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RESOLUTION 9.18
MARINE DEBRIS

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 recent work on marine debris promoted by ACCOBAMS Resolution 8.20 on "Marine Litter and Chemical Pollution",

Recalling the ACCOBAMS workshop convened in Catania on 6-7 April 2024 in collaboration with the University of Padova, with the objective to improve collection of relevant data, especially from stranded cetaceans, with a specific focus on identifying best practice related to monitoring ingested marine litter and entanglement evidence in the Agreement Area,

Taking into consideration that all the recommendations from the above-mentioned workshop were endorsed by the IWC Scientific Committee (Bled, Slovenia, 22 April - 3 May 2024),

Acknowledging the renewed political commitment to end plastic pollution, based on a comprehensive approach that addresses the full lifecycle of plastics, as mandated by UNEA resolution 5/14, in line with the Ministerial Declaration entitled "The Nice wake up call for an ambitious plastics treaty" launched at UNOC3**,**

Taking into consideration Recommendation 16.12 of the Scientific Committee on "Marine Debris",

1. *Encourages* ACCOBAMS Parties to create and develop their own tissue banks and facilitate at a regional level, the exchange of tissue samples (from stranded cetaceans, and through the relevant CITES authorities), as appropriate, among scientific entities for joint analyses and retrospective studies;

2. *Invites* the Parties to the Barcelona Convention and the Member States to the European Union, where feasible:
   a) to consider the inclusion of cetaceans as indicator species within, respectively, the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria (IMAP) candidate indicator 24 and relevant criteria of descriptor 10 (D10C3 and D10C4) of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive through the respective review processes;
   b) to promote the use of cetaceans as indicator species for micro-plastics (i.e., *Balaenoptera physalus*) and macro-litter pollution (i.e., *Physeter macrocephalus* and *Ziphius cavirostris*) in the Agreement Area and to use *Tursiops spp*. as indicators at sub-basin levels;

3. *Requests* the Secretariat and the Scientific Committee to liaise with relevant technical groups on the subject matter and consider sharing data with relevant platforms, such as The Global Plastics Hub of the UNEP Global Partnership on Plastic Pollution and Marine Litter (GPML) and others;

4. *Encourages* the Scientific Committee to:
    a) strengthen coordinated effort to better understand the toxicological effect on cetaceans of macro- and micro-litter ingestion, considering chemical, ecotoxicological, and physical effects;
    b) prepare a harmonised diagnostic methodology that includes:
        - evaluation of the presence of marine litter in marine mammals' gastro-intestinal tract;
        - categorization and quantification of identified marine litter through the determination of polymers by spectroscopy technique;
        - detection of plastic additives and absorbed contaminants to plastics in organism tissues;
        - development of risk, impact, and mortality indexes;
    c) continue encouraging joint efforts in the Adriatic Sea to merge data on bottlenose dolphin-human interactions (including set net interactions and marine debris ingestion) and mitigation efforts, as well as the creation of a multi-level and multi-disciplinary model to identify hotspot risks;
    d) propose:
        - the definition and development of new methods to evaluate the exposure to plastics and plastic additives in free-ranging organisms, including new approaches that could reveal the exposure to a plethora of stressors (micro-plastics, emerging chemicals, legacy chemicals, etc.) and drive the identification of new end-points;
        - the investigation on multiple stressors and the development of new diagnostic techniques to understand the effects of cumulative stressors on cetaceans, on both:
            - stranded organisms, investigating the potential ecotoxicological effects caused by the ingestion of marine litter, and emerging and legacy chemicals, through biomarker identification and analysis of tissues;
            - in vitro experiments, assessing the effects of micro- and nano-plastics (combined with emerging and legacy chemicals) through new technologies applied on cetacean cell lines, organoids and 'organ-on-chip' technology;

5. *Requests* the Secretariat to further collaborate with other organisations such as the International Whaling Commission and the Secretariats of Bonn, Barcelona and Bucharest Conventions, General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean and with the Sub-Regional Coordination Units to provide support for capacity building on monitoring the impact of marine debris on cetaceans.