trends in space and time.

Objectives of the ACCOBAMS LTMP

The primary motivation of the ACCOBAMS LTMP is to collect reliable data allowing to obtain accurate estimates of abundance and distribution of cetacean species in the ACCOBAMS Area. It may also collect information on human activities at sea that could generate threats to cetacean (maritime traffic, leisure boating, fishing, marine litter, Chemical pollutants, etc.). This information may be used to identify hotspot zones of interaction between cetaceans and human activities in the ACCOBAMS Area. The ultimate objective being to provide a robust scientific base for the setting and the regular adjustment of conservation and management measures that allow achieving a favourable conservation status for cetaceans in the Agreement area. Through such an achievement, Parties will fulfil their obligations under ACCOBAMS, as well as their commitments towards other relevant Multilateral Agreements (CBD, CMS, Barcelona Convention, EU regulations, etc.).

The periodic implementation of the ACCOBAMS LTMP will allow to assess trends in species population size and distribution, and, also using information on human activities impacting cetaceans, to assess, and where necessary adapt, the conservation measures in place. The data collected by the ASI in the ACCOBAMS Area established a reliable baseline from which to measure future changes in the monitored parameters.

²⁰ The ASI Project benefited, for its Mediterranean and Contiguous Atlantic Area component, from the financial support of France, Italy, Monaco, Slovenia, Spain, the MAVA Foundation, the Prince Albert II Foundation and IFAW.

²¹ The CeNoBS Project "Support MSFD implementation in the Black Sea through establishing a regional monitoring system of cetaceans (D1) and noise monitoring (D11) for achieving GES" was implemented between 2018-2021 thanks to a financial support of the European Union (<https://www.cenobs.eu/>).

²² The EMBLAS-Plus project "Improving Environmental Monitoring in the Black Sea – Selected Measures" (<http://emblasproject.org/>) is funded by the European Union.

The geographical scope of the ACCOBAMS LTMP

Given the mobile nature of cetacean species, the ACCOBAMS LTMP should cover the whole "Agreement area" as defined in Article I of the ACCOBAMS Agreement²³. This implies that it will cover within the Agreement area (i) the maritime waters under the jurisdiction of the Parties, (ii) the maritime waters of the non-Party States and (iii) the maritime waters located beyond national jurisdictions. Furthermore, it may also cover other maritime zones that could be included in the future in the Agreement area, such as the maritime zones of Portugal and Spain whose inclusion in the Agreement area was adopted by the Parties through Resolution A/4.1 amending the geographic scope of the Agreement, pending the entry into force of the amendment.

However, under certain circumstances it may not be possible to conduct monitoring surveys covering areas where administrative (permit-related) or political constraints do not allow monitoring teams to operate normally and safely. Furthermore, the geographical coverage of the monitoring may also depend on the availability of financial resources. Therefore, a synoptic survey may be limited to cover only part of the areas targeted by the ACCOBAMS LTMP. However, a maximum possible coverage should be aimed for.

Monitoring approach

The ACCOBAMS LTMP will be mainly based on periodic synoptic surveys covering the entire Agreement area. Each survey shall be a collaborative initiative involving all the ACCOBAMS Parties through their relevant national administrations, researchers and NGOs. It will be coordinated by the Secretariat of ACCOBAMS²⁴ and implemented by national teams supported, where necessary and appropriate, by observers and/or cruise team leaders designated by the Secretariat of ACCOBAMS in consultation with the relevant Focal Points and based on their scientific expertise.

The Scientific Committee of ACCOBAMS shall contribute to all phases of the ACCOBAMS LTMP by providing its advice to the Contracting Parties and the Secretariat on the scientific and technical matters, in particular in relation to the planning, development, implementation and assessment of synoptic surveys and other relevant monitoring activities.

Conducting the synoptic surveys of the ACCOBAMS LTMP according to a six-year frequency would provide the right balance between monitoring cost and regular updating of information on abundance and distribution of cetacean species in the ACCOBAMS Area. Ensuring such a frequency will be, however, a crucial challenge given the financial resources required for such monitoring effort.

For each synoptic survey, the Secretariat of ACCOBAMS will collaborate closely with the ACCOBAMS National Focal Points and a Contact Group whose members are designated by the National Focal Points. As demonstrated during the implementation of the ASI Project in 2018, the role of the Contact Group members is important, in particular for liaising with the relevant national authorities, ensuring the following-up at national level of the authorization request processes for aerial and/or boat surveys and to provide support with logistical aspects during the survey

²³ the "Agreement area", is constituted by all the maritime waters of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean and their gulfs and seas, and the internal waters connected to or interconnecting these maritime waters, and of the Atlantic area contiguous to the Mediterranean Sea west of the Straits of Gibraltar. For the purpose of this Agreement:

- the Black Sea is bounded to the southwest by the line joining Capes Kelaga and Dalyan (Türkiye);
- the Mediterranean Sea is bounded to the east by the southern limits of the Straits of the Dardanelles between the lighthouses of Mehmetcik and Kumkale (Türkiye) and to the west by the meridian passing through Cape Spartel lighthouse, at the entrance to the Strait of Gibraltar; and
- the contiguous Atlantic area west of the Strait of Gibraltar is bounded to the east by the meridian passing through Cape Spartel lighthouse and to the west by the line joining the lighthouses of Cape St. Vicente (Portugal) and Casablanca (Morocco).

²⁴ Where needed, the coordination may be delegated to a partner organisation.

implementation phase. In order to support the coordination at national level of the synoptic survey, the Secretariat, upon request by the National Focal Point, shall inform the relevant National Authorities of the country, such as the Foreign Affairs Services, about the synoptic survey and provide them with information on the general framework of the initiative and its expected results. The ACCOBAMS Parties and other involved countries shall facilitate the implementation of the surveys in their waters and where possible provide their support in relation to the necessary logistic requirements.

A Scientific Coordinator will assist the Secretariat in the development and implementation phases of the synoptic surveys, in liaison with the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee.

The Parties to ACCOBAMS and the non-Party States are encouraged to adhere to the ACCOBAMS LTMP and to ensure the maximum level of harmonisation between their “routine” cetacean monitoring activities in the ACCOBAMS Area and the ACCOBAMS LTMP. In this context, given that several countries regularly conduct monitoring campaigns to assess the cetacean populations in their national waters included in the ACCOBAMS Area, it would be useful that the ACCOBAMS Secretariat, with the support of the Bureau, liaises with the relevant authorities in these countries and invite them to synchronize the realization of their cetacean monitoring campaigns with the surveys under the ACCOBAMS LTMP and to ensure a high level of harmonisation of the surveying protocols. This will allow a better use of the available resources and means to ensure the evaluation of the cetacean population status in the whole Agreement area.

Programmes aimed at monitoring parameters other than those covered by the ACCOBAMS LTMP (e.g. cetacean stranding monitoring programmes, long-term passive acoustic monitoring, monitoring of bycatch, etc.) should be encouraged since they provide additional data that complement the information gathered under the ACCOBAMS LTMP and are a crucial component to the conservation of cetaceans.

Monitoring protocols and platforms

The ACCOBAMS LTMP will use the multispecies monitoring protocols developed and used for the surveys carried out within the framework of the ASI Project in 2018²⁵ and 2019, during which the aerial surveys, using appropriate airplanes and skilled and/or trained observers, enabled to collect data for obtaining robust estimates of density and abundance for most cetacean species in the Agreement Area. The synoptic surveys of the ACCOBAMS LTMP will be mainly based on aerial surveys. However, shipboard surveys shall be used for species requiring passive acoustic monitoring techniques and/or in areas where flying permits cannot be obtained.

During the whole process of data collection and processing, special attention should be paid to ensure data quality. The parameters to be considered by the ACCOBAMS LTMP are those needed to estimate abundance and distribution of different cetacean populations in the Agreement Area and to provide information on human activities impacting them.

Periodic surveys of the ACCOBAMS LTMP shall be implemented during the same season²⁶ to ensure data comparability between surveys from different years. Their data will not inform therefore on the seasonal distribution of the species. This kind of information could be generated by other monitoring programmes undertaken at different temporal planning and smaller spatial scales or using opportunistic platforms (ferries, fishing boats, etc.).

²⁵ Links to the field protocols for aerial surveys and boat-based surveys developed and used by the ASI Project to be added.

²⁶ The surveys shall be conducted preferably in summer season and their timing will take into account the weather specificities of each region.

To take advantage of possible future technological and/or methodological advances in the monitoring of cetaceans, the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee will closely follow up the development in cetacean monitoring techniques in order to propose adaptations and/or improvements to the monitoring protocols under the ACCOBAMS LTMP.

Monitoring targets

The ACCOBAMS LTMP will primarily target cetacean species and threats having a direct impact on them. However, to maximize the benefit from involved surveying effort, observation data relating to other species of megafauna and/or other threatened species may be collected, if observation teams are sufficiently skilled to ensure data quality, particularly with regard to the identification of observed species. The following taxa could be covered, in addition to cetaceans: turtles, monk seal, large fish, including elasmobranch, species and birds.

The ACCOBAMS LTMP should also provide the framework for the collection of information about the presence, during the monitoring transects, if relevant, of commercial ships, fishing boats, aquaculture farms, leisure boats, acoustic survey ships, oil slicks, marine litter and any other elements related to human activities that may threaten cetaceans. The collection of data concerning these human activities should allow the identification of areas where there is a high risk of adverse interactions with cetaceans, for example via spatial modelling approaches.

Data management and use

The Secretariat of ACCOBAMS is the depository of the data sets collected under the ACCOBAMS LTMP. Each Focal Point may receive, upon request, a copy of the data sets collected.

ACCOBAMS being an Intergovernmental Agreement aimed at promoting conservation of cetaceans, it therefore appears appropriate and advisable that data collected under the ACCOBAMS LTMP be made available for the widest possible use for conservation related purposes. Therefore, raw data generated by the ACCOBAMS LTMP may be made available, upon request, to scientists and partner organisations for use in conservation related purposes. Their dissemination and use in scientific publications and awareness-raising material shall be subject to Terms of Use that take into account the ACCOBAMS objectives and possible requirements by Parties and donors. The Terms of Use will be available on the website of ACCOBAMS.

For each synoptic survey, the Secretariat of ACCOBAMS shall establish a data analysis process in close consultation with the Scientific Coordinator. The data analysis will be conducted *a minima* by one skilled expert with the review/guidance of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee. If funding allows, the analysis process may be conducted by a team made of an *ad hoc* group of experts and other skilled scientists that Parties might designate to contribute in the data analysis.

The expert / the data analysis team shall produce a report rendering the outcomes of its/their works, focusing on cetacean abundance and distribution estimates, as well as on trends when possible. The report shall be reviewed by the Scientific Committee of ACCOBAMS and published by the Secretariat.

At the ACCOBAMS level, the ultimate use of outcomes from synoptic surveys will be mainly for the development of conservation recommendations elaborated by the Scientific Committee that will serve as a basis of draft Resolutions prepared by the Secretariat and reviewed by the Extended Bureau with the view of submitting them to the Parties for consideration. The outcomes of surveys conducted under the ACCOBAMS LTMP may also help in the decision-making

process in relation to conservation at national level and within the framework of other multilateral agreements concerned by the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources.

Skills availability/Capacity building

The accuracy and reliability of data collected within the framework of the ACCOBAMS LTMP will largely depend on the availability of skilled and/or trained observers able to identify target species and to properly apply monitoring protocols. As part of the ASI project, training sessions were organized for observers to familiarize with the monitoring protocols and to train in safety procedures to be followed where necessary. These sessions made it possible to train several observers from countries of the ACCOBAMS Area who had also the opportunity to improve their monitoring skills during surveys carried out in 2018 and 2019. The future implementation of the LTMP can therefore count on these skills. However, considering that some trained observers would no longer be available for future periodic surveys, the Secretariat should ensure for each monitoring survey under the ACCOBAMS LTMP the availability of qualified observers and cruise/team leaders²⁷. To this end, the LTMP should include a training component targeting all actors of the field surveys (observers, team leaders, etc.) allowing the newly involved participants to qualify for their tasks and the skilled ones to brush up their skills and familiarise with new methodological updates. The trainings should include, in addition to issues directly related to data collection, other relevant aspects covering safety, logistics, administrative procedures, etc.

Funding

The financial needs for the implementation of the ACCOBAMS LTMP are relatively high, which requires a particular effort to mobilize necessary funds. Furthermore, the effective implementation of such a long-term monitoring programme will require that assistance be provided, in a spirit of solidarity, to some Range States for capacity building and to contribute in covering their field surveying costs under the ACCOBAMS LTMP.

It is therefore important to establish a long-term mechanism for financing programme actions that ensures the sustainability of the programme and contributes to rationalizing available resources from donors and national authorities.

The Secretariat in close collaboration with the Bureau of ACCOBAMS will investigate funding options and will liaise with possible donors, as well as with relevant national authorities and relevant multilateral organisations with the view of securing the needed funds for the synoptic surveys.

Links with relevant initiatives

Cetacean monitoring programmes aimed at evaluating populations and their distribution in the ACCOBAMS Area are implemented within the framework of several initiatives at national and also multilateral level.

At national level, member countries of the European Union need to regularly undertake cetacean monitoring programs to collect the information required for their reporting under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive as well as in relation to the assessment of the Environmental Status under Descriptor 1 (Biodiversity) of the EU Marine Strategy Framework

²⁷ Given the crucial role of cruise leaders in planning and conducting surveys as well as in overcoming difficulties faced during the different survey stages, their appointment is among the issues demanding a special attention.

Directive (MSFD). Such monitoring programmes could also be useful for other European Union relevant legal frameworks.

In the Mediterranean, other cetacean monitoring programmes are expected within the framework of the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP) of the EcAp process under the Barcelona Convention. A similar initiative is also expected for the Black Sea within the framework of the Bucharest Convention. Most of these monitoring programmes have similarities with the ACCOBAMS LTMP, in terms of monitoring targets and protocols. The estimates on abundance and distribution of cetacean species that will be generated on a regular basis by the ACCOBAMS LTMP will constitute very useful data to report on favourable Conservation Status under the EU Habitats Directive and to assess Good Environmental Status (GES), both under EU MSFD and IMAP of Barcelona Convention's EcAp process.

RESOLUTION 8.11
CETACEAN POPULATION GENETICS

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 3.9 “Guidelines for the establishment of a system of tissue banks within the ACCOBAMS Area and ethical code”,

Recalling also that the Scientific Committee of ACCOBAMS has recognized the need for institutions dedicated to the preservation of body parts from marine mammals of the ACCOBAMS Area, and that such Institutions should: a) promote non-invasive or post-mortal collection of samples from cetaceans living in the ACCOBAMS Area and adjacent waters; b) prepare such samples for long term storage; and c) distribute them to the community of marine mammal researchers,

Taking into consideration Recommendations from the ACCOBAMS Workshop on Data Collection on Cetacean Population Genetics, organized on September 2022,

1. *Encourages* Parties to take note of the report of the ACCOBAMS Workshop on Data Collection on Cetacean Population Genetics, as well as the associated ACCOBAMS Best Practices on Cetacean Population Genetics;
2. *Invites* Partners conducting sample collection and research on population genetics to apply the ACCOBAMS Best Practices on Cetacean Population Genetics in their work and to regularly provide the Secretariat with relevant information to update the online cetacean sample database, as well as the list of suitable genetics laboratories and new scientific publications;
3. *Encourages* Parties to collect updated information regarding research results on population genetics and to include it in their National Report;
4. *Requests* the Scientific Committee and the Secretariat to:
 - a. review the process described in Resolution 4.18 on guidelines on the granting of exceptions to Article II, paragraph 1, for the purpose of non-lethal in situ research in the Agreement Area, especially regarding advices to be obtained from the Scientific Committee before the Party concerned decides whether to issue a research permit;
 - b. encourage research efforts on the gaps and priorities identified during the workshop, taking into account Appendix 1 of the ACCOBAMS Best Practices on Cetacean Population Genetics;
 - c. organize an online event to promote the diffusion of the databases and best practices to all interested stakeholders;
5. *Asks* the Scientific Committee to:
 - a. report on the work done on cetacean population genetics at the Ninth Meeting of the Parties;

- b. provide urgent advice on recommended procedures for individual identification and the origin of captive individuals using forensic genetics, especially in the Black Sea for bottlenose dolphins.

RESOLUTION 8.12
IUCN RED LIST STATUS OF CETACEAN SPECIES IN 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:

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,

Deeply concerned about the critical consequences of the armed aggression and military activities in the Black and Azov Seas within the ranges of species listed in the Red List,

Taking into account proposals to develop a Black Sea cetacean conservation plan, in the form of separate conservation plans for each of the three species,

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 species²⁸ 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

²⁸ These classifications are provisional as the assessments are under review by IUCN and the IUCN SSC Cetacean Specialist Group.

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 have been assessed in 2018 as Vulnerable, while in 2006 they had been classified as Data Deficient, and that Risso's dolphins, previously 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	Endangered ¹
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	Vulnerable ¹
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	Endangered ¹

¹ These classifications are provisional as the assessments are under review by IUCN and the IUCN SSC Cetacean Specialist Group.

Species	Previous IUCN Red List status		IUCN Red List status following the 2018-2021 assessments	
	Killer whale <i>Orcinus orca</i>	Mediterranean subpopulation	Not Evaluated	Strait of Gibraltar subpopulation
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 or Vulnerable and to take appropriate conservation actions, including in case of species for which Conservation Management Plans have not yet been developed;
5. *Calls on* Parties to take into account the military and anthropogenic impacts of military operations during the implementation of Conservation Management Plan in the Black Sea;
6. *Decides* that the present Resolution replaces Resolutions 3.19 and 6.15.

RESOLUTION 8.13
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* Parties 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, or
 - b. Adapt, for this purpose, existing national relevant programmes, and
 - c. Integrate 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.

RESOLUTION 8.14
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 as presented in Resolution 8.12 on IUCN Red List,

1. *Takes note* of the draft CMPs as presented in document MOP8/2022/Inf29;
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 CMPs 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 Türkiye;

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 Türkiye;

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, Türkiye, and Ukraine;

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

RESOLUTION 8.15
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 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*:

- 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, in coordination with the Scientific Committee, 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 perform detailed necropsies and analyse tissues in order to determine the cause of 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 to 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.

RESOLUTION 8.16
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 (Rev.MOP9) 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 recently adopted resolution on enhancing the conservation of cetaceans in the GFCM area of application (Resolution GFCM/43/2019/2), and the two 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), and the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear (2019);

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. *Encourages Parties* 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 align by catch thresholds with those developed by other ongoing processes;

2. *Encourages* 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. *Requests* 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 Scientific Committee to review 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. *Encourages* 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;
9. *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 benefits of mitigation measures;
10. *Invites* the Secretariat to pursue its collaboration with the Secretariats of GFCM, Barcelona Convention / SPA-RAC and Bucharest Convention, and to strengthen its involvement in their relevant work and initiatives;
11. *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;

12. *Encourages* the Secretariat to provide technical assistance and support to Parties engaged in the assessment and reduction of depredation caused by cetaceans in fisheries;

The Black Sea

13. *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;
14. *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);
15. *Urges* the relevant authorities to enforce existing laws and regulations in the region to minimize IUU fishing;
16. *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;
17. *Encourages* the further testing and development of bycatch mitigation measures, without delaying the implementation of immediate mitigation actions, including the use of pingers;
18. *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;
19. *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

20. *Reiterates* its great concern for cetacean bycatch levels in some areas of the Mediterranean Sea;
21. *Requests* the Scientific Committee to review the results of the 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;

22. *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;
23. *Recommends* the continuation of such studies in the Mediterranean Sea to monitor and assess bycatch and depredation and ensure that mitigation measures are effective;
24. *Decides* that the present Resolution replaces Resolution 7.11.

RESOLUTION 8.17
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 ACCOBAMS 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 in implementing 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 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,

Noting that the military aggression in the BS results in intense noise-generating military activities which have devastating impacts on cetaceans, their prey and the wider Black Sea ecosystem

Recognizing that the effects of loud noises by military activities, or other unexpected events, including explosions and powerful active sonars, on cetaceans can range from displacing animals from their normal habitat, and lower reproductive rates, through to causing physical harm in certain situations

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 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,

Welcoming Welcoming the outcome of the work carried out by the EU technical group on underwater noise, including their 2014 technical guidelines,

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,

Reiterating the importance for Parties to grant permits, on a priority basis, for activities in their national waters to industrial companies employing ACCOBAMS Highly Qualified MMOs/PAM operators,

1. *Reaffirms* that there is a need for ongoing and further internationally coordinated efforts, including research addressing the impact of underwater noise in order to provide adequate protection to cetaceans;
2. *Invites* the 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:
 - MOP8/2022/Inf43: Second Noise Hotspots Report: updated overview of the noise hotspots in the ACCOBAMS Area;
 - MOP8/2022/Inf44: Methodological Guide v3.1 - "Guidance on underwater noise mitigation measures";

3. *Encourages* Parties to avoid or minimize the effects of the introduction of potentially harmful impulsive noise, such as noise produced by airguns, sparkers, active sonars, within areas of importance for cetaceans, like Pelagos Sanctuary, Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs), in compliance with the relevant legislation;
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 ASCOBANS Secretariat to explore the potential for joint outreach efforts to national navies and NATO to mitigate noise from military activities and exercises;
 - b. request a study subject to availability of funding, on the effects of underwater noise generated by the foreseeable increase of windfarms in the ACCOBAMS Area, addressing all the phases of windfarm, from siting surveys to decommissioning. The study should take into consideration relevant existing guidelines, such as the CMS document on Best Available Technology (BAT) and Best Environmental Practices (BET) for three noise sources: shipping, seismic airgun surveys, and pile driving;
 - c. develop joint projects and initiatives for simulating mitigation measures, such as speed reduction, and related benefits, with the aim of reducing the impact of noise on cetacean habitats;
 - d. 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 private sector stakeholders aware of these developments;
 - e. organize trainings for national entities on noise monitoring, including analyses of PAM collected data, in some identified priority areas;
 - f. liaise with IMO Secretariat and their Working Group on noise in order to present NETCCOBAMS results about shipping noise impact on marine mammals aiming at proposing mitigation measures, such as speed reduction or re-routing;
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 to 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 into multi-environmental benefits, including the reduction of underwater noise and greenhouse gases emissions, as well as of 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. note that the issue of underwater noise pollution from ships can only be effectively addressed through IMO measures and international cooperation, and that applying mandatory measures provides an equal playing field level for the private sector;

- f. invite port authorities to develop incentive programmes that encourage the monitoring and reduction of underwater noise emissions, and to report regularly on all noise-generating activities to improve the mapping of Noise Hotspots Report (MOP8/2022/Inf43);
 - g. engage in trials measuring the impact of speed reduction and other operational measures aiming at 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 for publicly available data, without duplicating existing national marine noise registers;
 - 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;
 - j. to ask IMO to implement mitigation measures, such as speed reduction or re-routing in order to reduce shipping noise, especially in critical habitat or high-risk zones, considering the information available from NETCCOBAMS;
 - k. to consider implementing mitigation measures, such as speed reduction or re-routing, in order to reduce shipping noise in their exclusive economic zone or territorial sea, especially in critical habitats or high risk zones, considering the information available from NETCCOBAMS;
6. *Requests* the Joint CMS/ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS Noise Working Group (JNWG) to:
- a. review a study on the effects of underwater noise generated by the foreseeable increase of windfarms in the ACCOBAMS Area, addressing all the phases of windfarm from siting surveys to decommissioning;
 - b. examine noise models available in NETCCOBAMS (ACCOBAMS Resolution 8.7 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 locations throughout the ACCOBAMS Area, and taking account of the diverse sensitivities of different cetacean species;
 - c. 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 scientific evidence for establishing “quiet zones” both in space and time;
7. Asks the Scientific Committee to develop a post-war Plan for the Black Sea region towards the mitigation of warfare consequences on cetaceans, their habitat and their preys;
8. *Requests* 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.

RESOLUTION 8.18
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 the 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, with a view to enable a better identification of areas

where cetaceans, especially fin and sperm whales, are likely (or potentially likely) to suffer from ship strikes, based on risk models incorporating information on whale and vessel distribution, as well as prediction of collision rates, notably 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 number 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 Cetacean Critical Habitat process, and of the importance of reporting via a number of *fora*, including media;
 - b. further evaluation, including cost/benefit analysis, and dissemination of information on mitigation approaches;
 - c. fostering 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 out within the Pelagos Agreement area;
 - f. improved protocols for the identification of ship strikes through necropsies;
 - g. investigation of incidence with regard to the nature of ship strikes injuries within photo-identification studies (such as through the ship strikes project funded by the Pelagos Agreement);
 - h. encouraging studies that improve access to the temporal and spatial distribution of shipping, particularly vessels that do not transmit AIS information;
 - i. encouraging studies that improve the understanding of temporal and spatial distribution of cetaceans within the region, including telemetry studies;
 - j. encouraging 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 in the ACCOBAMS Area, where ship strikes with the following species are frequent:
 - Strait of Gibraltar - fin and sperm whales;
 - Balearic Islands - fin and sperm whales; Balearic Basin and Catalan Coast – fin and sperm whales;
 - Eastern Alborán Sea - fin and sperm whales;
 - Pelagos Sanctuary - fin and sperm whales;
 - 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 a proper evaluation, prioritisation and monitoring of ship strikes as a threat posed to various populations and regions; and (ii) assist in the development of mitigation measures;

6. *Recommends* Parties to support the designation process by IMO of a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) in the North West Mediterranean Sea so to mitigate the risk of collision between cetaceans and ships. This area includes ‘North West Mediterranean Sea Slope and Canyon System’ IMMA, the Pelagos Sanctuary, the Spanish Migration Cetacean Corridor Marine Protected Area, and the area between it and the coast;

7. *Asks* the Scientific Committee to assist Spain, France, Italy and Monaco in developing prospective protection measures in the PSSA once adopted;

8. *Recommends* that the Parties and the Secretariat pursue their cooperation efforts with IMO, as well as other intergovernmental organizations, national authorities, 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.

RESOLUTION 8.19
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 about 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 the 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 in 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 Pelagos Sanctuary, Gibraltar Strait, and south of Portugal);

9. *Endorses* the results of the study 'Identifying Whale Watching Hotspots in the ACCOBAMS Area' (ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf48);
10. *Encourages* 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 through NETCCOBAMS the information collected;
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 cetacean²⁹ watching activities in the ACCOBAMS Area

Author: Gianna Minton

Reviewed by: The ACCOBAMS Whale Watching Working Group

1. Introduction

Background and context

When conducted responsibly, whale watching activities have the potential to generate income and livelihoods for coastal communities, as well as contribute to public awareness and scientific understanding of whales, dolphins and porpoises and their conservation needs¹. However, when the industry develops too fast, or operators engage in irresponsible practices, whale watching also has the potential to become another source of pressure on wild cetacean populations that may already be suffering decreased fitness or population declines from bycatch, habitat degradation, climate change, and other pervasive threats^{e.g. 2,3}.

Aware of this risk, ACCOBAMS has demonstrated a proactive stance on the promotion of responsible whale watching activities from its inception. In Section 1.c) of Annex 2 to ACCOBAMS, the Parties require that ‘impact assessments be carried out in order to provide a basis for either allowing or prohibiting the continuation or the future development of activities that may affect cetaceans or their habitat in the Agreement area, *including tourism and cetacean-watching*, as well as establishing the conditions under which such activities may be conducted’. ACCOBAMS Resolution 4.7 sets forth clear guidelines for commercial cetacean watching in the ACCOBAMS Area, and Resolution 6.20, Annex 2, expands this advice by providing a detailed description of the standards associated with the High Quality Whale Watching (HQWW)[®] Certificate, and the code of conduct operators must follow to achieve that label. Through these resolutions, ACCOBAMS provides very clear guidance for tour operators on how to handle vessels and run their tours in a manner that minimises impacts to cetaceans and maximises the potential conservation benefits of their tours.

To complement these guidelines for operators, this document is intended to support managers and other stakeholders responsible for designing, implementing, and enforcing management measures to ensure that whale watching activities are conducted in a manner that minimises potentially negative impacts on the cetaceans that are the focus of tourism activities. As such, it takes a higher-level approach and considers multiple aspects of effective management and regulation of whale watching in the ACCOBAMS Area, with a focus on recommendations to those stakeholders who may be acting at local, national or regional levels. Technically, this document is an update to Annex 3 of Resolution 6.20. Although that annex is titled ‘Proposed guidelines for monitoring programs aimed at maximising the chance of detecting potential adverse impacts of whale watching activities on individual cetaceans and on populations’, it also deals with broader aspects of management of whale watching. As such, the title of this new document has been changed to reflect a broader remit.

Definitions

For the purpose of this document a few core terms are defined as follows:

²⁹ In the Guidelines, the term whale watching is used as a term that includes all cetaceans – whales, dolphins and porpoises.

- **Whale watching:** We use the definition of whale watching used for the landmark study by Hoyt, 2001¹: 'tours by boat, air or from land, formal or informal, with at least some commercial aspect, to see, swim with, and/or listen to any of the some 83 species of whales, dolphins and porpoises.' Recreational whale watch tourism conducted by individuals with private recreational vessels is NOT included in the scope of this study.
- **Managers:** Managers can include representatives of government bodies responsible for regulating tourism, wildlife, protected areas, or law enforcement. However, management teams responsible for designing, implementing and enforcing whale watching management frameworks can include a much wider range of stakeholders, including local communities, NGOs, tour operators and research organisations among others.
- **Target species:** These are the cetacean species that are most often the focus of whale watching activities in a particular area.

A note on voluntary versus legally enforceable regulations

Although some studies show that voluntary guidelines, especially if industry-led and self-enforced can be an effective means of promoting responsible whale watching^{e.g. 4,5}, in many cases researchers and managers alike have concluded that voluntary measures can be associated with low rates of compliance, especially if some operators feel that they are potentially losing business by adhering to voluntary guidelines when unscrupulous 'competitors' are getting their customers closer to whales^{6,7}. Legally enforceable management measures create a level playing field by ensuring that all operators are held to the same standard. While many of the measures below can be implemented in either voluntary or legally enforceable frameworks, some will require some level of legal underpinning to be truly effective.

In 2021 a review of whale watching regulations within the ACCOBAMS Area found that out of 26 countries replying to the survey, only ten had legal definitions for whale watching, only two had implemented licensing systems specifically for whale watching activities, and only five had legally enforceable whale watching regulations in place.

Structure of the document

This document has been structured to include sections that focus on nine different aspects that may be considered when designing a whale watching management framework. Each section begins with a brief summary of the rationale for addressing this aspect of whale watching management. This is followed by a 'menu' of tools and strategies available with some references to peer-reviewed publications and case studies. Each section is concluded with a bullet-point summary of recommendations for managers.

2. Measures to assess target populations and the potential impacts of tourism, including the concept of 'carrying capacity'

Rationale

Whale watching activities can benefit coastal communities with increased tourism, employment and income⁸, and can also help to raise awareness of cetaceans and their conservation needs among tourists themselves⁹⁻¹¹. However, there is strong evidence that without proper measures in place whale watching can

also have a range of negative impacts on the individuals and populations that are the focus of tourism activities^{2,12}. These impacts can range from short-term disturbances to feeding or resting, to displacement of cetacean populations from core habitat and long-term impacts on reproduction and fitness^{e.g.13-16}. The potential severity of these impacts will depend on a combination of factors¹⁷, including (but not limited to):

- *the species of cetaceans that are the focus of the tourism*: some species are more sensitive to disturbance from vessels and underwater noise than others, depending on their habitat preferences, behavioural patterns, and the frequencies they use for communication and echolocation¹⁸.
- *the abundance, distribution and conservation status of the cetaceans in question*: If many different species or large populations of cetaceans are available for tourism activities in a particular area, the 'pressure' of whale watching activities can be spread out among individuals or groups. Conversely, in settings where a single small (possibly threatened or declining) population is the focus of repeated attention from whale watching, a small number of individual animals will bear the burden of all the impacts associated with the industry in that area^{e.g.19}.
- *the way in which cetaceans are using the whale watching area and the behaviours that are likely to be disrupted*: If whale watching occurs in areas or at times of year in which animals are engaged in critical life-functions, like feeding, resting, or nursing their young, the consequences of repeatedly disrupting these activities are likely to be more severe^{16,20-24}. Similarly, cetaceans are more likely to be distracted from some types of behaviours than others, with resting and feeding being the behaviours most likely to be abandoned in the presence of whale watching vessels²⁴⁻³¹.
- *the abundance, frequency and duration of whale watching encounters with focal populations*: for all species, regardless of abundance or behavioural state, the potential impacts of whale watching activities will become more severe as the number of vessels, and the duration and frequency of vessel encounters increases^{e.g.32-34}.
- *the nature of whale watching activities, including the platforms that are used*: Land-based whale watching causes little or no impact to the cetacean populations that are observed. Vessel-based tourism can cause varying levels of disturbance based on the way they approach cetaceans and the type of noise generated by their engines^{35,36}. Non-motorised vessels (e.g. Kayaks) do not generate underwater noise, but may disturb cetaceans in other ways³⁷, while in-water encounters between swimmers and cetaceans have also been documented to have potentially negative impacts^{20,38,39}.

In light of the potential for negative impacts, and the factors that can determine the severity of impacts, those responsible for managing whale watching activities have an obligation to ensure that the necessary data is available on target populations and the to assess the potential impact of the current or proposed whale watching activities. Ideally this type of assessment will take place *before* whale watching activities commence. However, if that has not been implemented, an assessment is recommended as soon as possible to determine whether ongoing activities are sustainable.

Tools and examples

- *Methods to assess the distribution, abundance and trends of cetaceans* are available from multiple sources and are too extensive to be covered in detail in this document. ACCOBAMS has an excellent track record in promoting good practice in this area, and the Mediterranean is one of the best

surveyed bodies of water in the world, with multiple reviews of published studies⁴⁰, and regular vessel-based and aerial surveys to assess abundance, distribution and trends⁴¹

- *Methods to evaluate the impact of whale watching activities on cetacean populations* will ideally be implemented before whale watching activities (or a new category of activities) commence. In this case, the evaluation should start with a desk-based review of peer-reviewed literature and case studies featuring the same (or similar) species and whale watching platforms that occur (or are planned) in the area in question. The IWC-CMS Online Whale Watching handbook has three resources that may be useful to gather information on impacts that have been documented in other whale watching locations: 1) a searchable database of literature (<https://wwhandbook.iwc.int/en/downloadable-resources/searchable-database-of-scientific-literature>), 2) a table of documented impacts (<https://wwhandbook.iwc.int/en/industry-support/training-for-captains-guides>) and 3) a table of Case Studies (<https://wwhandbook.iwc.int/en/responsible-management/case-studies>).
- *Pilot studies*: Following a literature review, managers may consider conducting a pilot study in which a single or small number of operators are issued provisional licenses to conduct whale watching activities that can be carefully monitored to document the possible impacts on the target population. The results of such a pilot study can then be used to inform the design and implementation of an effective management framework. New et al. 2015⁴² provide an extensive review of methods to model and assess whale watching impacts. These are summarised and referenced in a table in Annex 1. Pilot studies or modelling can also be used to assess the potential impact of a new category of activity (e.g. swimming with cetaceans), before it is permitted on a wider scale^{43,44}.
- *Defining the whale watching ‘carrying capacity’ of a targeted geographical area*: The whale watching ‘carrying capacity’ of a particular area can be defined as the maximum amount of whale watching activity that can be undertaken in a defined geographical area without incurring negative impacts to the target cetacean populations and/or their surrounding environment⁴⁵⁻⁴⁷. Studies to determine carrying capacities have been limited to date, but are becoming more common. Examples include a study conducted in Praia del Forte, north-eastern Brazil⁴⁵ and an ongoing study in the Sado Estuary of Portugal. The outcome of the assessment can be used to determine the maximum number of vessels, daily tours, tourists, or ‘contact hours’ that should be permitted to operate in the area in question. These studies normally also assume that licensed operators will follow a code of conduct that minimises their disturbance to the populations in question (see Section 6 below).

Recommendations

- *If possible, ensure that a full suite of baseline information on the abundance, distribution, habitat use, and conservation status of cetacean populations in the target area is available before whale watching activities commence, or a new category of activity (e.g. in-water interactions) is being considered.*
 - *Conduct desk-based literature studies to determine what the potential impact of proposed whale watching activities could be on these populations, based on available information about similar species and tourism platforms.*
 - *Conduct small-scale pilot studies to test and document the potential impacts of whale watching activities before activities are allowed to commence on a wider scale. Annex 1 provides a list of study approaches with references to peer-reviewed studies that can serve as examples.*
 - *Use the results of the second and third steps above to determine the likely ‘carrying capacity’ of a particular area targeted for whale watching, and design an appropriate management plan that will not exceed that capacity.*
 - *If whale watching activities are already underway, steps 2-4 can still be conducted and current management adapted.*
-

3. Monitoring and adaptive management

Rationale

Management measures conceived based on the best available knowledge and tools available at a particular time may not always remain relevant or adequate as the industry, habitat, or targeted cetacean populations evolve and change over time. Continued monitoring of cetacean populations (especially their abundance and trends, but also their health and indications of stress) as well as of the industry, will allow managers to determine whether whale watching practices may be causing harm, and therefore require changes to the suite of management tools in place⁴⁸⁻⁵⁰. For example, targeted populations may suffer declines or reduced fitness or increased stress from environmental pressures (for example, fisheries bycatch, increased shipping, coastal construction, climate-change caused shifts in prey), requiring stricter guidelines to limit additional pressure from whale watching. In other settings, tour operator numbers may suddenly expand rapidly, or tour operators who were once happy to comply with a voluntary code of conduct may become more competitive with each other leading to lower compliance and more disturbance to cetaceans^{6,51}. These scenarios require a re-assessment of current management measures to determine whether they need to be adapted to ensure the well-being and long-term presence and survival of the targeted cetacean populations.

Tools and examples

The following categories of tools can be used to conduct regular monitoring, and ensure that results are used to guide policy adaptations.

- *Involvement of research organisations* in management teams to ensure that the necessary expertise is available to design and implement monitoring studies, and detect possible negative trends in population numbers, health, or compliance⁵² (see Annex 1 for examples of methods used to study

impacts of whale watching on cetaceans and to monitor the behaviour of whale watching tour operators);

- *A well-defined monitoring and review plan* to detect potential changes in cetacean populations and/or the whale watching industry (see Section 2 and Annex 1 for examples on how studies can be conducted). Some resources advocate 5- or 10 year cycles for evaluation and review of management plans⁵⁰.
- *The definition of ‘triggers’ or limits of acceptable change (LAC)*⁵⁰ that would require a suspension or re-evaluation of current practices and management measures either as part of, or outside of the normal cycle of review. These can be based on observed/measured changes in the target cetacean population, the industry, or the environment.

Recommendations

- *Encourage regular monitoring and evaluation of whale watching activities and the cetacean populations that they target, involving research organisations to detect and measure the potential impacts on cetacean behaviour, distribution, welfare, health or abundance.*
 - *Define triggers or limits of acceptable change (LAC) that will require a formal suspension or re-evaluation of current practices.*
 - *Be prepared to introduce new measures (see tools below) to further mitigate the impact of whale watching on the targeted populations.*
-

4. Development of effective management teams (stakeholder involvement)

Rationale

Many different categories of stakeholders have a role to play in the design, implementation, monitoring, enforcement, and adaptation of an effective whale watching management strategy⁵². These stakeholders range from government agencies and protected area managers to the operators themselves, local communities, cetacean and social science researchers, and marine and coastal law enforcement bodies. Excluding one group from participation in management decisions can lead to alienation, non-compliance, or other pitfalls that ultimately may result in negative impacts on the target populations⁴⁷. The composition of effective management teams may vary from one location to another, as may the priorities and strategies that are identified.

Tools and examples

- *Including different categories of stakeholders:* The IWC Whale Watching Handbook⁵³ features 22 case studies that illustrate different aspects of whale watching management, distilling strengths, weaknesses and lessons learned from each study. These almost unanimously cite the involvement of multiple categories of stakeholders in management as a strength in their management approach. The handbook also provides a table (adapted from Hoyt 2007⁵²) that outlines the different roles

different categories of stakeholders can play: <https://wwhandbook.iwc.int/en/responsible-management/stakeholder-engagement-and-adaptive-management>.

- *Formal frameworks for participation or consultation:* To ensure their participation, stakeholders or their representatives can be members of a formal management body, or managers can involve them through regular public consultations.

Recommendation

- *Identify all the stakeholders that have a role to play in assessing, designing, implementing, monitoring, enforcing or adapting management, and determine how each category can most effectively be involved and consulted in a formal, recognised manner.*
-

5. Licensing or certification measures

Rationale

The scope and scale of potential impacts of whale watching activities on target populations will most logically be proportional to the number of vessels and tours that are operating in a particular location. Several studies have demonstrated increasing levels of reactions (for example changes in swimming patterns or vocal behaviour, suspension of feeding, or resting etc.) with increasing numbers of vessels or increased time that animals are exposed to vessels^{54,55}. One effective way to limit the potential disturbance to cetaceans is to limit the number of operators or vessels in an area by requiring all whale watching vessels to be licensed, and to limit the number of licenses that are issued (perhaps in line with an established carrying capacity – see Section 2). A 2021 study has demonstrated that disturbance from whale watching vessels may vary from one type of vessel and/or engine category to another, recommending that this be taken into consideration when licensing operators⁵⁶. Licensing can also be a useful means to maintain an accurate overview of the number of whale-watching tour operators and their activities, and to ensure that licensed operators adhere to certain conditions to obtain, and retain their licence.

Tools and examples

- *Legal underpinning for licensing:* Effective licensing or permitting of whale watching activity requires a legal definition of whale watching or marine mammal tourism. As of 2021, Spain and Portugal are the only countries in the ACCBOAMS area that have legal definitions of whale watching (In Portugal, Decreto-Lei-n.o-9/2006, and in Spain Decree-1727_2007). Subsequently are also the only two countries to have whale watching licensing schemes in place.
- *Capping the number of licenses:* The number of licenses issued may be limited per port/harbour or province and linked to formal studies to assess carrying capacity⁴⁵ (see Section 2), or it may be established based on 'instinct'.
- *Standards or codes of conduct as conditions of licensing:* Alternatively, the number of licences may not necessarily be limited, but could still serve to improve management and mitigate impacts of

whale watching by placing conditions on licensing that hold operators to a minimum standard. These conditions/requirements can include the following elements (as they do in Portugal, for example):

- A prior permit/licence to operate as a commercial tourism business with proper registration with the chambre of commerce etc.;
 - Proper registration of vessels with the relevant port authorities, and specification of the exact vessels that will be used for whale watching activities;
 - A definition of the geographical area in which the operator intends to conduct tours;
 - Demonstration of appropriate qualifications for each crew member (skipper, deckhand, naturalist guide, etc.);
 - Proof that at least one crew member has been designated and trained to deliver an educational component to the tour (see Section 9);
 - An agreement to adhere to a code of good conduct (see Section 6);
 - An agreement to contribute to research and knowledge of the target species by sharing data on cetacean sightings with the relevant authorities at the end of each season/year (see Section 10).
- *Monitoring and enforcement:* Licencing schemes require a system of monitoring and enforcement to be effective, as there must be penalties for operators who offer tours without licences or operators who do not comply with the conditions of licensing. This requires collaboration with the coast guard or similar bodies, who must be familiar with the laws and the penalties or fines that can be imposed for non-compliance (See Section 7).
 - *Voluntary certification:* A voluntary form of licensing, is a certification scheme that operators can choose to apply to, such as the 'High Quality Whale Watching®' Certificate.

Recommendations

- *Work toward a legal definition of whale watching as a category of commercial tourism activity for which specific regulations and licencing measures can be put in place.*
 - *Use available data on cetacean populations and the possible impact of whale watching activities to determine whether the number of licenses issued should be limited to a certain number of vessels and/or tours.*
 - *Determine (ideally in collaboration with the multi-stakeholder management team) what conditions should be tied to the issuing and renewing of licenses to operate whale watching tours.*
 - *Maintain a database of licensed operators and their vessels, and consider regular communications through newsletters and/or (virtual) meetings at the start and/or end of each season.*
 - *Ensure effective monitoring and enforcement of licensing requirements (see Section 7).*
-

6. Measures to regulate approaches, frequency, length and type of exposure in encounters with cetaceans

Rationale

As outlined in Section 2, studies have demonstrated that the scope and scale of potential impacts of whale watching activities on cetaceans can vary depending on the species in question and the way that vessels are operated in proximity to cetaceans. Studies indicate that whales' and dolphins' reactions to boat presence vary with the distance of approaches e.g. ⁵⁷, the number of vessels within a certain radius of the animals e.g. ^{54,55}, the direction from which vessels approach⁴³, and with the presence of calves⁵⁸. Codes of conduct have proven effective in reducing the impact of whale watching on cetaceans, by regulating the speed and direction of approaches, limiting number of vessels that can be within a certain radius of whales or dolphins, and dictating whether or not swimmers are allowed to enter the water with cetaceans, and if so, under which specific conditions⁵⁹.

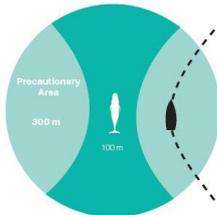
Tools and examples

- *Legally enforceable vs. voluntary guidelines:* As noted in Section 1, Codes of conduct including vessel approaches etc, can be voluntary or legally enforceable.
- *Guiding principles:* The details of effective regulations or codes of conduct may vary by species and/or location to ensure that they are appropriately tailored to local conditions. Many approach guidelines condone closer approaches for dolphins than for whales, for example, and many also apply stricter measures to whale or dolphin groups with calves than those without. Some guidelines stipulate that Critically Endangered species (such as the North Atlantic Right Whale on the NE coast of the United States) should not be approached for tourism at all. While tailoring guidelines to local needs is important, there are a number of guiding principles have been identified by the International Whaling

Commission. Those developing guidelines should be driven by the principle that disturbance to natural behaviour should be minimised, and as much as possible the nature and duration of the interaction between a cetacean and a vessel (or swimmer) should be determined by the animal and not the humans hoping to observe them.

THE CODE OF GOOD CONDUCT

- ◆ Length of observation limited to 30 mn, 15 mn if other boats are waiting;
- ◆ Do not approach closer than 100 meters;
- ◆ Keep your distance in case of new-born animals;
- ◆ Do not try to touch or feed animals even if they come voluntary near the boat;
- ◆ Do not suddenly change speed or direction;
- ◆ Stop immediately any approach if animals attempt to move away from observers and are disturbed.



PRECAUTIONARY AREA

- ◆ One boat at the time with a limited speed of 5 knots;
- ◆ Sounders and sonars must be switched off to limit acoustic disturbance;
- ◆ Keep a parallel trajectory to the animals.



- ACCOBAMS resources: [ACCOBAMS Resolution 4.7](#) provides very clear guidance for tour operators on how to handle vessels and in a manner that minimises impacts to cetaceans. [Resolution 6.20](#), Annex 2, provides a detailed description of the standards associated with the High Quality Whale Watching (HQWW®) Certificate, and the code of conduct operators must follow to achieve that label.

- IWC resources: The IWC Online Whale Watching Handbook also includes a searchable table of both voluntary and legally enforceable guidelines that can be consulted as examples: <https://wwhandbook.iwc.int/en/downloadable-resources/guidelines-and-regulations>

- Transparency and Communication: Codes of conduct/approach guidelines will be most effective if they are clearly communicated with

well-illustrated and succinct materials that can be shared with operators via traditional (printed) materials as well electronically and via social media. Ensuring that vessel conduct regulations are clear and simple will make it easier for vessels to comply, and also easier for those who are monitoring and enforcing regulations to clearly recognise and penalise non-compliance. If compliance with guidelines is intended to be monitored and/or legally enforced, work with relevant stakeholders to make sure they are aware of the guidelines and the penalties for infractions (see Section 7).

Recommendations

-
- *Conduct a literature review of the potential impacts of whale watching activities on the species found in the target area, as well as the measures that have been used to mitigate impact for that species and the type of whale watching activity in question.*
 - *Work with relevant stakeholders to develop approach guidelines that are most appropriate for your area.*
 - *Ensure effective communication of the conduct guidelines (whether voluntary or legally enforceable) to all relevant stakeholders, and ensure that those responsible for monitoring and enforcement know how to recognise and penalise infractions.*
-

7. Monitoring and Enforcement

Rationale

As noted in Section 1, legally enforceable regulations can ensure that all whale watching operators are held to the same standard in terms of adopting behaviours with the least impact on cetaceans. However, for these regulations to be effective, operators must know that there will be negative consequences for infractions, otherwise there is little incentive to comply^{60,61}. The bodies responsible for marine surveillance vary from one country to another, but can include marine police, the coast guard, the navy, and park rangers, among others^{7,62,63}. Voluntary certification schemes also require some form of monitoring and enforcement of standards, if they are to be effective. As stated in Section 6, monitoring and enforcement will be much more effective if 1) codes of conduct are clear and simple enough that infractions are easy to recognise, and 2) the penalties for infractions are clearly defined and clearly communicated to all the relevant stakeholders.

Tools and examples

- *Vessel-based patrol by coast guard or other marine enforcement bodies*: Traditionally, monitoring and enforcement is conducted by patrol vessels at sea that can approach whale watching vessels to request evidence of their legal status to conduct tours and/or to warn them or fine them when infractions are observed. This requires strong legal frameworks and a clear mandate for the enforcement agencies regarding the circumstances under which they can issue warnings, fines or more severe penalties like revoking whale watching licenses.
- *Lower cost alternatives*: The IWC Whale watching Handbook⁵³ also provides a summary of lower cost methods that can be used in areas where the logistics or costs of placing a vessel on the water among whale watching vessels on a daily basis are prohibitive:
 - An unpredictable rota of patrol presence once a week or once a month;
 - Land-based observations conducted from a viewpoint at the entrance to a bay or a cliff-top;
 - Combining the role of registering and collecting fees for entry into the marine protected area, and the enforcing of appropriate conduct;
 - The placement of observers on whale watching vessels to monitor compliance.
- *Encouraging increased compliance through monitoring and education*: Compliance with both legally enforceable and voluntary measures can be enhanced through education of both tour operators and clients^{7,9,63}. Monitoring to ensure compliance with voluntary measures or certification schemes may be conducted by research or training organisations, as is the case with the ACCOBAMS HQWW Certification, or voluntary schemes like WhaleSense in the USA^{7,60}.

Recommendations

- *Ensure that legally enforceable regulations and/or certification schemes include clear definitions of the penalties that will be incurred if infractions/non-compliance occurs.*
 - *Identify the stakeholders responsible for marine surveillance and/or who have a mandate to enforce the regulations, and ensure that they are well-informed about whale watching regulations, and the penalties for non-compliance.*
 - *Collaborate with stakeholders to establish a systematic means of conducting surveillance, whether at sea, or through other low cost methods.*
-

8. Time/Area closures to provide additional protection

Rationale

In some settings, approach guidelines and limits on the number of vessels that can approach cetaceans may be considered insufficient to prevent potential negative impacts to the target population. This may be the case for particularly vulnerable populations, or those using geographically constrained habitats like inlets, bays, estuaries or reefs for critical life functions. For example, in nearshore habitats or bays where mothers nurse calves, or where populations rest in order to recover from energetically demanding activity, any level of vessel presence or human activity may be deemed likely to disturb critical life functions, and thus present an unacceptable risk the long-term well-being of the population^{64,65}. Managers can protect these areas by creating no-go zones that are off limits to whale watching activities. These measures can be in place permanently, seasonally, or at certain times of day when animals are known to be engaged in activities that are essential to their health and survival^{65,66}.

Tools and examples

- *Defining critical areas/critical times for protection:* The design of effective time/area closure measures requires good data on cetacean distribution, habitat use and behaviour in order to understand which areas, seasons, and times of day host cetaceans engaged in activities that should not be disturbed^{67,68}. If this is not available from existing studies, it may be necessary to conduct research to inform management (see Section 2 and Annex 1). Well-documented examples include the highly predictable use of inshore bays by spinner dolphins for resting in Hawaii^{21,69} and in the Samadai Reef in the Egyptian Red Sea^{26,70,71}.
- *Clear boundaries and timing based on science:* Once areas of critical importance have been identified, stakeholders can collaborate to determine boundaries of areas that should be demarcated for time/area closures. Boundaries should be based on the ecology and behaviour of the cetaceans in question, but should also be obvious to industry stakeholders and those responsible for monitoring and enforcing measures (for example the interior of a bay as defined by a straight line from one headland to another)^{53,65}. Zoning can be applied to allow different levels of human activity, in different portions of the defined area, as is the case in Samadai Reef Egypt⁶⁶. If measures are

seasonal, or tied to certain times of day, these should also be based on the animals' behaviour and movements and clearly designated in the management plan^{72,73}.

- *Monitoring and enforcement* are essential to make time-area closures effective (see Section 8). To encourage compliance and make it easier for enforcement agencies to recognise infractions, the chosen geographical boundaries and/or seasons or times of closures should be communicated clearly to users as well as those responsible for enforcing regulations.

Recommendations

- *Consider time-area closures for particularly vulnerable populations or geographically constrained areas where cetaceans regularly use habitat for critical life functions like nursing young or resting.*
 - *Base the geographic boundaries and times of closures (whether seasonal or daily) on the animals' ecology and behaviour, but also make them simple and easy to understand and enforce.*
 - *Communicate closures clearly to industry stakeholders and those responsible for enforcement.*
-

9. Promoting education and awareness raising

Rationale

Multiple studies have shown that when whale watching tours include a structured educational elements they can result in participants' increased environmental awareness and motivation to support conservation efforts^{9,11,74-77}. It is this educational and awareness-raising element that is often considered the positive outcome that may counter-balance some of the acceptable levels of temporary disturbance that responsible whale watching activities can cause to target populations. Whale watching tours that do not include an educational element, even when they adhere to proscribed approach guidelines and other responsible practices, risk disturbing cetaceans without the positive offset of motivating their guests to help protect cetaceans and their habitats. Furthermore, research shows that tourists appreciate an element of education in their tours^{78,79}, and this can be used as a marketing strategy by tour operators. Provision of on-board education is a condition for obtaining and retaining a license to operate whale watching tours in Portugal, and is also a component of the HQWW® Certificate.

Tools and examples

- *On-board education:* The most common form of education associated with whale-watching tours is the presence of an on-board naturalist, guide or interpreter, who can share information about the cetaceans being viewed, as well as other aspects of the marine and coastal ecosystem. On-board naturalists may undergo formal training, as is provided through the ACCOBAMS HQWW Accreditation scheme, or they may be vessel captains or ex-fishermen with a wealth of local ecological knowledge.
- *Structuring educational elements:* Education associated with whale watching is most likely to be effective in increasing participants' knowledge and environmental motivation if it is structured and supported by audio/visual resources – which can range from videos shown on very large vessels to

laminated factsheets, maps, or illustrations for use on smaller open-decked vessels. A number of resources are available through the IWC Online Whale Watching Handbook: <https://wwhandbook.iwc.int/en/downloadable-resources/resources-for-guides-and-educators>

Educational messages can start at the time that clients book a tour, and carry on through all stages of the tour itself and through post-tour communication⁸⁰.

- *Partnerships with research organisations*: Researchers or students undertaking research on cetacean species can also make good naturalists guides⁸¹. Managers can consider encouraging collaborations that can have multiple benefits for tour operators (who can market themselves as having expert educators on board), guests (who will feel privileged to be learning from an expert in the field), and the researcher who will potentially be able to use data collected during whale watching tours for their study (see Section 10).

Recommendations

- *Encourage whale watching activities to include an element of education and awareness raising and consider making the provision of on-board education a condition to obtain and maintain a license to operate whale watching tours, or to gain certification (as is the case for the ACCOBAMS HQWW Certificate).*
 - *Encourage the development of training programmes for on-board naturalists, as well as the development of effective communication/educational resources that can be available to whale watching guides in the relevant languages needed to communicate with tourists/guests.*
-

10. Whale watching as a platform of opportunity for scientific data collection

Rationale

Vessel-based cetacean research is costly, and systematically designed scientific surveys generally generate data that represents only a snapshot of cetacean distribution, behaviour, and group composition at the specific point in time that the survey was conducted. By contrast, whale watching are often run on a daily basis (or during peak seasons in some locations, even multiple times per day) providing more regular opportunities to observe cetaceans in their natural habitats than most research programmes could ever hope to gain through systematic surveys. Multiple studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of using whale-watching vessels as platforms of opportunity to collect cetacean data⁸¹⁻⁹¹. At the same time, whale watching platforms are not suited for every type of research⁹². For example studies involving biopsy sampling, satellite tag deployment, or water/prey sampling, are all better conducted from dedicated survey vessels crewed only by trained scientists^{53,92}. However, data collected by vessel captains, on-board naturalists, or guests can include positional data and species identifications to provide insight into (seasonal) distribution^{82,85,87,90,93,94}. If sightings data are accompanied by vessel tracks or 'survey effort' whale watching data can also provide insight into not only where the animals ARE seen, but also where they are NOT seen, or are less likely to be seen, providing more accurate insight into relative abundance, habitat use and/or hotspots⁹⁰. On-board naturalists or tourists can also be encouraged to take photos that can be used in photo-identification studies,

contributing to population assessments and understanding of individual whale or dolphin movements over time^{81,95}. Together with awareness-raising, the data generated from whale watching tours can provide a positive offset to the potential disturbance that even responsibly conducted operations can cause to target populations.

Tools and examples

- *Collection of data by vessel captains or on-board naturalists*: In some areas vessel captains or on-board naturalists collect data on cetacean sightings during whale watching activities. This can range from simple sightings logs, to more complex data including vessel tracks and/or photographs to be used in individual identification. The collection of this type of data is a requirement for licensing to provide whale watching tours in Portugal and for HQWW certification in the ACCOBAMS Area. The IWC Online Whale watching Handbook provides an overview of the types of data that are more easily collected from whale watching Platforms of Opportunity: <https://wwhandbook.iwc.int/en/industry-support/contributing-to-science-and-conservation-1>
- *Collaboration between researchers and whale watching tour operators*: In some places, formal collaborations between whale watching tour operators and research organisations has resulted in data that is used for publication in scientific journals and to guide conservation management, such as a collaboration between the Center For Coastal Studies and tour operators in the Gulf of Maine, USA⁹¹. The collaborations can involve the placement of a researcher on whale watching tours to collect data at the same time that he/she shares expertise with guests. Alternatively, operators can send their collected data to researchers for analysis and synthesis into reports or publications. In some settings, data collected can also include questionnaires to tourists to rate their satisfaction and/or test for potential increases in awareness following their tours^{9,10,96-101}.
- *Research-based tourism*: Some research groups also offer paying participants the opportunity to join cetacean surveys and help collect, enter, and analyse data. In this way, participants help to fund valuable research, while also expanding their knowledge and appreciation of wildlife research methods.
- *Use of Citizen Science apps*: On-board naturalists and/or clients on board whale watching tours can be encouraged to submit sightings, tracks and/or photographs to various citizen science Apps. Apps can be location/region-specific and designed to contribute to the understanding of local cetacean populations, or they can be global. Some Apps allow data to be forwarded to relevant local research groups, while others (e.g. Flukebook.org, or happywhale.com or <https://www.inaturalist.org/>) are global in scope.

Recommendations

- *Encourage the collection of cetacean sightings and photo identification data during whale watching tours, and consider making a minimum level of data collection a requirement for obtaining and retaining a whale watching license and/or obtaining certification (as is the case for the ACCOBAMS HQWW Certification programme).*
 - *Encourage collaboration between researchers and tour operators to maximise the potential for robust data collection, analysis and application to adaptive management.*
 - *Consider use of citizen science apps to facilitate data collection.*
-

ANNEX 1: Table of methods used to assess and monitor the potential impacts of whale watching activities on cetacean populations

The table below provides an overview of the types of studies that have been conducted to monitor and measure the potential impact of whale watching activities on cetacean populations. The examples provided in the reference list are not exhaustive, but intended to provide some examples of peer-reviewed studies using each category of method.

Category of study	Research platforms	Indicator or measure of potential impact	References (correspond to final reference list)
Behavioural responses linked to the presence of whale watching vessels	Observations of behaviour from research vessels, shore-based observation stations, tethered balloons, to observe actual whale watching vessels and reactions or experimental approaches and reactions	Changes in diving or surfacing patterns	102-105
		Changes in swimming speed and direction	28,105-107
		Changes in time spent feeding	24,31,108,109
		Changes in time spent resting	27,29,34,110
	Passive acoustic monitoring or vessel-operated hydrophones	Changes in vocal behaviour	58,111-113
Modelling of how behaviour changes translate into potential long-term impacts on fitness	Studies that measure behaviour changes above include modelling of long-term and cumulative effects persistent shifts in 'energy budgets'	Potential energy deficits accrued over time by decreased feeding or resting, or increased traveling or surface-active behaviour	28,54,114-122
Monitoring vessel behaviour around target species	Observations can be made from a research vessel, or land-based station, or by researchers (anonymously) placed on whale watching vessels	Rates of categories of vessel behaviour that fall within, or outside of established standards in terms of distance, speed, approaches to species or group categories that are off limits, etc.	6,7,31,51,123-129
Monitoring tourist perceptions of whale watching experiences	Interview surveys are conducted with tourists following their participation in whale watching tours. 'Before' and 'after' surveys can be used to measure knowledge gain or change in awareness or attitudes	Rates of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with elements of whale watching experiences, or changes in levels of awareness, knowledge or motivation after participating in whale watching	9,11,75,96,97,101,130-132

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RESOLUTION 8.20
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, as well as other ongoing work, *inter alia*, in the framework of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, Annex V to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), the Protocol to the London Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter and the FAO's Voluntary Guidelines for the Marking of Fishing Gear,

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,

Taking into account the recently adopted Resolution on Marine Plastic Pollution, adopted by the International Whaling Commission meeting held in October 2022 in Slovenia,

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 in monitoring and management of 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* Parties and 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, as well as other relevant bodies, 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 ongoing work under the United Nations Environment Assembly Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee towards the development of 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 to end plastic pollution; 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, as well as the Resolution on Marine Plastic Pollution, adopted by the International Whaling Commission meeting held in October 2022 in Slovenia;
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.

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 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 incorporate citizen science information within the ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy.

RESOLUTION 8.22
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 29 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.

RESOLUTION 8.23
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 deep gratitude for the invaluable support from the Government of the Republic of Malta in providing an excellent venue and facilities for the Eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties; and for the relentless help and prompt assistance received from the Maltese National Focal Point and the Environment and Resources Authority team during the organisation process of the present Meeting;
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 for the huge support provided by the members of the Extended Bureau, the Sub Regional Coordination Units and the Scientific Committee, who contributed decisively to the preparation of the present session of the Meeting of the Parties.

ANNEX XIV

STATEMENTS OF TÜRKIYE AND GREECE REGARDING DRAFT RESOLUTION ON CETACEAN CRITICAL HABITATS

Statement by Türkiye

Türkiye has become a party to the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS) as of February 1st, 2018.

According to the resolutions "3.22 Marine Protected Areas for Cetaceans" and " 4.15 Marine Protected Areas of Importance for Cetaceans Conservation" adopted at the previous Meetings of the Parties, there are proposals for marine protected areas in the Sea of Marmara and the Aegean Sea, depicted as number 16: "the Turkish Straits System", number 9: "the northern Aegean Sea" and the number 10: "the Dodecanese".

Regarding the maritime area depicted as number 16, it should be reminded that nothing in the ACCOBAMS nor any act adopted on the basis of the Agreement shall prejudice the rights and obligations to the 1936 Montreux Convention as mentioned in Article 1 of the Agreement. The 1936 Montreux Convention defines the Turkish Straits as composed of the İstanbul Strait, the Sea of Marmara and the Çanakkale Strait. This Convention has been meticulously, transparently and impartially implemented by Türkiye for more than eight decades. The identification of a possible marine protected area in the Turkish Straits under the ACCOBAMS would not undermine the rights and obligations of Türkiye stemming from the Montreux Convention.

Regarding the maritime areas depicted as number 9 and 10, it should be underlined that maritime boundaries are yet to be delimited by Agreements between Türkiye and Greece in the Aegean Sea. In line with the Article 1 of the Agreement, nothing in the ACCOBAMS nor any act adopted on the basis of the Agreement shall prejudice the present and future claims or legal views of any State relating to the law of the sea, in particular the nature and the extent of marine areas, the delimitation of marine areas between States with opposite or adjacent coasts. Hence, the description of the maritime areas depicted in the list and maps under numbers 9 and 10 should be changed to include Türkiye.

In the light of above, we propose the following actions to be taken:

1. The maritime areas described is in the North Aegean Sea and the waters surrounding the Dodecanese fall within the national jurisdictions of both Türkiye and Greece. Therefore, we request that this information should be updated as "Greece and Türkiye" in the same resolutions and their annexes.
2. As stated in MOP 8-Doc 30, the CCH is not a marine protected area. We request that the map of proposed marine protected areas expression on the map in the 3.22 and 4.15 annexes should be changed to areas of special importance for cetaceans.

Hence, the list and map corrected in line with the above-mentioned points regarding the areas of special importance for cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS should be added to the draft resolution 8.21.

In addition, relevant ACCOBAMS page should be updated in line with the new annex to the resolution. And It should also be added a disclaimer like the same footnote called Secretariat's note in Resolution 4.15. As it follows;

The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the ACCOBAMS Secretariat concerning the extension or delimitation of maritime areas subject to the sovereignty or jurisdiction of any State.

Statement by Greece

Regarding the national statement of Türkiye, Greece would like to state the following:

The terms "Turkish Straits" and "Istanbul Straits, the Sea of Marmara and the Canakkale Strait" are not met in the Montreux Convention of 1936. The proper denomination of the Straits, according to the Montreux Convention of 1936, is the "Dardanelles, Sea of Marmara and Bosphorus Straits".

Moreover, concerning the Turkish statement that "maritime boundaries are yet to be delimited by Agreements between Türkiye and Greece", Greece underlines that:

1. As far as the maritime area "Northern Aegean Sea" (No.9) is concerned, the maritime boundaries between Turkey and Greece in Thrace (to a point 3 n.m. from the estuary of the Evros River) are defined by the Lausanne Peace Treaty of 1923 and the Athens Protocol of 1926.
2. As far as the maritime area "Dodekanese" (No 10) is concerned, the maritime boundaries between Türkiye and Greece are defined by the Agreement between Italy and Turkey, signed in Ankara on January 4, 1932, and the Procès Verbal, which is an integral part of the above Agreement, signed in Ankara on December 28, 1932. Greece, as a successor State to Italy, since 1947, acquired sovereignty over the Dodecanese, without any change to the maritime boundaries as determined by the 1932 Italo-Turkish agreements. According to customary international law and well-established State practice and jurisprudence, state succession does not affect territorial boundaries.

Statement by Türkiye

I would like remind that; while Türkiye signing the ACCOBAMS, a declaration was added regarding the use of terms Turkish Straits. This declaration reads as follows.

« DECLARATION :

The use of the term "Turkish Straits" has historical, political and legal justification, such as; respect for past and present general practice, due regard to Türkiye's sovereign rights over this particular area and to its jurisdiction according to the established principles of international law. There is also a considerable accumulation of agreements and principles developed by the UN concerning the standardization of geographical names which states inter alia that when a geographical feature is completely within sovereignty of a country then official name given by the authorized national organization should be used in international documents.

In fact, the term "Turkish Straits" or "Strait of İstanbul" and "Strait of Çanakkale" have been continuously used in many international documents, including IMO and NATO resolutions and documents. A case in point is the Turkish Straits Regulations registered within IMO in 1994 and again in 1998.

Therefore, the Republic of Türkiye reemphasizes that the correct terminology for "the Straits of Dardanelles" used in the Article 1 of the "Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area" is "the Strait of Çanakkale". »

As we mentioned in the morning session, the maritime boundaries between Türkiye and Greece have yet to be delimited by agreement.

There has been no maritime jurisdiction area established by valid agreements between Türkiye and Greece in the Aegean Sea in accordance with international law and the principle of equitability.

Türkiye believes that all interrelated Aegean issues should be addressed as a whole and stands ready to continue to work towards settlement of the Aegean issues through peaceful means in accordance with international law.

ANNEX XV – DECLARATION BY UKRAINE

Mrs. Chair,

Ukrainian delegation would like to make invite ACCOBAMS parties join this statement

Distinguished Delegates,

These are not normal times and our thoughts are with the Ukrainian people and everyone who is suffering because of Russia's war on Ukraine.

We also express grave concern over the growing environmental emergency in Ukraine relating to the ongoing and potential damage of its environment, stemming from the Russian Federation's unprovoked and unjustified aggression.

The Black Sea and the Sea of Azov are the home for numerous species of marine flora and fauna including three species of cetaceans, namely, common dolphin, bottlenose dolphin and harbour porpoise. All these species are under international and national protection of many Range States including the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov riparian countries.

Military activities of the Russian navy because of the its aggression against Ukraine have already caused unprecedented negative impact on coastal and marine biodiversity, destroying plant and animal habitats and led to mortality of living marine creatures.

Here is an alarming statistic of growing number of dead dolphins in the Black Sea this year. The scientists believe that the main reason of this phenomenon is military actions of the Russians military ships including detrimental impact of underwater noise generating by their sonars. Samples of dead and stranded dolphins have been already collected and prepared to be processed and analyzed by relevant laboratories.

While the Russian Federation is not a Contracting Party to ACCOBAMS it is evident that its aggression has a major threat not only to cetaceans but also to the biodiversity of numerous ecosystems including marine fauna and flora thus violating the fundamental principles of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

We recognise the need to assess the environmental consequences of Russia's aggression both in Ukraine and in a wider Black Sea region and affirm our support to Ukraine in reconstruction, including for providing assistance for restoration activities of the damaged habitats and plant and animal populations.

We call upon the Contracting Parties to ACCOBAMS to take every effort to force the Russian Federation to immediately cease its aggression that prevents Ukraine from exercising its obligations under the ACCOBAMS and other international treaties to protect and restore marine ecosystems.

We will forward the text of this statement to the Secretariat.

ANNEX XVI – STATEMENT MADE BY FRANCE ON BEHALF OF THE EU MEMBER STATES THAT ARE PARTIES TO ACCOBAMS – *i.e* BULGARIA, CYPRUS, SPAIN, GREECE, ITALY, MALTA, PORTUGAL, ROMANIA AND SLOVENIA - AS WELL AS THE PRINCIPALITY OF MONACO

The EU Member States that are Parties to ACCOBAMS and the Principality of Monaco would like to thank the representative of Ukraine for his statement.

We strongly condemn the unprovoked and unjustified aggression against one of the Parties to this Agreement, Ukraine. It constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations and undermines international security and stability. Allow me to express the full solidarity of the EU Member States that are Parties to ACCOBAMS and the Principality of Monaco with regard to Ukraine and the Ukrainian people

Russia must respect its obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights, particularly with regard to the protection of civilians, women and children.

We deplore the human disasters, but also the ecological disasters caused by this aggression, its impact on the marine environment and in particular on the cetaceans of the Black Sea that are protected by ACCOBAMS.