

RESOLUTION 9.13
STRANDING ISSUES
(ACCOBAMS EMERGENCY TASK FORCE FOR STRANDING EVENTS, FUNCTIONING STRANDING NETWORKS)

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 8.2 by which Parties agreed to encourage the creation of a regional Task Force and collaborations among national networks of Parties for stranding events and provisioned Conservation Action 1d for 2022/2025,

Recalling Resolution 8.15, stressing the need to establish and to ensure the continuous functioning of stranding networks, reiterating the need for the improvement of data collection on cetacean population and pathology, reiterating the need to further collaborate at a regional level between tissue banks, so to facilitate the exchanges of tissue samples for joint analyses,

Recalling also Resolution 7.14 on “Best practices in monitoring and management of cetacean stranding”, as well as Resolution 4.16 on “Guidelines for a coordinated cetacean stranding response”,

Welcoming the creation of the ACCOBAMS Emergency Task Force for Stranding events (AETFS), and *stressing* its added value in countries where stranding networks are not well established,

Noting that participants in the meeting jointly organised by the Secretariats of ACCOBAMS and of the Black Sea Commission that took stock of common subjects in relation to the Black Sea (Istanbul, 6-7 March 2024) agreed that, in the framework of the AETFS, a specific “Black Sea” Sub-Task, composed of experts from the Black Sea Countries, should be created,

Noting that standardised *post mortem* investigations and harmonised interpretation of findings were considered relevant for the implementation of different ACCOBAMS strategies, like those related to bycatch, ship strikes, marine litter and underwater noise,

Taking into consideration Recommendation 16.6 of the Scientific Committee on “Stranding Issues (AETFS, Functioning Stranding Networks)”,

1. *Requests* the two co-chairs of the AETFS to update the terms of reference (ToR) for AETFS by taking into consideration other existing initiatives in terms of objectives and to establish a prioritisation system to provide support in case of capacity-building request and emergency response;
2. *Decides*:
 - to consider as an emergency situation a cetacean stranding event, which can overwhelm local resources and/or represent a transboundary emergency situation (e.g., mass strandings, stranding of large whales, unusual mortality events, epidemic outbreaks), as well as a single event involving threatened, endangered

or data deficient species in the ACCOBAMS Area (e.g., Cuvier's beaked whales, sperm whales, Strait of Gibraltar killer whales)¹,

- that all emergency situation occurring in the ACCOBAMS Area require to be promptly reported to the AETFS through the Secretariat;
- that a specific section is added in the National Report;

3. *Requests* the Secretariat, in collaboration with the AETFS:

- to keep a continuously updated list of existing stranding experts and stranding networks contact points or coordinators, to be included in the ACCOBAMS website, to facilitate reporting and communication;
- to keep updated lists of tissue banks, responsible institutions designed by the Parties and laboratories registered as CITES scientific or forensic institutions, including the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) collaboration centers, for facilitating transboundary exchange of samples and investigations;
- to update existing ACCOBAMS 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 harmonisation in interpreting post mortem findings;
- to implement capacity building through training modules targeting veterinarians and biologists involved in post mortem investigations, using novel technologies (i.e., virtual and augmented reality, metaverse, 3D printing) and including principles of forensic photographs and tele-necropsy;

4. *Encourages* Parties to consider the 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;

5. *Invites* National Focal Points to provide the appropriate support to collect information on any human-related activity that could be related to the stranding event, as well as stranding network coordinators and relevant authorities, to help bring carcasses to appropriate laboratories, that have the necessary facilities to perform examinations proposed in Resolution 7.14, in order to allow in-depth identification of causes of death;

6. *Decides* to create an emergency fund constituted of voluntary contributions by Parties, International Organisations and public and private donors, which is managed by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat with the advice of the AETFS, in order to create simple and effective procedures to support expensive analyses (e.g., toxicology, genomics, research on hearing), samples exchange by Parties and/or expert travel for investigations on emergencies in Parties asking for support;

7. *Invites* the AETFS and the ACCOBAMS Secretariat to develop the procedures for requests of funding, and *asks* the Secretariat to submit them to the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee and to the ACCOBAMS Bureau for approval.

¹ Please refer to the document : "Best practice on cetacean post mortem investigation and tissue sampling" https://accobams.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/MOP7.Doc33_Best-practices-on-cetacean-post-mortem-investigation.pdf