

FOLLOW UP OF SC15 CONCLUSIONS

Issue: Follow up of SC15 conclusions

Background

In order to facilitate the preparation of the 16th Meeting of the Scientific Committee, the Secretariat and the Chair have prepared a short document with a summary of the 'decisions' approved during the 15th Meeting of the Scientific Committee in May 2023.

Members were invited to update on their relevant activities.

Follow up of SC15 conclusions

Conclusion 1.

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

No specific action

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.

No specific action

Conclusion 3.

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

No specific action

Conclusion 4.

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

No specific action

Conclusion 5.

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

No specific action

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, Jose Antonio VAZQUEZ, 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 GIMÉNEZ, 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 GIMÉNEZ, 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.

Invite TMs to provide a report to the SC16 on the topics they were assigned to

Léa: I will provide a synthesis of activities, with 2 workshops realized and their outputs (it will include also answering requests from conclusion 36 and 37)

Dimitar: I will provide a summary of activities reported by TG members.

Pavel: I will provide a summary of activities reported by TG members.

Tilen: I will provide a summary of activities related to CA1a.

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.

Invite CMP Steering Group to provide a consolidated report of the group's activities to SC16

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.

Invite TMs to inform and update on this issue

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](#).

Invite SC members to provide information to the SC Chair on the state of implementation of the agreed objectives to be achieved before SC16

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.

Invite the intersessional Correspondence Group to report on the review of the procedures and guidelines for the preparation of Regional Representatives reports, including the associated template, for consideration at SC16 meeting. Invite Regional Representatives to provide respective reports.

Caterina: I am drafting a document that will be presented during the SC meeting.

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.

No specific action

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.

To be considered in the context of the revision of ASI2 project according to BU16 conclusions

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.

To be considered in the context of the revision of ASI2 project according to BU16 conclusions

Conclusion 14.

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

Circulated by mail to SC members on 25th July 2023

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.

Updated summary on ASI data requests and respective use will be presented in a SC16 Information Doc by SEC.

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 VAZQUEZ.

Invite the joint MSFD WG to report to SC16

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.

Report of the genetic WS to be presented on SC16 Information doc.

Conclusion 18.

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

No specific action // SEC: Specific web pages on Genetic + on Best Practices/Guideline + DOI

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.

Invite Arda Tonay, Pavel Goldin and Dimitar Popov to update on this issue.

Dimitar, Pavel: Updates based on CeNoBS/ASI aerial survey paper are under way. To be updated before the meeting.

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.

Invite Catherine Numa to update on this issue.

The IUCN red list database has been fixed at global level.

Conclusion 21.

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

No specific action.

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).

Google Drive created by SEC / revised version necessary before 30th October 2024 for SC16 Doc.

Léa: I have already provided the latest version of the Gg CMP on the google drive (which is almost the same as the one provided in 2021)

Invite the 4 CMP leaders to update on dedicated workshop(s).

Léa: none

The Chair will prepare and present some basic ToR for the Stakeholder workshops together with Greg Donovan.

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.

SC Chair will contact Aurelie and Caterina for guidance.

The TG is preparing a draft document on the Ziphius strandings to be presented at the 16th SC Meeting.

To be discussed during the SC meeting.

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.

SC Chair to contact Ayaka, Pavel and Arda for guidance.

To be discussed during the SC meeting.

Conclusion 25.

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

Invite TM to report on this issue.

Dimitar: I have sent request for update to co-chairs of the WG as well as Jenny of ASCOBANS but haven't got any feedback so far.

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.

No specific action.

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.

What is envisaged/done by the SC?

SEC liaised with CMS and ICCAT on this issue and will report during SC16..

The Chair will liaise with OceanCare on this issue and update during SC16.

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.

No specific action.

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.

No additional information received by Cyprus FP, and no final report as of today.

SEC contacted all ACCOBAMS NFP of the Eastern Mediterranean region.

The joint ASCOBANS/ACCOBAMS WS with navies is planned for end November 2024 based on ToR prepared with JNWG, which will be presented and discussed during SC16.

(Léa: someone should present the Ziphius mass stranding event of May 2024 (Corsica) and the same as for the Feb2023 event should be launched)

A paper for Ziphys Strandings findings in Cyprus on February 2023 has been presented at the 35th ECS Conference in Sicily on 2024 and a presentation of the findings and results could be discussed during the 16th SC Meeting.

Léa: I will provide an update about training for HQ ACCOBAMS MMO/PAM certification realised and numbers of people certified.

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 16th Scientific Committee Meeting in 2024.

Invite ship strikes WG to report to SC16.

An innovative application on preventing megafauna collisions with ships, funded by Greece on 2024, will be presented at the 16th SC Meeting.

The SC Chair and the Secretariat will update on the ongoing effort to mitigate ship strikes in the ACCOBAMS area

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.

Invite WWWG to report to SC16.

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.

Invite WWWG to report to SC16.

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.

Final report of the ASCOBANS/ACCOBAMS Marine Debris Workshop circulated to SC members/ SC16 Information document.

The conclusions of the ACCOBAMS 2024 WS (before ECS) were welcomed by IWC / SC16 Information Document.

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.

SC members to update on this issue.

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.

Ongoing work by Joan and Sandro/ Documents to be presented to SC16.

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".

Request the Task Group to provide report for SC16 Information document.

Léa: I will provide a synthesis of activities, with the 2 workshops realized and their outputs (it will include also answering requests from conclusion 6 and 37)

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.

Invite TM to report on this issue.

Léa: I will provide a synthesis of activities, with the 2 workshops realized and their outputs (it will include also answering requests from conclusion 6 and 36). The last point is still not reached...

Conclusion 38.

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

No specific action.

Conclusion 39.

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

No specific action.

Conclusion 40.

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

No specific action.

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.

Invite the WG to report on this issue.

Dimitar: Contacted all members of the WG and Viola asking for update as I have problem with accessing NETCCOBAMS – waiting for feedback.

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.

Circulated on 25th July 2023.

Conclusion 43.

The Scientific Committee took note of the information.

No specific action.

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.

SC members concluded there were no time to provide comments.

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 Stachowitsch¹, in order to contribute to the elaboration of the next IWC State of the Cetacean Environment Report (SOCER) concerning Mediterranean and Black Seas.

Invite SC members to update on this issue.

Done.

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.

To be decided at MOP9.

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.

No specific action.

Conclusion 48.

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

SC16 from the 2 to 5 December in Barcelona.

Conclusion 49.

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