

RESOLUTION 9.10

POST-WAR PLAN FOR BLACK SEA CETACEANS

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

Recalling Resolution 8.17 on “Anthropogenic Noise” which “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” (paragraph 7),

Taking into consideration that the above-mentioned paragraph is clearly not restricted to looking into noise generating activities and impacts, but addresses all consequences resulting from warfare activities including marine pollution, eutrophication, increased risk of infections, increased risk of bioinvasions of alien (non-indigenous) species, as well as activities not directly related to combat, such as construction works (especially those producing underwater noise or altering the seascape), or changes in shipping routes,

Noting that military operations may have adversely impacted all the riparian countries to some degree,

Taking into consideration the results of the Joint ACCOBAMS – Black Sea Commission Meeting (March 2024, Istanbul, Türkiye), where it was stated that: “In the framework of the AETFS (ACCOBAMS Emergency Task Force for Stranding events), a specific “Black Sea” Sub-Task, composed of experts from Black Sea Countries is to be created and will 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”,

Recalling the “Trilateral Initiative” launched in 2024 between the naval forces of Bulgaria, Romania and Türkiye, with its respective Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), signed in Istanbul on 11th January, 2024, and the establishment of the Mine Countermeasures Black Sea (MCM BLACK SEA) Task Group to ensure the safety of maritime traffic against the threat of naval mines in the Black Sea through the surveillance, identification, and neutralisation of naval mines, while conducting related search and rescue operations,

Taking into consideration Recommendation 16.1 of the Scientific Committee on “Post-war Plan for Black Sea cetaceans”,

1. *Requests* the Secretariat to:
 - a) organise dedicated regional workshops in collaboration with the Black Sea Sub-Regional Coordination Unit, including experts on the relevant topics,
 - b) 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 (hereinafter, Post-war Plan for the Black Sea), and
 - c) enhance collaboration with naval forces and cooperation on dedicated projects focused on underwater munitions clearance and demining operations,

2. *Invites* Black Sea Parties and experts to consider, *inter alia*, the areas, topics, activities and measures listed in the [Annex](#) to this Resolution during the work on the Conservation Management Plan for the Black Sea cetaceans and the Post-war Plan for the Black Sea;
3. *Further invites* Parties to promote implementation of applicable activities and measures under the Post-war Plan for the Black Sea as soon as it is adopted, regardless of the military situation.

ANNEX

Areas, topics, activities and measures relevant for the Post-war Plan for the Black Sea region towards the mitigation of warfare consequences on cetaceans, their habitat and their preys

Assessment

1. Comprehensive monitoring of underwater noise, chemical pollution, marine debris and biological indicators of stress in animals, as well as *postmortem* studies, studies of pathology, lifespan and population structure, are necessary for understanding and managing the war impact and other anthropogenic impacts (construction, seismic surveys), until it is secured that the post-war impacts have been decreased to pre-war levels.
2. Collecting and long-term archiving of organ and tissue samples for the purposes of multiple screening and identification of causes of death, including but not limited to identification of contaminants, pathogens, ingestion of or entanglement in marine debris, evidence of acoustic trauma or blast injury, brain damage and indicators of individual stress are important efforts to be considered. Building and enhancing the capacity of the Parties, including national stranding networks and tissue banks, will contribute to this effort.
3. The following are also particularly relevant:
 - assessment of the losses, damage and potential possibility or need for restoration of species, populations and habitats;
 - development and application of existing remote sensing methods for assessing marine and coastal environments (including detection and reporting of sea mines and ammunition, other objects which can threaten the cetaceans and their prey at the sea floor);
 - enhancing new technology, including screening techniques for identification of contaminants, pathogens and alien (non-indigenous) species introduced by war related activities.
4. Assessing the impacts on distribution and abundance of prey for cetaceans is necessary, including assessment of potential shift in distribution of species and populations, their feeding and breeding grounds and migration routes due to warfare activities. This may include cooperation with the GFCM and other dedicated national and international bodies related to fisheries.
5. Assessing increase of bycatch risk and related bycatch mitigation measures in light of shifts in prey distribution and other stress factors affecting animal health should ideally also be considered.

Action

6. Demining is crucial for the short and long-term health of cetaceans and the entire marine ecosystem. By prioritizing the removal of explosives, both historical and contemporary, using Best Available Technology and Best Environmental Practices, can lead to minimizing the impact of explosions on the environment and to supporting 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.
7. Establishing new marine protected areas by Parties planned on the basis of previously identified Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs), including transboundary and international reserves, will be important for cetacean

conservation. Biosphere reserves may be suggested for areas of high cultural importance and exceptionally high anthropogenic impact, including those damaged by war.

8. It is recommended that response to stranding events is enhanced by Parties, aligned with strengthening the national stranding networks and cooperation with the relevant task force for a better response and capacity to carry out *postmortem* investigation, and hence collect, preserve and analyse samples.
9. Development and implementation of bycatch mitigation measures including those responding to post war effects are recommended to be further elaborated by Parties, along with monitoring of bycatch.
10. It is recommended that education and public awareness campaigns for the Black Sea marine ecosystem under pressure, particularly from military activities, are provided and created by Parties for a broad audience and professionals in relevant fields.
11. A post-war basin-wide synoptic survey of cetaceans in the form of aerial survey will be necessary for updating the status of cetacean populations in the Black Sea.
12. Cooperative regional effort is necessary for achieving the aforementioned objectives. This also may involve international and transboundary projects and agreements, as well as the Sub-Regional Coordination Unit.
13. Acting in coordination with the naval forces and other relevant governmental bodies of coastal countries.