

RESOLUTION 9.15
ANTHROPOGENIC UNDERWATER NOISE

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

Recalling the Work Plan (version of February 2023) for the Joint Noise Working Group (JNWG) of CMS, ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS,

Recalling Resolutions 7.13 on “Anthropogenic Noise”, 5.15 on “Addressing the impact of anthropogenic noise”, 6.17 and 8.17 on “Anthropogenic noise”,

Recalling also paragraphs 4 and 5 of Resolution 6.18 on “Implementation of an ACCOBAMS Certification for Highly Qualified Marine Mammals Observers” which encourage:

“[...] Parties to:

- implement the tools ensuring Highly Qualified MMOs/PAM operators in the ACCOBAMS Area;
- give, in priority, permits for activities in their national area, to industrial companies employing Highly Qualified MMOs/PAM operators or at least other internationally agreed certifications;
- whenever possible provide the Permanent Secretariat with a copy of the MMO/PAM report and data.

[...] industrial companies and public entities engaged in noise-producing activities that may have negative impacts on cetaceans to use the “Tools ensuring Highly Qualified MMOs/PAM operators in international associations of oil and gas producers to promote such steps”;

Taking into consideration Recommendation 16.9 of the Scientific Committee on “Anthropogenic Underwater Noise”,

Taking note of the Joint ACCOBAMS-ASCOBANS workshop with navies on underwater noise and cetaceans held in Toulon (26-27 November 2024),

1. Encourages ACCOBAMS Parties:

- a) to take into consideration and apply, as appropriate, the Threshold Values for Impulsive and Continuous Noise emissions recently adopted by the European Union in the documents published by the MSFD Technical Group on Noise: “Setting EU threshold values for continuous underwater sound”, and “Setting EU threshold values for impulsive underwater sound” and the relevant tools under the Barcelona Convention;
- b) to support the adoption of “ocean noise pollution” as a Common Indicator under the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria (IMAP) in the framework of Barcelona Convention, and that cetacean species be used as indicator species for the application of such Common Indicator;
- c) to apply the IMO Guidelines for the reduction of underwater radiated noise from shipping to address adverse impacts on marine life (IMO/MEPC 1/Circ.906) and participate in the experience building phase, while submitting respective information to the IMO’s Marine Environment Protection Committee;

- d) to participate and contribute, as appropriate, to the global review of marine seismic air gun surveys currently being undertaken by the International Whaling Commission;
- e) to promote among all stakeholders the training and certification for ACCOBAMS Highly Qualified Marine Mammals Observers and Passive Acoustic Monitoring Operators (ACCOBAMS HQ MMO/PAM training and certification);
- f) to require the use of certified and qualified MMO/PAM operators, including where possible ACCOBAMS HQ MMO/PAM where relevant activities (e.g. seismic surveys, offshore windfarms) take place in the ACCOBAMS area;
- g) referring to Resolution 8.17 (Anthropogenic noise), to share, to the possible extent, available information, , on impulsive noise- generating activities to allow a proper assessment of noise emissions in the Agreement Area and their potential impact on cetaceans;
- h) to provide, to the possible extent, through their relevant national institutions, data on impulsive noise- generating sources and activities from anywhere in the Agreement Area into the existing Regional Noise Registry, managed by ACCOBAMS for publicly available data;

2. *Requests* the ACCOBAMS Secretariat and the Joint CMS/ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS Noise Working Group (JNWG), to continue supporting the UNEP/MAP in the development of the IMAP EO11 on energy including underwater noise and its related common indicators 26 and 27 as well as in the preparation of the related chapter within the next MED QSR;

3. *Requests* the ACCOBAMS Parties, the Scientific Committee, and the Secretariat to contribute to the development and implementation of the Post-War Plan for Black Sea Cetaceans Resolution 9.10, with particular focus given to the removal of all types of underwater explosives, both floating and sunk, including mines;

4. *Requests* the ACCOBAMS Secretariat to discuss with the Secretariats of CMS and ASCOBANS the organisation of an in-person meeting of the JNWG, including the drafting of the relevant Terms of Reference, the establishment of a Steering Group, and funding;

5. *Encourages* the JNWG to continue its work, including:

- a) the further development of the concept of “quiet zones”, as outlined in Recommendation 10.5 of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee;
- b) the updating of the noise models available in NETCCOBAMS, securing their compliance with evolving guidance from the European Union Technical Group on Underwater Noise under the European Union Marine Strategy Framework Directive;
- c) the comparison of the results of noise modelling with appropriate in situ anthropogenic noise recordings made throughout the Agreement Area, taking account of the diverse sensitivities of the different cetacean species;
- d) the continued efforts to monitor anthropogenic activities generating underwater noise;
- e) the further encouragement of the use of mitigation measures for anthropogenic activities generating underwater noise;
- f) the further efforts to develop and assess the effectiveness of new mitigation measures; and
- g) the improved exchange, among the competent authorities, of relevant information related to military activities and exercises, from planning to assessment of impacts.