

SYNTHESIS OF THE REPORTS BY PARTIES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ACCOBAMS



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According to Article VIII (paragraph b) of ACCOBAMS, Parties are invited to prepare for each ordinary session of their Meeting a report on the implementation of the Agreement.

As agreed during the BU17 meeting (February 2025), the reports were prepared for completion via the NETCCOBAMS platform.

In order to assist ACCOBAMS Focal Points, some parts of the national report template were previously and partially filled in by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat, as possible, by taking into account existing information gathered from:

- previous National Reports submitted to ACCOBAMS MOPs;
- reports, if any, on “Implementation levels of the Work Programme 2023-2025” completed by Countries for the Sixth Meeting of the ACCOBAMS National Representatives, May 2024;
- Reports of regions presented by the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee Regional Representatives during SC15, May 2023, and during SC16, December 2024.

The Secretariat has inserted the existing information (gathered from the above-mentioned sources) in the respective National Reports, so that National Focal Points were able to add, modify, adapt and/or delete any information regarding their respective countries in the report. The objective was to assist ACCOBAMS countries in accomplishing their obligation foreseen in Article VIII (paragraph b) of the Agreement.

Therefore, ACCOBAMS Focal Points were invited by the Secretariat to review the information pre-filled in the reporting system regarding their respective countries and amend it as appropriate, with the view to presenting national reports to MOP9 (document ACCOBAMS-MOP9/2025/Inf04).

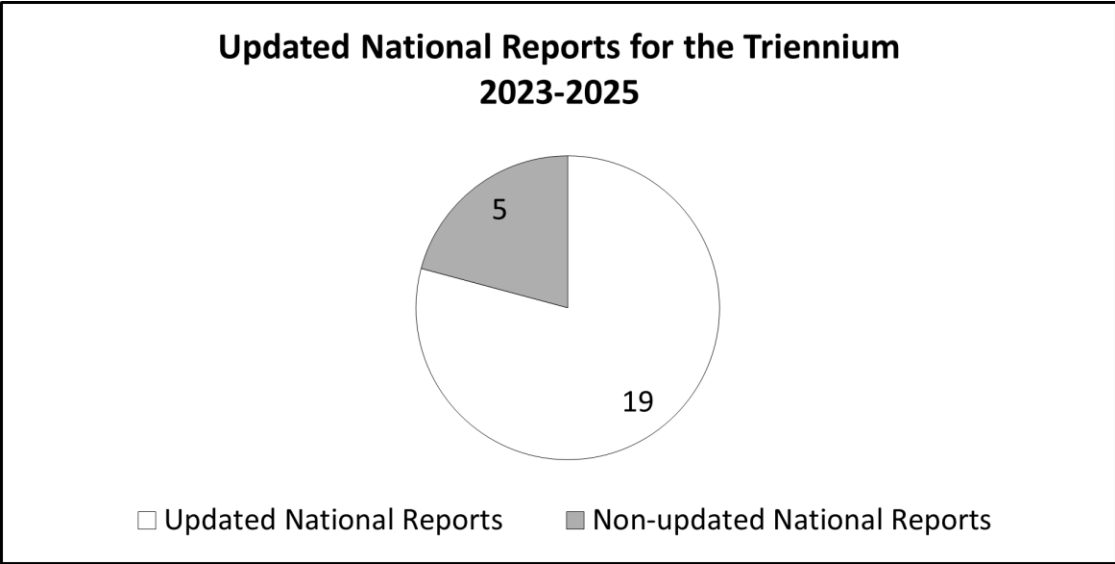
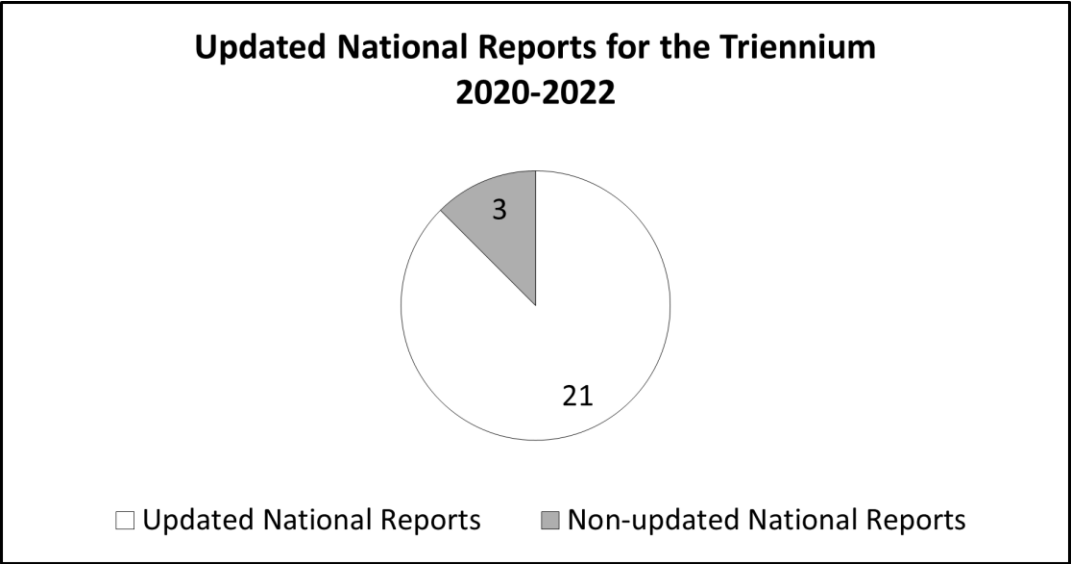
The current document is a brief synthesis of the relevant activities reported, by ACCOBAMS Parties, during the triennium 2023-2025 in the framework of the implementation of the Agreement.

Yes - **Y**
No - **N**
Partially - **P**
Not Relevant- **NR**
No Information - **NI**

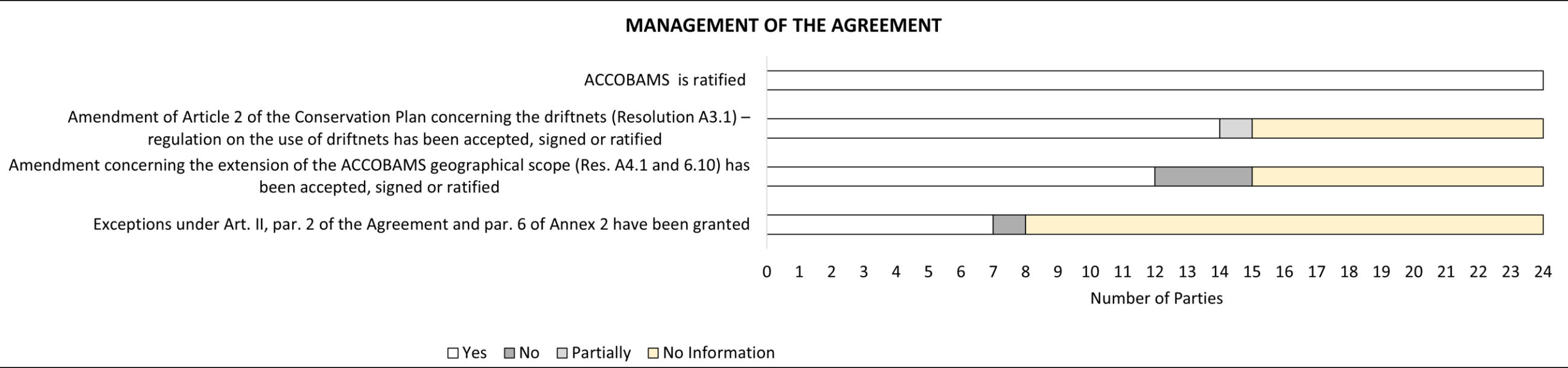
ALB = Albania; ALG= Algeria; BUL= Bulgaria; CRO= Croatia; CYP= Cyprus; EGY= Egypt; FRA= France; GEO= Georgia; GRE= Greece; ITA= Italy; LEB= Lebanon; LIB= Libya; MAL= Malta; MC= Monaco; MNT= Montenegro; MOR= Morocco; POR= Portugal; ROM= Romania; SLO= Slovenia; SP=SPAIN; SYR= Syria; TUN= Tunisia; TÜR= Türkiye; UKR= Ukraine

Specific questions and requests from Parties are [annexed](#) to the present report.

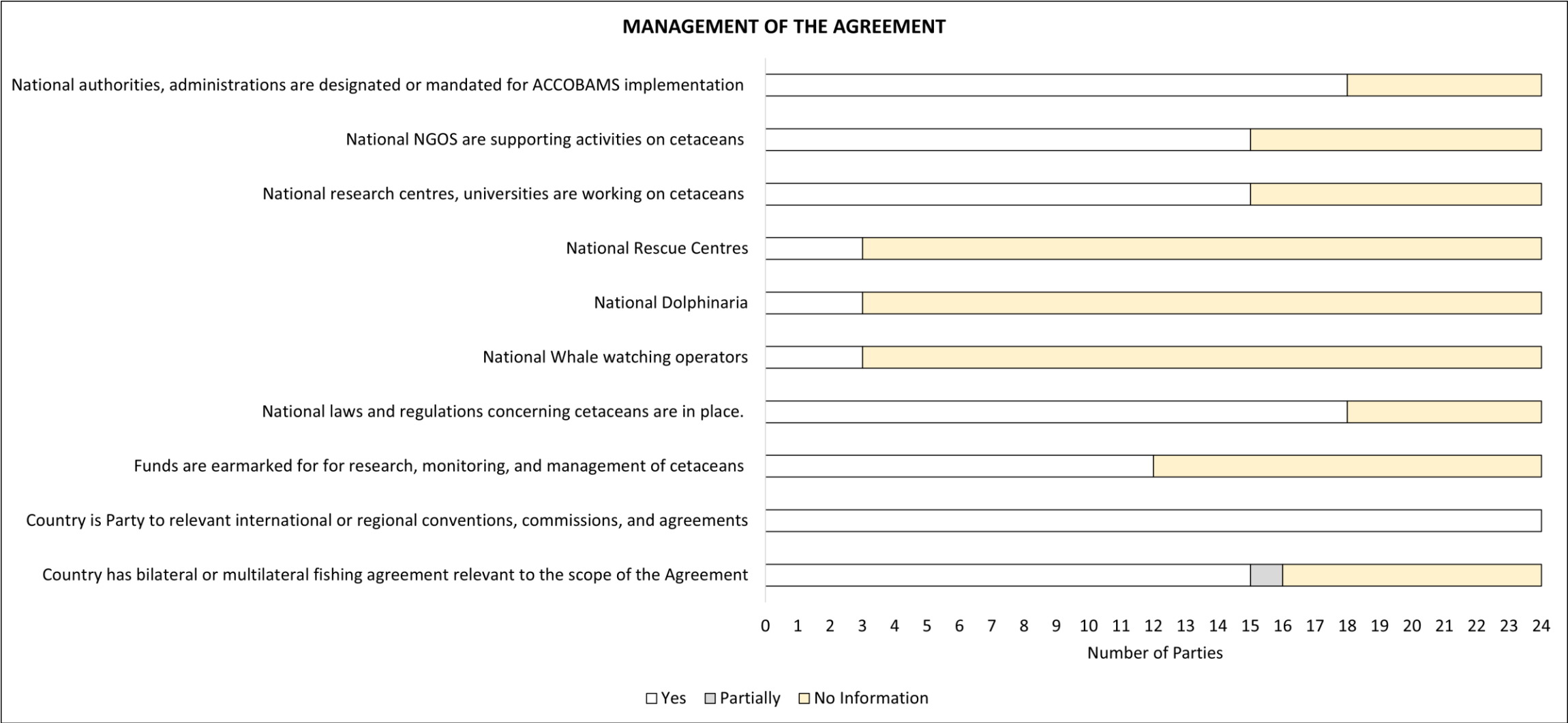
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NATIONAL FOCAL POINT, NATIONAL REPORTS, MAIN ISSUES AND NEEDS																								
National Focal Point is designated	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
National reports updated by Focal Points in 2025	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
Specific questions and requests	Please refer to the Annex																							



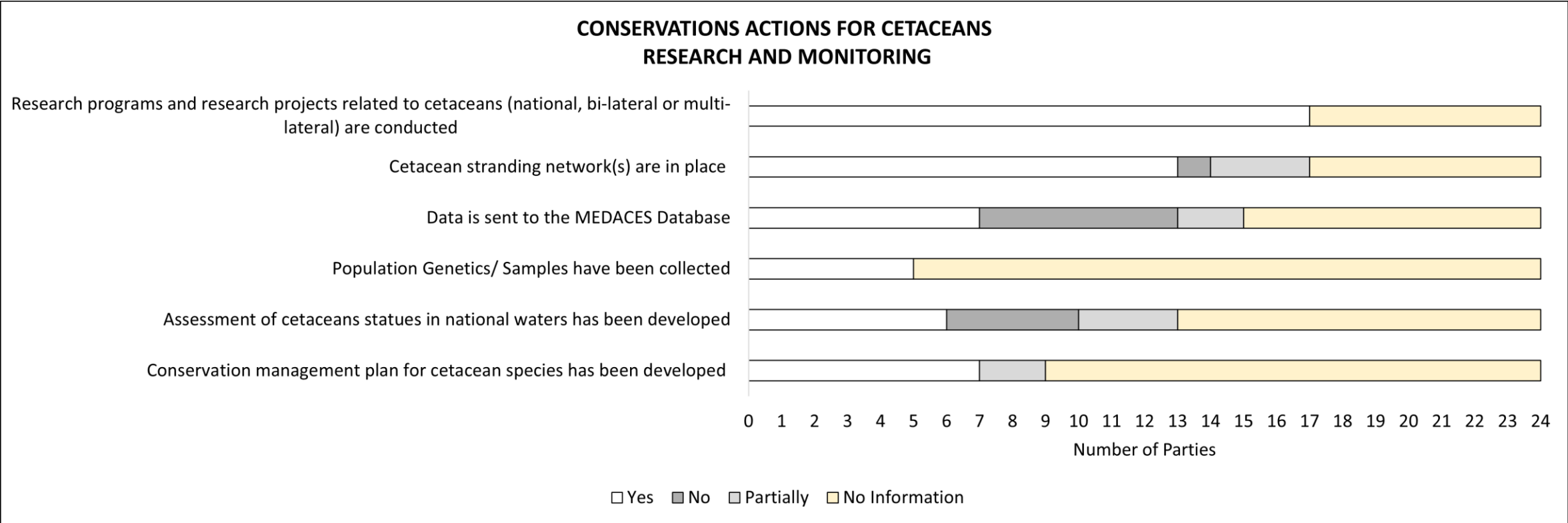
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MANAGEMENT OF THE AGREEMENT																								
ACCOBAMS is ratified	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Amendment of Article 2 of the Conservation Plan concerning the driftnets (Resolution A3.1) – regulation on the use of driftnets has been accepted, signed or ratified	NI	Y	Y	Y	Y	NI	Y	Y	NI	Y	NI	NI	P	Y	Y	Y	NI	NI	Y	Y	NI	Y	Y	NI
Amendment concerning the extension of the ACCOBAMS geographical scope (Res. A4.1 and 6.10) has been accepted, signed or ratified	NI	N	Y	NI	Y	NI	Y	Y	NI	Y	NI	NI	Y	Y	Y	N	N	NI	Y	Y	NI	NI	Y	Y
Exceptions under Art. II, par. 2 of the Agreement and par. 6 of Annex 2 have been granted	NI	N	Y	Y	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI	Y	Y	NI	NI	NI	NI



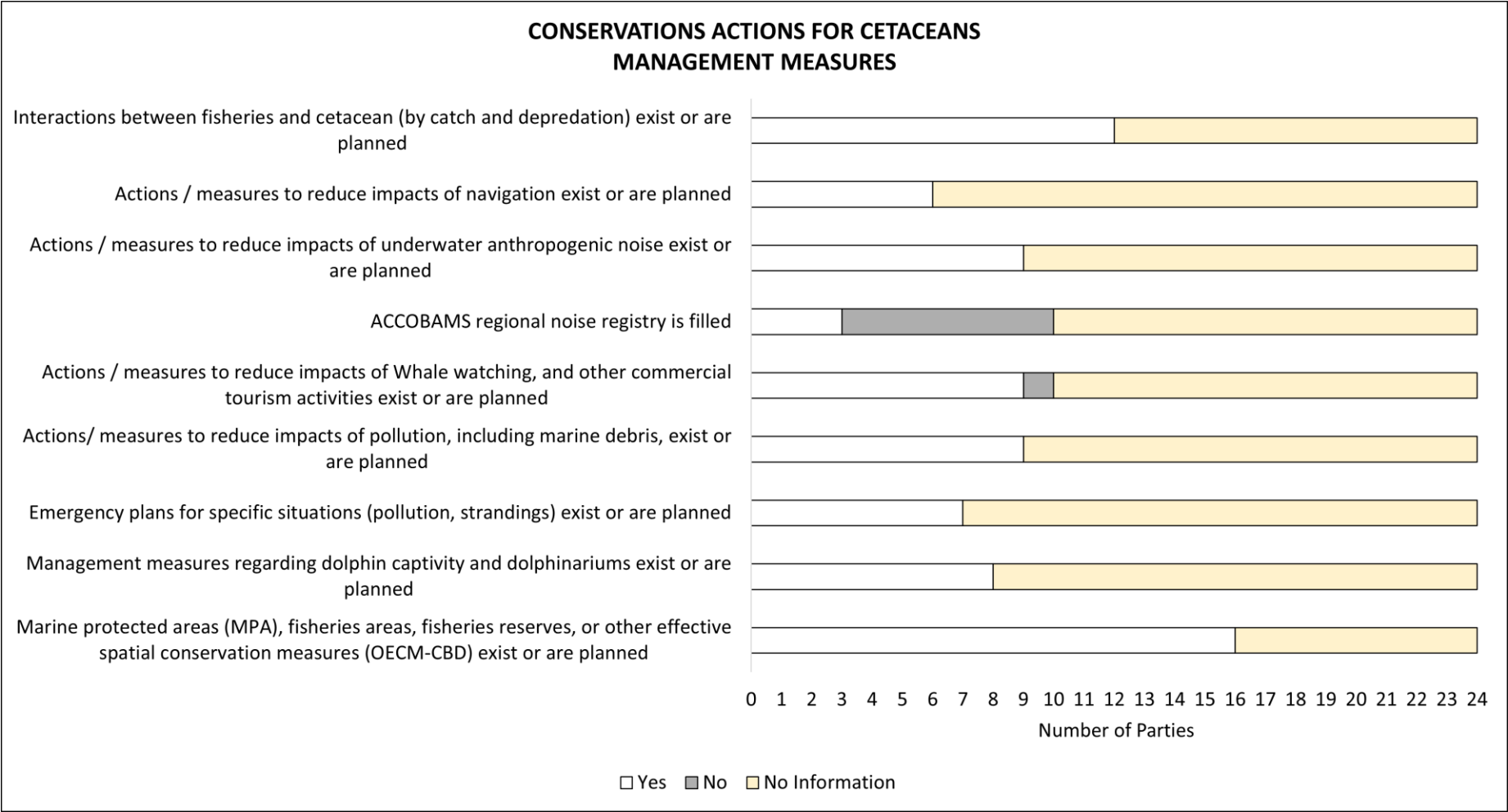
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MANAGEMENT OF THE AGREEMENT																								
National authorities, administrations are designated or mandated for ACCOBAMS implementation	NI	Y	Y	Y	Y	NI	Y	Y	NI	Y	Y	NI	Y	NI	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	NI	Y	Y	Y
National NGOs are supporting activities on cetaceans	NI	Y	Y	Y	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI	Y	NI	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	NI	Y	Y	Y
National research centres, universities are working on cetaceans	NI	Y	Y	Y	NI	NI	Y	Y	NI	Y	NI	NI	Y	NI	Y	Y	Y	NI	Y	Y	NI	Y	Y	Y
National Rescue Centres	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI	NI	NI
National Dolphinarium	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI	NI	Y	Y	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI
National Whale watching operators	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI
National laws and regulations concerning cetaceans are in place	NI	Y	Y	Y	Y	NI	Y	Y	NI	Y	Y	NI	Y	NI	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	NI	Y	Y	Y
Funds are earmarked for for research, monitoring, and management of cetaceans	NI	Y	Y	Y	Y	NI	NI	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI	Y	Y	NI	Y	Y	NI	Y	Y	NI
Country is Party to relevant international or regional conventions, commissions, and agreements	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Country has bilateral or multilateral fishing agreement relevant to the scope of the Agreement	NI	Y	Y	Y	Y	NI	Y	P	NI	NI	Y	Y	Y	NI	Y	Y	NI	NI	Y	Y	NI	Y	Y	Y



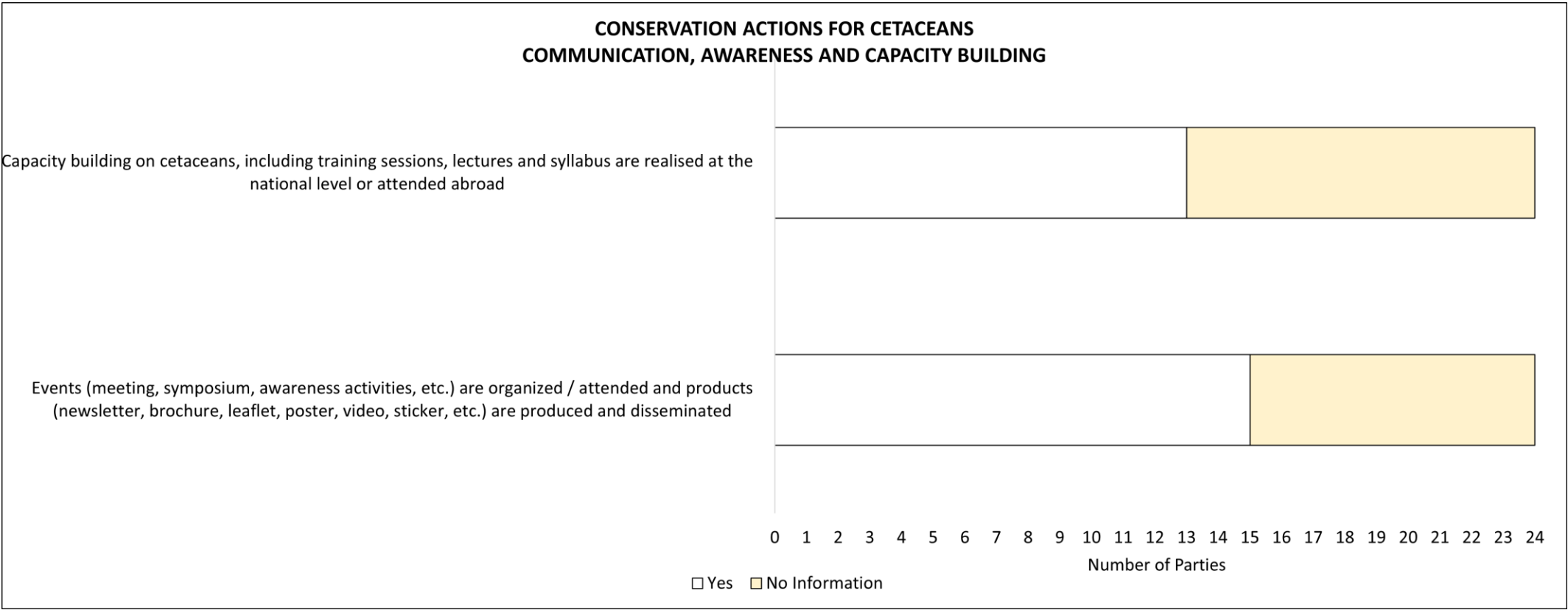
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CONSERVATION ACTIONS FOR CETACEANS / RESEARCH AND MONITORING																								
Research programs and research projects related to cetaceans (national, bi-lateral or multi-lateral) are conducted	NI	Y	Y	Y	Y	NI	Y	Y	NI	Y	Y	Y	Y	NI	NI	Y	Y	NI	Y	Y	NI	Y	Y	Y
Cetacean stranding network(s) are in place	NI	P	Y	Y	Y	NI	Y	P	NI	Y	Y	NI	Y	NI	N	Y	Y	NI	P	Y	NI	Y	Y	Y
Data is sent to the MEDACES Database	NI	N	Y	N	Y	NI	NI	N	NI	N	NI	NI	Y	NI	Y	P	N	NI	Y	Y	NI	Y	N	P
Population Genetics/ Samples have been collected	NI	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI
Assessment of cetaceans statues in national waters has been developed	NI	N	Y	Y	N	NI	NI	Y	NI	Y	N	NI	P	NI	P	NI	Y	NI	NI	P	NI	Y	N	NI
Conservation management plan for cetacean species has been developed	NI	P	Y	NI	Y	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI	NI	NI	Y	NI	Y	P	NI	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI	NI	Y



	ALB	ALG	BUL	CRO	CYP	EGY	FRA	GEO	GRE	ITA	LEB	LIB	MAL	MC	MNT	MOR	POR	ROM	SLO	SP	SYR	TUN	TÜR	UKR
CONSERVATION ACTIONS FOR CETACEANS / MANAGEMENT MEASURES																								
Interactions between fisheries and cetacean (by catch and depredation) exist or are planned	NI	Y	Y	Y	NI	NI	NI	Y	NI	Y	NI	NI	Y	NI	Y	Y	Y	NI	NI	Y	NI	Y	NI	Y
Actions / measures to reduce impacts of navigation exist or are planned	NI	Y	NI	NI	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI	NI	Y
Actions / measures to reduce impacts of underwater anthropogenic noise exist or are planned	NI	NI	Y	NI	Y	NI	NI	Y	NI	Y	NI	NI	Y	NI	Y	NI	NI	NI	Y	Y	NI	NI	NI	Y
ACCOBAMS regional noise registry is filled	NI	N	N	N	Y	NI	NI	N	NI	NI	NI	NI	Y	NI	Y	NI	N	NI	NI	N	NI	N	NI	NI
Actions / measures to reduce impacts of Whale watching, and other commercial tourism activities exist or are planned	NI	NI	Y	NI	Y	NI	Y	N	NI	Y	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI	Y	Y	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI	NI	Y
Actions/ measures to reduce impacts of pollution, including marine debris, exist or are planned	NI	Y	NI	Y	NI	NI	NI	Y	NI	Y	NI	NI	Y	NI	Y	Y	NI	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI	Y	NI
Emergency plans for specific situations (pollution, strandings) exist or are planned	NI	Y	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI	NI	NI	Y	NI	Y	Y	NI	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI	NI	Y
Management measures regarding dolphin captivity and dolphinariums exist or are planned	NI	NI	Y	Y	Y	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI	Y	Y
Marine protected areas (MPA), fisheries areas, fisheries reserves, or other effective spatial conservation measures (OECM-CBD) exist or are planned	NI	Y	Y	Y	Y	NI	NI	Y	NI	Y	NI	Y	Y	NI	Y	Y	Y	NI	Y	Y	NI	Y	Y	Y



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CONSERVATION ACTIONS FOR CETACEANS / COMMUNICATION AND AWARENESS																								
Events (meeting, symposium, awareness activities, etc.) are organized / attended and products (newsletter, brochure, leaflet, poster, video, sticker, etc.) are produced and disseminated	NI	Y	NI	Y	Y	NI	Y	Y	NI	Y	NI	Y	Y	NI	Y	Y	NI	NI	Y	Y	NI	Y	Y	Y
CONSERVATION ACTIONS FOR CETACEANS / CAPACITY BUILDING																								
Capacity building on cetaceans, including training sessions, lectures and syllabus are realised at the national level or attended abroad	NI	Y	NI	Y	Y	NI	Y	Y	NI	Y	NI	Y	Y	NI	NI	Y	NI	NI	Y	Y	NI	Y	Y	NI



Annex - Specific questions and requests from Parties

I/ Specific questions and requests to be considered by the Secretariat, the Bureau, the Follow up Committee, the Scientific Committee or during the next MOP.

Algeria

- Requested the Scientific Committee to transmit the national cetacean monitoring plan along the Algerian coastline to the ACCOBAMS Secretariat for examination.
- Requested the ACCOBAMS Secretariat to organize training sessions on necropsies.
- Requested the ACCOBAMS Secretariat for the processed and analyzed data from ASI-I project.
- Requested the ACCOBAMS Secretariat for the signing and submission of Amendment No. 1 to Memorandum of Understanding No. 06/2021/FAC.

Italy

- Requested the ACCOBAMS Secretariat and the Scientific Committee to ensure coordination among the national research activities.
- Requested the Scientific Committee to consider a moratorium on most impactful activities according to the species IUCN Status and available data under Precautionary Principle

Libya

- Requested the ACCOBAMS Secretariat and the Scientific Committee to establish national monitoring program (aerial/boat surveys, stranding networks, citizen science) in order to address the lack of monitoring of cetacean populations.
- Requested the ACCOBAMS Secretariat and the Scientific Committee to implement training workshops for scientists, and NGOs on marine mammal research, rescue, and data management in order to address the limited national capacity and technical expertise.
- Requested the ACCOBAMS Secretariat and the Scientific Committee to conduct socio-ecological studies, GIS mapping, and surveys to fill data gaps as well as to publish results to guide conservation to address knowledge gaps on distribution, abundance and threats.

Morocco

- Requested the ACCOBAMS Secretariat, the Scientific Committee, the Bureau and the MOP to support the establishment of cetacean observation in Morocco through technical assistance and support for equipping vessels applying for this activity.
- Requested the ACCOBAMS Secretariat, the Scientific Committee, the Bureau and the MOP support for obtaining the “High Quality Whale Watching” label through technical and administrative assistance.
- Requested the ACCOBAMS Secretariat, the Scientific Committee, the Bureau and the MOP support for monitoring the impact of anthropogenic underwater noise on cetaceans and marine biodiversity through technical and administrative assistance.

Tunisia

- Highlighted the need for reinforced the technical skills and capacity of the National Stranding Network team to improve the quality, reliability, and interpretation of data collected during cetacean strandings, with the aim of better understanding the causes of mortality and the health status of populations. It requested the ACCOBAMS Secretariat for specialized necropsy training for the National Stranding Network team.
- Highlighted the need for the development of specialized technical skills within national teams in acoustic analysis (PAM – Passive Acoustic Monitoring) and biochemical analysis (stable isotopes), to enhance monitoring, research, and diagnostic capacities related to cetaceans and their environment. It requested the ACCOBAMS Secretariat for targeted training for capacity building (PAM, stable isotopes).
- Highlighted the need to support and strengthen the regular and coordinated implementation of cetacean monitoring campaigns to improve knowledge of their spatio-temporal distribution, abundance, and the threats they face, with a view toward conservation and sustainable management. It requested the ACCOBAMS Secretariat for support for cetacean monitoring campaigns along the Tunisian coast.
- Highlighted the need for duplicating the effort to monitor interactions (depredation/bycatch) between cetaceans and fisheries/aquaculture along the entire Tunisian coastline and requested the ACCOBAMS Secretariat for adequate funding.
- Highlighted the need for a scientifically recognized mapping of critical habitats for cetaceans along the Tunisian coast in order to guide conservation efforts, support marine spatial planning, and contribute to regional and international processes for the protection of marine mammals. It requested the ACCOBAMS Secretariat for identification of IMMA (Important Marine Mammal Areas) and CCH (Critically Important Habitats) zones.
- Highlighted the need for ensuring sustainable mobilization of financial resources to enable rigorous scientific studies on cetaceans, their habitats, and the pressures they face, in support of conservation, sustainable management, and compliance with national and international commitments. It requested the ACCOBAMS Secretariat to seek funding for conducting scientific studies.

Türkiye

- Requested the deletion of the issues listed under the headings "Major issue(s) or main threats or 'hot' topics" and "Recommendations / suggestions for improvement of the conservation» as these statements were intended as regional suggestions rather than ones specific to Türkiye. These statements have subsequently been deleted by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat

Ukraine

- Ukraine pointed out that military activities are still conducted by the Russian Federation in the Black Sea. It stated that consequences resulting from warfare activities include marine pollution, eutrophication, increased risk of infections, increased risk of bio invasions of alien (non-indigenous) species, and other effects and that effects on marine ecosystems were caused by the destruction of the Kakhovka Dam on the Dnipro River. In addition, war activities not directly related to combat are to be considered, such as construction works (especially those producing underwater noise or altering the seascape), changes in shipping routes and oil spills. Ukraine highlighted that the military operations may have adversely impacted all the riparian countries to some degree. It therefore addresses the MOP, Secretariat, Bureau, Follow-Up Committee and Scientific Committee the following demands :
 - *Recalling* Resolution 8.12 on "IUCN Red List Status of Cetacean Species in the ACCOBAMS Area" which "5. calls on Parties to take into account the military and anthropogenic impacts of military operations during the implementation of Conservation Management Plan in the Black Sea;"
 - *Recalling* Resolution 8.17 on "Anthropogenic Noise" which : "7. asks the Scientific Committee to develop a post-war Plan for the Black Sea region towards the mitigation of warfare consequences on cetaceans, their habitat and their preys; ", "*Taking into consideration* its operative paragraph is clearly not restricted to looking into noise generating activities and impacts, but with a generic approach addressing all consequences resulting from warfare activities".
 - *Taking into consideration* Recommendation 16.1 – Post-War Plan For The Black Sea Cetaceans – of the Scientific Committee,
 - Stresses that it is necessary and highly important to adopt the Post-War Plan For The Black Sea Cetaceans and start its implementation regardless of the military situation, as some of the activities/measures are relevant at that moment.
- Ukraine pointed out that during the Eight Meeting of Parties to ACCOBAMS, Parties requested the creation of a regional Task Force for stranding events: The ACCOBAMS Emergency Task Force for Stranding events (**AETFS**). The conceptual framework for the ACCOBAMS Emergency Task Force for Stranding events (AETFS) was presented at the Joint meeting ACCOBAMS - Black Sea Commission, 6-7 March 2024. The AETFS aims at assisting emergency and unusual cetacean mortality events and more specifically to monitor and report strandings and bycatch data in the area in a common and real time repository; collect information on ongoing underwater noise sources (including military sources, seismic surveys, use of sonar for oil and gas exploration research, or other work) that effect cetaceans to be monitored, and to enhance passive acoustic monitoring; routinely carry out complete postmortem investigations, including acoustic trauma, with remote advice and support from ACCOBAMS Experts (telenecropsy), when needed; collect and preserve tissue samples and store as a back-up; support the forensic examination of samples when necessary; support live strandings and unusual mortality events responses. Consequently, it addresses the MOP, Secretariat, Bureau, Follow-Up Committee and Scientific Committee the following demands:
 - *Taking into consideration* Recommendation 16.6 – Strandings Issues (AETF, Functioning Stranding Networks) – of the Scientific Committee.
 - Ukraine stated that it is necessary and highly important to adopt and implement the relevant Resolution fully mirroring the Recommendation 16.6, in particular: to consider an emergency situation as a cetacean stranding event which can overwhelm local resources and/or representing a transboundary emergency situation (e.g., mass strandings, large whales, unusual mortality events, epidemic outbreaks), and to create an emergency fund through voluntary contribution by Parties, international organizations, and public and private donors. The emergency fund should be managed

by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat with the advice of the AETFS, creating simple and effective procedures to support expensive analyses (e.g., toxicology, genomics, research on hearing), samples exchange and any expert travel for investigations on emergencies in Countries asking for support. The procedures for requests and funding should be proposed to the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee.

II/ Recommendations/ suggestions for Improvement of the conservation from the regional report(s) of the Scientific Committee

Algeria:

- training dedicated to capacity building (necropsies and post-mortem investigations, sea observations)
- the implementation of the NAP (National Action Plan)
- the identification of funding sources to carry out studies
- strengthening of citizen science activities
- strengthening cooperation between Mediterranean research centers
- encouraging the use of opportunistic platforms as a tool to support monitoring of cetacean population diversity, abundance, and distribution

Croatia:

- developing and funding targeted dolphin-fisheries studies investigating local phenomenon and possibly proposing mitigation measures.
- funding of continuous Cetacean monitoring activities.
- developing dolphin-watching monitoring (licensing) scheme.
- advancing studies of deep diving cetaceans in the southern Adriatic.

Cyprus:

- capacity building for the establishment of a stranding network and proper infrastructure to handle injured individuals.
- scientific research in the fields of population and cetacean and environmental acoustic monitoring.

Italy:

- a strong and effective synergy among the various research and monitoring programs conducted at a national level within the framework of European Directives such as the Habitats Directive and MSFD, both in the definition of methodologies and in the subsequent data analysis phase. To date, monitoring activities have lacked coherence in terms of timing, seasons, and area, primarily due to administrative workflows. While researchers often collaborate, challenges arise when political factors are involved. In this regard considerable effort should be put in place to ensure that the next ASI will take advantage of the planned national activities in the framework of both the MSFD and HD directives, hence incorporate them to benefit from.

Malta:

- To continue providing capacity building in terms of national stranding networks and including necropsy training for veterinarians.
- To further evaluate the functioning of the stranding networks.
- To further help countries to set up a tissue bank.
- To organise passive acoustic training.

Morocco:

- Strengthening the capacities of the INRH team, students, and collaborators regarding continuous necropsy trainings to better analyze the causes of cetacean mortality.
- Supporting INRH teams in the identification and monitoring of cetaceans in their natural habitat.
- Providing technical and scientific support to the INRH team to enhance passive acoustic monitoring efforts.

- Raising awareness on the importance of photographic documentation for scientific analysis and conservation and encourage teams to rigorously apply standardized methods.

Slovenia:

- The expansion of existing MPAs. Slovenia pointed out that this process is currently ongoing.
- Improved funding of cetacean research and conservation programs.

III/ Major issue(s) or main threats or "hot" topics

Algeria pointed out that:

- There is a lack of scientific data and scientific work (publications on cetaceans). Consequently, existing data should be processed and valorized.
- In order to explain the phenomena of signaling vagrant and occasional species, monitoring of reports and data collection should be implemented.
- Considering plastic pollution, there is a need to repeat the organization of plastic waste collection campaigns by fishermen.

Croatia pointed out that:

- Increase in marine traffic (particularly during tourist season) and ubiquitous noise continues to cause habitat degradation and disturbance.
- Unregulated dolphin watching is a cause for concern in some areas.

Cyprus pointed out that:

- Extensive underwater activities in the eastern Mediterranean, including but not limited to military exercises, sonar testing, and hydrocarbon exploration, and exploitation activities within Cyprus' EEZ, may negatively impact local cetacean populations. Consequently, the Tender "VISUAL AND ACOUSTIC SURVEY FOR CETACEANS IN THE MARINE WATERS OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS (CETACEANS PROJECT-CY)" (TENDER NO.: 30/2025) should be implemented. Monitoring program incorporates into the tender for the acoustic and visual survey to be carried out 2025-2026.
- There is a lack of trained personnel, or permanent stranding network, to handle possible future mass strandings.
- There is a lack of infrastructure and knowledge on the island to hold and treat injured cetaceans found stranded or at sea.
- There is a lack of baseline information on the characteristics of the underwater noise profile (both from anthropogenic as well as from natural sources). Consequently, the Tender "MONITORING OF UNDERWATER NOISE IN MARINE WATERS OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS" (TENDER NO.: 30/2025) should be implemented.
- There is a lack of officially trained and certified MMO and PAM personnel in Cyprus.

Italy pointed out that:

- Some research activities may be a source of stress for individuals. Some of the most impactful of these (i.e. Biopsy and biologging) have been conducted on the same species and in the same areas since the 1980s. It is time to consider if new data are needed, weighing the potential for harm against the expected benefit. There is a need to consider studying these cases and applying the precautionary principle. This would allow us to increase control over these activities and, where appropriate, implement a temporary or spatial moratorium on a case-by-case basis

Libya pointed out that:

- On 4 September 2025, four stranded Sperm Whales (*Physeter macrocephalus*) were reported in Eastern Libya, near Ajdabiya. Consequently, there is a need to Investigate causes of mortality through necropsy, sampling, and collaboration with regional experts. Libya further underlined that due to security restrictions, the team was not able to access the stranding site, as authorities prohibited anyone from approaching the carcasses. However, a specialized team from the Marine Biology Research Centre in Benghazi undertook the necessary procedures, including taking standard measurements and collecting biological samples from the four stranded whales.

Malta pointed out that:

- Noting that impacts from marine litter, underwater noise and ship strikes are relevant throughout the Mediterranean, it is deemed pertinent to continue providing capacity building regarding common methodologies for assessment of such impacts.

Morocco pointed out that:

- There is a need to improve maintenance and upkeep of the Moroccan tissue bank at INRH to address current conservation issues related to infrastructure, which are leading to the loss of cetacean tissue samples. Particularly, to address the loss of samples, it is important to improve the infrastructure of the Centre Spécialisé en Pathologie des Animaux Aquatiques under INRH in Tangier. The following needs have been identified:
 - The installation of a negative cold room (-20°C) is necessary to ensure the long-term preservation of samples and the tissue bank.
 - It is also recommended to secure the existing freezers in the various INRH regional centers by equipping them with failure detection systems or automatic alert devices in case of power outage or malfunction.

The preservation of samples must comply with the requirements of analysis and diagnostic protocols.

- There is a need to understand the behavior of the bottlenose dolphin in the Mediterranean in order to reduce the negative impact of its interactions with fishing activities, while ensuring the conservation of this marine cetacean. This must be done through strengthening studies and extending them to other cetacean species and additional areas.

Portugal pointed out that:

- The study of the carrying capacity for whale watching operations in southern Portugal was postponed due to the lack of available funds. It is expected to be implemented during 2026. Portugal pointed out that actions to be implemented included the establishment of a carrying capacity for whale watching in southern Portugal.

Romania pointed out that:

- The cetaceans' populations are threatened by multiple pressures including bycatch in fishing nets, pollution, overfishing and ingestion of micro and macroplastics.

Spain pointed out that:

- There is an increase of the water temperature including marine heat waves.

Tunisia pointed out that:

- In Tunisia, the overlap between fishing areas and cetacean habitats, particularly in the Gulf of Gabès and the southern waters, poses a significant conservation challenge. These spatial interactions lead to behavioral disturbances in cetaceans (such as changes in migratory routes and avoidance of feeding or breeding areas), a reduction in the availability of shared trophic resources (small pelagic fish, cephalopods), as well as an increased risk of bycatch, especially in fisheries using gillnets and bottom trawls. These interactions also result in economic losses for fishermen, linked to damage to fishing gear and a decrease in marketable catches. Tunisia highlighted that although some initiatives have been undertaken to reduce these interactions, particularly within the framework of regional cooperation projects supported by ACCOBAMS and occasional actions with the help of NGOs (such as trials of acoustic deterrent devices—pingers—or training on protocols for releasing bycaught animals), these efforts remain limited in scope and sustainability. However, the results observed from pilot experiments conducted on purse seines in Kélibia, as well as around aquaculture farms in Teboulba, have been considered positive both in terms of reducing interactions with cetaceans and in acceptance by professionals. These initiatives have demonstrated the potential of appropriate technical measures, provided they are accompanied by awareness-raising and regular monitoring. It therefore appears necessary to build on these successful experiences and consider replicating them in other types of fisheries and regions of the country, as part of an integrated national strategy aligned with ACCOBAMS objectives.
- There is a lack of precise information on the size of cetacean populations along the Tunisian coast and their distribution patterns. However, beyond occasional monitoring, strengthened surveillance not only allows the collection of key data on population dynamics but also plays a fundamental role in the sustainable management of marine ecosystems. Tunisia highlighted that enhanced monitoring not only provides key data on population dynamics but also plays a crucial role in the sustainable management of marine ecosystems.

Ukraine pointed out that:

- The ongoing Russia's war against Ukraine escalated in February 2022 puts the entire Black Sea basin under a huge threat. Military activities in the marine and coastal areas may affect the marine biota in the region, including cetaceans, in multiple ways including but not limited to marine pollution, eutrophication, increased risk of infections, increased risk of bio invasions of alien (non-indigenous) species, and other effects. Sea mines are especially threatening in short and long-term run.
 - Ukraine stated that comprehensive monitoring of underwater noise, marine pollution and biological indicators of stress in animals, as well as response to stranding events and studies of pathology, are necessary for understanding and managing the war impact and other human impacts (construction, seismic surveys). Cooperative regional effort is necessary for obtaining adequate material and data about the causes of mortality.
 - In addition, it stated that demining measures and activities are necessary both in short and long-term run for reducing multiple threats for cetaceans, and other marine biota and research efforts. By prioritizing the removal of explosives, both historical and contemporary, using Best Available Technology and Best Environmental Practices, we can minimize the impact of explosions on the environment and support ongoing research efforts. This may include building on existing demining initiatives in the North and Baltic Seas to develop comprehensive guidance for identifying and safely removing all types of underwater explosives, both floating and sunk.
 - Furthermore, establishing new marine protected areas planned on the basis of earlier defined IMMAs, including transboundary and international reserves, will be important for cetacean conservation. Biosphere reserves may be suggested for areas of high cultural importance and human impact.

- Moreover, it is necessary to organize dedicated regional workshops including the experts on the relevant topics to elaborate the road map for the Post-war Plan for the Black Sea region towards the mitigation of warfare consequences on cetaceans, their habitat and their preys; to consider specific areas, topics and activities/measures during the work on the Conservation Management Plan for the Black Sea cetaceans and the Post-war Plan for the Black Sea; and to promote implementation of applicable activities/measures under the Post-war Plan for the Black Sea as soon as it is adopted, regardless of the military situation, as some of the activities/measures are relevant at that moment.
 - Finally, Ukraine pointed out that new techniques for cetacean research should be encouraged, such as the pilot studies using unmanned aerial and underwater vehicles.
- Comprehensive monitoring of underwater noise, marine pollution and biological indicators of stress in animals, as well as response to stranding events and studies of pathology, are necessary for understanding and managing the war impact and other human impacts (construction, seismic surveys). Cooperative regional effort is necessary for obtaining adequate material and data about the causes of mortality. Consequently, Ukraine stated that there is a need to fully support the measures suggested by the Recommendations 16.6, 16.9 and 16.12 of the Scientific Committee, including but not limited to:
- to create an emergency fund through voluntary contribution by Parties, international organizations, and public and private donors. The emergency fund should be managed by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat with the advice of the AETFS, creating simple and effective procedures to support expensive analyses (e.g., toxicology, genomics, research on hearing), samples exchange and any expert travel for investigations on emergencies in Countries asking for support. The procedures for requests and funding should be proposed to the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee for approval;
 - improved facilitation of the exchange of relevant information with competent authorities related to military activities and exercises, from planning to assessment of impacts;
 - Parties to further collaborate at a regional level between tissue banks, to facilitate the exchange of tissue samples for joint analyses and retrospective studies;
 - multiple stressors investigation: development of new diagnostic techniques to understand the effects of cumulative stressors on cetaceans;
 - to consider an emergency situation as a cetacean stranding event which can overwhelm local resources and/or representing a transboundary emergency situation (e.g., mass strandings, large whales, unusual mortality events, epidemic outbreaks), or even single events involving threatened/endangered/data deficient species in the ACCOBAMS area (e.g., Cuvier's beaked whales, sperm whales, Iberian killer whales);
 - to keep a continuously updated list of existing stranding experts and stranding networks contact points/coordinators to be included in the ACCOBAMS website to facilitate reporting and communication. Additionally, keep updated lists of tissue banks (Resolution 3.9), responsible institutions designed by the parties and laboratories registered as CITES scientific and/or forensic institutions including the WOAHA collaboration centers, for facilitating transboundary exchange of samples and investigations;
 - to update existing ACCOBAMS adopted documents related to strandings management and investigations (best practices, guidelines and protocols) when needed through regular meetings among experts to include novel findings and analyses and to promote harmonization in interpreting post-mortem findings;
 - to promote a systematic adoption of technologies for remote assistance during investigations, supporting the acquisition of suitable hardware and software to routinely apply this approach in the ACCOBAMS area;
- The main cause of death of the harbour porpoise in the Black Sea is the bycatch. The bycatch in turbot fishery and the high seasonal mortality of harbor porpoises, threatening the viability of the subspecies, it is of an urgent matter to refine and monitor estimates of porpoise abundance, population dynamics, causes of mortality and bycatch level, as well as to develop and test multiple measures to reduce bycatch. Consequently, Ukraine stated that there is a need Support for the measures suggested by the Recommendation 16.7 of the Scientific Committee, including:

- parties ensure that monitoring schemes by independent observers are made obligatory for the fishing methods that have been proven to pose a threat to cetaceans (e.g., bottom-set gillnets targeting turbot in the Black Sea, purse seine fishery and mid-water trawls in the Mediterranean and the Black Seas);
- the FAO-GFCM Guidelines for bycatch monitoring (FAO, 2019) be revised as 0.5% coverage for onboard observation is far from being satisfactory to understand the complete situation of cetacean bycatch (see Recommendation 16.8);
- Whenever possible, the relevant authorities (environmental and fisheries) should encourage the retrieval of dead bycaught animals from vessels to perform necropsies by relevant institutions involved in the national strandings network. As a minimum, onboard observers should collect tissue samples for a wide range of analyses (minimum samples for age (teeth), genetics (skin), and physiological status (blubber)) to understand the status and demographic characteristics of the affected populations (e.g., ICES 2024);
- Parties implement active awareness-raising programs among fishermen to encourage reporting of bycatch events in order to improve data collection and assess more precisely the extent of this threat.

And especially:

- strongly recommend the use of PAL pingers in turbot fishery in the Black Sea as an effective measure to mitigate harbour porpoise bycatch in bottom set gillnets according to the best available practices (FAO, 2019; Hamilton and Baker, 2019);
 - encourage further testing and development of bycatch/depredation mitigation measures in the ACCOBAMS area;
- In accordance with Decision No. 17.299 of the Conference of the Parties to CITES, when issuing permits for the temporary export of bottlenose dolphins *Tursiops truncatus ponticus* from the dolphinarium of Ukraine, starting from 2018 a mandatory blood test and the issuance of a genetic report for each exported animal are carried out. One of the key difficulties that needs to be addressed first by international scientific organizations is the genetic isolation of bottlenose dolphins in the Black Sea and other areas. Consequently, Ukraine stated that improvement of effort and application of new techniques would be important for monitoring the animals in captivity to prevent illegal takes from the wild and illegal trade. And that no excuse or exemption can be made for takes of animals from the wild to captivity under the umbrella of stranding response effort. There must be support for the measures suggested by the Recommendation 16.13 of the Scientific Committee.

IV/ National needs in terms of capacity building, in reference to the ACCOBAMS strategy and programme of work

Algeria expressed needs with regards to:

- Necropsies
- Photo ID

Cyprus expressed needs with regards to:

- Monitoring of marine mammals at sea
- Marine mammal necropsy training Course
- Use of new technologies

Libya expressed needs with regards to:

- Building capacities of government staff and NGOs on ACCOBAMS-related legal instruments and reporting requirements.
- The establishment of trained national response teams for stranded cetaceans, with proper equipment and protocols.

Malta expressed needs with regards to:

- Additional scientific surveys at regional scale; further training of fishers and sea-users; as well training to new officials operating within relevant institutions, like ERA, Department of Fisheries and Agriculture (DFA), Ministry for the Environment, Energy and Enterprise (MEEE), and the Armed Forces of Malta (AFM); as well as veterinarians and NGOs assisting in stranding and rescue operations; the setting up of genetic data banks; and the need for appropriate assessment tools and approaches and data analysis for cetacean sightings and overall population assessments.

Montenegro expressed needs with regards to:

- Capacity building regarding standing network establishment (veterinarians, coordination mechanisms)
- General protection measures
- Analysis of data on population trends and status

Morocco expressed needs with regards to:

- Technical and regulatory support for the development and management of whale watching and pescatourism projects.
- Training on the ACCOBAMS “High Quality Whale-Watching” label and certification.
- Training for ship captains to anticipate and mitigate collisions with cetaceans.

Tunisia expressed needs with regards to:

- Training in necropsy
- Study of diet
- Photo-identification and database creation
- Monitoring using passive acoustics
- Genetics applied to cetology