

REPORT OF THE SEVENTEENTH MEETING OF THE ACCOBAMS BUREAU



13 & 14 February 2025, Monaco Hybrid Meeting

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1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

1. The Seventeenth Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Bureau was held in Monaco and online from 13th to 14th February 2025.
2. It was attended by Bureau Members for 2023-2025: Ms Marie Thérèse Gambin (Malta), Chair of the ACCOBAMS Bureau, and the Vice-Chairs: Mrs Yana Velina (Bulgaria), Mr Milad Fakhri (Lebanon), and Mrs Marina Sequeira (Portugal).
3. According to Article 2 of the Rules of Procedure of the Bureau, "If unable to attend a Meeting, any member of the Bureau may be replaced by an alternate member identified by the ACCOBAMS Party concerned". Following such provision, Mrs Celine Mahfouz was nominated to attend the morning session of 13th February 2025, replacing Mr Milad Fakhri.
4. The Meeting was also attended by Mr Simone Panigada, Chair of the Scientific Committee and Mrs Ayaka Amaha Öztürk, Vice-Chair of the Scientific Committee; by four experts assisting the Secretariat – Mrs Pauline Gauffier, Dr Giuseppe Notarbartolo di Sciara, Mr Chedly Rais, and Prof. Tullio Scovazzi; and by staff members of the ACCOBAMS Secretariat.
5. The full list of participants is provided in [Annex 1](#) of this report.
6. The Chair of the ACCOBAMS Bureau, hereafter referred to as Chair, opened the Meeting at 9.00 a.m., on Thursday 13th February 2025.
7. The Chair welcomed participants and the ACCOBAMS Executive Secretary, Mrs Maÿlis Salivas, as well as the Secretariat's team. She thanked the Secretariat and wished a fruitful session.
8. The ACCOBAMS Executive Secretary, hereafter referred to as the Executive Secretary, welcomed the participants and provided details about logistic arrangements and documentation for the Meeting.
9. The Executive Secretary acknowledged the Bureau members for their support and guidance over the past three years. Additionally, gratitude was extended to the Secretariat team and all consultants for their hard work and dedication in get everything set for the Meeting.

2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

10. The Executive Secretary presented the provisional agenda (ACCOBAMS-BU17/2025/**Doc01**), alongside the provisional annotated agenda (ACCOBAMS-BU17/2025/**Doc02**), the list of documents (ACCOBAMS-BU17/2025/**Doc03**), the provisional timetable (ACCOBAMS-BU17/2025/**Doc04**), as well as the provisional list of participants (ACCOBAMS-BU17/2025/**Inf01**).
11. The Meeting adopted the draft agenda and related timetable. The agenda is shown in [Annex 2](#) of this report.

3. PROGRESS REPORT BY THE SECRETARIAT

12. The Executive Secretary presented document ACCOBAMS-BU17/2025/**Doc05**, summarising the activities developed since the 15th Bureau Meeting in November 2023 and the progress made in promoting the Agreement, as well as collaborative activities with other instruments.
13. Regarding the State of Ratification of the ACCOBAMS Area Extension decided in 2010, the Executive Secretary informed the Meeting that Greece and Georgia ratified the extension in 2023. Four more ratifications were needed for the geographical extension to enter into force.
14. Regarding the Management of the Agreement, the Executive Secretary informed the Meeting that:
 - a. ACCOBAMS is accredited as an intergovernmental organisation (IGO) for the UN Ocean Conference (June 2025).
 - b. Key meetings in 2023 and 2024 included the Scientific Committee and Bureau meetings, with ongoing preparations for MOP9.
 - c. Collaborations have been strengthened through ACCOBAMS Secretariat signing an MoU with UNEP-MAP and holding a joint meeting with the Black Sea Commission. The ACCOBAMS Secretariat also participated in several CMS Family and UNEP-MAP meetings.
 - d. The ACCOBAMS Secretariat was involved in preparing the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (MED QSR), and NETCCOBAMS continues to be showcased regularly, highlighting ACCOBAMS' ongoing reporting and assessment efforts.
 - e. ACCOBAMS Secretariat is involved in three regional projects under the Pelagos initiative call: the “ShiPrint” project to reduce the impact of maritime traffic, the “Pelagos Consortium” which is based on an ecosystem approach, and the “Climate Change” initiative to monitor and mitigate impacts on cetaceans.
 - f. In October 2024, the Recruitment Committee met in Monaco and selected Mrs Maylis Salivas as the new Executive Secretary of ACCOBAMS, taking over from the previous Executive Secretary, Ms Susana Salvador.
15. Regarding Cetacean Population Estimates & Distribution, the Executive Secretary recalled that the Second ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative (ASI-II) project proposal was circulated in October 2023, and that the Long-Term Monitoring Program (LTMP) Contact Group met three times in 2024.
16. Regarding Ecosystem Approach to Conservation, the Executive Secretary explained that ACCOBAMS collaborates with the Barcelona Convention and attended several meetings of the Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON) for cetacean monitoring alignment. The ACCOBAMS Secretariat highlighted ASI data's value through various events, apart from the publication of 12 scientific articles in the 2024 Special Issue of the *Frontiers in Marine Science Journal*: “The ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative (ASI): Implementing Large Scale Surveys for Marine Megafauna in the Mediterranean and Black Seas”.
17. Regarding Population Structure, the Executive Secretary informed the Meeting that the ACCOBAMS Secretariat translated the guidelines on cetacean genetics, presented findings at the ECS Conference in 2024, and organised a Genetic Webinar to share expertise on data collection and analysis.
18. Regarding Strandings, the Executive Secretary explained that trainings were organised to harmonise stranding response, including necroscopy best practices for experts. Additionally, the ACCOBAMS Task Force was launched to assist Parties in emergency responses.

19. Regarding Interactions with Fisheries, the Executive Secretary informed the Meeting about three ongoing projects on dolphin depredation and bycatch, funded by FAO-GFCM in Italy, Morocco, and Türkiye. The Secretariat organised meetings with the Joint ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS Bycatch Working Group (JBWG) and participated in specific meetings with the GFCM and Black Sea Commission Permanent Secretariat, particularly on harbour porpoise bycatch in March 2024.
20. Regarding Anthropogenic Underwater Noise, the Executive Secretary informed the Meeting about two projects on noise monitoring in which the ACCOBAMS Secretariat was involved: QUIETSEAS (completed by the end of 2023) and SEASOUNDS which aims to assess anthropogenic noise emissions. The Secretariat was also in charge of drafting the noise chapter in the Mediterranean Quality Status Report 2023 (MED QSR) released by the UNEP Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP). The Secretariat regularly participated in conferences and technical group meetings, such as the EU-TG Noise and the Joint CMS/ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS Noise Working Group (JNWG), addressing underwater noise issues.
21. Regarding Ship Strikes, the Executive Secretary explained that the ACCOBAMS Secretariat collaborated with the Information and Communication Regional Activity Centre (INFO/RAC) of the Barcelona Convention to monitor maritime traffic. As part of the ShiPrint Project, the Secretariat was planning to conduct four stakeholder workshops, as well as to develop a "Whale Safe" certification for ports and ships aimed at mitigating marine traffic impact.
22. Regarding Cetacean Watching, the Executive Secretary recalled the ongoing work carried out by the ACCOBAMS Whale-watching Working Group (WWWG) in assessing data collection protocols. She also communicated that the "High Quality Whale Watching®" (HQWW) trademark has been recently renewed for the decade 2024-2034.
23. Regarding Marine Litter, the Executive Secretary described the ACCOBAMS Secretariat activities regarding three workshops organised in 2023 and 2024 to better understand the impact of marine litter on cetaceans, and to monitor ingestion and entanglement evidence across the ACCOBAMS area. The conclusions of these workshops were endorsed by the Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission (IWC).
24. Regarding Cetacean Captivity, the Executive Secretary informed the Meeting that an Advisory Committee was established to address issues related to this subject matter, develop best practice guidelines, and propose genetic passports for cetaceans in captivity.
25. Regarding Area-based Measures for Cetacean Conservation, the Executive Secretary noted that the ACCOBAMS Secretariat organised two workshops in 2024 about the Cetacean Co-occurrence with Human activities (CCH) process, mapping human activities and promoting the implementation of relevant measures for cetacean conservation in critical habitats.

Conclusion 1:

The Bureau commended the activities implemented and strongly supported the Secretariat's initiatives to join interregional projects and encouraged ACCOBAMS' participation in more projects within a collaborative approach with several organisations to further enhance cetacean conservation efforts. The Bureau thanked all the experts and bodies who supported the implementation of the ACCOBAMS activities.

4. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

4.1 Report on activities

26. The Chair of the Scientific Committee introduced the Progress report on the activities of the Scientific Committee (ACCOBAMS-BU17/2025/Doc06) and informed the Meeting about the activities of the Scientific Committee (SC) since the 15th Bureau Meeting in December 2023.
27. Regarding the first ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative (ASI-1), the Chair of the Scientific Committee informed the Meeting that a Special issue was published in *Frontiers in Marine Science*. It included 12 scientific articles dealing with different results of ASI-1 covering both the Mediterranean and the Black Seas, plus an editorial paper. All of them were published “open access” thanks to the kind voluntary contribution from Italy. The different articles were showcased on the ACCOBAMS social media and were well-perceived. The Scientific Committee recommended that the Chair submits the ASI-1 estimates to the Scientific Committee of the IWC for review as part of the ongoing efforts to develop an internationally recognised and consistent list of approved abundance estimates.
28. Regarding Conservation Management Plans (CMPs), the Chair of the Scientific Committee informed the Meeting that four CMPs (for Fin whale, and Risso’s, Bottlenose and Common dolphins) have been developed and are now ready to be discussed at a stakeholder workshop. The SC will establish small CMP workshop steering groups for each CMP. The Terms of Reference for the CMP Stakeholders workshops for Fin whale and Risso’s dolphin were prepared to be implemented as soon as adequate funds are available. Two additional CMPs (Cuvier’s and Sperm whales) are currently being drafted, as recommended by the Scientific Committee of the IWC. Black Sea experts will also consider drafting a multi-species CMP to be presented to the next Scientific Committee Meeting.
29. Regarding Cetacean Co-occurrence with Human activities (CCH), the SC has started liaising with the Duke University (USA), which led a significant work on species density modelling of all cetacean species over the ACCOBAMS area, to strengthen collaboration and benefit of this work for the CCH process.
30. Regarding Training activities, the Chair of the Scientific Committee informed the Meeting that three workshops are planned for the 36th European Cetacean Society Annual Conference (Ponta Delgada, Portugal, May 2025) on best practices and guidelines related to invasive research, cetacean watching, and cetacean culture within the ACCOBAMS region.
31. Regarding the Pelagos Initiative, the Chair of the Scientific Committee recalled during the Meeting that the ACCOBAMS Secretariat is currently involved in three regional projects under the Pelagos initiative call.
32. The Chair of the Scientific Committee also informed the Meeting that SC16 agreed to draft a “Scientific Committee Handbook” to document its current working practices and guidelines. This will be presented at the Extended Bureau Meeting to be held in April 2025.

4.2 Recommendations from the Sixteenth Meeting of the Scientific Committee (SC16)

33. The Chair of the Scientific Committee presented the Recommendations issued by the 16th Meeting of the Scientific Committee (Barcelona, 2-5 December 2024):

- **Recommendation 16.1** – Post-war plan for the Black Sea cetaceans
- **Recommendation 16.2** – Abundance and distribution
- **Recommendation 16.3** – ASI-II and LTMP
- **Recommendation 16.4** – Species list for monitoring purposes
- **Recommendation 16.5** – Population structure
- **Recommendation 16.6** – Strandings issues (AETFS, functioning stranding networks)
- **Recommendation 16.7** – Bycatch and bottom trawling
- **Recommendation 16.8** – Revision of the FAO GFCM guidelines on monitoring incidental catch of vulnerable species in the Mediterranean and Black Seas (FAO 2019)
- **Recommendation 16.9** – Anthropogenic underwater noise
- **Recommendation 16.10** – Ship strikes
- **Recommendation 16.11** – Commercial Whale Watching Activities in the ACCOBAMS Area
- **Recommendation 16.12** – Marine Debris
- **Recommendation 16.13** – Semi-captivity (passport & guidelines)
- **Recommendation 16.14** – Area-based measures for cetacean conservation
- **Recommendation 16.15** – NETCCOBAMS

Conclusion 2:

The Bureau congratulated the Scientific Committee for its activities and welcomed the Recommendations adopted by SC16, which will be considered for the elaboration of the Draft Resolutions to be submitted to the next Extended Bureau Meeting (April 2025).

5. INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

5.1 Assessment of the new composition of the Scientific Committee

34. The Executive Secretary recalled that during MOP8, Parties adopted Resolution 8.3, amending the Rules of Procedure of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee and increasing the number of Regional Representatives up to twelve. The new composition of the Scientific Committee was adopted on a trial basis with the view to be reconsidered at MOP9. During MOP8, Italy offered to cover the additional participation costs generated by the increased number of SC members.

35. The Executive Secretary explained that during BU15, Bureau members decided to consider the effectiveness of the new composition of the Scientific Committee, as established by Resolution 8.3, requesting the Secretariat and the Scientific Committee to: a) prepare an analysis on the subject, taking into account the functionality of the Scientific Committee and the budgetary implications linked with the increased number of SC members; and b) propose options for the designation of Regional Representatives to be appointed by the

Parties. To facilitate this process, a consultant, Dr Giuseppe Notarbartolo di Sciara, was engaged to develop a proposal on the matter.

36. The consultant introduced document BU17/2025/**Inf02** on suggested amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Scientific Committee (from SC16).
37. The Chair of the Scientific Committee presented the structure of the draft initial outline of a “Scientific Committee Handbook” prepared by the SC.

Conclusion 3:

The Bureau took note of and commended the work of the consultant and invited him to provide recommendations based on his conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the composition of the Scientific Committee used during the current triennium on a real basis. These recommendations are to be presented to the next Extended Bureau (April 2025) and are to include the pros and cons of previous and current structure of the SC, including practical, legal and financial implications.

38. Regarding the participation of one representative from the European Cetacean Society (ECS) in the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee, the request received by the Secretariat from the Chair of the ECS shall be submitted to the forthcoming MOP (November 2025).

Conclusion 4:

The Bureau requested the Secretariat to submit for the next Extended Bureau (April 2025) a legal analysis about the option of electing the Chair and Vice-Chair from among all SC members.

5.2 Follow-up of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative

39. The Executive Secretary presented the progress on the next ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative (ASI-II) (ACCOBAMS-BU17/2025/**Inf04**). She recalled that the Long-Term Monitoring Program (LTMP) Contact Group (CG) met three times in 2024 and concluded that the starting date of ASI-II should be postponed to 2026. The LTMP CG highlighted the importance of including the use of environmentally friendly technologies, such as drones, as well as investigating options for reducing the survey costs. It also emphasised the urgent need to recruit experts to support the ACCOBAMS Secretariat for ASI-II.
40. The Executive Secretary recalled that, during its Meeting of June 2024 (BU16), the Bureau: a) decided to plan the first ASI-II fieldwork for 2026 and to use the momentum of the 3rd United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3) (Nice, June 2025) to increase the visibility of the project and attract potential funders; b) and adopted Conclusion 2, which emphasised the urgency of securing financial contributions and formal commitments from the Parties. The Conclusion also stressed the importance of appointing a Scientific Coordinator and a Project Officer as soon as possible to ensure timely planning for the summer 2026 survey.
41. The Executive Secretary stressed that to ensure the ASI-II survey happens in 2026, the following actions should be initiated as soon as possible: a) to recruit consultants to assist the Secretariat in initiating administrative procedures and securing funds; b) to transfer funds available under the Budget Line of the ACCOBAMS Project Officer (currently vacant) to the Budget Line “External assistance” to allow for the appointment of a consultant to work on the preparation of the projected survey and to ensure its timely planning for summer 2026. She

recalled that, according to the TORs for budget administration, “If the needed transfer of funds within the same budget section is higher than 20% of the budget line from which the transfer is made, the Secretariat shall request the authorisation of the Bureau” (Resolution 8.2, paragraph 15 of Annex 3); c) recruit a Scientific Coordinator to work on the project methodologies, considering appropriate environmental-friendly technologies, and on the survey design in consultation with the Scientific Committee and relevant experts; to this end, the Secretariat will partially use the remaining funds from ASI-I; and d) organise at the UNOC3 a side-event dedicated to the official launch of the ASI-II project using part of the remaining funds of ASI-1.

42. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Scientific Committee supported the proposal made by the Secretariat and recalled that some Parties and other funders have pending/committed financial or in-kind contributions for 2026 that might not be available if the survey is postponed. There is also a risk that if the launch is postponed, the ASI-II will be postponed indefinitely.

Conclusion 5:

The Bureau took note of the preparatory work done so far for the ASI-II, including the challenges faced, particularly in securing the necessary funding. In this context, the Bureau decided that its Chair will send a letter, before the next Extended Bureau, to the Contracting Parties stressing the importance of the ASI-II and encouraging them to provide support as soon as possible to its implementation in the summer 2026.

Conclusion 6:

The Bureau welcomed and supported the initiative by the Secretariat to organise, during the 3rd United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3 - Nice, June 2025), a side-event dedicated to the formal launch of the Second ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative (ASI-II). It invited the Secretariat to take the necessary steps to obtain the approval of the side event by the UNOC3 organisers.

Conclusion 7:

The Bureau invited the Secretariat to:

- a) transfer the available budget of the Budgetary Line “ACCOBAMS Project Officer (1102)” to the to the Budgetary Line “External assistance (1203)”, in accordance with paragraph 15 of Annex 3 of the Resolution 8.2¹;
- b) launch Calls for the appointment of a Scientific Coordinator and consultants to assist the Secretariat in initiating ASI-II using, where necessary, remaining funds from ASI-1, and funds from Budgetary Line “External assistance (1203)”.

Conclusion 8:

The Bureau asked the Secretariat to:

- a) prepare an information note about possible unspent funds from the current triennium budget that might be transferred to ASI-II, and present it at the next Extended Bureau (April 2025);
- b) regularly inform the Parties, via the LMTP Contact Group, about the progress in preparation of the ASI-II project.

¹ [Resolution 8.2](#), Annex 3 Terms of Reference for administration of the budget, Article 15: “The ACCOBAMS Secretariat can, if needed, transfer funds up to 20% from one budget line of the approved budget, to another budget line within the same budget section. If the needed transfer of funds within the same budget section is higher than 20% of the budget line from which the transfer is made, the Secretariat shall request the authorization of the Bureau.”

The Bureau encouraged continued efforts by the Parties and the Secretariat to mobilise the necessary funding for the ASI-II project. This includes approaching potential donors and taking advantage of the political context of the UNOC3 to increase the visibility of the project.

5.3 Italian proposal to amend the rules of Procedure for the Meeting of the Parties

43. The Executive Secretary recalled that during MOP8, Italy proposed increasing the number of Vice-Chairpersons in the ACCOBAMS Bureau, from four to six, to better represent different sub-regions. The Bureau was tasked by the MOP to consider the proposal and to report back on the issue at MOP9. The 15th Bureau Meeting requested the Secretariat to prepare a document on the compositions of similar bodies in other intergovernmental organisations.
44. The Legal Advisor of the Secretariat, Prof. Tullio Scovazzi, presented document ACCOBAMS-BU17/2025/**Doc07** on an analysis of the composition of the ACCOBAMS Bureau.

Conclusion 9:

The Bureau concluded that the proposed increase in the number of Bureau members does not conflict with the ACCOBAMS Agreement. However, it would require changes to the Rules of Procedure for the Meetings of the Parties and the Bureau. The Bureau members agreed that the decision about whether or not to increase the number of the Bureau's Vice-Chairpersons should be made by the MOP and requested the Secretariat to prepare for the next Extended Bureau (April 2025) a note about the implications of the proposed changes. The Extended Bureau will consider the note by the Secretariat to finalise its feedback to MOP9 on the issue.

5.4 Supplementary Conservation Grants Fund

45. The Secretariat provided updates to the Bureau on projects funded under the Supplementary Conservation Grants Fund (SCF). In 2023, there were six ongoing projects: four under the 2022 ACCOBAMS Call for Proposals (in Romania, Tunisia, and Türkiye), and two from the 2019 Call (in Algeria and Ukraine). Currently, four of these projects were ongoing.
46. The Secretariat informed the Bureau that there were no new voluntary contributions to the SCF in 2024, therefore, the remaining funds amounted to € 4,724 at the end of 2024. If there will be no additional voluntary contributions to the SCF in the coming months, the Secretariat will not be in a position to issue a new call for projects under the SCF.

Conclusion 10:

The Bureau requested the Secretariat to prepare a Call for Voluntary Contributions with a specific emphasis on SCF that explains the current situation, with a mid-April 2025 deadline for replies. A final decision on this matter will be considered at the 6th Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Extended Bureau (April 2025).

5.5 ACCOBAMS Partners

47. The Executive Secretary recalled that during the 15th Bureau Meeting, the Secretariat informed the Bureau that some Partners were lacking time and personnel to comply with the documentation requirements outlined in Resolution 7.9. In response, the 15th Bureau Meeting requested the Secretariat to prepare a proposal for the revision of the relevant annexes of Resolution 7.9 and submit it to its 16th Meeting.
48. The Legal Advisor of the Secretariat, Prof. Tullio Scovazzi, presented document ACCOBAMS-BU17/2025/Doc08 including a proposal of amendments of Annex 1 and Annex 2 to Resolution 7.9 (ACCOBAMS Partners).

Conclusion 11:

The Bureau welcomed the proposed amendments aiming to ease the documentation requirements and requested the Secretariat to elaborate a draft Resolution on the issue for the next Extended Bureau.

6. BUDGETARY MATTERS

6.1 Report on incomes and expenditures for 2023

49. The Executive Secretary made a presentation in relation to document ACCOBAMS-BU17/2025/Doc09 on incomes and expenditures for 2023, as per 31st December 2023, recalling that the 2023 accounts had been validated by the management controller.

Conclusion 12:

The Bureau approved the 2023 accounts and commended the financial support provided in 2023 by Monaco, Italy, and Spain through voluntary contributions. The Bureau also expressed its appreciation to the Secretariat for its efforts in developing projects and activities supported by co-funding (MAVA Foundation, CTN Naval Group, UNEP/MAP, HCMR and CIESM).

6.2 Report on incomes and expenditures for 2024

50. The Executive Secretary presented document ACCOBAMS-BU17/2025/Doc10 “Report of incomes and expenditures relevant to ACCOBAMS 2024 (as of 31st December 2024)”.

Conclusion 13:

The Bureau took note of the report on incomes and expenditures, and commended the financial support provided in 2024 by Monaco, Spain, and Italy through voluntary contributions. The Bureau also expressed its appreciation to the Secretariat for its efforts in developing projects and activities supported by co-funding (FAO GFCM, UNEP/MAP, HCMR).

51. The Executive Secretary introduced document BU17/2025/Doc11 on pending contributions to ACCOBAMS prepared by the Legal Advisor, Prof. Tullio Scovazzi. She recalled that during MOP8, Parties requested the Bureau to propose to the next Meeting of the Parties a procedure concerning the management and the recovery of the long-term pending contributions. During the 15th Bureau Meeting in 2023, the Secretariat was requested to present a draft document taking into account the following aspects:

- a. a restriction on the right to vote and on the involvement as Bureau or Scientific Committee members for Parties which are three or more years behind in paying their annual contributions on the date of the opening session of the Meeting of the Parties (MOP), unless these Parties provide the Secretariat with a formal letter explaining the “exceptional circumstances” originating the delay in payment, which is then to be deemed acceptable or otherwise by the MOP;
 - b. a restriction on funding projects under the Supplementary Conservation Fund for governmental bodies from Parties which are five or more years behind in paying their contributions on the date of the opening of the MOP; however, national NGOs from these Parties are not to be affected by such restriction.
52. The Legal Advisor of the Secretariat presented a legal analysis of these aspects to assist the Bureau in formulating its views. This analysis was based on Conclusion 7 from BU15, advocating for an approach that prioritises maintaining good relationships with all countries, as their involvement is essential for advancing ACCOBAMS’ objectives of cetacean conservation.

Conclusion 14:

The Bureau took note of **Doc11** and acknowledged the issue of long-term unpaid contributions by Parties and the need for a procedure to manage and recover these contributions. However, it emphasised the importance of maintaining good relationships with all Parties, despite the existence of long-pending contributions, as the involvement of all ACCOBAMS countries is crucial for achieving the Agreement's objectives.

Conclusion 15:

The Bureau agreed on the proposed restrictions regarding:

- a) **Voting rights:** Parties that are three or more years behind in paying their annual contributions will lose their voting rights unless they submit a formal letter explaining the exceptional circumstances causing the delay, with the contents being agreed upon by the MOP.
- b) **Elections:** Representatives of Parties in arrears for more than three years will be ineligible for election as Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson of the Meeting of the Parties and, consequently, for membership in the Bureau.
- c) **Funding projects under the SCF:** Grants will not be given for governmental bodies from Parties that are five or more years behind in paying their contributions, while ensuring that national NGOs from these Parties are not affected.

Conclusion 16:

The Bureau encouraged Parties with pending contributions to liaise with the Secretariat to develop a reasonable payment plan to reschedule their payments with a view to avoid any measures being imposed.

Conclusion 17:

The Bureau requested the Secretariat to prepare a **specific Resolution** to address the issue of unpaid contributions for the 9th Meeting of the Parties (MOP9) based on these conclusions, outlining the proposed measures for managing and recovering long-term pending contributions, and independent from the "Work programme and Budget 2026-2028" Resolution.

6.3 Provisional list of activities and proposed expenditures for 2025

53. The Executive Secretary presented document BU17/2025/**Doc12** on estimated expenditures for 2025 based on proposed new activities. In accordance with Annex III, “Terms of reference for the administration of the budget”, of Resolution 8.2, adopted by MOP8, the Secretariat provided the Bureau with an estimate of proposed expenditures for the current year based on the 2023-2025 Working Programme.

Conclusion 18:

The Bureau approved the proposed activities and estimated expenditures for 2025 as reflected in [Annex 3](#) to this report.

7. REPORTING AND COMMUNICATION

7.1 ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy

54. Ms Clara Monaco, ACCOBAMS Senior Programme and Project Officer, presented an overview of ACCOBAMS' comprehensive approach to enhancing its digital presence and audience engagement. The communication strategy is based on publications on the website and social media channels, where indicators have shown significant growth in followers and their interactions over the past two years. In 2025, ACCOBAMS updated its visual identity by renewing the templates for Secretariat documents and social media posts. The Secretariat remains committed to maintaining a strong and effective communication strategy supporting ACCOBAMS' mission and goals.
55. The Bureau appreciated the work done regarding the ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy and encouraged the continued use of the new templates.

7.2 Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs)

56. The Executive Secretary recalled the conclusion made by the Bureau at its 15th Meeting requesting the Secretariat to assign DOI (Digital Object Identifier) to all relevant ACCOBAMS documents to facilitate easier access to important ACCOBAMS documents in force, as well as to the Decisions of the Parties. To streamline this process, a consultant, Mrs Pauline Gauffier, was engaged to implement the DOI system on the ACCOBAMS website for all relevant documents.
57. The consultant presented the development of the DOI system on the ACCOBAMS website and informed the meeting that a DOI had already been assigned to all Rules of Procedure, Guidelines, and Best Practices in force. Suggestions were made to adopt standard citation formats and to update all relevant documents with the corresponding DOI, “How to Cite” guidelines, and Crossmark reference, in line with the Communication Strategy.

Conclusion 19:

The Bureau welcomed the progress made by the Secretariat on this matter and requested it to prepare a document for presentation and discussion at the next Extended Bureau (April 2025). This **document** should include:

- a) a proposed list of documents available on the ACCOBAMS website that could be assigned a DOI (e.g. Resolutions, meeting reports, etc.);

- b) a further analysis of different citation options for various types of documents, including a legal assessment of authorship and intellectual property rights for documents prepared by contracted experts; and
- c) an explanation about what is a DOI and its managing organisation.

The Bureau agreed that the DOI information, landing pages, and documents should be updated once a decision has been reached on authorship and citation.

7.3 National Reports

58. The Executive Secretary recalled that, in preparation for the upcoming MOP9 in November 2025, and in accordance with Article VIII of the Agreement, each ACCOBAMS Party shall prepare a report on its implementation of the Agreement. Considering Resolution 8.7, which requests Parties to provide relevant information on activities through NETCCOBAMS, the Secretariat presented updates on the National Reports format to facilitate national reporting.

Conclusion 20:

The Bureau took note of the new reporting system proposed by the Secretariat for National Reports through NETCCOBAMS.

Conclusion 21:

The Bureau requested the Secretariat to:

- a) provide all National Focal Points with their password before the next Extended Bureau (April 2025) and invite them to complete their National Report by mid-July 2025 (not later than 120 days before the MOP as foreseen in the Agreement);
- b) include guidance in NETCCOBAMS on how to complete the document, the rationale behind choosing this reporting option, and the mid-July 2025 deadline; and
- c) provide a complementary Word format upon request from a National Focal Point.

8. PREPARATION OF THE EXTENDED BUREAU MEETING

59. Referring to Resolution 6.4 on the Rules of Procedure for the Bureau, the Executive Secretary presented document ACCOBAMS-BU17/2025/**Doc13** on the appointment of three experts to support the Extended Bureau Meeting in preparation for the next MOP. She recalled that a Working Group, composed of three experts with extensive experience in social and economic aspects of marine biodiversity conservation and management, is to be established. These experts will be selected based on their background, according to the expected development of the Working Programme and the priorities for the next three-year period.
60. The Executive Secretary recalled that, as stipulated in Resolution 6.4, the three experts should be selected by the Bureau in close consultation with the Secretariat. They are to be identified based on the Working Programme and the priorities to be considered for the next triennium. They will attend the Extended Bureau Meeting as observers in their expert capacity, rather than as representatives of their respective countries. Their participation will be unpaid, with the Secretariat covering exclusively their travel and per diem expenses.

Conclusion 22:

The Bureau agreed that the Secretariat would invite the following three proposed experts to attend the next Extended Bureau Meeting as members of the Working Group: Mr Mohammed Malouli Idrissi, Dr Giuseppe Notarbartolo Di Sciara and Mr Bayram Oztürk.

61. The Executive Secretary also informed Bureau Members on progress made in preparation for the MOP9 to be held in November 2025 in Cyprus and presented a proposal on a draft list of Resolutions for MOP9 (ACCOBAMS-BU17/2025/Doc14).

Conclusion 23:

The Bureau Members approved the List of Resolutions to be submitted to MOP9 as reviewed and amended during the Meeting ([Annex 4](#)).

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

62. There were no other issues submitted for consideration by the Meeting.

10. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

63. The Chair of the Meeting thanked the Secretariat for its efforts, and all participants for their contributions. She reiterated the Bureau's willingness to assist the Secretariat.
64. The Bureau members congratulated Ms Maïlis Salivas on her first Bureau Meeting as ACCOBAMS Executive Secretary and her excellent work.
65. The Executive Secretary thanked the Bureau members for their active participation and valuable contributions. Appreciation was also extended to the Chair, Mrs Marie Thérèse Gambin, for her exceptional leadership and guidance. The Executive Secretary expressed gratitude for the support from the Vice-Chairs, the Chair & Vice-Chair of the SC, and acknowledged the hard work of the Secretariat team and the consultants.
66. The 17th Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Bureau was closed on Friday, 14th February 2025, at 12:30.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1 - List of participants

ANNEX 2 - Agenda

ANNEX 3 - Provisional list of activities and proposed expenditures for 2025

ANNEX 4 - Provisional list of draft Resolutions to be submitted to MOP9

ANNEX 1 – LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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ANNEX 2 – AGENDA

- 1. Opening**
- 2. Adoption of the Agenda**
- 3. Progress report by the Secretariat**
- 4. Progress report on the activities of the Scientific Committee**
 - 4.1 Report on activities
 - 4.2 Recommendations and conclusions from the Sixteenth Meeting of the Scientific Committee
- 5. Institutional issues**
 - 5.1 Assessment of the new composition of the Scientific Committee
 - 5.2 Follow up of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative
 - 5.3 Italian proposal to amend the rules of Procedure for the Meeting of the Parties
 - 5.4 Supplementary Conservation Fund
 - 5.5 ACCOBAMS Partners
- 6. Budgetary matters**
 - 6.1 Report on incomes and expenditures for 2023
 - 6.2 Report on incomes and expenditures for 2024
 - 6.3 Provisional list of activities for 2025
- 7. Reporting and Communication**
 - 7.1 ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy
 - 7.2 Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs)
 - 7.3 National Reports
- 8. Preparation of the Extended Bureau Meeting**
- 9. Any other business**
- 10. Closure of the Meeting**

ANNEX 3 – PROVISIONAL LIST OF ACTIVITIES AND PROPOSED EXPENDITURES FOR 2025

ACTIONS UNDER THE 2023-2025 PoW	FORESEEN ACTIVITIES	ACTIVITIES FUNDED THROUGH:		COMMENTS/UPDATE/STATE OF PLAY
		ORDINARY CONTRIBUTIONS (€)	VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS/CO-FUNDING (€)	
MANAGEMENT OF THE AGREEMENT				
MA 1 – INVOLVEMENT OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS				
<i>MA 1a - Strengthen involvement of all key stakeholders in ACCOBAMS's operations</i>				
Strengthen involvement of national representatives in formulating actions related to cetacean conservation, according to their national priorities	Organize the 17 th Meeting of the Bureau	7 000€ (LB 2300)	-	<i>13-14 February 2025</i>
	Organize the 6 th Meeting of the Extended Bureau (Nice)	11 000€ (LB 2300)	-	<i>23-24 April 2025</i>
	Organize the Ninth Meeting of ACCOBAMS Parties (Cyprus)	58 000€ (LB 2100)	-	<i>18-21 November 2025</i>
Establish/strengthen partnerships and collaborations with all relevant IGOs, NGOs, and international/national entities	Participate in meetings and relevant fora (UNOC3, CMS Family, UNEP MAP Meetings,...)	10 400€ (LB 1502)	Financial support from ongoing projects where ACCOBAMS is involved	
Enforce communication within the ACCOBAMS community and strengthen exchanges of information on national and regional projects / activities / initiatives	Using NETCCOBAMS platform as sharing/consultation tool - Exchange of information on national reports and regional projects / activities / initiatives Implementation of the project called Pelagos Consortium	10 000€ (LB 54)	25 000€ 2023-2025 Monaco Voluntary Contribution 30 000€ in 2025 if the project is accepted	<i>As part of the call for projects under the Pelagos initiative, ACCOBAMS is involved in a project proposal called Pelagos Consortium which aims at establishing a group of different stakeholders within the Pelagos Sanctuary to apply an ecosystem approach to the area</i>

MA2 – ENSURE ADEQUATE FUNDING, IN PARTICULAR FOR CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES				
<i>MA2a – Mobilizing and diversifying funding sources</i>				
Fund projects under the Supplementary Conservation Grant Fund (SCF) related to cetacean conservation	Launching a new ACCOBAMS call for proposals for projects under SCF	-	-	<i>A new call could not be launched since not enough funds are secured</i>
MA3 – IMPLEMENTATION OF AND COMPLIANCE WITH ACCOBAMS				
<i>MA3a – Improve the level of implementation of and compliance with ACCOBAMS Resolutions as well as the monitoring of its progress</i>				
Propose remedy actions in cases of non-follow-up with ACCOBAMS Resolutions and infringements	Organize the Fourth Meeting of the Follow-up Committee	5 000€ (LB 2500)	-	<i>September 2025</i>
CONSERVATION ACTIONS				
CA1 - IMPROVE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE STATUS OF CETACEANS				
<i>CA1a- Cetacean population estimates and distribution</i>				
Promote the implementation of the Long-Term Monitoring Programme	Preparation of synoptic basin-wide surveys in the ACCOBAMS Area with a focus on abundance and trends (ASI-II) 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	20 000€ (LB 1102) 30 000€ (savings from ASI) 10 000€ (LB 53)	-	<p><i>Use the Budgetary Line of the previous ACCOBAMS Project Officer who left her position and has not yet been replaced to hire dedicated consultants to assist the Secretariat in 2025.</i></p> <p><i>Allocate the remaining funds of ASI1:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>to recruit a Scientific Coordinator for 2025.</i> <i>to host special event(s) at UNOC3 in Monaco and Nice in June 2025 to officially launch ASI-II, aiming to increase visibility and attract potential funders</i> <p><i>Organize side events during relevant Meetings</i></p>

Promote data collection at sub-regional and national levels	Collaboration with relevant organizations, such as Barcelona Convention, the Bucharest Convention and the European Commission (MSFD)	5 000€ (LB 53)	-	<i>SAP BIO, CORMON meetings in 2025</i>
Promote data collection from multidisciplinary surveys	Organize an online workshop to explain the interest and methodology of multidisciplinary surveys	5 000€ (LB 53)	-	<i>To be organized online in spring 2025</i>
CA1b- Population structure				
<i>CA1b - no actions planned for 2025</i>				
CA1c- Monitoring cetacean's status Cetacean population estimates and distribution				
Facilitate the Development/ revision/ implementation of National or Regional Action Plans for cetaceans	Supporting the revision of the National Action Plans for cetaceans in collaboration with SPA/RAC and national authorities in 2 Countries	3 000 € (LB 53)	-	<i>To be initiated in 2025</i>
Develop/ revise/ implement relevant Conservation Management Plans for cetacean species	Enhance the understanding and application of telemetry in marine mammal research Joint workshop "Advances in Marine Mammal Telemetry: Technologies, Analyses, Best Practices, and Future Perspectives" during the 36 th ECS Annual Conference	10 000€ (LB 53)		<i>May 2025, Ponta Delgada, Portugal</i>
CA1 d - Functional stranding networks and responses to emergency situation				
Set up /Reinforce official national stranding networks (with all national institutions concerned) as appropriate, and encourage	Support participation of expert during a necropsies training following the best practices on cetacean	3 000 € (LB 1501)	-	<i>Training stranding network experts organized by Liege University (Summer 2025)</i>

collaborations among national networks of Parties	postmortem investigation and tissue sampling			
Encourage collaboration among national networks of Parties	Organize online meeting of the ACCOBAMS Emergency Task Force for Stranding (AETFS)	1 500€ (LB 53)	-	<i>To be organized in spring 2025</i>
	Continue developing tele-necropsy in the ACCOBAMS Area with continuous assistance in the pilot Country (Morocco)	3 000€ (LB 53)	-	<i>The initiative was initiated in 2023 with Morocco as pilot Country</i>
	Support MEDACES	-	18 000 <i>(Usually supported by a Spanish Voluntary Contribution)</i>	
CA2- Reduce human pressures on cetaceans				
<i>CA2 a - Interactions with fisheries / aquaculture</i>				
Support countries in monitoring and mitigating depredation and bycatch situations, with urgent focus on harbour porpoise bycatch in the Black Sea	Continue facilitating the overall coordination and the mobilization of the relevant expertise in the 3 ongoing projects implemented in collaboration with GFCM/FAO	70 000€ (LB 6416 LB 6417 LB 6418)	-	-
	Collaborate with relevant entities: 2 nd Meeting of the JBWG, relevant GFCM meetings, ECS, One Ocean Science Congress (UNOC3)	4 000€ (LB52) 3 000€ (LB 6416 LB 6417 LB 6418)	-	<i>Talk “Mitigating dolphin depredation in Mediterranean fisheries: results and insights from collaborative efforts for cetacean conservation and sustainable fisheries” at the One Ocean Science Congress, in collaboration with GFCM-FAO, SPA/RAC, and LIFE. Event in the framework of the Third United Nations Ocean Conference, Nice, 9-13 June 2025</i>

<i>CA2 b - Anthropogenic underwater noise</i>				
Encourage the monitoring of anthropogenic activities generating underwater noise	Gather data on anthropogenic noise in NETCCOBAMS in order to update noise maps	9 000€ (LB52)	-	
	Revising and updating the ACCOBAMS Guide on underwater noise taking into account outcomes from recent projects	3 000€ (LB52)	-	
	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 (UNOC3)	7 000€ (LB52)	The ACCOBAMS Secretariat is also partner in the SEASOUNDS project which has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie. => participation in workshops	<i>EU-TG Noise Meetings</i> <i>Talk "Assessing Anthropogenic Underwater Noise Pollution in the Mediterranean Sea and its Implications for Marine Ecosystem Protection and Restoration" at the One Ocean Science Congress. Event in the framework of the Third United Nations Ocean Conference, Nice, 9-13 June 2025</i>
<i>CA2c - Ship strikes</i>				
Monitor / assess high-risk areas for ship strikes (CCH) in the Mediterranean Sea	Identify 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 Develop cooperation on ships strike issue with other International Organizations / organize workshops with	3 000€ (LB52)	60 000€ from the ShiPrint project 10 000€ from 2023 Italy voluntary contribution 15 000€ from 2023-2025 Monaco Voluntary Contribution	

Promote the use of mitigation measures	<p>relevant stakeholders</p> <p>Follow and assist Parties in the PSSA project process in collaboration</p> <p>Foster the development of incentive systems to shipping companies adopting suggested mitigation measures</p>			
<i>CA2 d - Cetacean watching</i>				
Monitor status of WW activities	<p>Revise the guidelines for commercial cetacean-watching</p> <p>Analyse existing national legislation</p> <p>Workshop proposal: "Enhancing Whale-Watching Practices for Cetacean Conservation: an ACCOBAMS Workshop" during the 36th ECS Annual Conference</p>	<p>2 500€ (LB 52)</p> <p>1 000€ (LB 52)</p> <p>4 000€ (LB 52)</p>	-	-
Support the implementation of the HQWW certificate in the ACCOBAMS Area	<p>Support trainings on HQWW</p> <p>Revision of the Regulations Governing Use associated with the "High Quality Whale-Watching®" Certificate</p>	<p>500€ (LB 52)</p> <p>1500€ (LB 52)</p>	-	-

CA2 e - Marine litter & CA 2 f - Chemical & biological pollution				
Monitor the impacts of marine litter (ingested marine litter / microplastics / entanglements in ghost nets) on cetaceans	Collaborating with relevant Organizations (ASCOBANS, IWC, MEDPOL, IMO, FAO) including through joint activities	2 000 € (LB 52)	-	-
CA2 g - Climate change				
CA2g - no actions planned for 2025				
CA2 h - Captivity related issues				
CA1h - no actions planned for 2025				
C34a – Area-based measures for cetacean conservation				
Regularly update Cetacean Critical Habitats (CCH) including by identifying priority areas for action to mitigate the known threats (bycatch...) / area-based management measures	Collaborating with other Organizations, such as UNEP-MAP/ SPA-RAC, BSC, IMO, IWC, and GFCM, and in particular through the Strategic alliance	2 000€ (LB 52)	-	-
CA4a – Information / Communication / Awareness about cetaceans				
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	Implement the ACCOBAMS communication strategy Promote cetacean conservation, advancing culture and social learning	40 000€ (LB 54) 5 000€	-	<i>Joint workshop with CMS “Cetacean culture: navigating change in the ACCOBAMS region and beyond” during the 36th ECS Annual Conference (May 2025, Ponta Delgada, Portugal)</i>

ANNEX 4 – PROVISIONAL LIST OF DRAFT RESOLUTIONS TO BE SUBMITTED TO MOP9

Administrative items
Granting the right to vote (if needed)
Scientific Committee
Rules of Procedure for the Meeting of the Parties
Recommendations of the ACCOBAMS Follow-Up Committee
Work programme and Budget 2026-2028
Long-term unpaid annual contributions to the ACCOBAMS Trust Fund
NETCCOBAMS
ACCOBAMS Partners
Conservation issues
Post-War plan for Black Sea cetaceans
Abundance and distribution, including ASI-II and LTMP
Species List for monitoring purposes
Population Structure
Strandings Issues (AETF, functioning stranding networks)
Interactions between fisheries and cetacean (Bycatch, bottom trawling and revision of the FAO GFCM Guidelines on monitoring incidental catch of vulnerable species in the Mediterranean and Black Seas)
Anthropogenic Underwater Noise
Ship Strikes
Commercial whale watching activities in the ACCOBAMS area
Marine debris
Semi-captivity (Passport & Guidelines)
Area-based measures for cetacean conservation
Other Resolutions
Date and venue of the Tenth session of the Meeting of the Parties
Tribute to Organisers