

FINAL REPORT OF THE JOINT MEETING ACCOBAMS / BLACK SEA COMMISSION



FINAL REPORT OF THE JOINT MEETING ACCOBAMS / BLACK SEA COMMISSION



6 and 7 March 2024, Istanbul - Türkiye

Draft Report of the Joint meeting ACCOBAMS - Black Sea Commission

The Secretariats of ACCOBAMS and of the Black Sea Commission have jointly organized a meeting to take stock of common subjects in relation to the Black Sea on **6-7 March 2024, in Istanbul**, in the premises of the Black Sea Commission Permanent Secretariat.

It was attended by Representatives from the ACCOBAMS Secretariat, the Black Sea Commission Permanent Secretariat, the EU/DG Mare, the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (GFCM). Representatives from Black Sea ACCOBAMS Parties and Members of the Scientific Committee also participated to the meeting.

The full list of participants is shown in [Annex I](#) to this report.

After welcoming addresses from Mrs. Susana Salvador, ACCOBAMS Executive Secretary, and from Ms. Iryna Makarenko, Black Sea Commission Permanent Secretariat, participants adopted the agenda as presented in [Annex II](#) to this report.

Regarding Document ACCOBAMS-BSC/2024_Doc04 on fisheries issues in the Black Sea, participants agreed with it, taking into account amendments proposed during the meeting and shown in [Annex III](#).

Conclusions of the Joint meeting ACCOBAMS - Black Sea Commission, as agreed by participants, appear in [Annex IV](#).

ANNEX I – LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**AKAN Gökçe**

ACCOBAMS National Focal Point - Türkiye
Engineer
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks
Department of Sensitive Areas
Beştepe Mahallesi Alparslan Türkeş Caddesi No:71 - Yenimahalle / ANKARA, 06560
Tel: +90 312 207 6376 - +90 530 133 3670
gokce.ceylan@tarimorman.gov.tr

AKPINAR Ilgin

ACCOBAMS National Focal Point - Türkiye
Biologist
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks
Department of Sensitive Areas
Beştepe Mahallesi Alparslan Türkeş Caddesi No:71 - Yenimahalle / ANKARA, 06560
Tel: +90 312 207 50 00/5913
ilgin.akpinar@tarimorman.gov.tr

BELEKOU Pinelopi (Online)

Policy Officer
Eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea
European Commission / DG MARE
D1- Fisheries Management
Mediterranean and Black Sea
J-99 02/074
B-1049 Brussels/Belgium
Tel: +32 229 95251
Pinelopi.BELEKOU@ec.europa.eu

CARPENTIERI Paolo

Fishery Resources Monitoring Officer
General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM)
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
Palazzo Blumenstihl, Via Vittoria Colonna, 1, 00193, Rome, Italy
Paolo.Carpentieri@fao.org

DINCER Timucin

FAO-GFCM
Tel : +90 536 583 1100
Timucin.Dincer@fao.org

HARCOTĂ George (Online)

Scientific Researcher III,
Marine Biology and Ecology Department,
National Institute for Marine Research and Development "Grigore Antipa"
300 Mamaia blv. 900581 Constanta, Romania
Tel: 0040754491908
Gharcota@alpha.rmri.ro

GOL'DIN Pavel (Online)

Schmalhausen Institute of Zoology
 National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine & Ukrainian Center of Ecology of the Sea
 vul. Bogdana Khmelnytskogo 15
 01030, Kyiv - Ukraine
 Tel: +380673900118
pavelgoldin412@gmail.com

LOMASHVILI Irina

irinaloma@yahoo.com

MAKARENKO Iryna

Black Sea Commission Permanent Secretariat
 Pollution Monitoring and Assessment Officer
 Su Isleri Bakanligi, Maslak Mh Buyukdere Cd 265 Sariyer 34398 Istanbul - Türkiye
 Tel : +905333936225
Iryna.makarenko79@gmail.com

OZBILGIN Huseyin

FAO-GFCM
 BlackSea4Fish Project Coordinator
 Marine Station, International Congress Center, Office 4.
 Burgas, Bulgaria
 Tel : +90 532 706 1977
Huseyin.ozbilgin@fao.org

OZTÜRK Ayaka Amaha (Online)

Vice-Chair of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee
 Turkish Marine Research Foundation
 Fistikli Yali Sok. N°34/5 Beykoz,
 34820 Istanbul - TÜRKİYE
 Tel: +90-533 7475915
ayakamaha@hotmail.co.jp

PANIGADA Simone

Chair of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee
 Tethys Research Institute
 Viale G.B. Gadio 2
 20 121 Milan - ITALY
 Tel: (+39) 02 7200 1947 - (+39) 02 6694 114
panigada69@gmail.com

PETROV Konstantin (Online)

GFCM subregional coordinator for the Black Sea
 GFCM Black Sea Unit
 International Congress Center, Office No.4
 Sea Station, 8000 Burgas, Bulgaria
konstantin.petrov@fao.org

POPOV Dimitar (Online)

GREEN BALKANS NGO
1 Skopje str., office 10
Plovdiv, Bulgaria
Tel : +359885108712
dpopov@greenbalkans.org

SALIVAS Maïlis

Programme & Project Officer
Les Jardins d'Apolline - Bât. C, 1, Promenade Honoré II
MC-98000 Monaco
Tel: +37798984275
msalivas@accobams.net

SALVADOR Susana (Online)

Secrétaire Exécutif
Les Jardins d'Apolline - Bât. C, 1, Promenade Honoré II
MC-98000 Monaco
Tel: +37798988010/2078
ssalvador@accobams.net

TONAY Arda Mehmet

İstanbul Üniversitesi
Su Bilimleri Fakültesi
Ordu Cad. No:8 Laleli, 34480 İstanbul - TÜRKİYE
ardatonay@yahoo.com

VELINA Yana (Online)

ACCOBAMS National Focal Point - Bulgaria
Biological Diversity Department
National Nature Protection Service Directorate
Ministry of Environment and Water
22, Maria Luisa Blvd.
Sofia 1000, BULGARIA
Tel.: (+359 2) 940 6128
yavelina@moew.government.bg

WILES Bianca (Online)

European Commission
Policy Assistant - Mediterranean and the Black Sea
Rue Joseph II 99
1000, Brussels BELGIUM
Tel: +32 229 69425
bianca.wiles@ec.europa.eu

ANNEX II – AGENDA

- 1. Discussion about priorities defined in respective Programmes of Work**
- 2. Areas for joint work in 2024 and 2025**
- 3. Conservation Plans**
- 4. Fisheries issues: Network for harbour porpoise bycatch in the Black Sea between the European Commission, GFCM, ACCOBAMS and the Black Sea Commission**
- 5. Monitoring cetacean populations in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea**
 - a. Outcomes of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative 2018/2019
 - b. Preparatory phase for the next survey in the ACCOBAMS area
- 6. Future collaboration between ACCOBAMS and the Black Sea Commission**

ANNEX III – FISHERIES ISSUE IN THE BLACK SEA

1- BACKGROUND IN ACCOBAMS

During the Seventh Meeting of the Parties to ACCOBAMS (Türkiye, 2019), Parties recommended the re-establishment of an ACCOBAMS expert panel on strandings to assist with emergency and unusual mortality events (Resolution 7.14). Moreover, under the section CA1.d - Functional Stranding Networks and Responses To Emergency Situation- of the Programme of Work for the triennium 2020-2022 (Resolution 7.6), Parties, Scientific Committee and Secretariat were invited to *“Encourage the creation of a permanent expert panel on strandings to assist on emergencies and unusual mortality as a means of implementation for the action of setting /reinforce official national stranding networks (with all national institutions concerned) as appropriate, and encourage collaborations among national networks of Parties”*.

Information was presented to the Eighth Meeting of the Parties to ACCOBAMS (Malta, 2022) and Parties requested the creation of a regional Task Force for stranding events: The ACCOBAMS Emergency Task Force for Stranding events (AETFS).

2- THE ACCOBAMS EMERGENCY TASK FORCE FOR STRANDING EVENTS (AETFS)

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 in order to note any deviation from the average stranding rate for the area, period and species;
- collect information on ongoing military exercises involving underwater noise sources to be monitored, and to enhance passive acoustic monitoring;
- routinely carry out complete *postmortem* investigations, including acoustic trauma, according to Resolutions 7.13 and 7.14, with remote advice and support from ACCOBAMS Experts (telenecropsy);
- collect and preserve tissue samples in double: 1) to be stored and analyzed in Country by local laboratories and stored in a centralized Tissue Banks (University of Padova and Schmalhausen Institute of Zoology of National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine) and 2) to deliver samples to European countries to be analyzed for a second opinion, and stored as a back-up tissue Bank;
- deliver brain tissue to the University of Padova for molecular and microscopic examination, and ears to the University of Liege and Hannover for microscopic examination so to support forensically acoustic impacts;
- report any incident related to acoustic trauma to ACCOBAMS Secretariat and to the Task Force;
- respond to live strandings and unusual mortality events;
- maintain preparedness through organizing necropsy and telenecropsy training sessions so to develop and improve remote advice for dissection and samplings.

Composition of the AETFS

The Task Force will be jointly chaired by **Sandro Mazzariol** (sandro.mazzariol@unipd.it) from Padova University and **Thierry Jauniaux** (T.Jauniaux@ulg.ac.be) from Liege University. The 2 co-chairs are assisted, at least, by the following experts:

- Michel André - michel.andre@upc.edu
- Cristina Casalone - cristina.casalone@izsto.it
- Ursula Siebert - Ursula.Siebert@tiho-hannover.de
- Antonio Fernandez - antonio.fernandez@ulpgc.es

Additional experts may join the AETF after providing their CV to the ACCOBAMS Secretariat and to both co-chairs.

3- SPECIAL SITUATION IN THE BLACK SEA

3.1 - State of play of Black Sea cetaceans

The cetacean fauna of the Black Sea includes three species which are recognized as endemic subspecies – the Black Sea harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena relicta* Abel, 1905), the Black Sea common dolphin (*Delphinus delphis ponticus* Barabash-Nikiforov, 1935) and the Black Sea bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus ponticus* Barabash, 1940). The ranges of all the Black Sea cetacean subspecies include open waters of the Black Sea, as well as territorial waters and exclusive economic zones of all Black Sea countries. Also, the Sea of Azov is the habitat for a distinctive decreasing population of the Black Sea harbour porpoise. The conservation status of Black Sea cetaceans has been reviewed and assessed under initiatives by the European Cetacean Society (1992), the European Commission (1999), the Black Sea Commission (1999 and 2008), ACCOBAMS (2002, 2006 and 2010), the International Whaling Commission (2004), and the IUCN (2008, in progress). The Black Sea harbour porpoise and the Black Sea bottlenose dolphin are now listed as Endangered by the IUCN (Birkun and Frantzis, 2008; Birkun, 2012) and the Black Sea common dolphin is listed as Vulnerable (Birkun, 2008). Eleven Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) were formally distinguished in the Black Sea by the IUCN (2021), among them the whole Sea of Azov, Kerch Strait and the Turkish Straits System (<https://www.marinemammalhabitat.org/imma-eatlas/>).

All three Black Sea cetacean species suffer from common and specific threats, both natural and anthropogenic. They are all affected by prey depletion and by habitat degradation, chemical pollution and underwater noise, microplastic contamination, as well as infection diseases causing many mass mortality events. Amongst the anthropogenic factors, incidental mortality in fishing nets is the most serious threat, which needs immediate action by riparian states (ACCOBAMS SC 14, 2021). Although all three Black Sea cetacean species are 'bycaught', the majority (often more than 90% in annual estimates) of recorded cetacean entanglements are harbour porpoises (Birkun et al. 2014; Popov et al 2022). Bycatch is, indeed, the major factor affecting the population trend in harbour porpoises in the region. There is also a threat of illegal live catches for captivity purposes posed to bottlenose dolphins.

3.2 - Proposed Network for harbour porpoise bycatch in the black sea between the European Commission (DG Mare), GFCM, ACCOBAMS and the Black Sea Commission

Organizations Involved:

- European Commission, DG Mare
- General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM)
- Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS)
- Black Sea Commission's Permanent Secretariat

General Aim:

The general aim of this collaborative network is to address the issue of high-rate harbour porpoise bycatch in the Black Sea region through coordinated efforts, data sharing, research, and policy implementation, within the ultimate goal of reducing and mitigating by-catches during fishing activities.

Specific Objectives:

- To identify Contact Points in each involved organization and in each Black Sea Country
- Sharing information contributing to assess the current status and trends of harbour porpoise populations in the Black Sea

- To enhance the knowledge about by-caught animals so to better quantify the real impact of those bycatches in the harbour porpoise population and in terms of the sustainability of Black Sea fisheries
- To enhance synergies between stakeholders, the fishing sector, marine conservation organizations and regional fisheries management organizations, academia, and decision-makers
- To promote public awareness to the problem, disseminate Best Practices towards reinforcing conservation of harbour porpoise in the Black Sea region
- To create a specific Black Sea Sub Task

3.3 - Specific Black Sea Sub Task¹

In the framework of the AETFS, a specific “Black Sea” Sub-Task, composed by experts from Black Sea Countries is to be created and shall provide annual summary information to the AETFS, and to the “Network for harbour porpoise bycatch in the black sea between the European Commission (DG Mare), GFCM, ACCOBAMS and the Black Sea Commission”.

The main objectives of the “Black Sea” Sub-Task will be:

- monitor strandings and bycatch;
- implement *postmortem* investigations to preserve and store samples of bycaught animals for future analyses.

¹ The information gathered by the subtask or network about the bycatch of harbour porpoise in the Black Sea is collected, analysed, and processed by the participating specialists in their personal capacities. The aforementioned information does not represent official information or reporting by the respective national competent authorities or government bodies and ought not to be regarded as such. Furthermore, the activities of the EU Member States’ joint special group on the EU Action Plan: Protecting and restoring marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries (Marine Action Plan), including regarding *Phocoena phocoena* bycatch rates, threshold values and maximum allowable mortality from incidental catches in the Black Sea, remain exclusively the sole competence and responsibility of each Member State.

ANNEX IV – CONCLUSIONS

1. Participants agreed to consider:
 - a. updating the draft Conservation Plan for Black Sea Cetaceans for (2025-2030) for further submission to relevant Black Sea Commission Advisory Groups and consideration by the Black Sea Commission.
 - b. implementing the Conservation Management Plan framework for Black Sea cetacean species.
2. Secretariats agreed to revise the Annex of the MoU between Black Sea Commission Permanent Secretariat and ACCOBAMS.
3. Participants agreed to continue efforts to deepen cooperation on cetaceans' conservation between ACCOBAMS, GFCM, BSC PS and EU/DG MARE in the Black Sea region and other relevant entities as appropriate.
4. Participants expressed their commitment:
 - a. to conduct basin wide survey as ASI2 for estimating cetacean abundance and distribution, and
 - b. to engage within the ASI2 contact group.
5. Secretariats will liaise with Ukraine to ensure coordination of activities taking into account current circumstances.
6. Regarding monitoring and mitigation project of harbour porpoise bycatch by GFCM, participants agreed that results of the GFCM project were impressive and promising for the use of PALs as mitigation measures against the bycatch of harbour porpoises, which is still the most serious threat for this subspecies. Participants recommended to stress this point at the next SC and following MOP to elaborate some practical recommendations.
7. In relation to fisheries issues, participants agreed to consider creation of a collaborative network between the EU/DGMARE, GFCM, ACCOBAMS, and the Black Sea Commission aimed to facilitate the joint response to the objective of addressing the critical high-rates of harbour porpoise bycatch in the Black Sea region.
8. Participants considered ACCOBAMS-BSC/2024_Doc04 on fisheries issues in the Black Sea and agreed with it, taking into account amendments proposed during the meeting, as it is shown in [Annex III](#).