

2nd October 2008



Statement of the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS) to the 2nd meeting of Western African Talks on Cetaceans and their Habitats (WATCH II)

The Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS), a committed Partner organisation to CMS, would like to take this opportunity to congratulate participants for progress on this important initiative to protect the small cetaceans of West Africa.

We commend the new signatories to the Western African Small Cetacean Agreement for their leadership and commitment in bringing this agreement to this advanced stage, and for their endorsement of the Small Cetacean Action Plan, which we believe will be an effective mechanism for the conservation and protection of the whales and dolphins of the eastern Atlantic basin and an excellent point for coordination of regional efforts.

As is now often the case, through this CMS agreement, Western Africa and Macaronesia is demonstrating significant global leadership in this important area of migratory species conservation.

As Western Africa and Macaronesia is aware the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Global Biodiversity Challenge seeks to *“achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national levels as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth”*.

It is important to note that CMS is recognised by CBD for the delivery of migratory species related 2010 targets including:

- trends in extent of selected biomes, ecosystems and habitats;
- trends in abundance and distribution of selected species;
- change in status of threatened species;
- coverage of protected areas; and
- connectivity/fragmentation of ecosystems.

We are confident that the Small Cetacean Action Plan will directly contribute to the achievement of these targets, making an important regional contribution to this ambitious global campaign.

We believe that the CMS MoU will also benefit the region by:

- facilitating deeper region-wide cooperation to address issues of shared responsibility including threat reduction, habitat protection and the establishment of migratory corridors, research, monitoring, and information exchange, regional capacity building, the development of sustainable and responsible cetacean-based tourism;
- increasing international awareness and recognition about the issues and threats to small cetaceans in Western Africa and Macaronesia;
- networking Western Africa and Macaronesia with other similar cetacean agreement regions, increasing technical information flow and capacity sharing; and
- providing an effective channel for international funding.

WDCS regrets that it is unable to join you at this meeting, however we remain firmly committed to this agreement and the work set down by the Action Plan.

We look forward to working with many of you in the months and years to come.

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