



# Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

*Secretariat provided by the United Nations Environment Programme*



## Speech of the CMS Executive Secretary Robert Hepworth

Your Serene Highness, distinguished guests, friends and colleagues: this is a unique and exciting evening to celebrate two landmarks in the conservation of whales and dolphins.



First, we say "Happy 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary" to the Parties and Secretariat of ACCOBAMS, the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area. This is especially pleasurable for me personally, as I was privileged in the early 1990s to have taken part in some of the preliminary negotiations to create a Mediterranean and Black Seas Agreement to protect whales and dolphins under the Convention on Migratory Species. At that time, I was wearing my hat as Chair of the CMS Standing Committee on behalf of the UK. Whilst I am sorry that the UK has never quite acceded to ACCOBAMS, I am pleased to see they support the Agreement politically and financially.

Since joining the United Nations Environment Programmes six years ago, I have been able to maintain friendship with Marie-Christine van Klaveren who has worked tirelessly with her team in Monaco to make ACCOBAMS one of the most effective and respected intergovernmental Agreements under CMS. We have gradually built up a positive triangular relationship between ACCOBAMS, UNEP HQ (especially the Regional Seas Directorate) and the UNEP/CMS Secretariat. This has resulted in several tangible projects jointly supported by the three organisations, such as the conception and production of a training kit on cétacés in the agreement area to be used to train young scientists and technicians. Since moving within UNEP to become Executive Secretary of CMS two years ago, there has been even more scope for Marie-Christine and I to co-operate.

That cooperation is exemplified by the second reason for our celebrations this evening, which is the international Launch of the Year of the Dolphin in 2007. ACCOBAMS, alongside its northern counterpart ASCOBANS, and together with the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, have worked with CMS as we conceived this new initiative to increase awareness, both Europe and worldwide, about dolphins, which are vital and valuable species. Year of the Dolphin will be part of the UNESCO-led Decade on Education for Sustainable Development. Year of the Dolphin will also be a milestone in efforts made by the CMS Family of Agreements, and our Parties, to meet the targets of reducing wildlife losses by 2010 which all Governments have agreed through the UN, and which we hope will soon be added to the formal Millennium Development Goals.

There are 31 known species of dolphins, all of which are migratory. Dolphins face many threats - by-catch, pollution and in some cases, direct killing for meat. They are charismatic species, with highly developed communication abilities. Dolphins appeal to human beings all over the world. They appear in ancient classical art as rescuers of shipwrecked sailors. They help traditional fishermen to locate and net their catch. In more recent times, and more commercially, dolphins have helped modern navies in military operations.

Much more happily, we have seen an exponential rise in recent years in dolphin ecotourism, as more and more people are prepared to spend time and money on watching these remarkable creatures.

It is therefore particularly fitting that the largest travel company in the world, TUI, which is, like CMS, based in Germany, has agreed to be a major sponsor of Year of the Dolphin. As well as helping to design the campaign logo, they are publicising Year of the Dolphin in their travel catalogues for 2007, and funding a 'Dolphin Diploma'. This will be targeted at young people and their families, aiming to inform and educate about dolphins, the threats they face and what visitors and residents of coastal tourist resorts can do to protect these species. ACCOBAMS' own education programme will feature the dolphin diploma.

There are many other activities planned under Year of the Dolphin, far too many to mention tonight. However I want to conclude my words by announcing a vital component that will link each and every one of these activities. This is the fact that H.S.H. Prince Albert II has kindly agreed to be the Patron of Year of the Dolphin. His commitment to marine conservation, as well as his sympathetic personality, will be a major asset in helping us put Year of the Dolphin on the international agenda over the next 15 months, and keep it there. Your Highness, we are indebted to you for supporting this initiative.

It is thus an additional pleasure for us that ACCOBAMS has chosen to mark its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this evening by placing a dolphin statue on the seabed. I have not myself acquired Scuba skills, but I am sure that thousands of divers will visit the statue, and draw inspiration from it. I hope that every single diver who does so will also make a personal effort to support Year of the Dolphin.

Thanks for listening to me. The Convention on Migratory Species sends its very best wishes to the Secretariat of ACCOBAMS and all guests for a successful and enjoyable evening.