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13<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES  
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Agenda Item 11.5

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

Summary:

The Secretariat is circulating herewith, for the information of the 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CMS, a report provided by the Secretariat of the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS).

The report is provided unedited in the format and language that it was submitted.

**ACCOBAMS STATEMENT**  
**13<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CMS**  
**15-22 February 2020, Gandhinagar, India**

Important progresses have been achieved by ACCOBAMS since CMS COP 12 in 2017, whose results have been presented to the Seventh Meeting of the Parties to ACCOBAMS hosted by the Republic of Turkey from 5 to 9 November 2019.

The year 2020 is critical for the renewal of international commitments related to biodiversity protection and CMS COP 13 is one of the major steps that will pave the way for the adoption of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework at the end of the year. The Permanent Secretariat contributed to the consultation process conducted by CMS in preparation of the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. In line with this CMS initiative, ACCOBAMS Parties adopted in particular the Resolution 7.17 on ACCOBAMS mobilization towards the Global post-2020 Biodiversity Framework, highlighting the ACCOBAMS contribution to this effort.

A major achievement of ACCOBAMS over the past years is the successful implementation of the **ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative**. This unique collaborative project aims to establish an integrated and coordinated cetacean monitoring system for the whole ACCOBAMS Area - the Mediterranean and the Black Seas – a monitoring system based on objective, robust and comparable data, with a final view to improving the conservation status of these species and their habitats. This project is fully in line with the international commitments of the countries, in particular those relating to the monitoring of the marine environment through the Ecosystem Approach process implemented by the Barcelona Convention and the “Marine Strategy Framework Directive” of the EU.

The ASI led to the completion of the first ever aerial and boat based large-scale surveys in 2018 and in 2019 in the entire ACCOBAMS Agreement Area, which is going to provide this year valuable information on the distribution and abundance of cetacean populations at the Mediterranean and Black Sea levels, but also on other species of marine megafauna in open sea areas for which only a few information was available. Assessments of floating marine litter density and ambient noise levels at the regional scale will also be valuable contributions to the comprehension and better management of the threats impacting marine biodiversity.

The success of the ASI not only relies in its scientific results but also on the unprecedented cooperative effort that it mobilized, with the implication of all ACCOBAMS area countries and dozens of national, international and non-governmental partnering organisations. This programme has been a major asset in reinforcing monitoring and analytic capacities of dozens of scientists from all around the macro region, and participated to leverage new collaborations and interest in Marine life through awareness events conducted across the ACCOBAMS area since 2017.

It is worth mentioning that the data collected during the ASI has been made available for the widest use possible and that it was shared already with a large number of organisations for multiple research and conservation purposes. The ACCOBAMS Secretariat invites all interested organizations to download the data on ACCOBAMS Website.

ASI results are also serving the IUCN Red list assessment and reassessment process for 8 species of cetaceans of the Mediterranean and the 3 species resident of the Black Sea, which will lead to updated status by the end of 2020 which support conservation actions. While a new publication on the state of cetaceans in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea will be released in about a year, the ACCOBAMS efforts are also turned towards the continuation of the ASI, because it is crucial that this program

continues to allow monitoring the trends the region's species over the long term to better adjust conservation measures. In this sense, new collaborations will be / are being sought to ensure the long term implementation of this program for monitoring marine macrofauna and anthropic pressures in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

For **the management of underwater noise**, ACCOBAMS, continuously supported by the Joint CMS/ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS Noise Working Group, actively participates in the development of the two candidate indicators for Ecological Objective 11 (energy including underwater noise) of the Ecosystem Approach implemented by the Barcelona Convention and contributes to strengthening the cooperation of States in implementing the Descriptor 11 of the EU Framework Directive on the Marine Environment, in particular by:

- the QuietMed project, which aimed to improve the level of coherence and the comparability as regards Descriptor 11 (underwater noise) by enhancing cooperation among Mediterranean Sea Basin countries within the implementation of the second cycle of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive;
- the QuietMed2 project which aims to support the assessment of the extent to which Good Environmental Status has been achieved in the Mediterranean Region regarding underwater noise to get updated, improved and more complete regional assessments;
- the finalization of the ACCOBAMS MMO/PAM Courses for the standard MMO/PAMs training of all accredited “trainer” Organizations, the accreditation of the three first “ACCOBAMS Highly Qualified MMOs/PAM operator” trainer Organizations and the implementation of the first ACCOBAMS training for High Quality MMO/PAM Operator in Constanta, Romania, on 12-16 September 2018;
- the ACCOBAMS workshop on “sonars and cetaceans’ interactions” which aimed to improve dialogue and cooperation of national navies with ACCOBAMS, especially regarding military activities of navies (8 – 9 October 2019, Toulon, France)
- the revised Methodological Guide: “Guidance on underwater noise mitigation measures” (MOP7/2019/Doc31) to assist Parties in their future work in the ACCOBAMS Area.

A new Resolution on Anthropogenic noise (ACCOBAMS Resolution 7.13) has been adopted by ACCOBAMS Parties at MOP7. This Resolution:

- *Invites* Parties and non-Parties to implement CMS Resolution 12.14 on Adverse Impacts of Anthropogenic Noise on Cetaceans and Other Migratory Species with the attached CMS Family Guidelines on Environmental Impact Assessment for Marine Noise-generating Activities;
- *Adopts* the revised detailed Guidelines to address the impacts of anthropogenic noise on cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Area that are presented in [Annex 2](#) to the Resolution, and which include recommendations for both impulsive and continuous noise.

Regarding **interactions with fisheries**, and in line with CMS Resolution 12.22 on Bycatch, collaboration between ACCOBAMS and the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (FAO-GFCM) - the competent RFMO in the Mediterranean and Black Sea - was strengthened, in particular through joint projects and activities aimed at monitoring and mitigating incidental catches of endangered species following a multitaxon approach. In particular:

- A standardized methodology to monitor the incidental catch of vulnerable species in the Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries was developed and published: <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca4991en>;
- Bycatch data collection by trained observers is supported in more than 40 ports in Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey through on-board observations, questionnaires and self-reporting;
- Several tools were developed to facilitate the identification of vulnerable species incidentally caught in fisheries, such as an Identification Guide and Identification sheets;
- Two bibliographic reviews on bycatch of vulnerable species and mitigation technics were elaborated;
- Four Guides on good practices for fishers to handle vulnerable marine species incidentally caught in Mediterranean fisheries were elaborated for cetaceans, sea turtles, seabirds and elasmobranchs;
- Field activities to monitor bycatch and depredation were supported in Algeria, France, Morocco, Spain and Tunisia.

The ACCOBAMS-ASCOBANS Joint Bycatch Working Group is now fully operational and allows exchanges of experience and best practices among the two CMS instruments to address this issue. At the kind invitation of France, a First Meeting of the JBWG is expected to be organized in May 2020 in France.