

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, Turkey 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. Trough 9 small project, 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