



CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES

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Agenda Item 22.1

PROGRESS REPORT OF THE AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION OF CETACEANS OF THE BLACK SEA, MEDITERRANEAN SEA AND CONTIGUOUS ATLANTIC AREA (ACCOBAMS)

1. The Secretariat is circulating herewith, for the information of participants in the 11th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species, the report provided by the Secretariat of the **Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic Area**, to accompany document UNEP/CMS/COP11/Doc.22.1.
2. The Report is provided unedited in the format and language that it was submitted.



PROGRESS REPORT OF THE AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION OF CETACEANS OF THE BLACK SEA, MEDITERRANEAN SEA AND CONTIGUOUS ATLANTIC AREA (ACCOBAMS)

I. MANAGEMENT OF THE AGREEMENT

I.1 - Administrative matters

1. As of September 2014, there are **23 Parties** to the Agreement: Albania, Algeria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine.

2. A **proposal for the extension of the ACCOBAMS** to cover the Atlantic EEZ of Spain and Portugal was adopted by the MOP4 in 2010. On September 2014, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Monaco, Spain and Ukraine deposited their instrument of acceptance with the Depository.

3. **The 5th Meeting of the Parties to ACCOBAMS** was held in Tangier (Morocco) from 5th to 8th November 2013. The Meeting appointed Morocco (Chair), Croatia, France, Georgia and Monaco as Bureau Members for the triennium 2014-2016.

His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco announced the choice of Ms. Florence Descroix-Comanducci as the new Executive Secretary of ACCOBAMS provided by Monaco, starting from 1st January 2014.

A variety of issues relevant to the collaboration with CMS were discussed, especially in the ACCOBAMS long term strategy for 2014-2025 ([Resolution 5.1](#)) and in the ACCOBAMS Work Program (Resolution 5.2) where CMS was requested to look into way of supporting ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS efforts to collaborate more closely with the European Commission.

Parties also approved the organization of a new set of Regional Workshops in 2015 (as it was done in 2009 and 2012) and to use the opportunity to prepare the ACCOBAMS working programme for the next triennium.

The report of the Meeting is available on the ACCOBAMS website.

4. **The 9th Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee** was held from 15th to 17th April 2014, in Monaco. Simone Panigada was nominated as the Chair of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee for the period 2014-2016 and Renaud de Stephanis as the Vice Chair.

Four Task Managers dealing with priorities defined by the Scientific Committee (cetacean population estimates, Interactions with fisheries, Conservation of cetaceans critical habits and Capacity Building) were appointed by the Meeting.

The report of the Meeting is available on the ACCOBAMS website.

1.2 - Regular communication

5. An [ACCOBAMS Interactive platform](#) was created in 2013. The aim of the project is to collect the main and most important information of the ACCOBAMS Permanent Secretariat and transpose it to multiple GIS layers.
6. **The 1st workshop for ACCOBAMS Partners** was organized on 17th April 2014. To date 32 organizations are ACCOBAMS Partners.
7. **The 3rd Biennial Conference on Cetacean Conservation in South Mediterranean Countries** will be held in Jounieh (Lebanon) from 21st to 23rd October 2014. The objective is to assess the knowledge gained on cetaceans in the South of the Mediterranean, to identify potential gaps and to stimulate the development of conservation actions in order to promote the implementation of the ACCOBAMS Agreement.

1.3 – Cooperation with international organizations

8. The ACCOBAMS Secretariat has been significantly increasing its collaboration with **other relevant international organizations** (CMS Family, CBD, Barcelona Convention, Bern Convention, Bucharest Convention, GFCM, IWC, IUCN...), in particular by having the outputs of its work programme integrated into their initiatives.
9. To facilitate further cooperation between EU-ACCOBAMS member States and non EU-ACCOBAMS member States, the Secretariat requested the co-chair of the joint ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS working group on the MSFD to prepare an **overview of existing practices at national level by using a questionnaire survey methodology**. The questionnaire was prepared in collaboration with the Permanent Secretariat and in consultation with ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee. Results will be presented to the Ninth Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Bureau on 9-10 December 2014.

II. CONSERVATION ACTIONS

II.1 - Improve knowledge about state of cetaceans

10. **Cetacean population estimates and distribution:** The "ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative" project consists of carrying out a study of (1) the abundance of cetaceans and (2) their geographical distribution, following a survey to be carried out on one occasion, in the whole Agreement area. The study would bring together visual survey methods (1) by boat, (2) by air, and (3) using acoustic detection techniques.
Taking into consideration the important work carried out since several years, and as agreed by the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee at its 6th Meeting, it can be considered that the scientific work related to the preparation of the project is completed and the scientific methodology including the related protocols for carrying out the survey are agreed. The next step will be the elaboration of funding requests to potential donors.
In the framework of the agreement signed between the Agence des aires marines protégées

(France), the ACCOBAMS Secretariat, the IUCN Center for Mediterranean Cooperation, and the Regional Activity Center for Specially Protected Areas (UNEP-MAP-RAC/SPA), an expert in project development and fundraising was hired by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat for finalizing the project document and mobilizing necessary funds to carry out the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative.

At this stage, a consultation process with the countries was initiated through the establishment of a Contact Group, formed of representatives from the States from the Agreement area and of the "Task Manager Survey" of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee. The role of this contact group will be to facilitate the involvement of the countries in the development of the project, with the aim to ensure ownership by the countries.

11. **Cetacean Population Structure:** A joint ECS/ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS workshop was organised during the 2013 Meeting of the ECS. The objective was to provide an overview of the existing studies and gap analysis concerning population structure and the outline of a work programme to support population structure studies in the ACCOBAMS area for the subsequent quinquennium.

A relevant study by Professor Scovazzi was presented during the last ACCOBAMS MOP in November 2013 "[Taking of cetaceans and dolphinarium: a legal analysis within the framework of ACCOBAMS](#)". A [draft Recommendation](#) has been prepared by the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee on the establishment of individual identification system(s) of cetaceans kept in captivity that should be presented by one (or more) ACCOBAMS Party to the next CITES COP in 2015.

II.2 - Reduce human pressures on cetaceans

12. **Interaction with fisheries:** in December 2011, an International Workshop on By-Catch was organized in collaboration with the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM). In May 2012, the ACCOBAMS Secretariat signed a MoU with GFCM on the occasion of the 36th Session of the Commission. Based on this collaboration, both organizations are jointly developing a project for improving the conservation of endangered marine species with respect to fishing activities in the Mediterranean. One of the project's objectives is to provide detailed assessment of the extent of by-catch in cetacean and to propose technical and management solutions to reduce adverse interactions between cetaceans and fisheries through case studies. It was decided jointly with GFCM to adopt a multi-species approach and to extend the scope of the project to other threatened species, in particular sea turtles and seabirds. The project concept was prepared and submitted to the MAVA Foundation who agreed in principle to contribute to funding the project. The full project document is under review by MAVA Foundation.

13. **Anthropogenic noise:** A joint Working Group with ASCOBANS (JNWG) with two co-chairs was created according to the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee recommendation and on the occasion of the 19th ASCOBANS Advisory Committee Meeting (19-23 March 2012). The proposal to include CMS in the JNWG was endorsed by the CMS Scientific Council in July 2014.

[Three relevant documents](#) were taken into consideration during the Fifth Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Parties through the [Resolution 5.15](#) (Addressing the impact of anthropogenic

noise): (i) Anthropogenic noise and marine mammals. Review of the effort in addressing the impact of anthropogenic underwater noise in the ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS areas; (ii) Implementation of underwater noise mitigation measures by industries: operational and economic constraints and (iii) Methodological guide: Guidance on Underwater Noise Mitigation Measures.

Collaboration with **CBD** was established, especially through the participation to the *CBD Expert Workshop on Underwater Noise and its Impacts on Marine and Coastal Biodiversity* (February 2014) and to CBD-SBSTTA 18 (June 2014) where a side event on noise was organized.

The joint ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS Noise Working Group (JNWG) is currently considering the input of ACCOBAMS in the **ECAP process of the Barcelona Convention**, relating to the Ecological Objective (EO) 11 on Energy including underwater noise. The Integrated Correspondence Groups of GES and Targets Meeting (COR GEST) have requested that ACCOBAMS, through the JNWG, provides specific recommendations for the discussions of the CORMON groups and specifically drafts 'monitoring guidance on marine noise'.

A project of mapping anthropogenic noise hot spots in the ACCOBAMS area is currently circulated through the JNWG for comments. Once these are received, the ACCOBAMS Secretariat will finalize the approach to the potential contributors.

14. **Ship strikes:** The ACCOBAMS Secretariat co-organised with Pelagos Secretariat, a conference on “ship strikes and presentation of REPCET system” in the framework of the 2013 Monaco Yacht Show.

The ACCOBAMS Secretariat supported and participated in the annual training course for professional and student ship crews at the French National Superior School of Shipping of Marseille (March 2014). In the frame of the support of the REPCET programme, the Secretariat co-organised with Pelagos Secretariat, a conference on “ship strikes and presentation of REPCET system” in the frame of the 2013 Monaco Yacht Show (September 2013). A meeting was also organized with representative from Sea ID, the company currently exploring the possibility for developing a system – which could be combined with REPCET system- for yacht boats to become contributor to collecting bathymetric data.

15. **Cetacean watching:** Thanks to a voluntary contribution from France, a feasibility study for developing pilot whale watching projects was carried out in Morocco and in Tunisia in 2012. The results of the studies were presented at the 2012 Forum of Mediterranean MPAs (Antalya, Turkey, 25-28 November 2012). Based on the results of these studies, the ACCOBAMS Secretariat developed a joint project with the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM). One of the objectives is to mitigate the negative interactions between cetaceans and fisheries by promoting the development of ecotourism activities through the diversification of artisanal fishermen activities. Ecotourism activities will include the development of sustainable boat-based wildlife watching and pescatourism activities.

The first training on a “High quality whale watching” certificate was organised by Pelagos in collaboration with ACCOBAMS during spring 2012 (2-6 April 2012), for operators from France and Monaco. Pursuant to the [Resolution 5.10](#) encouraging Parties to adopt national rules in order to implement at national level the “High quality whale watching” certificate in relevant bodies, the Bureau was in favor of the implementation of a private certificate as an alternative process to a public label, giving thus the choice to the Parties facing legal

difficulties. The first framework Convention "Partner Whale Watching High Quality" with a private organization was signed in July 2014. Thus, the NGO "souffleurs d'Ecume" is now authorized to use the certificate in the French Mediterranean, upon conditions of compliance with the terms contained in a Convention. The ACCOBAMS Secretariat is the owner of the logo "High Quality Whale Watching". It has been registered at the WOPI. ACCOBAMS will manage its use through the regulations governing the use of collective certification brands.

16. **Climate Change:** A [workshop](#) to address the climate change issues and their impacts on the marine biodiversity, in particular on the cetaceans, in the Black and the Mediterranean Seas was organized in Monaco on 11th June 2014. Seventeen experts from eight countries from across the ACCOBAMS region and beyond attended, including representatives from a number of international organisations and members of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee. The workshop recognised climate change as a profound threat to the cetaceans of the region and made recommendations for policy makers and for future research topics. Conclusions of the workshop were considered in the draft Resolution of the UNEP/CMS/ScC18/Doc. 10.1 Programme of work on climate change and migratory species to be presented to the CMS COP 11 in 2014. ACCOBAMS is also a member of the CMS working group on climate change since July 2014.

17. **Species conservation plans:**

- Upon the request of the last CMS Conference of Parties (Bergen, Norway 2011), the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee prepared [a proposal to include the Mediterranean Cuvier's beaked whale \(*Ziphius cavirostris*\)](#) in Appendix 1 of CMS (granting to this species the endangered status) to be presented to the CMS COP 11 in 2014. The Aquatic Mammal Working Group approved the proposal and suggested to consider concerted actions for this species in the Mediterranean region. ACCOBAMS offered to lead the concerted actions.
- The coordinator of the **Mediterranean Bottlenose Dolphin** Conservation Plan, together with the ACCOBAMS Secretariat and ACCOBAMS experts, will process and propose a boat based, shelf limited data collection protocol by the end of the year.
- The ACCOBAMS Secretariat, in collaboration with the Black Sea Commission Permanent Secretariat, undertook the revision of the existing Conservation Plan for **Black Sea Cetaceans**. The updated version will be considered and possibly adopted by the Black Sea Commission during its 30th Regular Meeting (19-20 November 2014).
- The ACCOBAMS Secretariat is assisting the RAC/SPA in the revision of the **Action Plan for the conservation of cetaceans** in the Mediterranean Sea and together with defining a work program and a relevant **schedule**. It will be presented to the RAC/SPA Focal Points Meeting in April 2015.

18. **National Action plans:** Between November 2011 and November 2014, the ACCOBAMS Secretariat supported the preparation of the National Action Plans for cetacean conservation in Algeria and Morocco.

Regarding Morocco, the Secretariat worked with the Fisheries Department in charge of the preparation of the Plan and the Institut National de Recherche Halieutique (INRH) to finalize the draft Plan and to identify activities to be developed by this Institution in line with the MoU signed with the ACCOBAMS Secretariat in 2011. A consultation meeting was organized

in April 2013 with all concerned authorities to review the final draft. The National Action Plan is now under implementation.

Regarding Algeria, a draft Plan was prepared in collaboration with the scientists from the University of Oran. The Secretariat shall contact the national Focal Point to discuss further steps to be taken.

II.3 - Improve Communication, Awareness and Capacity Building

19. **Functional stranding networks and responses to emergency situation:** The ACCOBAMS Secretariat initiated a series of trainings regarding the necropsies of cetaceans for veterinarians or scientists usually involved in this task:

- Bulgaria (July 2012)
- Morocco (January 2013)
- Cyprus (June 2013)
- Tunisia (June 2013)

This training is also aimed at reinforcing capacity building and helping in implementing a better use of the Guidelines regarding the best practices and procedures for dealing with mass mortality events due to chemical pollution, noise and pathogenic agents.

The ACCOBAMS Secretariat will organize on 29-30 October 2014, in collaboration with the Pelagos Secretariat, a workshop on cetacean live stranding. Its objective is to identify elements for an administrative transboundary procedure in order to facilitate response to emergency situation where transboundary situation occurs in the Pelagos Sanctuary (pilot area of ACCOBAMS). The administrative transboundary elements agreed during the workshop will be presented to all ACCOBAMS Parties as a framework document for other areas where transboundary situation occurs.

20. **Capacity to use cetaceans photo id and undertake aerial surveys:** Two projects on photo identification were selected for funding under the ACCOBAMS Supplementary Conservation Funds:

- Pilot cetacean photo-ID activities along the southern Bulgarian Black Sea coast (Bulgaria – Green Balkans NGO)
- Photo-identification of dolphins from the Romanian Black Sea coastal waters (Romania – Mare Nostrum NGO).

Final reports of both projects can be seen on the [ACCOBAMS website](#).

A training on photo-identification techniques for cetaceans will be held during the 3rd Biennial Conference on Cetacean Conservation in South Mediterranean Countries organized by ACCOBAMS on 21-23 October 2014 (Lebanon).

21. **Cetacean conservation and postgraduate programmes:** A module on cetacean conservation was organised with the support of the Italian Ministry of Environment. The teaching module is designed to enrich students' knowledge in cetacean conservation through a multidisciplinary approach and is primarily aimed at training scientists from all French-speaking countries of the Agreement area. The module on cetology represents 30 hours of training on the following items:

- species of cetaceans (identification, anatomy, physiology, adaptation, parasitology, etc.)

- threats to cetaceans (interaction, pollution, collisions, noise, etc.)
- study skills (observation/ rating population, photo-identification, passive acoustics, etc.)
- legal and legislative framework on the conservation of cetaceans.

In 2012/2013, scientific Masters in the French-speaking countries of the Agreement (Algeria, France, Lebanon, Morocco, and Tunisia) have been identified. More than two hundred students followed the ACCOBAMS teaching module. Courses contents are now translated in [English](#) in order to allow the implementation of the course in English speaking Universities by early 2015.

22. Five projects that include a capacity building component were selected for funding under the ACCOBAMS Supplementary Conservation Funds in the 2012 call for proposals:

- Conducting in-depth studies to identify communities of Bottlenose dolphin around Rachgoun, Habibas, and Plane Islands (Algeria – University of Oran);
- Building capacities of Bulgarian Black Sea municipalities on Cetaceans strandings (Bulgaria – Green Balkans NGO);
- Strengthening the network of cetacean strandings monitoring in Morocco (Morocco - National Institute for Fisheries Resources);
- Strengthening the network of cetacean strandings monitoring in Tunisia (Tunisia - National Institute of Marine Science and Technology);
- Sampling of cetaceans in the Siculo-Tunisian Strait using ferries as a platform for observation (Tunisia, ATUTAX NGO)

More information on these projects can be obtained from the [ACCOBAMS website](#)

II. 4 - Enhance effective conservation of cetaceans critical habitats

23. **Protected areas for cetaceans:** Despite the identification of **22 areas of special interest for cetaceans** in the ACCOBAMS area, in some areas of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, there is no data available at all. This issue will be addressed during the **workshop on “the effectiveness of protected areas containing critical habitats for cetaceans”** to be held in June 2015, in collaboration with MedPAN, RAC/SPA and other relevant organizations. The ACCOBAMS Secretariat actively contributed to the drawing up proposals for Ecologically or Biologically Significant Areas (**EBSAs**), especially by participating to the Mediterranean Regional Workshop to Facilitate the Description of EBSAs, which was held in Malaga from 7 to 10 April. During the CBD Eighteenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, the ACCOBAMS Secretariat co-organized with MedPAN and the RAC/SPA, a **side event regarding the “Roadmap to achieve an effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected system of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean by 2020”**.

Moreover, a [cetacean manual](#) for MPAs managers was prepared jointly with MedPAN and RAC/SPA. It is aimed at supporting MPA managers to take into consideration the cetacean component in MPA management.