

## REPORT OF THE FIFTEENTH MEETING OF THE ACCOBAMS SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE



Tunis, Tunisia, 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> May 2023

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## REPORT OF THE FIFTEENTH MEETING OF ACCOBAMS SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

### 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

1. The Fifteenth Meeting of the Scientific Committee (SC15) of ACCOBAMS was convened at Ramada Hotel in Tunis, Tunisia, on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> May 2023. It was attended by Members of the Scientific Committee, Representatives from ACCOBAMS Sub Regional Coordination Units, Experts, Representatives of International Organizations and ACCOBAMS Partners. A few participants attended the meeting online.
2. The full list of participants is shown in [Annex I](#) to this report.
3. Susana Salvador, ACCOBAMS Executive Secretary, welcomed all participants and opened the meeting at 8.30 on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2023. She provided logistic details and indicated relevant documentation for the Meeting.
4. Simone Panigada, Chair of the Scientific Committee for 2020-2022, and Lea David, Vice-Chair for 2020-2022, also welcomed the participants, recalling that this was the first meeting of the Scientific Committee of the 2023-2025 period.

### 2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

5. The provisional agenda of the Meeting, reflected in Document ACCOBAMS-SC15/2023/Doc01, was presented, and participants were invited to review and comment it.
6. Two subjects were proposed to be added under agenda item “Any other Business”:
  - The participation of a member nominated by the European Cetacean Society to the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee.
  - Information on the IWC State of the Cetacean Environment Report (SOCER) concerning Mediterranean and Black Seas.

#### Conclusion 1.

The Scientific Committee adopted the agenda, as shown in [Annex II](#) to this report, together with the proposed meeting timetable.

### 3. FUNCTIONING OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

#### **3.1 Terms of Reference for the election of the Chair and of the Vice-Chair of the Scientific Committee**

7. The Executive Secretary recalled that pursuant to Resolution 8.3, the Scientific Committee needed to appoint, at its first Meeting of the triennium, a Chair and a Vice-Chair amongst the experts designated as members to the Scientific Committee by CIESM, IUCN, IWC, CMS, and Regional Representatives.
8. She presented the Proposed Terms of Reference for the election of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Scientific Committee (ACCOBAMS-SC15/2023/Doc04).

9. The Scientific Committee discussed about the current procedure and there was general agreement that in the future, more time should be given for informal consultation between the experts designated as members to the Scientific Committee regarding the election of the Chair and Vice-Chair.

#### **Conclusion 2.**

Terms of Reference for the election of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Scientific Committee were adopted as shown in [Annex III](#) to this report.

### **3.2 Election of the Chair of the Scientific Committee 2023/2025**

10. The SC members were invited to inform in case they did not wish to be considered as candidates to serve as Chair of the Scientific Committee for 2023/2025.
11. The Secretariat provided to each Scientific Committee member present in the room a secret ballot containing the list of experts who could be considered to serve as Chair of the Scientific Committee, and requested each Scientific Committee member to circle the name of the expert they wished to elect for this position for 2023/2025.

#### **Conclusion 3.**

Simone PANIGADA was elected as Chair of the Scientific Committee for 2023/2025.

### **3.3 Election of the Vice-Chair of the Scientific Committee 2023/2025**

12. Scientific Committee members were invited to inform in case they did not wish to be considered as candidates to serve as Vice-Chair of the Scientific Committee for 2023/2025.
13. The Secretariat provided to each Scientific Committee member present in the room a secret ballot containing the list of experts who may be considered to serve as Vice-Chair of the Scientific Committee, and requested each Scientific Committee member to circle the name of the expert they wished to elects for this position for 2023/2025.

#### **Conclusion 4.**

Ayaka AMAHA ÖZTÜRK was elected as Vice-Chair of the Scientific Committee for 2023/2025.

### **3.4 Terms of Reference for the designation of Task Managers**

14. The Executive Secretary recalled that pursuant to Resolution 8.3 on the Scientific Committee, at its first Meeting, the Scientific Committee was expected to designate up to four (4) "Task Managers" among experts nominated by CIESM, IUCN, IWC, CMS & regional representatives.
15. She presented the Terms of Reference of the Scientific Committee Task Managers (ACCOBAMS-SC15/2023/Doc05).

#### **Conclusion 5.**

The Terms of Reference of the Scientific Committee Task Managers were adopted as shown in [Annex IV](#) to this report.

### 3.5 Designation of Task Managers of the Scientific Committee 2023/2025

16. Four Task Managers were identified according to the Work Programme priorities (ACCOBAMS-SC15/2023/Doc06). Other members of the Scientific Committee, as well as ACCOBAMS Partners, offered their support to the Task Managers.

#### Conclusion 6.

In accordance with the main priorities of the 2023-2025 Working Programme, the Scientific Committee decided to designate the following Task Managers, supported by the respective Vice Task Managers and Support Groups:

#### **CA1a- Cetacean population estimates and distribution**

Task Manager: Tilen GENOV

Vice Task Manager: Simone PANIGADA

Support Group: Aylin AKKAYA, Antonella ARCANGELI, Marta AZZOLIN, Ibrahim BEN AMER, Greg DONOVAN, Caterina FORTUNA, Silvia FREY, Pauline GAUFFIER, Draško HOLCER, Souad LAMOUTI, Giancarlo LAURIANO, Aurelie MOULINS, Marian PAIU, Guido PIETROLUONGO, Dimitar POPOV, Yianna SAMUEL, Aviad SCHEININ, Antonio VASQUEZ, Ayaka AMAHA ÖZTÜRK

#### **CA1d – Functional stranding networks and responses to emergency situations**

Task Manager: Pavel GOL'DIN

Vice Task Manager: Anastasia KOMNENOU

Support Group: Marta AZZOLIN, Rimel BENMESSAOUD, Olfa CHAEIB, Erdem DANYER, Aytemiz DANYER Işıl, Aimilia DROUGAS, Carolina FERNANDEZ MALDONADO, Draško HOLCER, Thierry JAUNIAUX, Celine MAHFOUZ, Sandro MAZZARIOL, Danny MORICK, Marian PAIU, Guido PIETROLUONGO, Dimitar POPOV, Yianna SAMUEL, Marina SEQUEIRA, Mark SIMMONDS, Arda TONAY

#### **CA2a – Interactions with fisheries / aquaculture**

Task Manager: Dimitar POPOV

Vice Task Manager: Caterina FORTUNA

Support Group: Marta AZZOLIN, Ibrahim BEN AMER, Rimel BENMESSAOUD, Pauline GAUFFIER, Tilen GENOV, Joan GIMENEZ, Pavel GOL'DIN, Joan GONZALVO, Draško HOLCER, Souad LAMOUTI, Hüseyin OZBILGIN, Ayaka AMAHA ÖZTÜRK, Marian PAIU, Guido PIETROLUONGO, Marina SEQUEIRA, Aviad SCHEININ, Mohamed Naoufal TAMSOURI, Arda TONAY

#### **CA3a – Area-based measures for cetacean conservation**

Task Manager: Léa DAVID

Vice Task Manager: Souad LAMOUTI

Support Group: Aylin AKKAYA, Antonella ARCANGELI, Marta AZZOLIN, Ibrahim BEN AMER, Rimel BENMESSAOUD, Greg DONOVAN, Nicolas ENTRUP, Caterina FORTUNA, Silvia FREY, Susan GALLON, Pauline GAUFFIER, Tilen GENOV, Joan GIMENEZ, Pavel GOL'DIN, Joan GONZALVO, Draško HOLCER, Giancarlo LAURIANO, Aurelie MOULINS, Ayaka AMAHA ÖZTÜRK, Marian PAIU, Simone PANIGADA, Guido PIETROLUONGO, Dimitar POPOV, Yianna SAMUEL, Mark SIMMONDS, Naoufal TAMSOURI Mohamed

The Scientific Committee agreed that Support Groups remain open. The list will be circulated to the Scientific Committee members and to the ACCOBAMS Partners.

**Conclusion 7.**

Since there is no longer a Task Manager for Conservation Management Plans, the Scientific Committee decided to establish a specific CMP Steering Group to facilitate coordination between CMP leaders and to harmonize CMPs drafting. The Terms of Reference for the CMP Steering Group are presented in [Annex V](#) to this report.

17. Mark Simmonds, representing CMS, noted that there were a number of ACCOBAMS work areas where ASCOBANS and CMS were similarly highly active. He also noted that CMS will have its Meeting of the Parties this Autumn and recommended seeking opportunities to build on synergies between ACCOBAMS work and those two bodies.

**Conclusion 8.**

The newly appointed Task Managers were strongly encouraged to liaise with relevant working groups of ASCOBANS and CMS to collaborate on shared activities.

#### 4. CONSERVATION ACTIONS

**Conclusion 9.**

For each agenda item under this section, the Scientific Committee reviewed and completed the draft Working Programme for 2023-2025. The updated 2023-2025 Working Programme, with objectives to be achieved by the Scientific Committee before SC16 meeting is presented in [Annex VI](#).

##### **4.1 Report by Regional Representatives**

18. The Chair recalled that, in accordance with the rules on the Scientific Committee adopted by MOP8, Regional Representatives should provide a report to the Meetings of the Scientific Committee on the conservation status of cetaceans and on the relevant activities in regard to the regions they represent in the Scientific Committee. He invited Regional Representatives to introduce their respective reports, which are reflected in the following documents:

- Report on the conservation status of cetaceans and relevant activities in Western Mediterranean and contiguous Atlantic area (ACCOBAMS- SC15/2023/Doc07)
- Report on the conservation status of cetaceans and relevant activities in Central Mediterranean (ACCOBAMS- SC15/2023/Doc08)
- Report on the conservation status of cetaceans and relevant activities in Eastern Mediterranean (ACCOBAMS- SC15/2023/Doc09)
- Report on the conservation status of cetaceans and relevant activities in Black Sea (ACCOBAMS- SC15/2023/Doc10)

##### **Western Mediterranean and contiguous Atlantic area**

19. Souad Lamouti, Giancarlo Lauriano and Mohamed Naoufal Tamsouri presented the Report on the conservation status of cetaceans and relevant activities in Western Mediterranean and contiguous Atlantic area in which many cetacean's conservation activities are reported. They pointed out a set of recommendations especially regarding interactions with fisheries, strandings, underwater noise, ship strikes, marine litter and capacity building.

20. Marina Sequeira informed the Meeting that following the recent disruptive behaviour showed by some individuals of the killer whale subpopulation inhabiting the Iberian Peninsula, an informal working group (Working Group on Atlantic Orca, WGAO) composed of biologists from France, Portugal and Spain was established in order to collect

as much data as possible and to try to find solutions to mitigate and better understand how to deal with this behaviour. Also, within the IWC Scientific Committee an Intersessional Correspondence Group was created in 2021, involving members of the WGAO and other international experts, to try to further investigate this behaviour and to find and propose possible mitigation measures. It would be important to integrate colleagues from Morocco in the WGAO to allow for the exchange of information on interactions and ideas on the best way to tackle the problem. The WGAO has already developed a website ([orcaiberica.org](http://orcaiberica.org)) and a Facebook page (Orca Ibérica GTOA) where information on interactions can be shared, and has developed a voluntary protocol to be followed by sailors in case of interaction with killer whales.

21. Aurélie Moulins informed the Meeting of sightings of animals close to the coast that might be in distress. Non regular species sightings close to the coast occur regularly in the Pelagos Sanctuary (about once a year) such as grey whales, humpback whales, killer whales, so as the presence of animal «in distress», like a tailless fin whale. These sightings are constantly reported by research organizations to local coast guards so to monitor the situation. Nevertheless, these sightings are also widely reported in the media, which increases direct harassment by leisure boats, diving activities and whale-watching companies. There is thus an urgent need to improve actions on how to « Communicate simply and efficiently uncommon situations in the ACCOBAMS Area (Example of killer whales in 2019/2020) » and to limit the impact put on the individuals by local citizens.

#### **Central Mediterranean**

22. Tilen Genov presented the regional report for the Central Mediterranean, that he jointly prepared with Caterina Fortuna and Draško Holcer. A number of research activities are carried out in most countries within the region, including boat-based and aerial surveys, photo-identification, acoustic monitoring and citizen science, among others. Exceptions to this are Albania and Libya, where no research is currently reported as being carried out. Generally, the southern part of the region is poorly surveyed as compared to the northern part, with a notable exception of Tunisia, where several types of research are being carried out. Bycatch in fishing gear has been raised as a growing concern in several areas. Capacity building has been pointed out as a necessity by several countries, particularly with respect to stranding networks, stranding responses and necropsy procedures. The Regional Representatives provided a list of published papers (with abstracts) in 2022-2023 relevant to the Central Mediterranean.

#### **Eastern Mediterranean**

23. Anastasia Komnenou presented the regional report for the Eastern Mediterranean, that she prepared in collaboration with Céline Mahfouz and Yianna Samuel. Several research activities have been taken place in the last decade, with survey techniques ranging from opportunistic data collection methods, stranding and sighting reports to dedicated visual and acoustic surveys. Land-based and boat-based surveys were relatively increased in certain locations, yet neither data collection is standardised between the neighbouring countries nor hold similar survey effort. Surveys were generally focused on species presence and distribution, photo-identification, behavioural budget and alterations under different human pressure and strandings. Eastern Mediterranean regional countries fully support the implementation priorities adopted by ACCOBAMS and they are willing to offer their long-term expertise to turn cetacean research and conservation strategies into action. Their priority actions are: response to strandings and mass emergency situations, establishment of an “Emergency Task Force” for marine mammal morbidity and mortality and special events, affecting marine mammal populations or their critical habitats, scientific research as bases for conservation, capacity building, awareness and education. Eastern Mediterranean Sea is under the heavy pressure of oil and gas explorations and navy practices, which has already resulted in several



stranding cases. Therefore, the impact of loud and impulsive noise on cetacean populations in the region should be targeted.

### **Black Sea**

24. Arda M. Tonay presented the regional report for Black Sea, which was prepared in collaboration with Dimitar Popov and Pavel Gol'din, summarizing activities in the Black Sea for the last three years. Their presentation highlighted studies on cetacean abundance (CeNoBS, ANEMONE and BlackCeTrends using F-Pods, local surveys), on bycatch and mitigation, stock identification and population structure, noise, marine pollution, health, tissue banks and conservation. He highlighted the war in Black Sea, which may affect the marine biota in the region, including cetaceans, the bycatch rates and the continuous oil and gas related activities as hot topics and issues that need to be tackled in the region. He further emphasized Resolution 8.12 to take into account the military and anthropogenic impacts of military operations during the implementation of Conservation Management Plan in the Black Sea, and Resolution 8.17 to develop a post-war plan for the Black Sea region towards the mitigation of warfare consequences on cetaceans, their habitat and their prey.
25. After the presentation of regional reports, the Chair raised the issue of the reporting format. Some Scientific Committee members highlighted the need to review and update procedures and guidelines for the preparation of Regional Representatives reports, including the associated template, for consideration of the SC16 meeting.

### **Conclusion 10.**

An intersessional Correspondence Group on Revision of Recommendation 12.1 on Regional Reports was created. The Terms of Reference are presented in [Annex VII](#) to this report.

## **4.2 Knowledge about state of cetaceans**

### ***4.2.1 Cetacean population estimates and distribution (LTMP)***

26. The Executive Secretary recalled that, at MOP8, ACCOBAMS Parties adopted Resolution 8.10 on an ACCOBAMS Long Term Monitoring Program (LTMP) which provides that the next basin-wide surveys in ACCOBAMS area should be undertaken in 2024-2026. They also tasked *“the Scientific Committee and the Secretariat, in collaboration with the ASI Steering Committee and other relevant experts, to prepare, for the next 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”*. She highlighted that the Secretariat tasked Julie Belmont, who worked at the Secretariat from 2017 to 2022 as the “ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative” Project Officer, to draft this document. Furthermore, Hervé Lethier - who supported, between 2015-2018, the ASI fundraising process - is also involved in the elaboration of the project proposal and ready to support future fundraising efforts.
27. Julie Belmont introduced document ACCOBAMS-SC15/2023/Doc11 that contains the draft project proposal for the next synoptic basin-wide survey in the ACCOBAMS Area. She explained that this document draws upon the ASI experience, the 2021 evaluation of the ASI project and the efforts by the LTMP ad hoc working group, which, prior to MoP8 in 2022, developed recommendations on the LTMP financial aspects and the next survey. In terms of implementation strategy, the draft proposal incorporates key implementation elements from ASI, such as main activities, timeline and governance, while also drawing on past achievements and lessons learned. These include survey methodology, a consolidated network, a survey task force, and the ASI evaluation.
28. Julie Belmont pointed out that the budget amounts included in the draft project proposal resulted from actual expenses related to the implementation of the ASI and CeNoBS projects during the 2017-2022 period, as well as

from recommendations contained in the ASI evaluation report elaborated in 2021. She also noted that as a result of the experience gained, some costs will be lesser in future surveys, but some other potential costs are likely to increase depending on market developments and inflation at the exact time the next surveys will be conducted, which cannot be estimated at this point in time.

**Conclusion 11.**

The Scientific Committee agreed that the ACCOBAMS activities related to the next synoptic basin-wide survey in the ACCOBAMS Area are highly relevant to the complementarity of monitoring efforts under other regional policies in the region, namely MSFD and EcAp.

**Conclusion 12.**

The Scientific Committee invited the Secretariat to include a “Simulation framework” activity in the project proposal – whose preliminary Terms of Reference are contained in [Annex VIII](#) to this report – and to find an appropriate sharing platform to allow the Task Group on [Cetacean population estimates and distribution](#) to review the project proposal before mid-June 2023, including the associated provisional budget.

**Conclusion 13.**

The Scientific Committee recommended the Task Group on [Cetacean population estimates and distribution](#) to review the ASI field protocols for basin-wide cetacean surveys before the implementation of the next survey.

**Conclusion 14.**

The Scientific Committee invited the Secretariat to circulate to the Scientific Committee the ASI evaluation report prepared in 2022.

**Conclusion 15.**

The Scientific Committee invited the Secretariat to prepare a summary on ASI data requests and respective use, including on multi-species information, and to organize an online conference to facilitate the sharing of the results of the utilisation of ASI data requested.

29. The Executive Secretary briefly introduced the ABIOMMED project highlighting that the Secretariat and several members of the Scientific Committee are involved in one of its work packages aimed at improving the implementation of the cetacean criteria of MSFD Descriptor D1 for coordinated monitoring and assessment in the Mediterranean. In particular, within this framework, a Working Group of experts/managers from the different EU Mediterranean and Black Sea countries has been established to strengthen regional coordination for monitoring cetacean MSFD related criteria, including the definition of proposals for regionally harmonized monitoring strategy and thresholds values. She explained that the ABIOMMED project will finish in the coming months and the WG is expected to end with the project.

30. Referring to document ACCOBAMS-SC15/2023/Inf04, the Executive Secretary recalled that ACCOBAMS established a couple of WGs in relation to MSFD. The Joint ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS Working Group established in 2013, which has 2 co-Chairs: Ms. Sinéad Murphy – ASCOBANS – and Mr. Vincent Ridoux – ACCOBAMS – although in October 2022, the latter informed no longer wishing to co-chair. Furthermore, following the adoption of Resolution 6.12 “Implementation of the EU MSFD and relevant Ecosystem Approach processes” during MOP6, the

Terms of References for a MSFD/EcAp Correspondence Working Group on the ACCOBAMS area were proposed to the Scientific Committee during SC11, in 2017, who welcomed them.

**Conclusion 16.**

The Scientific Committee highlighted the importance for ACCOBAMS to follow the MSFD and EcAp processes and agreed on the following points:

- The ABIOMMED Working Group becomes the “core” group of the Committee on MSFD and should liaise with WG established under other organisations;
- New co-chairs of the joint MSFD WG were appointed: Giancarlo LAURIANO and José Antonio VASQUEZ.

31. The representative of OceanCare suggested that a meeting could be arranged between representatives from ACCOBAMS, ASCOBANS and the European Commission (DG ENV/DG MARE), as well as representatives from regional seas Conventions (Barcelona and Bucharest Convention, and HELCOM) to identify setting priorities for ACCOBAMS and its Scientific Committee on how to contribute - in terms of knowledge and expertise - to the current status of the MSFD implementation process.

*4.2.2 Population Structure*

32. Pauline Gauffier presented the results of the “ACCOBAMS workshop on data collection on cetacean population genetics” held in September 2022 (document ACCOBAMS-SC15/2023/Inf05). She explained that the aim of this initiative was to identify knowledge gaps and research priorities for cetacean population genetics, to create databases of available resources in terms of existing samples and suitable laboratory facilities to improve collaboration, and to compile best practices based on expert knowledge. Information was gathered through online questionnaires and two expert workshops. These efforts have led to the creation of a cetacean sample database and the development of the ACCOBAMS Best Practices on Cetacean Population Genetics.

**Conclusion 17.**

Considering the high number of biopsies done for purposes different than genetics - such as analyses about contaminants, feeding ecology, etc. - the Scientific Committee recommended the Workshop organizers to identify other relevant institutions in order to facilitate exchanges and the possible use of biopsy for multipurpose analyses.

**Conclusion 18.**

The Scientific Committee also recommended the Secretariat to make the Best Practices more easily accessible on the ACCOBAMS website.

*4.2.3 Monitoring cetacean's status*

33. The Chair of the Scientific Committee updated on the progress of the process undertaken during 2020/2022 for assessing or updating the IUCN status of cetacean species in the ACCOBAMS Area (ACCOBAMS-SC15/2023/Inf06). Between 2018 and 2021, the cetacean species IUCN Red List status was re-assessed (or in some cases assessed), using data and knowledge gained thanks to the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative, as well as other data collected since previous assessments in 2008-2011. He added that classifications for Black Sea species were provisional as the assessments were under review by IUCN and IUCN SSC Cetacean Specialist Group.

**Conclusion 19.**

The Scientific Committee strongly encouraged the IUCN Red List assessors to finalize the Black Sea species assessment as soon as possible, and invited the Secretariat to forward this message to them.

34. Some Scientific Committee members highlighted difficulties to find the updated assessments in the IUCN website, since the previous ones are still online.

#### **Conclusion 20.**

The Scientific Committee recommended the Secretariat to contact the IUCN Red List Unit through the IUCN Mediterranean office to facilitate a more efficient search mode to retrieve recent Red List assessments.

#### *4.2.4 Functional stranding networks and responses to emergency situation*

35. Thierry Jauniaux was invited to present the ongoing ACCOBAMS activities regarding strandings. He recalled that an ACCOBAMS marine mammal necropsy training was jointly organized by both Universities of Padova and Liege. Its main goal was to train expert biologists and veterinarians from different ACCOBAMS countries on “Best Practice Document on cetaceans’ postmortem investigations and tissue sampling, in order to gain information on possible threats for cetacean conservation”.
36. A note on the feasibility of tele-necropsy systems was approved by the Parties during MOP8 (29<sup>th</sup> November – 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2022, Malta) and the initiative has started in Morocco early 2023.
37. He also recalled that the creation of an ACCOBAMS emergency task force for stranding events (AETFS) to assist with emergencies and unusual mortality events was also approved during MOP8. The AETFS has been formally launched early 2023 (ACCOBAMS-SC15/2023/Inf07). The AETFS is jointly chaired by Sandro Mazzariol, from Padova University, and Thierry Jauniaux, from Liege University.

#### **Conclusion 21.**

The Scientific Committee welcomed and thanked all experts in these initiatives for their dedicated work presented under this topic.

#### **4.3 Conservation Management Plans**

38. The Chair of the Scientific Committee recalled that during MOP6, Parties adopted a Resolution on species “Conservation Management Plans” (CMPs), which are key to manage human activities that affect cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea and maintain a favourable conservation status throughout their historical range, based on the best available scientific knowledge. To date, four CMPs are under development on: fin whales, Risso’s dolphins, common dolphins and bottlenose dolphins.

#### **Conclusion 22.**

The Secretariat was requested to make the four draft CMPs accessible on a shared platform to enable the Scientific Committee members to provide comments, in view of streamlining final versions before March 2024.

The four CMP leaders - Simone Panigada for fin whales, Léa David for Risso’s dolphins, Joan Gonzalvo for common dolphins and Guido Gnone for bottlenose dolphins - were requested to identify relevant stakeholders to organize a dedicated workshop(s).

#### **Conclusion 23.**

The Scientific Committee prioritized drafting future CMP on:

- **Ziphius** – to be led by **Aurelie Moulins** and supported by Draško Holcer, Marta Azzolin, Anastasia Komnenou, Greg Donovan and other experts who participated in the IUCN assessment; and

- **Sperm whale** – to be led by **Caterina Lanfredi** and supported by Greg Donovan and experts who participated in the IUCN assessment.

#### **Conclusion 24.**

The Scientific Committee designated Ayaka Amaha Öztürk, Pavel Gol'din and Arda Tonay to initiate preliminary CMP documents for the relevant species in the Black Sea.

### **4.4 Human pressures on cetaceans**

#### *4.4.1 Interaction with fisheries / aquaculture*

39. Ayaka Amaha Öztürk, co-Chair of the ACCOBAMS-ASCOBANS joint working group on bycatch, reported the updates of the activities carried out since 2019. The most recent update is the workshop organized at the ECS annual conference in O Grove, Spain, (17 April 2023) entitled “Current bycatch issues in European waters” and was open to all the conference participants. In total, 43 people attended (including some from fishing communities) and discussed bycatch issues in both ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS areas. New data on monitoring and assessment of bycatch in the Baltic Sea, Bay of Biscay, Black Sea and Mediterranean Sea were presented, highlighting situations of serious concern despite some progress at the political level due to the pressure exerted by the European Commission on its Member States. She also pointed out that the work program of the working group needs to be updated with volunteers to lead each task.

#### **Conclusion 25.**

The Scientific Committee recommended that the Task Manager on Interactions with fisheries / aquaculture liaises with the ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS JBWG.

40. The Executive Secretary informed the Scientific Committee of Resolution 8.16 adopted at MOP8, which called for the establishment of an Emergency Task Force composed of the Black Sea Parties, the Secretariat and Scientific Committee, the European Commission, GFCM and the Secretariat of the Black Sea Commission, to identify and implement the best fisheries management measures in order to address the critical issue of harbour porpoise high bycatch rates. She explained that the Secretariat has been in contact with the European Commission (DG MARE) and the GFCM, both of which have indicated their interest in joining this effort, and that this Emergency Task Force is expected to be formally established in the coming months.

41. Hüseyin Özbilgin, GFCM Black Sea Technical Unit, presented the Pilot project to assess cetacean bycatch in the Black Sea turbot gillnet fisheries and trial measures to mitigate the incidental catch of cetaceans (CetaByM). He explained that the pilot project started in Summer 2022 and should be completed by the end of 2023, under the umbrella of GFCM Blacksea4Fish project. The activities are presently being conducted in Bulgaria, Romania and Türkiye, and soon would start in Georgia, in cooperation with experts from NIMRD, MareNostrum, GreenBalkans NGO, Sinop University, Çukurova University, RTE University and NEA, under four Work Packages:

- WP 1: Awareness raising and fishers' engagement in bycatch mitigation measures
- WP 2: Estimation of spatial and temporal distribution of active fishing effort
- WP 3: Commercial tests of Porpoise Alerting devices (PAL)
- WP 4: Experimental tests of PALs and comparison of soak time

Awareness raising activities of the project (WP 1) are being coordinated with ACCOBAMS through fishers' meetings, posters and leaflets. Many cooperative fishers willing to involve in bycatch reduction trials were identified all over the survey area. Preliminary results from direct interaction with turbot gillnet fishers indicate that the real fishing efforts for 2022 (WP 2) were usually not in line with the officially reported efforts.

Fishing effort showed significant accumulation around the close season (15 April – 15 June) in Bulgaria and Türkiye, whereas it was more evenly distributed in Romanian waters. Although 100 PALs tested in 39 fishing operations (WP 3) in five different locations have relatively lower bycatch of marine mammals, the results are far from being statistically significant at this stage. Mitigation tests (WP 4) comparing four different nets against commercially used nets in Romanian waters started in April and are planned to produce results after ten settings, by August 2023.

42. In conclusion, Hüseyin Özbilgin highlighted that observations from field work show that, although there are many fishermen who are ready to cooperate for a sustainable and bycatch free fishing, misreporting is a common practice in Black Sea turbot fisheries. Moreover, the fishery is very dynamic and highly differs amongst locations. Therefore, for a sustainable turbot fishery and reduced cetacean bycatch in the Black Sea, it is recommended to:

- Strengthen cooperation with fishers and awareness raising
- Strengthen stakeholder engagements
- Initiate regular abundance assessments
- Enforce compulsory monthly effort declarations (km\*days)
- Strengthen on board monitoring programmes (CPUE)
- Continue testing mitigation measures.

43. The Executive Secretary thanked GFCM for their efforts to take the harbour porpoise bycatch problem in the Black Sea so seriously and for the excellent collaboration with the ACCOBAMS Secretariat and ACCOBAMS Partners in the Black Sea towards the implementation of CetaByM activities.

#### **Conclusion 26.**

The Scientific Committee welcomed the presentation of CetaByM project and invited GFCM to circulate the results of the project when available, and to conduct trials in 2023 and 2024 to strengthen the statistical accuracy of results.

In discussion, the difficulty of devising effective trials for mitigation measures (e.g., pingers) with at least the potential to produce statistically significant results was recognized.

It was also noted that power analyses should be undertaken when designing surveys to examine trends in abundance with respect to frequency and coverage, as well as knowledge of population structure.

44. Nicolas Entrup (OceanCare) informed that Alnitak, a Spanish based organisation, collected data over the last couple of years and documented that drift nets are being used throughout the Alborán Sea. Thanks to combined monitoring by Alnitak alongside with a sector of the Spanish fishing fleet, on the night of the 8th of May, the Spanish coast guard detained three Moroccan vessels fishing with drift nets, and a number of entangled live dolphins got released. This happened inside the Alborán Island marine reserve. Alnitak has been monitoring this issue for a couple of years, and a 2022 survey in ports and harbours resulted in the identification of 940 boats in the Mediterranean coast of Morocco using drift nets of a combined estimated length of over 2000 km.

#### **Conclusion 27.**

The Scientific Committee suggested to promote collaboration efforts between ACCOBAMS and GFCM to address illegal driftnet fisheries and related bycatch in Western Mediterranean region.

#### *4.4.2 Anthropogenic underwater noise*

45. Sigrid Lüber, co-chair of the Joint CMS/ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS Noise Working Group (JNWG) was invited to present the JNWG progress report (ACCOBAMS-SC15/2023/Inf14). 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 needed 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 a study on the extent and temporal variability of the habitat of particularly vulnerable species, 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.

46. Alessio Maglio was then invited to introduce progress report regarding noise monitoring (ACCOBAMS-SC15/2023/Inf13). He explained that two main initiatives regarding noise monitoring were currently being implemented by ACCOBAMS: the QUIETSEAS project and the assessment of underwater noise pollution in the Mediterranean Sea, as part of the 2023 Quality Status Report of the Barcelona Convention.
47. OceanCare welcomed the work presented by Alessio on further developing NETCCOBAMS and its capacity to assess anthropogenic noise emissions in the Agreement area. It is important for the assessment work in line with the MSFD threshold values and the EcAP process.
48. OceanCare asked for caution when assessment results are presented, as it is well known that, due to significant data gaps, results would not provide a full understanding of potential ocean noise emissions. Existing national noise registries may not comprise the full data about all activities, as some countries do not have such registries yet in place. Reference was made to the experience of the Hot Spots 2 Report process, noting that data deficiencies exist. Furthermore, parts of the agreement area can be called an “underwater warfare zone” and active sonar is widely applied. It is likely that hardly any of such activities are reported and therefore not included in the datasets. Subsequently, assessment-results should not be misinterpreted as providing a complete understanding of the situation, and could not be used to assess whether or not a good environmental status has been achieved.

#### **Conclusion 28.**

The Scientific Committee recommended Parties to be cautious in evaluating assessment results on noise as there are still significant gaps in data and further encouraged Parties to provide complete data sets of impulsive noise-generating activities into the ACCOBAMS regional noise register, in order to be included in future assessments.

49. Ross Compton highlighted that the Noise Hotspots Report included data based on assumptions of where activities have taken place, based on information about licence blocks, rather than on information about actual activities. This was discussed at length with Alessio Maglio during the MOP8, and the need to ensure that data are corrected or provided with appropriate caveats was taken on. To the point raised by Nicolas Entrup, the Competent Authority of the relevant country is in possession of the relevant data, due to the applicable permit procedures and reporting requirements, and therefore they dispose of such data, which they can provide to the national noise registries.
50. In reaction to a statement by IOGP on data deficiency, OceanCare reminded the Scientific Committee that also Partner organisations, such as IOGP, should provide data and support the work towards achieving the objectives of the Agreement. A similar request has already been voiced at the 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Scientific Committee in 2021. So far, no information on impulsive noise generating activities has been made available by IOGP.
51. Ayaka Amaha Öztürk reported the mass stranding of Cuvier's beaked whales in Feb-Mar 2023 on the northern coast of Cyprus. There were 13 animals washed ashore on the northern coast of Cyprus and another one on the southern coast of Türkiye. Some animals were still alive but eventually died in spite of the rescuing efforts on site. Five whales were necropsied by the joint effort of Cyprus Wildlife Research Institute, Turkish Marine Research

Foundation and local authorities. There was no recent external injury. All animals had air bubbles in some organs such as brain, diffuse congestion in internal organs and haemorrhage blubber layer around the ears, which show consistency with acoustic trauma signs. Besides, the stomachs were full with fresh squids, which indicated that the animals were healthy and feeding freely at the time of the event. According to NAVTEX, there was a Russian military exercise taken in the area close to Cyprus Island just before the stranding occurred. However, there can be other acoustic activities in the surrounding areas, including seismic surveys. TUDAV emphasized the importance of stronger actions by Parties and/or navies to prevent such tragedies as there have been several mass mortality cases in the Mediterranean in the past.

#### **Conclusion 29.**

The Scientific Committee recommended to ask ACCOBAMS Focal Points of Range States to the Eastern Mediterranean region to provide information about any impulsive activities they are aware of, or that have taken place in the region - in advance and at the time - in context to the atypical mass stranding of beaked whales in Cyprus, in February 2023. When available, such information should be reviewed by the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee.

The Scientific Committee also recommended that the final report about this stranding event in Cyprus in Feb-March 2023 is brought to the attention of the ACCOBAMS Bureau and the Parties.

The Secretariat was encouraged to progress on the organisation of a second workshop with national navies in collaboration with ASCOBANS, in 2024.

52. Caterina Fortuna informed the Meeting about some information material on “Mediterranean Cuvier’s Beaked Whales and Impulsive Underwater Noise” prepared by the Pelagos Agreement Working Group on Mitigation of Impacts. The production of this information material resulted from the occurrence of some military exercises clearly audible in the Sanctuary area. This material also refers to ACCOBAMS Resolution 5.13 (2013) on Conservation of Cuvier’s beaked whales in the Mediterranean, and Resolutions 4.17 (2010) and 7.13 (2019) on Anthropogenic noise, including the revised Guidelines to address the impact of anthropogenic noise on Cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Area.

#### *4.4.3 Ship strikes*

53. The Executive Secretary informed the meeting that during the 2023 Monaco Ocean Week, the Secretariat proposed & organised an ACCOBAMS event “NETCCOBAMS, a collaborative management tool - focus on collisions between cetaceans and ships”, as an opportunity to showcase the functioning of NETCCOBAMS platform and its appropriateness as a knowledge hub in support of cetacean conservation in the Mediterranean and Black Seas. Focus was put on the proposal for a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) in the North-Western Mediterranean Sea to the International Maritime Organisation, elaborated by France, Monaco, Italy and Spain. Participants provided information on their national priorities, and management processes; and were invited to share the way in which they envisage future developments notably on the implementation of the PSSA and monitoring of associated IMO measures.

54. The Chair of the Scientific Committee updated the Meeting on two projects regarding marine traffic in the ACCOBAMS Area:

- The OCEAN project (<https://ocean-navigation-awareness.eu/>) is focused on enhancing operator awareness in navigation, to reduce the frequency of severe accidents like collision and grounding, to mitigate ship-strike risks to marine mammals, and to mitigate the risk presented by floating obstacles to ships. The OCEAN project



will contribute to an improved understanding of accident root causes, and will strive to reduce the resulting human, environmental and economic losses through socio-technical innovations supporting ship navigators.

- The LIFE SeaDetect project (<https://life-seadetecet.eu/>) aims to develop automated detection of marine mammals & obstacles and an anti-collision system for vessels. The SeaDetect project is composed of 3 systems: 1) a system installed on large vessels providing real-time detection of marine mammals and detections of other vessels and unidentified floating objects and related alerts; 2) a Passive Acoustic Monitoring network based on buoys that will detect and triangulate the position of cetaceans in real time; and 3) obtained detections will be shared through a dedicated application to inform other vessels of the risk of collision.

55. OceanCare reported that the Coalition of IFAW, OceanCare, Pelagos Cetacean Research Institute and WWF Greece has been relatively successful in the past year in its efforts to work with the shipping industry to convince shipping companies to re-route in the Hellenic Trench based on the best available scientific advice. Some companies have already imposed re-routing measures and some reducing vessel speed. These achievements result already in a significant risk reduction for collisions with sperm whales in the Hellenic Trench (estimated to be around 25%).

56. OceanCare also reported that a large chemical tanker company is reducing its vessel speed by 20% down to 10 knots in the North-western Mediterranean Sea. The work will be continued and it is expected that more companies will take similar operational measures.

57. Caterina Fortuna inquired on the status of the ACCOBAMS ship strikes Working Group. She mentioned the existence of the Pelagos Sub-Group on Collisions and Shipping operating under the Pelagos Agreement Working Group on Mitigation of Impacts, which is coordinated by Dr Maxime Sèbe. Since experts in those group are likely to be the same, she proposed to have a Joint Working Group between ACCOBAMS and Pelagos to avoid duplications.

#### **Conclusion 30.**

The Scientific Committee confirmed the relevance of this topic and recommended the SC Chair to reactivate the ship strikes Working Group and liaise with the Pelagos Sub-Group on Collisions and Shipping, and examine results of relevant ongoing projects prior the 16<sup>th</sup> Scientific Committee Meeting in 2024.

#### *4.4.4 Cetacean watching*

58. Marina Sequeira, Chair of the Working Group on Whale Watching (WWWG), presented the draft Terms of Reference for the WWWG for 2022-2025 as contained in document ACCOBAMS-SC15/2023/Doc12.

#### **Conclusion 31.**

The Scientific Committee endorsed the Terms of Reference and the composition for the WWWG for 2022-2025 shown as [Annex IX](#) to this report.

59. Mark Simmonds informed the Meeting about the CMS ongoing work related to the development of draft guidelines for recreational in-water interactions with marine wildlife, which will be presented for adoption of CMS Parties at their Fourteenth Meeting (COP14) to be held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, from 23 to 28 October 2023.

**Conclusion 32.**

The Scientific Committee recommended to the Chair of the Working Group on Whale Watching (WWWG) to liaise with CMS regarding the issue of in-water interactions which will be considered in the new Programme of Work for cetaceans at the next meetings of the CMS Scientific Council and Conference of the Parties.

#### 4.4.5 Marine litter & Chemical and biological pollution

60. Christina Panti introduced document ACCOBAMS-SC15/2023/Doc13 “Study on the hotspots of interactions between cetaceans and marine litter in the ACCOBAMS area - Draft report”, document ACCOBAMS-SC15/2023/Doc14 “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” and document ACCOBAMS-SC15/2023/Doc15 “Guidelines on the best practices to assess the impact of chemical pollution on cetaceans / to measure the chemical contamination on cetaceans”.
61. Mark Simmonds, who chaired the ASCOBANS/ACCOBAMS Marine Debris Workshop organized on 15 April 2023 in O Grove, Spain, presented the Recommendations issued by the workshop (ACCOBAMS-SC15/2023/Inf17).

**Conclusion 33.**

The Scientific Committee recommended that the Secretariat circulates the final report of the ASCOBANS/ACCOBAMS Marine Debris Workshop when it becomes available, so that SC16 will review progress on the workshop’s recommendations.

62. SPA/RAC representative informed the meeting about the activities undertaken by UNEP/MAP and its components in relation with the Monitoring of Marine debris & Chemical and biological pollution in the framework of the IMAP/EcAp process and the main adopted tools/guidelines to mitigate their impact on the Mediterranean, developed within the EU MED Marine litter project, such as Guidelines to tackle the single use plastic products. She invited the participants to visit the project web site for more information (<https://www.unep.org/unepmap/what-we-do/projects/MarineLitterMED-II>).

#### 4.4.6 Climate change

63. Mark Simmonds provided an overview of the new report of OceanCare on Climate Change which was made available to all the participants. This review takes note of the latest IPCC outputs and gives particular consideration to the Mediterranean, an area of high biodiversity but seemingly also high vulnerability.
64. Ocean warming has progressed faster over the past century than at any other time since the end of the last deglacial transition. Climate change impacts can also negatively affect the health, body condition, immune system, and survival of individuals and reduce the adaptive capacity and genetic variability within populations or species. In the Mediterranean Sea, the composition of most of the present marine and coastal ecosystems is expected to change under continued warming and there will be a greater risk of species extinctions – especially those with a restricted climatic distribution, those that require highly specific habitats, and/or small populations which are naturally more vulnerable to modifications in their habitats. The Mediterranean fin whales’ future ability to adapt to warming is of concern, for example, as their only known prey species, Northern krill (*Meganyctiphanes norvegica*) currently lives at the thermal limit of its distribution. If *M. norvegica* proves unable to shift its range due to land barriers, climate change might lead to strong declines in its abundance and potentially drastic reductions in food availability for Mediterranean fin whales.

65. Finally, he concluded with some recommendations from the 2021 IWC workshop, including that research was needed to ‘inform a switch in the focus for management of cetaceans from sustainability to one of building resilience in their populations’ and ‘to identify priorities, including: high impact stressors, regions under the greatest threat, vulnerability windows and at-risk populations or species.’

**Conclusion 34.**

The Scientific Committee encouraged collaboration with ongoing initiatives using Mediterranean as a case study, in particular with CMS.

The nexus of activities that contribute to climate change and have an impact on cetaceans should also be further explored.

*4.4.7 Captivity related issues*

66. The Executive Secretary reminded that semi-captivity issue has been considered for several years by ACCOBAMS, and addressed, in particular, in 2 reports: “Taking of cetaceans, dolphinarium and quasi-dolphinarium: a legal analysis relating to ACCOBAMS Parties” prepared by Prof. Tullio Scovazzi and Mrs. Ilaria Tani in 2017, and presented at MOP7; and “Scientific perspective on “potential marine semi-enclosed facilities” in the ACCOBAMS Area” prepared by Joan Gonzalvo and presented at MOP8. She reminded that MOP8 agreed that the Scientific Committee should establish an Advisory Committee on semi-enclosed facilities to provide guidance to interested Parties in relation to all questions related to semi-enclosed facilities.

67. Joan Gonzalvo introduced document ACCOBAMS-SC15/2023/Doc16 on the Terms of Reference for and the Draft composition of an ACCOBAMS Advisory Committee on semi-enclosed facilities.

**Conclusion 35.**

The Scientific Committee endorsed the amended Terms of Reference of the ACCOBAMS Advisory Committee on semi-enclosed facilities, approved its composition, both shown in [Annex X](#). Joan Gonzalvo was delegated to lead the Advisory Committee.

**4.5 Cetacean Critical Habitats**

68. Léa David, the Task Manager on “Area-based measures for cetacean conservation” updated on the activities regarding the CCH process, according to the outputs of a dedicated workshop held in Cap d’Ail, in March 2022. She explained that the CCH identification was a science-based process whose results would be useful for communication with stakeholders and decision-makers at regional level, as an interface between science and policy. The CCH framework would enable the focus to be put on possible mitigation measures, including place and sectorial-based. She explained that defining confidence levels at different steps across the identification process was crucial for a sound CCH process. The workshop concluded that a meeting with the Duke Marine Lab was necessary towards obtaining Surface Density Modelisation for all cetacean species, through using existing data in the whole ACCOBAMS area.

**Conclusion 36.**

The Scientific Committee recommended to the Task Group on ‘Area-based measures for cetacean conservation’ to review and update the work to be done for “area-based measures for cetacean conservation”, also considering the recommendations from the workshop held in March 2022.

It was suggested to replace, with an appropriate terminology, the term “Cetacean Critical Habitat”.

69. Léa David added that the workshop recommended to hold other workshops, which have been included in the 2023-2025 ACCOBAMS Working Programme:

- with stakeholders regarding human activities at sea datasets and their analysis,
- on marine traffic with A.I.S. data and on fisheries activities data.

**Conclusion 37.**

The Scientific Committee recommended that the Task Manager of 'Area-based measures for cetacean conservation' and her support group:

- draft and circulate to the Scientific Committee the Terms of Reference for both proposed workshops, and include more experts in modelling.
- revise and update available maps on the ACCOBAMS website, for example, those in Resolution 4.15.

## 5. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

### 5.1 Communication Strategy

70. The Executive Secretary updated on the implementation of the ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy 2023-2028, adopted by MOP8 through Resolution 8.6. Due to the lack of financial resources to put in place its different components, altogether in 2023, its implementation started with the development and management of media outreach through the activation of harmonised posts on ACCOBAMS social networks. This is considered a key step to raise awareness on cetacean conservation issues and to make ACCOBAMS more visible strengthening the echo of its action. The outcomes of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative, the NETCCOBAMS platform, and the High-Quality Whale Watching® label and certification constitute important information sources and touchpoints with the different target audiences.

**Conclusion 38.**

The Scientific Committee encouraged the Secretariat to further involve ACCOBAMS Partners in the implementation of the Communication Strategy.

71. Aurélie Moulins recalled the meeting that the Scientific Committee Recommendation 14.8 on Commercial Whale Watching Activities, (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). Moreover, in Res 8.6 - ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy for 2023-2028, it is stated in the section website that the "High Quality Whale Watching" label will be promoted through a dedicated page in the ACCOBAMS website. The Secretariat should consider to diffuse the key message of its effective achievement (I.3) such as the "High Quality Whale Watching" and this conservation tool aims to change tourist and economic sector mentalities.

**Conclusion 39.**

The Scientific Committee recommended that the communication campaign on the "High Quality Whale-Watching®" label and certification is enhanced.

## 5.2 NETCCOBAMS

72. Alessio Maglio presented the updated version of NETCCOBAMS which has been developed since early 2020 (i) by updating and improving the previous versions of the NETCCOBAMS platform and (ii) by tackling the willingness expressed by the Secretariat to experiment best available science and new technologies to collect, analyze, and model data on cetaceans, as well as on acoustic risk areas, in order to support the threat-based management approach and to implement all relevant conservation measures promoted by ACCOBAMS.
73. It was suggested to create a folder for Marine Renewable Energy, in order to gather all existing documents to be available for ACCOBAMS partners, scientists, about official national or international guidelines on impact assessment for windfarms, for example, and also measures - ERC, Avoid-Reduce-Compensate - and reports from existing windfarm.

### Conclusion 40.

The Scientific Committee suggested the Secretariat to facilitate access to NETCCOBAMS to all Scientific Committee members.

### Conclusion 41.

The Scientific Committee recommended to activate the NETCCOBAMS Working Group established by Resolution 8.7 as soon as possible.

This Working Group will be coordinated by Dimitar Popov and supported by Lorenza Babbini, Rimel Ben Messaoud, Léa David, Greg Donovan, Nicolas Entrup, Caterina Fortuna, Draško Holcer, Alessio Maglio, Aurelie Moulins, Arda Tonay.

The Scientific Committee invited the Working Group to report to SC16.

## 6. COLLABORATION AND INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

### 6.1 Implementation of, and compliance with, ACCOBAMS Resolutions, and progress monitoring

74. The Executive Secretary informed that the Third Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Follow-up Committee was held online on 29 - 30 March 2022. She added that MOP8 adopted ad hoc Resolutions based on conclusions and recommendations of the 4 submissions that were presented in 2016 by OceanCare on:
- the assessment and control by Greece of military activities around South-East Crete. This procedure was not declared closed with regard to the control by Greece of military activities around Southeast Crete;
  - the assessment and control by Spain of petroleum exploration activities around the Balearic Islands. This 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;
  - the assessment and control by Portugal of petroleum exploration activities in the Algarve and Alentejo basins. This procedure was declared closed with respect to Portugal's involvement;
  - 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 concerned Countries were invited during MOP 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.

75. The Executive Secretary informed the Meeting of the implementation of Resolution 4.18 on the Guidelines on the granting of exceptions to Article II, paragraph 1, for the purpose of non-lethal in situ research in the Agreement. She reminded that ACCOBAMS provides that research activities at sea that are likely to cause harassment of cetaceans must be prohibited unless a Party decides to grant an exception, after obtaining advice from the Scientific Committee. Guidelines on the granting of exceptions have been adopted by the Parties back in 2010 through Resolution 4.18, in order to provide guidance on their implementation. Although many activities generating harassment have been possibly carried, no request for advice has ever been submitted to the Scientific Committee. During last triennium, the Bureau asked the Secretariat to remind all National Focal Points, Scientific Committee members, Sub-Regional Coordinating Units, Partners and partner Organizations, of the procedure for granting exemptions to research activities at sea in case they are likely to cause harassment of cetaceans, and to ask Parties to inform about exemptions they may have granted during the five past years. Out the 24 ACCOBAMS Parties, 10 replies were received by November 2022. 4 Parties confirmed having given derogations - Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Spain - and 6 Parties reported that no derogations had been granted - Algeria, Cyprus, Malta, Monaco, Morocco and Türkiye. A document was presented to MOP8, during which it was decided to include a derogation dedicated section in the national report format. The Secretariat is to report on this to MOP9.

#### **Conclusion 42.**

The Scientific Committee took note of the information and suggested the Secretariat to circulate Resolution 4.18 to the members of the Scientific Committee to assess if there is a need to review, prior to SC16, the process described in the guidelines on the granting of exceptions.

#### **6.2 Update on selected projects under Supplementary Conservation Fund**

76. Referring to document ACCOBAMS-SC15/2023/Inf16, the Executive Secretary presented the 6 projects currently funded under the ACCOBAMS Supplementary Conservation Fund.

Two (2) projects were selected during the 2018 ACCOBAMS Call for proposals, which endured launching or implementation delays, respectively:

- "Establishment of a new operational network for the monitoring of cetacean strandings on the Algerian Coast" coordinated by the National Centre for Research and Development of Fisheries and Aquaculture (CNRDPA),
- "Establishing the bank of cetacean tissue samples in Ukraine" coordinated by the I.I. Schmalhausen Institute of Zoology of National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (IZAN).

Four (4) other projects were selected during the 2022 ACCOBAMS Call for proposals, whose implementation started in January 2023:

- "Implementing ACCOBAMS best practices in post-mortem investigations on stranded and by-caught cetaceans from Romanian shore and ingested marine litter monitoring (PONTICCET)" coordinated by the National Institute for Marine Research and Development (NIMRD),
- "The Tunisian Dolphin Project, expanding the monitoring programme to the Gulf of Gabes" coordinated by the Association Tunisienne de la Vie Sauvage (ATVS),
- "Research and Conservation of the Sperm Whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*) in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea of Türkiye" coordinated by the NGO Deniz Memelileri Araştırma Derneği (DMAD),
- "Establishing a cetacean tissue bank in Türkiye" coordinated by the Istanbul University, Faculty of Aquatic Sciences (IUFAS).

#### **Conclusion 43.**

The Scientific Committee took note of the information.

### 6.3 Cooperation with international organizations

#### 6.3.1 Collaboration with Sub Regional Coordination Units

77. The SPA/RAC representative informed about the implementation progress of the EU funded EcAp MED III project which aims to Support Efficient Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach-based IMAP to delivery of data-based 2023 Quality Status Report in synergy with the EU MSFD (EcAp-MED III).
78. She recalled that the first activity coordinated by SPA/RAC within this project is to support 7 Beneficiary Contracting Parties for the implementation of the monitoring of IMAP Common Indicators 3, 4 and 5 which focus on species distributional range of cetaceans, population abundance of selected species of cetaceans and population demographic characteristics of cetaceans, respectively. The second main action is the contribution of SPA/RAC to the preparation of 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (2023 MED QSR): mainly in relation with the Content on Biodiversity, Non-indigenous species and Fisheries Ecological Objectives (EOs); SPA/RAC has prepared six thematic assessment reports for benthic habitats, cetaceans, Mediterranean monk seal, seabirds, marine turtles and non-indigenous species (NIS). These reports have been presented and amended during the last Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON), Biodiversity and Fisheries, held in Athens 9-10 March 2023 and will be further discussed during the next meeting of the Integrated CORMON, planned for 27 and 28 June 2023.
79. She underlined that the main sections to be included in the final 2023 MED QSR will include Key messages; Good Environmental Status (GES)/alternative assessment. Key findings per CI; Measures and actions required to achieve GES for cetaceans.
80. Finally, she informed that the MoU between ACCOBAMS-SPA/RAC, including the joint programme of work for the next triennium is under signature.

#### Conclusion 44.

The Scientific Committee members were invited to review the 2023 MedQSR Cetaceans Chapter by 17 May 2023. On 18 May, the Scientific Committee members will be consulted to see whether they agree that their comments are shared with UNEP/MAP-SPA/RAC on behalf of the Scientific Committee. In case of no agreement, Scientific Committee members will be free to provide their feedback in their personal capacity.

81. Iryna Makarenko (Black Sea Commission' Permanent Secretariat or BSC PS), representing also the ACCOBAMS Black Sea Sub Regional Coordination Unit, informed that BSC PS is 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.).
82. She informed that BSC PS appreciated the level of cooperation and assistance of ACCOBAMS and other relevant partners, and was looking forward to continue this important collaboration (i.e. sustainability and dissemination of Black Sea Cetaceans Survey results and CENOBs Project, Project on cetacean by-catch; Cetacean conservation modules in Black Sea universities; marine litter; underwater noise etc.). She informed that the Permanent Secretariat closely worked together through dedicated regional projects, such as EU4EMBLAS, CENOBs, Black Sea BRIDGE, Black Sea DOORS, BS CONNECT, ABIOMED and others; followed implementation of the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda for the Black Sea Common Maritime Agenda. Currently, despite the fact that all their activities and budget implementation were suspended, BSC PS continues coordination of joint efforts with 3 new projects recently launched in the region, such as GEF UNDP/UNESCO Black Sea LME Project, dealing with

biodiversity and MPAs; World Bank Blue in the Black Sea Project dealing with pollution and FAO GFCM Project on Fisheries; the first project will actually include a component on cetaceans, including Cetaceans Conservation Plan; BSC PS also joined the World Ocean Assessment III process launched by UN DOALOS. The Regional Action Plan on management of the Marine Litter in the Black Sea was adopted in October 2018 and currently implementing activities foreseen within Marine Litter Med II Project, monitoring guidelines, producing ML assessment and working on national monitoring programs in Georgia and Ukraine, “adopt-the-beach” measures and single use plastics legislation.

83. The representative of the BSC PS explained that support and expertise for drafting and improving the relevant documents were needed, in particular to update the Conservation Plan for Cetaceans, the new draft of BSIMAP 2022-2027, the short format of BSC annual reporting, a dedicated Chapter on Cetaceans in the next State of Environment Report. She also mentioned the support of experts to the newly established group on cetacean by-catch by the JRC. She emphasized the crucial importance to ensure that BSC and ACCOBAMS are fully engaged into post-war assessments carried out by different organizations and asked the ACCOBAMS Secretariat to support dedicated efforts.
84. To conclude, she emphasized that BSC PS was ready to contribute to other relevant ACCOBAMS activities, in particular in implementing the project for MSFD implementation for cetaceans, in assisting dissemination and sustainability of CENOBIS Project results and the preparation of data on cetaceans for Black Sea Red Data Book.

#### *6.3.2 Collaboration with ACCOBAMS Partners*

85. Representatives from OceanCare, Green Balkans NGO and Mare Nostrum NGO highlighted that working towards reaching the objectives of the ACCOBAMS Agreement remains one of the core priorities for their organizations and that several work streams and activities undertaken will directly contribute to the the work programme adopted by Parties (Resolution 8.2)

#### *6.3.3 Collaboration with other Organizations*

86. Greg Donovan reiterated the excellent long-term collaboration between ACCOBAMS and the IWC since the inception of ACCOBAMS. There is a tremendous overlap between almost all scientific and conservation issues between the two IGOs and the co-operation on these is of great mutual benefit. He especially highlighted the scientific collaboration and the tremendous work of the ACCOBAMS Secretariat in fostering these collaborations.
87. Catherine Numa from the IUCN Med, recalled that both organizations have a long-standing partnership in the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean and Black Seas, and are committed to continuing their joint efforts to protect these species and their habitats.
88. Hüseyin Ozbilgin, the FAO-GFCM representative, highlighted the greatly appreciated collaboration with ACCOBAMS, with whom they address issues of key importance within the GFCM 2030 strategy, in particular those related to reduce and mitigate both incidental catches of vulnerable species and dolphin depredation.
89. Susan Gallon from MedPAN recalled that ACCOBAMS has been a long-term partner of MedPAN and is a member of the MedPAN Advisory Committee but also of MedPAN’s working group on mobile species. Both organizations collaborate in order to increase effectiveness of conservation efforts for cetaceans.



## 7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

90. On the issue of the [IWC State of the Cetacean Environment Report \(SOCER\)](#) concerning Mediterranean and Black Sea, Caterina Fortuna informed the Meeting that the IWC produces the State of the Cetacean Environment Report (SOCER) every year, and that in 2024 SOCER will focus on Mediterranean and Black Sea. This will be a good opportunity to increase the visibility of the scientific work carried out within the ACCOBAMS Area at a global level.

### Conclusion 45.

The Scientific Committee recommended that Members of the Scientific Committee and ACCOBAMS Partners should provide all relevant literature published since 2018 in the ACCOBAMS Area to the IWC to Michael Stachowitsch<sup>1</sup>, in order to contribute to the elaboration of the next IWC State of the Cetacean Environment Report (SOCER) concerning Mediterranean and Black Seas.

91. On the issue of the membership of the European Cetacean Society (ECS) to the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee, Ayaka Amaha Öztürk recalled the decision made by the Parties (Resolution 8.3), during MOP8, to exclude ECS as a member to the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee. She underlined that the ECS does represent a significant scientific entity, comprising more than 500 scientists and experts on marine mammals, which has been importantly contributing to the work of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee since the beginning. She requested the Scientific Committee members to express their opinions on this unexpected exclusion.

### Conclusion 46.

The Scientific Committee members commended the contribution of the European Cetacean Society to the works of the previous Scientific Committee meetings, emphasising the substantial added value that ECS may bring to the future work of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee. The Scientific Committee recommended that Parties reconsider the inclusion of the ECS amongst the organisations invited to designate one representative as a member to the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee.

### Conclusion 47.

The Scientific Committee suggested that ECS addresses a letter to the ACCOBAMS Bureau through the Secretariat expressing their renewed interest in fully participating to the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee work.

## 8. DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE MEETING

### Conclusion 48.

The Scientific Committee suggested that the sixteenth Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee is held early December 2024, in Tunis.

## 9. ADOPTION OF CONCLUSIONS

### Conclusion 49.

The Scientific Committee adopted the conclusions as they appear in the report.

## 10. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

92. After the customary exchange of courtesies, the Chair of the Scientific Committee closed the Meeting at 18h45 on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2023.

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## ANNEXES

[Annex I](#) - List of participants

[Annex II](#) - Agenda

[Annex III](#) - Terms of Reference for the election of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Scientific Committee

[Annex IV](#) - Terms of Reference of Scientific Committee Task Managers

[Annex V](#) - Terms of Reference of the CMP Steering Committee

[Annex VI](#) - ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee Working programme for 2023-2025 - with priorities identified by Parties at MOP8 - Objectives to be achieved before SC16

[Annex VII](#) - Terms of Reference of the intersessional Working Group regarding Regional Representatives reports

[Annex VIII](#) - Suggested draft Terms of Reference for work on survey strategy simulation framework

[Annex IX](#) - Terms of Reference and composition for the Working Group on Whale Watching (WWWG)

[Annex X](#) - Terms of Reference for and composition of an ACCOBAMS Advisory Committee on semi-enclosed facilities

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## ANNEX II - AGENDA

### 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

### 2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

### 3. FUNCTIONING OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

- 3.1 Terms of Reference for the election of the Chair and of the Vice-Chair of the Scientific Committee
- 3.2 Election of the Chair of the Scientific Committee 2023/2025
- 3.3 Election of the Vice-Chair of the Scientific Committee 2023/2025
- 3.4 Terms of Reference for the designation of Task Managers
- 3.5 Designation of Task Managers of the Scientific Committee 2023/2025

### 4. CONSERVATION ACTIONS

- 4.1 Report by Regional Representatives
- 4.2 Knowledge about state of cetaceans
  - 4.2.1 *Cetacean population estimates and distribution (LTMP)*
  - 4.2.2 *Population Structure*
  - 4.2.3 *Monitoring cetacean's status*
  - 4.2.4 *Functional stranding networks and responses to emergency situation*
- 4.3 Conservation Management Plans
- 4.4 Human pressures on cetaceans
  - 4.4.1 *Interaction with fisheries / aquaculture*
  - 4.4.2 *Anthropogenic underwater noise*
  - 4.4.3 *Ship strikes*
  - 4.4.4 *Cetacean watching*
  - 4.4.5 *Marine litter & Chemical and biological pollution*
  - 4.4.6 *Climate change*
  - 4.4.7 *Captivity related issues*
- 4.5 Cetacean Critical Habitats

### 5. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

- 5.1 Communication Strategy
- 5.2 NETCCOBAMS

### 6. COLLABORATION AND INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

- 6.1 Implementation of, and compliance with, ACCOBAMS Resolutions, and progress monitoring
- 6.2 Update on selected projects under Supplementary Conservation Funds
- 6.3 Cooperation with international organizations
  - 6.3.1 *Collaboration with Sub Regional Coordination Units*
  - 6.3.2 *Collaboration with ACCOBAMS Partners*
  - 6.3.3 *Collaboration with other Organizations*

### 7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

### 8. DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE MEETING

### 9. ADOPTION OF THE CONCLUSIONS

### 10. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

## ANNEX III - TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

### **Background**

ACCOBAMS Resolution 8.3 amended the Rules of Procedure of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee (SC).

The amendments agreed by the Meeting of the Parties in 2022 aim at ensuring a wider participation of ACCOBAMS Parties in the Scientific Committee, as a subsidiary key body to the ACCOBAMS work. The enhancement of its institutional role was envisaged, as well as its alignment with fundamental principles and universal values - transparency, geographic and gender representation, cooperation, inclusion – while mindful of the necessary balance between contrasting factors like the quality of the scientific and technical advice vs. the comprehension of institutional work, and the preservation of the institutional memory of the organisation vs. the need for generational change.

Based on these objectives, the MOP8 changed the rules on the composition of the SC, the designation of their members and the election procedures, as follows:

- a) up to 12 experts may be designated as Regional Representatives;
- b) the MOP designates all the members of the Scientific Committee, although some of them still continue to be proposed by CIESM, IUCN, CMS, IWC;
- c) the SC Chair and Vice-Chair are elected amongst all SC members, excluding any additional members designated on a voluntary basis by the Parties;
- d) the SC Chair and Vice-Chair shall not be experts nominated by the same Organization;
- e) a maximum duration of two consecutive terms for the SC Chair, Vice Chair and Task Managers was introduced, starting from 2025.

The role and responsibilities of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Scientific Committee are summarised in [Appendix 1](#) to these Terms of Reference.

### **Election procedure**

Pursuant to Resolution 8.3, the Scientific Committee needs to appoint, at its first Meeting of the triennium, a Chair and a Vice-Chair among the experts designated as members to the Scientific Committee by CIESM, IUCN, IWC, CMS, and Regional Representatives.

1. At the first SC Meeting of each triennium, a list of all experts designated as members of the Scientific Committee is provided in [Appendix 2](#) to these Terms of Reference.
2. The ACCOBAMS Executive Secretary, together with another staff member of the ACCOBAMS Secretariat, will facilitate the election procedure of the Chair and Vice-Chair.
3. At the beginning of the election procedure, SC members will be invited to inform the meeting in case they do not wish to be considered as candidates to serve as Chair or/and as Vice-Chair.
4. Then the Secretariat provides to each SC member present in the room a secret ballot containing the list of experts who may be considered to serve as Chair of the Scientific Committee, and requests each SC member to circle the name of the expert they wish to elect for this position.
5. In case there are SC members who cannot attend in person and are participating on line, they may delegate

their vote to another SC member present in the room, and should inform the Secretariat in writing of that decision, well in advance of the meeting. In such case, the SC member with the delegated vote will be given a supplementary secret ballot.

6. Once the voting procedure is concluded and after collecting all secret ballots in the room, the Secretariat immediately counts the votes, in the presence of all SC Members, and announces the results of the voting procedure.
7. Once the voting procedure for the election of the SC Chair is successfully concluded, a second voting procedure is carried out to elect the SC Vice-chair, taking into account that the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Scientific Committee shall not be experts nominated by the same Organization, and that gender and geographical balance, as well as alternation in all roles of the Scientific Committee, is to be considered.
8. Each member of the Scientific Committee will be given one vote for the SC Chair and one vote for the SC Vice-Chair.
9. In case any voting procedure fails to obtain a majority in the first ballot, a second ballot on the two most voted candidates shall be taken, until the voting procedure is concluded.

## **Appendix 1 - Summary of the role and responsibilities of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Scientific Committee**

### **Coordination and representation of the SC**

The Chair and Vice-Chair:

1. in addition to their role as members of the Scientific Committee, will coordinate the work of the Scientific Committee concerning the topics that have been assigned to them by the Scientific Committee.
2. 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.
3. together with other members of the Scientific Committee, the Secretariat and the Bureau, the Sub-Regional Coordinating Units, ACCOBAMS Partners and international and national non-governmental Organizations, will contribute to promote and facilitate the implementation of the ACCOBAMS Work Program, bearing in mind the Resolutions adopted by the Meeting of the Parties.
4. may be requested to attend meetings on behalf of the ACCOBAMS Secretariat, in relation to their field of expertise.

### **Collaboration**

The SC Chair and SC Vice-Chair:

5. together with other Scientific Committee members, will further contribute to promote cooperation with scientific Institutions in the ACCOBAMS area.
6. will conduct their work in close collaboration with the Secretariat, the Bureau and, when actions are interconnected, with relevant ACCOBAMS working groups, as appropriate.
7. will mainly work through exchange of email.

### **Scientific Committee Meetings**

8. The Chair and Vice-Chair elected for the previous 3-years period will assist the Secretariat in the preparation of the first Meeting of the Scientific Committee of the following 3-years period.
9. During the Scientific Committee meeting, the Chair and Vice-Chair will assist the Secretariat by providing conclusions on each agenda item, which will be reflected in the Meeting report.
10. The Chair shall preside over the meetings of the Scientific Committee, support the Secretariat in the preparation of the provisional agenda, and liaise with SC members between meetings of the Committee. The Chair may represent the Committee as required and carry out other any other functions delegated to him/her by the Committee, within the limits of the SC scope of work.
10. The Vice-Chair shall assist the Chair. In the absence or incapability of the Chair, the Vice-Chair will preside over



the Scientific Committee meetings and exercise the powers and duties prescribed for the Chair.

### **Assistance on the composition of the Scientific Committee**

11. The Chair and Vice-Chair will assist the Extended Bureau in the selection of Scientific Committee members by providing an evaluation of the background and *Curricula* of the candidates, which will also be submitted to the Meeting of the Parties.

### **Consultative role & consultation procedure**

12. 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 consult the Chair and other Scientific Committee members to get their advice on such request.
13. Within 30 days, the Chair takes a decision on the request, also considering the advice received from the other Scientific Committee members, and conveys such decision to the Secretariat for immediate communication to the requesting Party.
14. 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.
15. The Chair shall forward the proposal to the Scientific Committee members. Their comments shall be submitted within 30 days from the date of that communication to all members of the Scientific Committee and to the Secretariat.
16. 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 urgently contact the relevant Parties.

## Appendix 2 – List of all experts designated as Members to the Scientific Committee

Members nominated by CIESM	<p><b>Loriane MENDEZ</b> Mediterranean Science Commission Research Assistant 16 boulevard de Suisse 98000 Monaco Tel: +33629414208 <a href="mailto:lmendez@ciesm.org">lmendez@ciesm.org</a></p>
	<p><b>Ayaka Amaha OZTÜRK</b> Turkish Marine Research Foundation Advisor Fistikli Yali Sok. N°34/5 Beykoz, 81650 Istanbul – TURKEY Tel: +90 216 3239050 <a href="mailto:ayakamaha@hotmail.co.jp">ayakamaha@hotmail.co.jp</a></p>
	<p><b>Simone PANIGADA</b> Tethys Research Institute Viale G.B. Gadio 2 20 121 Milan – Italy Tel: (+39) 02 7200 1947 – (+39) 02 6694 114 <a href="mailto:panigada69@gmail.com">panigada69@gmail.com</a></p>
Members nominated by IUCN	<p><b>Rimel BENMESSAOUD</b> Assistante d'enseignement Supérieur- Département de Génie Halieutique et environnement Institut National Agronomique de Tunisie (INAT) 43 Avenue Charles Nicolle, Tunis, 1082 Tunisie Tel : +216 29 08 36 31 <a href="mailto:benmessaoud_rimel@yahoo.fr">benmessaoud_rimel@yahoo.fr</a></p>
	<p><b>Léa DAVID</b> EcoOcéan Institut Dr écologie marine cétologie/ornithologie 18 Rue des Hospices - 34090 Montpellier FRANCE Tel : +33 4 67 84 28 87 - Mob : +33 6 09 49 68 39 <a href="mailto:lea.david2@wanadoo.fr">lea.david2@wanadoo.fr</a></p>
	<p><b>Maria Cristina FOSSI</b> Dipartimento di Scienze Fisiche, della Terra e dell'Ambiente Università di Siena Via P.A. Mattioli, 4 53100 Siena - Italy <a href="mailto:fossi@unisi.it">fossi@unisi.it</a></p>
	<p><b>Simone PANIGADA</b> Tethys Research Institute Viale G.B. Gadio 2 20 121 Milan – Italy Tel: (+39) 02 7200 1947 – (+39) 02 6694 114 <a href="mailto:panigada69@gmail.com">panigada69@gmail.com</a></p>
CMS Representative	<p><b>Mark SIMMONDS</b> Councillor for Marine Pollution <a href="mailto:mark.simmonds@sciencegyre.co.uk">mark.simmonds@sciencegyre.co.uk</a></p>

<b>IWC Representative</b>	<b>Greg DONOVAN</b> <a href="mailto:gregiwc@btinternet.com">gregiwc@btinternet.com</a> <a href="mailto:corkblue1o@gmail.com">corkblue1o@gmail.com</a>
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Regional representatives	
Region	Member
<b>Western region &amp; contiguous Atlantic area</b>	<b>Souad LAMOUTI</b> Chercheuse CNRDPA 11 boulevard Colonel Amirouche, Bou-Ismaïl w. de Tipaza – Algérie Tel: +213-24-32-64-10 <a href="mailto:souad.lamouti@gmail.com">souad.lamouti@gmail.com</a>
	<b>Giancarlo LAURIANO</b> Senior Researcher Italian National Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA) via Vitaliano Brancati 60 00144 Rome, Italy <a href="mailto:giancarlo.lauriano@isprambiente.it">giancarlo.lauriano@isprambiente.it</a>
	<b>Mohamed Naoufal TAMSOURI</b> Chef du Laboratoire des Technologies Aquacoles Marine/CSIAM Tétouan- Maroc Tel: 0606056084 <a href="mailto:tamsouri@inrh.ma">tamsouri@inrh.ma</a>
<b>Central region</b>	<b>Caterina FORTUNA</b> Senior Researcher Italian National Institute of Environmental Protection and Research via Vitaliano Brancati 60 00144 Rome, Italy Tel: +39 349 7344094 <a href="mailto:caterina.fortuna@isprambiente.it">caterina.fortuna@isprambiente.it</a>
	<b>Tilen GENOV</b> MORIGENOS, Slovenian Marine Mammal Society Kidričevo nabrežje 4 6330 Piran Slovenia Tel: +38631771077 <a href="mailto:tilen.genov@gmail.com">tilen.genov@gmail.com</a>
	<b>Draško HOLCER</b> Department of Zoology Croatian Natural History Museum Demetrova 1, HR-10000 Zagreb, Croatia Tel: +385 1 4851700 - Mobile: +385 91 4637424 <a href="mailto:Drasko.Holcer@hpm.hr">Drasko.Holcer@hpm.hr</a>

Regional representatives	
Region	Member
Eastern region	<b>Anastasia KOMNENOU</b> University Hospital, Department of Clinical Sciences, School of Veterinary Medicine, Faculty of Health Sciences, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, AUTH, 11 St. Voutyra str, 54627, Thessaloniki Greece Tel: +30 2310 994443 -mob. +30 6945 531850 <a href="mailto:natakomn@vet.auth.gr">natakomn@vet.auth.gr</a> <a href="mailto:natakomn@gmail.com">natakomn@gmail.com</a>
	<b>Céline MAHFOUZ</b> National Centre for Marine Sciences 189 Jounieh / Jounieh - Lebanon Tel: +961 349 6680 <a href="mailto:celine.mahfouz@gmail.com">celine.mahfouz@gmail.com</a>
	<b>Yianna SAMUEL</b> Department of Fisheries & Marine Research Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment Vithleem 101 2033 Strovolos Cyprus Tel: + 375-22-807841 Cell: +357-99-373308 <a href="mailto:ysamuel@dfmr.moa.gov.cy">ysamuel@dfmr.moa.gov.cy</a>
Black Sea region	<b>Pavel GOL'DIN</b> Schmalhausen Institute of Zoology National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine & Ukrainian Center of Ecology of the Sea vul. Bogdana Khmelnytskogo 15 01030, Kyiv - Ukraine Tel: +380673900118 <a href="mailto:pavelgoldin412@gmail.com">pavelgoldin412@gmail.com</a>
	<b>Dimitar POPOV</b> GREEN BALKANS NGO 1 Skopie str., office 10 Plovdiv, Bulgaria Tel : +359885108712 <a href="mailto:dpopov@greenbalkans.org">dpopov@greenbalkans.org</a>
	<b>Arda TONAY</b> İstanbul Üniversitesi Su Bilimleri Fakültesi Ordu Cad. No:8 Laleli, 34480 İstanbul <a href="mailto:ardatonay@yahoo.com">ardatonay@yahoo.com</a>

**ANNEX IV - TERMS OF REFERENCE OF SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE TASK MANAGERS**

In addition to their role as members of the Scientific Committee, Task Managers are expected:

1. to coordinate, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, the works of the Scientific Committee concerning the topics they have been assigned.
2. to contribute promoting the necessary actions to facilitate the implementation of the Work Program, considering the Resolutions adopted by the Meetings of the Parties, in collaboration with the other Scientific Committee members, the Secretariat, the Bureau, the Sub-Regional Coordinating Units, the ACCOBAMS Partners, and international and national non-governmental Organizations.
3. to conduct their work in close collaboration with the Chair of the Scientific Committee, with the ACCOBAMS Secretariat and, when actions are interconnected, with the other Task Managers or relevant ACCOBAMS working groups.
4. to mainly work by email, while trying to meet other relevant experts during other scheduled meetings (e.g. ECS, IWC, etc.).
5. If so requested, to attend meetings pertinent to their field of expertise, on behalf of the ACCOBAMS Secretariat.
6. to provide a report to the Scientific Committee meetings on the topics they have been assigned to.
7. to assist the ACCOBAMS Secretariat and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the SC by providing a summary of relevant discussions/conclusions for inclusion in the Scientific Committee meeting report.

## **ANNEX V - TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR AN ACCOBAMS SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE STEERING GROUP ON CMPs**

### **Objective**

To provide guidance and advice on species Conservation Management Plans (CMPs) with a focus on completion of the ongoing CMP drafts.

### **Terms of Reference**

The Steering Group shall:

- (1) use the CMP template and general principles outlined in the Resolution 6.21 (MOP 2016) as the basis for its work;
- (2) finalise the drafts of the ongoing CMPs (fin whales, Risso's dolphin, common dolphin, bottlenose dolphins) as soon as feasible with a focus on ensuring consistency amongst them, and determining the best way to cross-reference and, where appropriate, consolidate and merge actions for the different species;
- (3) in collaboration with the Secretariat, develop a strategy, budget, participant list and timeline for the necessary stakeholder workshop(s) to review and finalise the CMPs for formal approval by ACCOBAMS (and IWC);
- (4) assist assigned specialist drafting groups in the process of developing further CMPs with initial focus on Cuvier's beaked whales (led by Aurelie Moulins) and sperm whales (led by Caterina Lanfredi);
- (5) provide a consolidated report of the group's activities to the next Scientific Committee meeting.

### **Membership**

The Group will be co-ordinated by Greg Donovan and Simone Panigada with Léa David, Joan Gonzalvo, Guido Gnone, Aurelie Moulins, Caterina Lanfredi and Caterina Fortuna.

### ***Modus operandi***

The primary method of working will be electronic.

**ANNEX VI - WORK PROGRAMME 2023-2025 WITH PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED BY PARTIES AT MOP8  
OBJECTIVES TO BE ACHIEVED BEFORE SC16**

<b>CONSERVATION ACTIONS (CA)</b>
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<b>CA 1 a</b>	<b>Cetacean population estimates and distribution</b>
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<b>Expected outcomes</b>	<b>Improved knowledge of cetacean populations in the ACCOBAMS Area</b> <b>Global distribution and abundance of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea and Black Seas established, based on results of surveys</b>
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Proposed Action(s)	Priority	Action led by and in cooperation with	Means of implementation	Objectives to be achieved before SC16
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	High			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Res 8.11: (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;</li> </ul>
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"> <li>Secure funds for implementing ASI2, including by investigating the existence of possible funding at national / regional levels</li> <li>Development and implementation of a simulation framework to examine the performance of different future survey strategies (synoptic, regional/national)</li> <li>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</li> <li>Promoting synchronization and standardization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a simulation framework to examine the performance of different future survey strategies</li> <li>Res 8.10: Tasks the Scientific Committee and the Secretariat, in collaboration with the ASI Steering Committee and other relevant experts, <b>to prepare</b>, for the next synoptic basin wide survey, a <b>detailed technical document</b> in the form of a <b>project proposal</b>, with a description of the different work packages, time-frame, budget and a SWOT analysis.</li> <li>Present the results of the simulation framework to examine the performance of different future survey strategies (synoptic,</li> </ul>



			<p>of existing monitoring efforts to contribute to LTMP purpose (coordination meetings at the sub-regional level, Working Group on cetaceans monitoring...)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborating with relevant organizations, such as the Barcelona Convention (EcAp-Med III), the Bucharest Convention and the European Commission (MSFD),</li> </ul>	<p>regional/national)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the Scientific Coordinator of the next basin-wide surveys in the ACCOBAMS Area to be undertaken in 2024-2026, in particular to review and update as necessary the field and analytical protocols</li> <li>• Participate in relevant meetings of the Barcelona Convention, the Bucharest Convention and the European Commission, such as the Online working group on marine mammals</li> </ul>
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"> <li>• Developing NETCCOBAMS functionalities to create a repository system for ASI data</li> <li>• Promoting ASI data and results in relevant fora, also through the Special Issue in Frontiers of Marine Science</li> <li>• Sharing ASI data following received requests in accordance with ASI Terms of use and archiving/monitoring of the requests</li> <li>• Collecting outputs of work and analysis conducted following ASI full dataset requests to be used by the SC to give best scientific advice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advise the development of NETCCOBAMS to create a repository system for ASI data</li> <li>• Promote ASI data and results in relevant fora</li> </ul>
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"> <li>• Facilitating exchanges and coordination between Parties on sub-regional surveys</li> <li>• Organizing training activities on monitoring methods/protocols and data analysis for smaller-scale surveys (at local, national and sub-regional levels)</li> <li>• Develop handbooks on standardized monitoring methods (aerial surveys, boat-based surveys, acoustic surveys...)</li> <li>• Collaborating with relevant organizations, such as Barcelona Convention (EcAp-Med III), the Bucharest Convention and the European Commission (MSFD)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support training activities on monitoring methods/protocols and data analysis for smaller-scale surveys (at local, national and sub-regional levels)</li> <li>• Contribute to the development of handbooks on standardized monitoring methods (aerial surveys, boat-based surveys, acoustic surveys...)</li> </ul>
Promote data collection from multidisciplinary surveys (such as fisheries / acoustic surveys), innovative	High	Scientific Committee Secretariat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertaking activities in pilot areas to collect data using multidisciplinary surveys (such as fisheries / acoustic surveys), innovative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Res 8.19: to review and update the 'Common procedure (data collection system) for whale watching vessels</li> </ul>

technologies (UAV, satellite) and of platforms of opportunity (ferries, whale watching vessels, navy vessels, etc..)		Parties, Non-Party Range States Partners, SRCUs	<p>technologies (UAV, satellite) and platforms of opportunity (ferries, whale watching vessels, navy vessels, etc..) based on recommendations of previous studies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiating collaboration with existing regional fisheries surveys (MEDITS, MEDIAS) and relevant organizations such as GFCM and ICCAT</li> <li>• Collaborate with relevant existing networks (FLT) and initiatives/projects (ex. CONCEPTU MARIS Life project)</li> <li>• Organizing meetings/workshops to discuss possible synergies and shared methodology and data analysis</li> <li>• Developing protocols on standardized monitoring methods for multidisciplinary surveys/ Ferries</li> <li>• Update the "Guidelines for the Monitoring of the Range of Cetaceans, Abundance and Demographic Characteristics of Populations"</li> <li>• Regularly review « Best Available Technologies » and assess potential contribution to LTMP</li> </ul>	<p>to be implemented in the ACCOBAMS Area', included in Annex 4 to Resolution 6.20 (under cetacean watching activities with the WWWG - CA2d)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Res 8.10: (a) investigate the use of vessels of opportunity and multidisciplinary cruises, as well as dedicated surveys, to provide information on: (i) areas that may not be able to be surveyed in basin-wide surveys and for which few data on presence or absence are available; (ii) non-summer occurrence; (iii) local trends in abundance and distribution; and (iv) areas where those platforms are already used for the collection of data on cetaceans and their habitat components.</li> <li>• Res 8.10: (c) further consider 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.</li> <li>• Support the implementation of pilot activities to collect data using multidisciplinary surveys and platforms of opportunity (ferries, whale watching vessels, navy vessels, etc..) based on recommendations of previous studies</li> <li>• Participate to meetings/workshops</li> </ul>
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				to discuss possible synergies and shared methodology and data analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Updated "Guidelines for the Monitoring of the Range of Cetaceans, Abundance and Demographic Characteristics of Populations" to be presented at SC16</li> </ul>
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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 Exchange of samples is facilitated for joint analysis Data exchange is facilitated for basin wide analysis
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Proposed Action(s)	Priority	Action led by and in cooperation with	Means of implementation	Objectives to be achieved before SC16
Improve photo ID data collection and dissemination: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update and harmonize protocols on data collection for photo ID</li> <li>Share photo ID data</li> </ul>	High	Scientific Committee Secretariat Parties, Non-Party Range States Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organizing experts meeting for best practices guide on how to collect data for comparison</li> <li>Organizing regional experts' trainings on analysis on photo ID including AI (Artificial Intelligence)– draft ToR to facilitate exchanges or a harmonized relevant database</li> <li>Facilitating data sharing and the creation of large-scale photo-id catalogues for in-depth analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contribute to experts meeting for best practices guide on how to collect data for comparison</li> <li>Contribute to regional expert trainings on analysis on photo ID including AI</li> </ul>
Improve data collection on cetacean populations genetic in the ACCOBAMS Area  Development of genetical identification of population structure (particularly for Mediterranean), including e.g eDNA	High	Scientific Committee Secretariat Parties, Non-Party Range States Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishing and promoting a common protocol on data collection on cetacean populations genetic</li> <li>Facilitating the creation of a general data-base/archive/inventory on existing samples/tissues in ACCOBAMS Area</li> <li>Disseminating databases and guidelines to stakeholders</li> <li>Facilitating analysis of existing tissue samples (including those from biopsies) to address questions on stock structure and genetic diversity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make the GL easy to find in the website</li> <li>Res. 8.11: (a) report on the work done on cetacean population genetics at the Ninth Meeting of the Parties.</li> <li>Res. 8.11: (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.</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organizing workshop about genetic population structure (including e-DNA) for marine mammals in the framework of international scientific events or meetings</li> <li>Collaborating with relevant organizations (CITES, ABS Nagoya Protocol...)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the dissemination of the “ACCOBAMS Best Practices on Cetacean Population Genetics”</li> <li>Advise the creation of a general data-base/archive/inventory on existing samples/tissues in ACCOBAMS Area</li> <li>Facilitate analysis of existing tissue samples (including those from biopsies) and review results of population genetics studies to address questions on stock structure and genetic diversity</li> <li>Contribute to workshop about genetic population structure (including e-DNA) for marine mammals</li> </ul>
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>
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Proposed Action(s)	Priority	Action led by and in cooperation with	Means of implementation	Objectives to be achieved before SC16
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"> <li>Supporting the BSC in the revision of the Regional Conservation Plan for cetacean in Black Sea, taking into consideration the IWC Conservation Management Plan.</li> <li>Supporting the SPA/RAC in the implementation of the Mediterranean Action Plan for Cetaceans adopted by Parties to the Barcelona Convention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contribute to the revision of the Regional Conservation Plan for cetacean in Black Sea</li> <li>Res 8.17: Develop a post-war Plan for the Black Sea region towards the mitigation of warfare consequences on cetaceans, their habitat and their preys</li> <li>In collaboration with BSC</li> </ul>
Develop/ revise/ implement relevant Conservation Management Plans for cetacean species	Main	Scientific Committee Secretariat, Parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organizing Experts Workshop(s) to develop/ revise/ Conservation Management Plans for cetacean species, taking into account all national conservation plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contribute to the finalization and implementation of Fin Whales, Grampus, Bottlenose and common dolphin's CMP</li> </ul>

		Non-Party Range States, Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiating focus on Black Sea with preliminary document</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• Starting the development of CMP for other Mediterranean species such as Cuvier's beaked whales and sperm whales</li> <li>• Derived CMP actions are cross-cutting and considered in the framework of other specific activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiate the Black Sea preliminary document</li> <li>• Res 8.14: Starting the development of CMP for Cuvier's beaked whales and sperm whales.</li> <li>• Participation in the identification of relevant coordinators and in stakeholders' workshop</li> </ul>
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"> <li>• 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...)</li> <li>• Establishment of national Working Groups or Councils in the framework of National Actions Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support of SC in the preparation of relevant NAP (to be identified in collaboration with SRCUs)</li> </ul>

CA 1 d	Functional stranding networks and responses to emergency situations
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Expected outcomes	Official National Stranding networks are established and operating Information on stranding events is regularly exchanged among national networks
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Proposed Action(s)	Priority	Action led by and in cooperation with	Means of implementation	Objectives to be achieved before SC16
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"> <li>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</li> <li>Assistance in the preparation of a legislative framework to settle the national coordination network</li> <li>Organizing trainings on necropsies, response to live strandings and emergency situation in the ACCOBAMS Area, and on the use of relevant databases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contribute to the organization of 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</li> <li>Support the dissemination of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>study on legal/institutional status of National stranding networks</li> <li>the procedures on Best Practices on cetacean postmortem investigation and tissue sampling resulted from the harmonization process in ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Encourage collaboration among national networks of Parties  Perpetuate mutualization of stranding protocols between Parties	Main	Scientific Committee Secretariat Parties, Non-Party Range States Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disseminating the procedures on Best Practices on cetacean postmortem investigation and tissue sampling resulted from the harmonization process in ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS</li> <li>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</li> <li>Developing tele-necropsy in the ACCOBAMS Area (workshops and trainings)</li> <li>Entering relevant national data into relevant regional databases, such as MEDACES</li> <li>Supporting and financing of MEDACES</li> <li>Creating a network to exchange information on sampling through NETCCOBAMS Platform</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support of the SC for the Emergency Task Force for strandings (ETFS) to assist on emergencies and unusual mortality. The</li> <li>Report of the ETFS to be presented to SC16</li> </ul>
Communicate simply and efficiently on uncommon situations in the ACCOBAMS Area (Example of killer	High	Scientific Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creation of a task force for the management of uncommon situations, including monitoring of</li> </ul>	

whales in 2019/2020)		Secretariat Parties, Non-Party Range States Partners, SRCUs	uncommon species in the ACCOBAMS Area, taking into account national legislations	
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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 reduced  Ecotourism activities (whale watching and pescatourism) are proposed as an alternative income source to fishermen impacted by depredation
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Proposed Action(s)	Priority	Action led by and in cooperation with	Means of implementation	Objectives to be achieved before SC16
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 (JBGW), Non-Party Range States, Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving data collection on interactions with fisheries (implementation of on-board observers' programs and port questionnaires...) and testing mitigation measures</li> <li>Sharing experience and results, including from past projects on interactions with fisheries (workshops, field visits...)</li> <li>Investigating the use of stranding data to assess bycatch mortality (using drifting models)</li> <li>Collaborating with relevant entities, in particular with GFCM, EC (DG MARE and DG Environment), Barcelona Convention (EcAp-Med III project) and IWC BMI</li> <li>Establishing an Emergency Task Force with EC, GFCM and BSC to address the porpoise bycatch critical issue in the Black Sea</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Res 8.16: 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 (high priority).</li> <li>Res 8.16: 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</li> <li>Advise future bycatch/depredation monitoring and mitigation program</li> <li>Investigate the use of stranding data to assess bycatch mortality (using drifting models)</li> <li>Contribute to the Emergency Task Force with EC, GFCM and BSC to</li> </ul>

				address the porpoise bycatch critical issue in the Black Sea • Report of the JBWG to be presented at SC16
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"> <li>Supporting the development of sustainable ecotourism activities in pilot sites</li> <li>Considering socio-economic aspects of alternative solutions</li> </ul>	

CA 2 b	Anthropogenic underwater noise
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Expected outcomes	<p>Main anthropogenic activities generating underwater noise are monitored in the ACCOBAMS Area</p> <p>Use of mitigation measures for anthropogenic activities generating underwater noise</p>
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Proposed Action(s)	Priority	Action led by and in cooperation with	Means of implementation	Objectives to be achieved before SC16
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"> <li>Raising awareness amongst countries by organizing an awareness &amp; consultation workshop at national level with different stakeholders, especially at ministerial level</li> <li>Involving different national stakeholders (coordination by National Focal Points) and identify an entity that can centralize information at the national level</li> <li>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</li> <li>Organizing trainings for national entities on noise monitoring (CB), including analyses of PAM collected data in some identified priority areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involvement of JNWG in the organization of trainings for national entities on noise monitoring (CB), including analyses of PAM collected data in some identified priority areas // <b>required additional funds</b></li> <li>Progress report of the JNWG</li> <li>Assistance in the development of incentive programmes</li> <li>Consider progress reports on the ongoing regional projects on noise including QuietSeas on continuous noise where some members of the JNWG are involved in order to revise, if necessary ACCOBAMS Guidelines</li> </ul>



			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking into consideration work achieved and advices provided by the JNWG</li> <li>• Managing the regional noise register</li> <li>• Feeding data on impulsive noise generating sources from the entire ACCOBAMS Area into the existing International Noise Registry managed by ACCOBAMS</li> <li>• Providing necessary data to update risk maps and generate maps for the Black Sea by considering relevant target species</li> <li>• Reviewing the Noise Hotspots Report II</li> <li>• Revising and updating the ACCOBAMS Guidelines on underwater noise taking into account outcomes from recent projects</li> <li>• Producing a study on the effects of underwater noise generated by the foreseeable increase of wind farms in the ACCOBAMS Area</li> <li>• 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</li> </ul>	
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"> <li>• Improving enhanced training of regulators on the appropriate application of the CMS Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and ACCOBAMS Noise Guidelines</li> <li>• Producing common minimum requirements for appropriate national legislation and other regulations regarding underwater noise impacts on cetacean</li> <li>• Promoting the ACCOBAMS Highly qualified MMO/PAM operators' certificate</li> <li>• Supporting the development and update of the ACCOBAMS HQMMO/PAM training tools</li> <li>• Granting the status of ACCOBAMS HQMMO Partners to entities for the implementation of the Highly qualified MMO/PAM operators' certificate</li> <li>• Revising and updating the ACCOBAMS "Guide for Parties to use mitigation measures "</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress report of the MMO WG</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing joint project/initiatives for simulating mitigation measures such as speed reduction and related benefits</li> <li>• Developing cooperation on underwater noise issues with other International Organizations</li> </ul>	
Exchange of relevant information with competent authorities before military activities / exercises	High	Scientific Committee including through the JN WG Secretariat, Parties Non-Party Range States, Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• Workshop/meeting with national Navy forces and NATO members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involvement of the JN WG in the preparation of a workshop with national Navy forces and NATO members</li> </ul>

CA 2 c	Ship strikes
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Expected outcomes	Reduction of ship strikes in high-risk areas
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Proposed Action(s)	Priority	Action led by and in cooperation with	Means of implementation	Objectives to be achieved before SC16
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"> <li>Encouraging the entry of ship strikes data in relevant databases such as the IWC central database on ship strikes</li> <li>Improving protocols for the identification of ship strikes via necropsies in collaboration with the Pelagos Agreement</li> <li>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</li> <li>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</li> <li>Follow and assist Parties in the PSSA project process in collaboration with the Permanent Secretariat of the Pelagos Agreement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contribute to the improvement of protocols for identification of ship strikes via necropsies // <b>Task of the WG on ship strikes</b></li> <li>Res 8.18: (c) map the temporal and geographic distribution and abundance of cetaceans in relation to similar information on vessel traffic to identify potential higher risk areas.</li> <li>Res 8.18: (d) estimate the number of ship strikes.</li> <li>Res 8.18: (g) investigate the 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)</li> <li>Report on the identification of high-risk areas for ship strikes (CCH)</li> </ul>
Promote the use of mitigation measures	High	Secretariat, Scientific Committee Parties, Non-Party Range States, Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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</li> <li>ostering the development of incentive systems to shipping companies adopting suggested mitigation measures</li> <li>Supporting national or regional projects in order to reduce the risk of collision (FLT network / REPCET system...)</li> <li>Evaluation the efficiency of implemented or proposed new mitigation measures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Study on the follow-up of mitigation measures already implemented // <b>Task of the WG on ship strikes</b></li> <li>Contribute to the promotion of the use of relevant mitigation tools/measures</li> </ul>

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)	Priority	Action led by and in cooperation with	Means of implementation	Objectives to be achieved before SC16
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"> <li>Revising the Guidelines for commercial cetacean-watching in the ACCOBAMS Area</li> <li>Analysis of existing national legislations related to whale watching regulation</li> <li>Implementing a pilot study to define the whale watching 'carrying capacity' in a targeted geographical area where commercial whale watching is intensively practiced</li> <li>Collaborating with relevant organizations, such as IWC and Pelagos Agreement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Updated Guidelines for commercial cetacean-watching in the ACCOBAMS Area to be presented at SC16</li> <li>Support the analysis of existing national legislation related to whale watching regulation</li> <li>Review the results of the studies carried out to define the whale watching 'carrying capacity' in targeted geographical areas</li> </ul>
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"> <li>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)</li> <li>Organizing photo-ID and data collection training for whale watching operators, with the final goal of sharing the collected data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue testing the common procedure for data collection and assess the results achieved so far and the lessons learnt in the areas where the procedure is being tested</li> <li>Report of the WWWG to be presented at SC16</li> </ul>
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"> <li>Promoting the implementation of the HQWW certificate by Parties and in areas -based management measures in collaboration with relevant projects/ organizations</li> <li>Organizing Trainings on HQWW (CB Parties)</li> <li>Liaising with relevant tourism Organizations</li> </ul>	

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	Objectives to be achieved before SC16
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"> <li>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</li> <li>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</li> <li>Identifying hot-spot areas for marine litter accumulation and identifying threat to cetacean species occurring in those areas</li> <li>Developing a proposal to use cetacean species as indicators of marine litter in the ACCOBAMS Area</li> <li>Collaborating with relevant Organizations (ASCOBANS, IWC, MEDPOL, IMO, FAO) including through joint activities</li> <li>Promoting campaigns on the ban of single-use plastics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the results of the pilot action carried out in Adriatic</li> <li>Promote the development of standardized methods to detect the occurrence and effects of marine litter, including micro-plastics, in cetacean species</li> <li>Proposal to use cetacean species as indicators of marine litter in the ACCOBAMS Area to be presented at SC16</li> </ul>

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	Objectives to be achieved before SC16
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"> <li>• Developing an inventory of institutions or laboratories within the ACCOBAMS Area able to analyze samples for legacy and emerging pollutants</li> <li>• Establishing a common database on diseases and chemical burdens</li> <li>• Assessing cumulative effects and multiple stressors, including chemicals, marine litter, climate change, and emerging pathogens, on cetaceans in ACCOBAMS Area</li> <li>• Disseminating the best practices to assess the impact of chemical pollution on cetaceans with a focus on emerging contaminants</li> <li>• Organize training on the best practices to assess the impact of chemical pollution</li> <li>• Collaborating with relevant Organizations, initiatives and projects</li> <li>• Encouraging Parties to follow existing protocols to minimize the introduction of pollutants in the marine environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the inventory of institutions or laboratories within the ACCOBAMS Area able to analyze samples for legacy and emerging pollutants</li> <li>• Advise on a common database on diseases and chemical burdens</li> <li>• Promote studies aimed at assessing cumulative effects and multiple stressors, including chemicals, marine litter, climate change, and emerging pathogens, on cetaceans in ACCOBAMS Area</li> <li>• Contribute to the dissemination of the best practices to assess the impact of chemical pollution on cetaceans with a focus on emerging contaminants</li> </ul>

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	Objectives to be achieved before SC16
Contribute to regional initiatives on climate change	Medium	Scientific Committee Secretariat, Parties, Non-Party Range States, Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liaising with relevant CMS Working Group</li> <li>• Participating in Meetings and side events</li> </ul>	

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	Objectives to be achieved before SC16
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"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• Updating the overview of specimens held in captivity in the ACCOBAMS Area in collaboration with international organizations (such as CITES)</li> <li>• Reinforcing collaboration with NFP / NGO/ ACCOBAMS Partners / CITES authorities in each country</li> <li>• Developing a template of genetic passport for different cetacean species kept in captivity, in collaboration with the ACCOBAMS Advisory Committee on Captivity related issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the update of the overview of specimens held in captivity in the ACCOBAMS Area</li> <li>• Develop a template of genetic passport for different cetacean species kept in captivity</li> <li>• Report of the ACCOBAMS Advisory Committee on semi-enclosed facilities to be presented at SC16</li> </ul>

CA 3 a	Area-based measures for cetacean conservation
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Expected outcomes	<p>Cetacean Critical Habitats are updated</p> <p>IMMAs are updated and new ones are identified</p> <p>Implementation of relevant measures are initiated in some pilot Cetacean Critical Habitats</p>
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Proposed Action(s)	Priority	Action led by and in cooperation with	Means of implementation	Objectives to be achieved before SC16
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"> <li>Gathering data, in particular through the organization of regional workshops to update CCH, taking into account IMMAs and EBSAs process)</li> <li>Gathering data on human activities and cetaceans, in particular through the organization of <b>regional workshops</b> with relevant regional organization (GFCM, maritime organization...), taking into account the IMMAs and EBSAs process and upcoming regional study from Duke Marine Lab.</li> <li>Launching a working group in order to review the best metrics to use considering the CCH aim</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report on CCH updated</li> <li>Contribute to the CCH working group in order to review the best metrics to use considering the CCH aim</li> </ul>
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"> <li>Identifying and promoting relevant management measures in pilot CCH, in collaboration with all stakeholders, including network of MPAs managers</li> <li>Raising Parties' awareness on CCHs, on their added value during <b>online workshops</b>, on the use of existing IMMAs to identify and to declare new MPAs or MPAs network</li> <li>Collaborating with other Organizations, such as UNEP-MAP/ SPA-RAC, BSC, IMO, IWC, and GFCM, and in particular through the Strategic alliance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report on management measures implemented in pilot CCH</li> </ul>



CA 4 a	Information /Communication / Awareness about cetaceans
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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
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Proposed Action(s)	Priority	Action led by and in cooperation with	Means of implementation	Objectives to be achieved before SC16
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"> <li>Implementing the ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy, in particular: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- defining ACCOBAMS as brand</li> <li>- upgrading communication products</li> <li>- improving presence on social networks</li> <li>- assessing the effectiveness of the Communication Strategy</li> </ul> </li> <li>Development of NETCCOBAMS Platform (MA1a)</li> <li>Promoting the use of the HQWW label (CA2d)</li> <li>Linking conservation with culture (UNESCO/ Ocean decade) by initiating joint natural history exhibitions and offering expertise and knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress report on NETCCOBAMS (Task of the WG on NETCCOBAMS)</li> <li>Res 8.2: The Scientific Committee further promote cooperation with scientific Institutions of the ACCOBAMS Area.</li> <li>Res 8.7: Scientific Committee to instruct the [NETCCOBAMS] 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, 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.</li> </ul>
Promote citizen sciences uses		Secretariat Parties Scientific Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overview of initiatives and tools already in place / in order to mutualize efforts in particular at the level of young people</li> <li>Workshop on how to collect data and data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overview of "Citizen Science" initiatives and tools</li> </ul>

		Non-Party Range States, Partners, SRCUs	exchanges through citizen apps (standardization of the protocols and methodology for data collection) in the context of proposed analytical techniques	
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"> <li>• Introducing new teaching module in universities dealing with cetacean conservation</li> <li>• Translation of the Teaching Module on national languages of ACCOBAMS Parties</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involvement of some SC members in the review of the Teaching Module</li> </ul>
Promote and disseminate project results and tools		Secretariat Parties Scientific Committee Non-Party Range States, Partners, SRCUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizing a Conference on cetacean conservation in South Mediterranean Countries - CSMC</li> <li>• Disseminating projects tools such as “whale risk”</li> <li>• Special ACCOBAMS issue in a scientific review</li> <li>• Encouraging publications of national experts in international journal with handbooks with simple and standardized methods and specific trainings and workshops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involvement of some SC members in the organization of the CSMS</li> </ul>

**ANNEX VII - TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE CORRESPONDENCE GROUP ON REVISION OF RECOMMENDATION 12.1**

In light of the discussions at this meeting, the primary objective of the “**Recommendation 12.1 Correspondence Group**” is to review and update the procedures and guidelines for the preparation of Regional Representatives reports, including the associated template, for consideration at SC16 meeting.

The group will:

- A. Reconsider the two existing objectives of such reports (*i.e.* to “*provide a report to the SC on the conservation status of cetaceans*” and on “*relevant activities*”) after evaluating their ability to date to meet these objectives.
- B. Explore how to achieve useful and streamlined reporting on relevant activities in the Agreement identifying:
  - i. the necessary information to achieve the given objectives (e.g., alert on important/unusual issues, provide news on ongoing activities or threats);
  - ii. ways to collate the necessary information;
  - iii. the time required to develop such reports;
  - iv. the timing of the preparation of these reports (in relation to Parties’ reporting at the MOP, IUCN/ACCOBAMS Red List updates and any other major assessment by the Scientific Committee);
  - v. potential new/other ways to convey at least some of the information (e.g., ACCOBAMS website, NETCCOBAMS, ACCOBAMS newsletter digest, published papers digest); and
  - vi. the potential role and contribution of Regional Representatives and of other members of the Scientific Committee to the preparation of these reports.

**Proposed composition**

All Regional Representatives, the Chair of the Scientific Committee, the Four Task Managers:

- Léa DAVID
- Caterina FORTUNA
- Draško HOLCER
- Tilen GENOV
- Pavel GOL’DIN
- Anastasia KOMNENOU
- Souad LAMOUTI
- Giancarlo LAURIANO
- Céline MAHFOUZ
- Simone PANIGADA
- Dimitar POPOV
- Yianna SAMUEL
- Naoufal Mohamed TAMSOURI
- Arda TONAY

## ANNEX VIII - SUGGESTED DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR WORK ON SURVEY STRATEGY SIMULATION FRAMEWORK

Component 1 of the agreed LTMP (MOP8) states:

“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).”

**Objective:** The first priority is to develop a spatial framework that uses existing ASI and other relevant survey data to provide a modelling framework to explore different line transect survey strategies (including frequency and geographical extent) to obtain robust abundance estimates and detect trends (in abundance and distribution). It should allow for optimisation by priority species or a priority group of species.

A later priority relates to the use of vessels of opportunity/multispecies surveys and risk assessment strategies and should build upon this framework.

**Approach:** For this to be achieved in a reasonable time to inform the next ASI survey (and the LTMP), it seems likely that this will only be achieved by a contract focussed on the first priority. It is suggested that a small working group is established to assist the Secretariat in developing an outline contract for this work.

## **ANNEX IX - TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE WORKING GROUP ON WHALE WATCHING**

### **Background**

A Working Group for the assessment, monitoring and data collection of cetacean watching activities in the ACCOBAMS area was established in 2014 during the Ninth Meeting of the Scientific Committee.

The Whale Watching Working Group was reactivated in 2020 and its Terms of Reference need to be updated in light of the activities of the ACCOBAMS Program of Work for 2023-2025 adopted at the 8th Meeting of the Parties to ACCOBAMS (Resolution 8.2) related to Cetacean watching (CA2d).

These draft Terms of Reference were prepared by the Chair of the Working Group, with the support from the Secretariat, in collaboration with WG Members. They will be presented for review to the Fifteenth Meeting of the Scientific Committee in May 2023.

### **Mandate**

With a view to assessing cetacean watching activities in the Agreement area and their potential adverse impacts on cetacean individuals and populations, the Whale Watching Working Group (WWWG) in cooperation with other experts and partners will:

- Revise the Guidelines for commercial cetacean-watching in the ACCOBAMS Area in view of their presentation at SC16 in 2024, in coordination with IWC whose General principles for Whale Watching are being revised;
- Support the work of the expert who will be tasked to analyze existing national legislations related to whale watching. The report of the study will be presented at SC16;
- Review the results of the study carried out in Portugal to define the whale watching 'carrying capacity' in a targeted geographical area where commercial whale watching is intensively practiced (Sado estuary);
- Continue testing the common procedure for data collection and assess the results achieved so far and lessons learnt in the areas where the procedure is being tested;
- Support the development of project proposal(s) aimed at strengthening the exchange and cooperation between tourism operators, policy makers and scientific institutions in order to assess the cetacean watching pressure on cetacean populations.

### **Composition (by alphabetical order):**

Marta Azzolin  
 Costanza Favilli  
 Caterina Fortuna  
 Pauline Gauffier  
 Joan Gonzalvo  
 Tilen Genov  
 Draško Holcer  
 Aurélie Moulins  
 Marina Sequeira (Chair)  
 Laurène Trudelle

## ANNEX X - TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR AND COMPOSITION OF AN ACCOBAMS ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SEMI-ENCLOSED FACILITIES

### PART I - TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR AN ACCOBAMS ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SEMI-ENCLOSED FACILITIES

#### **Background:**

As advised by the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee and the Follow-up committee, the Meeting of the Parties considers establishing an ACCOBAMS Advisory Committee on semi-enclosed facilities, according to the present Terms of Reference (ToR).

#### **Objective:**

Based on the best scientific evidence, the ACCOBAMS Advisory Committee on semi-enclosed facilities will provide guidance to interested Parties on all questions related to semi-enclosed facilities for cetaceans, taking into 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-MOP8/2022/Inf52](#).

The ACCOBAMS Advisory Committee will perform their activities based on these ToR, and may receive further guidance from ACCOBAMS Parties through the Secretariat.

The Advisory Committee shall use electronic means for their communication, unless a situation arises that requires an on-site meeting.

Prior to making any commitment and/or to performing any function on behalf of ACCOBAMS, the Advisory Committee shall receive a written authorization from the ACCOBAMS Secretariat.

The Advisory Committee will present an activity report to each Meeting of the Scientific Committee and also to the following Meeting of the Parties, to be held in 2025.

#### **Composition:**

The ACCOBAMS Advisory Committee on semi-enclosed facilities will be led by expert.

The appointed Chair of the Advisory Committee will make proposals on the composition of the Advisory Committee, which will gather leading experts in different fields, such as:

- 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 Advisory Committee members will serve in their expert capacity, and not as representatives of any organization or Country.

The composition of the Advisory Committee on semi-enclosed facilities will be circulated to all ACCOBAMS Parties.

## PART II –COMPOSITION OF AN ACCOBAMS ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SEMI-ENCLOSED FACILITIES

The following experts are proposed as members of the ACCOBAMS Advisory Committee on semi-enclosed facilities (by alphabetical order):

### **Joan Gonzalvo**

Joan Gonzalvo, born in Barcelona, is a Catalan biologist whose main research interest is the conservation of the marine environment and, more specifically, the study and conservation of marine mammals. He holds a Ph.D. in Biodiversity from the University of Barcelona. In 1999 he started his collaboration with the Tethys Research Institute. Since 2007, he is member of Tethys' Board of Directors. Between 2000 and 2005, Joan was a member of the Group for the Study and Conservation of Marine Mammals at the University of Barcelona. He has participated in a number of diverse projects involving work on dolphin-fisheries interactions, dolphin population estimates and behavioural studies with the aim of producing sound information to promote conservation action. For over two decades he has spent 1,000+ hours observing dolphin groups in their natural environment in different Mediterranean locations and has designed and executed numerous public awareness campaigns. Joan is experienced in research methods including ship-based, land-based and aerial surveys on cetaceans, individual photo-identification, behavioural sampling, remote biopsy sampling, cetacean dissection techniques and tissue sampling on stranded animals. During the last decade he has incorporated the Mediterranean monk seal as one of his main target species for the development of research and conservation activities. He is currently engaged in a project funded by the Monk Seal Alliance conducted in the Inner Ionian Sea Archipelago in western Greece. Recently he also acted as consultant of UNEP's Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (SPA/RAC) for the updating of the Regional strategy for the conservation of monk seal in the Mediterranean.

He is regularly engaged in training and teaching young scientist wanting to gain experience in cetacean research. In addition, Joan has worked on a few occasions as consultant of the UNEP's Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (RAC/SPA) and for the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area (ACCOBAMS) on the preparation, among others, of National Action Plans for the Conservation of Cetaceans in Syria and Lebanon, respectively. More recently, he led the Update of the Action Plan for the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean.

Between 2015-2019 he acted as Council member of the European Cetacean Society; since 2020 he is Chair of the ECS Council. He is member of the Scientific Committee of ACCOBAMS and in January 2020 became also member of the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) Cetacean Specialist Group (CSG). Since 2006 his research is carried out mainly in western Greece, where he leads the Ionian Dolphin Project. He speaks Catalan, Spanish, English, Italian and Greek.

### **Frances Gulland**

Frances Gulland currently serves as Chair of the US Marine Mammal Commission, having been appointed to that position by President Biden on May 4th 2022. In 2000, she joined the Commission's Committee of Scientific Advisors, and in 2011, was appointed to serve as one of three Commissioners and confirmed by the Senate. Dr. Gulland is a veterinarian specializing in marine mammal medicine. She is a Research Associate at the University of California, Davis, and worked for 25 years at The Marine Mammal Center in Sausalito, California, where her focus was treatment of stranded marine mammals and research into the causes of disease in these animals. She received a veterinary degree from the University of Cambridge, United Kingdom, in 1984, and a Ph.D. in zoology in 1991. Dr. Gulland has served on a number of federal and state advisory panels, including the Working Group on Marine Mammal Unusual Mortality Events, the Hawaiian Monk Seal Recovery Team, and California's Ocean Protection Council and Oiled Wildlife Care Network.

### **Lori Marino**

Lori Marino is a neuroscientist and expert in animal behaviour and intelligence, formerly on the faculty of Emory University. Lori received her Ph.D. in biopsychology in 1995, and is internationally known for her work on the evolution of the brain and intelligence in dolphins and whales (as well as primates and farmed animals). She has published over 130 peer-reviewed scientific papers, book chapters, and magazine articles on marine mammal biology and cognition, comparative brain anatomy, self-awareness in nonhuman animals, human-nonhuman animal relationships, and the evolution of intelligence.

She is also an expert on marine mammal captivity issues such as dolphin assisted therapy and the educational claims of the zoo and aquarium industry.

In 2001, she co-authored a ground-breaking study offering the first conclusive evidence for mirror self-recognition in bottlenose dolphins, after which she decided against further research with captive animals.

Lori is also the Founder and Executive Director of The Kimmela Centre for Animal Advocacy, which focuses on bridging the gap between academic research and scholarship and on-the-ground animal advocacy efforts.

She has appeared in several films and television programs, including the 2013 documentary *Blackfish* about killer whale captivity, *Unlocking the Cage*, the 2016 documentary on the Nonhuman Rights Project, and *Long Gone Wild*, the 2019 documentary that picks up where *Blackfish* left off and the work of the Whale Sanctuary Project begins.

### **Sandro Mazzariol**

Sandro Mazzariol is a veterinary pathologist involved in coordinating the National Stranding Network in Italy. Since 2010, he has coordinated the definition of national guidelines for the intervention and rehabilitation of cetaceans stranded alive, and, as part of Cetaceans Strandings Emergency Response Team, he has supported and supervised most of the interventions on behalf of stranded animals.

He served as a member of the International Whaling Commission's Scientific Committee for several years, on the Scientific Committee of the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area (ACCOBAMS) to follow live and mass strandings procedures, and as a consultant to the Ministry of Health and Environment.

Sandro has authored or co-authored more than 33 scientific papers, along with chapters in several books, and lectures at the veterinary school of the University of Padova, and in several courses for graduate students dedicated to wildlife, animal welfare and ethics. He received his Ph.D. in veterinary public health from the University of Padova in 2006.

### **Giuseppe Notarbartolo di Sciara**

Giuseppe Notarbartolo di Sciara is a marine conservation ecologist who has been concerned for over 40 years with the advancement of knowledge of the natural history, ecology, behaviour, and taxonomy of marine mammals and cartilaginous fishes, has described a new species of manta ray, and published more than 230 scientific papers. During the past 30 years he has concentrated efforts on conservation, in particular through the development of marine protected areas and the identification of Important Marine Mammal Areas. In the early '90s he has spearheaded the creation of the first high-seas marine protected area, the Pelagos Sanctuary for Mediterranean Marine Mammals, established in 2002 by a treaty among France, Italy and Monaco. He has been responsible for the leading and management of governmental and private, national and international science and conservation organisations, including the Tethys Research Institute, the Italian Central Institute for Applied Marine Research (ICRAM), and the European Cetacean Society. Dr. Notarbartolo di Sciara is the Co-chair of the IUCN Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force. He has chaired the Scientific Committee of ACCOBAMS from the beginning of the agreement until 2010, and currently serves as the COP-appointed Councilor for aquatic mammals at the Convention on Migratory Species. In 2009 he received the Knighthood in the Order of St. Charles from H.S.H. the Prince Albert II of Monaco (for more details: [www.disciara.org](http://www.disciara.org)).