

DRAFT RESOLUTION 8.21
CETACEAN CRITICAL HABITATS (CCH)

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

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

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

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

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

-as regards sites legally declared by Countries, those listed under the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean to the Barcelona Convention, the ‘Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest’ founded in the context of the Council of Europe, the ‘Natura 2000’ network under the European Union Habitats Directive, and the Fisheries Restricted Areas of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean,

-as regards sites that have been identified for their conservation interest, the ‘Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas’ (EBSAs) in the Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea, through a process developed in the framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Cetacean Critical Habitats (CCH), developed by ACCOBAMS, and the Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs), developed by IUCN,

Taking into consideration:

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

Welcoming and acknowledging the continuing efforts undertaken by the Secretariat and the Scientific Committee, in particular the dedicated Task Manager for identifying areas of CCHs (*i.e.* areas of overlap between cetacean occurrence and human activities that may adversely affect cetaceans) through an up-to-date science-based process (MOP8/2022/Doc30), taking particularly account of IMMAs identified under the IUCN system,

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

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

Recognising the mutual benefits between CCH and Conservation Management Plans (CMPs) as follows:

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

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

- collection of updated and robust information on density and abundance of cetaceans at regular intervals at the basin scale, obtained from coordinated efforts through standardized and shared protocols,
 - collection of data on relevant human impact/activities at sea, mainly those not followed by other systems (AIS, VMS),
1. *Takes note* of the report of the Workshop on CCHs (MOP8/2022/Inf53);
 2. *Encourages* Parties to implement relevant measures in identified CCHs;
 3. *Mandates* the Scientific Committee to create a technical working group for “CCH data/maps on human activities and on species” in collaboration with external experts from relevant entities, such as the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) and Duke University Marine Laboratory, as well as choosing an up-to-date method to elicit expert evaluations (e.g. the Sheffield Elicitation Framework);
 4. *Asks* the Secretariat to:
 - assist Parties, national authorities, GFCM, the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and other relevant bodies to gather data and maps,

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