

**DRAFT 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 Mediterranean, Black Sea and contiguous Atlantic area,

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

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

*Considering* the important contribution that the Agreement will provide towards achieving 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 ACCOBAMS bodies and in partnership or 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 Strategy<sup>1</sup> and to strengthen its effectiveness.
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 Programs of Work for each triennium presented for adoption by Parties.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

## 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 Mediterranean, Black Sea 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 Mediterranean, Black Sea 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 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 Mediterranean, Black Sea 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 Vision<sup>2</sup> 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.

#### II.1.2 The ACCOBAMS logotype

25. The existing visual brand - or corporate identity - of ACCOBAMS, commonly referred to as the logotype, is currently difficult to read, with a design a bit outdated, and not built to fully function in a world of digital communication.
26. As the communication model tends to be increasingly based on digital communication channels, it is advisable to make it more adequate in terms of its design. The creation of a modern ACCOBAMS logotype based on ACCOBAMS brand, positioning and signature is recommended to improve ACCOBAMS image, visibility and outreach.

#### II.1.3 The ACCOBAMS positioning

27. 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”.
28. An ACCOBAMS positioning will provide the brand strategic pillars to position ACCOBAMS amidst other organisations that operate in similar, related or complementary fields.

<sup>2</sup> ACCOBAMS Mission and Vision were adopted in Resolution 5.1 on the ACCOBAMS Strategy for the Period 2014 – 2025

29. 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

30. The recommended brand positioning for ACCOBAMS is “*knowledge and regional cooperation to protect cetacean lives*”.

#### ***II.1.4 The ACCOBAMS signature***

31. Developing a brand signature based on the ACCOBAMS positioning will synthetically express how the ACCOBAMS brand wants to be perceived, while differentiating it from other organisations with similar activities.

32. The recommended ACCOBAMS signature results from the brand positioning and its field of activity and is “*cetacean protection has a voice*”. The signature feeds into the ACCOBAMS brand identity, including graphically, and will be aligned with a specific brand style, used consistently, as well as with a new ACCOBAMS logotype.

#### ***II.1.5 The ACCOBAMS Brand mood and style guide***

33. 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.

34. 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.

35. 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***

36. 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.
37. The ACCOBAMS website already centralizes an important and huge repository of information and knowledge.
38. 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.
39. 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.
40. 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.
41. 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.
42. 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.
43. 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***

44. 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.
45. 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.
46. 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.
47. Currently used social channels target mainly adult audiences. If younger or professional audiences are to be considered as part of the strategy, a 3<sup>rd</sup> (or 4<sup>th</sup>) 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.



48. 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.
49. 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***

50. 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.
51. 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.
52. 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***

53. 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.
54. 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**

55. Communication content is all information produced by ACCOBAMS (and some specific 3<sup>rd</sup> parties) that can be conveyed to various audiences.
56. 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.
57. 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.
58. 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

59. 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

60. 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.

61. 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

62. 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.

63. 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

64. This Communication Strategy is planned for an initial period of 6 years, from 2023 to 2028.

65. 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**

66. 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.
67. 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.