

RESOLUTION 9.16

VESSEL STRIKES

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

Recalling ACCOBAMS Resolutions 7.12 and 8.18 on “Ship strikes” and Resolution 14.5 of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) on reducing the risk of vessel strikes for marine megafauna,

Recalling that ACCOBAMS Parties and the International Whaling Commission (IWC) have long recognised the problem of vessel strikes, particularly on large whales, and have worked together to develop a better understanding of the problem and effective mitigation measures, *inter alia*, within the Agreement Area, particularly for fin and sperm whales,

Acknowledging that the Pelagos “Collisions and Shipping” Focus Group (PCSFG) is working on improvements of the precision surrounding the identification of collisions,

Acknowledging the work undertaken by the Secretariat, Partners and the Scientific Committee in supporting the implementation of the adopted Associated Protective Measures (APMs) within the North-Western Mediterranean Particularly Sensitive Sea Area by offering the adjacent coastal states (Spain, France, Italy, and Monaco) and shipping stakeholders the technical and awareness-raising solutions necessary for their effective implementation,

Acknowledging also ongoing mitigation efforts such as the SaveWhales project in the South Peloponnese, which aims to establish an early warning system to detect large marine mammals and inform ships about their presence in order to slow down speed to avoid colliding with them,

Taking into consideration Recommendation 16.10 of the Scientific Committee on “Ship Strikes”,

1. *Welcomes* the adoption in July 2023 of IMO Resolution MEPC.380(80) establishing the Northwestern Mediterranean Sea as a Particular Sensitive Sea Area at the initiative of four ACCOBAMS Parties (France, Italy, Monaco, and Spain);
2. *Reiterates* its recommendations to Parties to implement, as a matter of urgency, mitigation measures in the following high-risk areas in the ACCOBAMS Area, where vessel strikes with the following species are frequent:
 - Strait of Gibraltar - fin and sperm whales;
 - Balearic Islands - fin and sperm whales;
 - Balearic Basin and Catalan Coast - fin and sperm whales;
 - Eastern Alborán Sea - fin and sperm whales;
 - Pelagos Sanctuary - fin and sperm whales;
 - Hellenic Trench, Greece - sperm whales;

3. *Requests Parties and the Secretariat to:*

- a) promote communication with stakeholders (*e.g.*, navies, port authorities, shipping companies, whale-watching organisations, etc.) on the issue of vessel strikes, including mitigation approaches and reporting to the IWC ship strikes database;
- b) encourage and support regional data collection and mitigation initiatives and foster the development of incentive systems to shipping companies that adopt appropriate mitigation methods;
- c) continue to work within IMO and its Marine Environment Protection Committee on relevant initiatives that include mitigation approaches, such as shipping lanes;
- d) foster and improve collaborative efforts with the Barcelona Convention Secretariat and other bodies working on this issue;
- e) support efforts to improve access to the temporal and spatial distribution of shipping, particularly merchant vessels steaming at high speed, and vessels that do not transmit Automatic Information System (AIS) data;
- f) support, when appropriate, activities within the framework of ongoing projects in particular for the definition of criteria for the identification of high-risk areas;
- g) offer support to the Greek Authorities for reducing the risk of ship strikes in the Hellenic Trench, including strengthening collaboration with the International Hydrographic organisation (IHO) and the Hellenic Hydrographic Office to develop standards and accelerate the process for the updating of nautical charts to locate the area crucial for the protection of marine life;

4. *Asks the Chair of the Scientific Committee to cooperate with the Scientific and Technical Committee of the Pelagos Agreement to create a joint Ship Strikes Working Group with agreed Terms of Reference, including:*

- a) liaison with riparian States, the IWC and other stakeholders to continue and improve the collection of information on cetaceans and vessel traffic, to enable better identification of actual or potential high-risk areas for cetaceans, especially fin and sperm whales, by incorporating information on whale and vessel distribution into risk models;
- b) incorporating the results of the IWC-IUCN-ACCOBAMS workshop (Messinia, 2019) and work on Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs);
- c) investigation of ways to support the integration and updating of cetacean risk information (*e.g.*, IMMAs) into Electronic Charts Systems used for maritime navigation;
- d) improving efforts and approaches to quantifying ship strike occurrence;
- e) promotion and use of the IWC ship strikes database and appropriate modules within NETCCOBAMS;
- f) elaboration of improved methods to evaluate the effectiveness of mitigation measures and especially of recent or new PSSAs and associated protective measures;
- g) review of the results of relevant studies being undertaken in the region;
- h) review of the results of existing efforts and encouragement of the development of new real time cetacean localization projects, which are designed to be complementary tools in avoiding ship strikes;
- i) review of the progress on the development of a reward for “best practitioners” (Whale safe certificate) given to identified vessels who follow ACCOBAMS’ best practices to be initially tested in the North-Western Mediterranean Particularly Sensitive Sea Area.