

DRAFT RESOLUTION 9.21
AREA-BASED MEASURES FOR CETACEAN CONSERVATION

The Meeting of the Parties to the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area:

Recalling that according to Article II, paragraph 1, of the Agreement, the Parties “shall co-operate to create and maintain a network of specially protected areas to conserve cetaceans”, and that, under the ACCOBAMS Conservation Plan (Annex 2 to the Agreement), paragraph 3, the Parties “shall endeavour to establish and manage specially protected areas for cetaceans corresponding to the areas which serve as habitats for cetaceans and/or which provide important food resources for them. Such specially protected areas should be established within the framework of the Regional Seas Conventions (OSPAR, Barcelona and Bucharest Conventions), or within the framework of other appropriate instruments”,

Recalling that in 2010 the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee started a preliminary identification of areas of special importance for cetaceans in the Agreement Area (Annex to Resolution 4.15, “Areas of special importance for cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS area”), and that, due to the ACCOBAMS efforts, including the recent ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative (ASI), knowledge of cetacean species and work in mapping have greatly improved,

Reaffirming the value of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs) designated under the Barcelona Convention as key instruments for the conservation of marine biodiversity, including cetaceans, in the Mediterranean region;

Acknowledging the relevance of the Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs) process under the Convention on Biological Diversity, and its contribution to identifying areas important for marine biodiversity, including cetaceans;

Recognising the importance of the Natura 2000 network and the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) under the EU Habitats Directive, which contribute to the protection of cetacean habitats in European waters;

Noting that it is appropriate to revise the above-mentioned Annex to Resolution 4.15 and of the ongoing process looking at quantifying anthropogenic pressures over cetacean habitats taking into account the already existing mechanisms and tools related to area-based cetacean conservation (e.g. Important Marine Mammal Areas, Marine Protected Areas, Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures, Maritime Spatial Planning, etc.),

Recalling the work of the Scientific Committee on “Area-based measures for cetacean conservation” and the recommendations on this subject-matter by workshops held in 2022 and 2024,

Aware of the need for care and sensitivity when producing official maps which, while providing a powerful communication tool, also have a potential capacity for misuse and misinterpretation,

Aware of the difficulties of appropriately combining overlapping maps created in different ways and from datasets of different spatial and temporal scales,

Recognising that the process of identification of Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) by the Joint IUCN SSC/WCPA Task Force on Marine Mammal Protected Areas (the “Task Force”) in application of agreed criteria has been acknowledged by the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species (Resolution 12.13 of 2017), which, *inter alia*, requested the Parties and invited the Range States to identify specific areas where IMMAs could be beneficial,

Recalling the Joint IMMA Task Force/ACCOBAMS Workshop (October 2016), which identified IMMAs in the Mediterranean Sea,

Recalling the Post-2020 Regional Strategy for Marine and Coastal Protected Areas and Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures in the Mediterranean, adopted by the Parties to the Barcelona Convention at their 22nd Meeting (Antalya, Türkiye, 7-10 December 2021),

Recalling also the Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean Region (Post-SAPBio), which provides a comprehensive framework for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, and supports the implementation of area-based measures for the protection of cetaceans and their habitats,

Taking into account Recommendation 16.14 of the Scientific Committee on “Area-based measures for cetacean conservation”,

1. *Agrees on* the terminology and process agreed at the 2022 and 2024 workshops¹ and, in particular, on replacing the term “Cetacean Critical Habitat” with “Cetacean Co-occurrence with Human Activities”, while keeping CCH acronym;
2. *Requests* the Scientific Committee to:
 - a) continue the work of the CCH Task Group to develop proposed CCH areas in light of updating map included in ACCOBAMS Resolution 4.15 on “Marine Protected Areas of Importance for Cetacean Conservation”, taking into account the recommendations of the relevant workshops, as well as existing mechanisms and tools related to area-based cetacean conservation presented in the Annex to the relevant workshop’s report;
 - b) further explore with relevant experts (including those at the International Whaling Commission’s Scientific Committee and on Maritime Spatial Planning) the appropriate consideration and mapping of uncertainty and the integration of maps of cetacean and human activities;
3. *Requests* the Secretariat to:
 - a) liaise with the Information and Communication Regional Activity Center (INFO/RAC) and the Priority Actions Programme Regional Activity Center (PAP/RAC) and the Knowledge Management Platform (KMaP), as well as continue exploration of the facilities of the NETCCOBAMS network;

¹ SC16.Doc23_Report on area-based measures for cetacean conservation by the Task Group & SC16.Inf20_Report of the ACCOBAMS Workshop Mapping human activity data in the ACCOBAMS area

- b) actively participate in the “Strategical Alliance among the Secretariats of ACCOBAMS, GFCM, IUCN-Med, UNEP/MAP through SPA/RAC and in collaboration with MedPAN” and the Pelagos Agreement, concerning spatial-based protection and management measures for marine biodiversity;
 - c) actively participate to the Ad hoc Group of Experts for Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (AGEM) and to the implementation of its Programme of Work for 2025 and key priorities to be tackled and covered during the next biennium 2026-2027, where appropriate;
- 4. *Strongly encourages* the IUCN Joint SSC/WCPA Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force, in collaboration with the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee, to undertake a re-assessment of the Mediterranean region for the identification of Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) which is a priority action for the 2026-2028 triennium,
- 5. *Encourages* integration of national marine habitat mapping efforts, and the development of conservation measures for Natura 2000 sites, into a broader regional framework for marine spatial planning;
- 6. *Decides* that:
 - a) the present Resolution replaces Resolution 4.15;
 - b) the Annex of archived Resolution 4.15 shall be marked with the following text:

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