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GLOBAL PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR CETACEANS

(Prepared by the Council and the Secretariat)

Summary:

This document reports on progress to implement Decision 12.16 *CMS Global Programme of Work for Cetaceans (2012-2024)* and recommends revisions to the Decision. [It has been revised by the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council at its 4th session in November 2019.](#)

Further, it reports on progress to implement Decision 12.51 f) – part of the Decision dealing with *Recreational In-Water Interaction with Aquatic Mammals*, but addressing wider issues faced by cetaceans in the Red Sea. A detailed overview as submitted by the Appointed Councillor for Aquatic Mammals is attached as Annex 1.

In addition, a new work area focusing on the role of whales in ecosystems, to be addressed in collaboration with the International Whaling Commission, is being introduced.

Draft decisions on the above subjects are presented in Annex 2.

GLOBAL PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR CETACEANS

Background

1. At its 12th meeting (COP12, Manila, 2017), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decision 12.16 *CMS Global Programme of Work for Cetaceans (2012-2024)*:

12.16 Directed to the Scientific Council

Subject to the availability of resources, the Scientific Council should review the regional threats for the CMS-listed aquatic mammals not included in the Global Programme of Work for Cetaceans and prepare for the CMS Conference of the Parties at its 13th meeting a robust assessment of threats and regional priorities as well as similar work programmes for these other aquatic mammal species.

2. In addition, Decision 12.51 f), even though originally placed under the heading *Recreational In-Water Interaction with Aquatic Mammals*, is more logically addressed in conjunction with the *Global Programme of Work for Cetaceans*. It reads as follows:

12.51 f) Directed to the Scientific Council

*The Scientific Council should consider, in the light of CMS Technical Series No. 33 *Cetaceans of the Red Sea*, launched at the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, how best to take forward the conservation of cetaceans in the Red Sea region, taking into account all relevant threats, and report back on this to the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*

3. Further, Resolution 12.17 *Conservation and Management of Whales and their Habitats in the South Atlantic Region* in paragraph 5:

Requests the Secretariat and the Scientific Council to work with the Scientific and Conservation Committees of the International Whaling Commission to increase understanding of cetaceans' contribution to the functioning of marine ecosystems, including by co-hosting a workshop to review the existing data and research and identify opportunities to expand this work.

Activities to Implement Decisions 12.16 and 12.51 f)

4. Due to lack of capacity and resources, no progress has been made with respect to implementation of Decision 12.16. It is recommended that the action be carried forward, and funds be made available to support its implementation.
5. In implementation of Decision 12.51 f), the Appointed Councillor for Aquatic Mammals facilitated the development of the report found in Annex 1 to this document. It provides a comprehensive overview of issues affecting cetaceans in the Red Sea and makes recommendations on how to address these.
6. In support of this Decision, the CMS Secretariat reached out to the Secretariat of the Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden (PERSGA) in February 2019, enquiring about possibilities for cooperation on the subject. Further outreach including through the Regional Office for West Asia of the United Nations Environment Programme is anticipated.

Collaboration with the International Whaling Commission (IWC) on the Role of Cetaceans in the Ecosystem Functioning

7. At its 67th meeting in 2018, the International Whaling Commission adopted Resolution 2018-2 *Advancing the Commission's Work on the Role of Cetaceans in the Ecosystem Functioning*¹. The resolution acknowledges increasing scientific data suggesting that whales enhance nutrient availability for primary production. It recognizes the need to include in management strategies and decision making for conservation consideration of the contributions to marine ecosystem functioning made by live cetaceans and carcasses present in the ocean. IWC Member States also decided to increase collaboration and cooperation with governmental and non-governmental, regional and international organizations.
8. As noted above, the mandate given to the Scientific Council and Secretariat to collaborate on this issue stems from Resolution 12.17 *Conservation and Management of Whales and their Habitats in the South Atlantic Region* and therefore has a regional focus on the South Atlantic. However, the scientific evidence to be considered is not limited to this region. Accordingly, it seems appropriate that CMS, when engaging with the IWC on this subject, follows the global approach used by IWC.
9. The Secretariat has liaised with the IWC Secretariat regarding the implementation of this request, and steps towards co-hosting a workshop on this subject have been made. It is preliminarily scheduled to take place at the Secretariat's premises in Bonn in the second quarter of 2020.

Discussion and Analysis

10. The progress made with assessing the situation of cetaceans in the Red Sea, both through the [Technical Series No. 33 Cetaceans of the Red Sea](#), published in 2017, and now with the review of threats in the region provided in Annex 1, corresponds well with the activities foreseen in the *Global Programme of Work for Cetaceans*, adopted in [Resolution 10.15 \(Rev.COP12\)](#).
11. The authors of the document reproduced in Annex 1 recommend the development of an Action Plan for the cetacean populations found in this sensitive marine area. Their recommendations are captured in the proposed Decisions found in Annex 2.
12. The request for an assessment of threats and regional priorities as well as the development of work programmes for other aquatic mammal species contained in Decision 12.16 has been included in the proposed new Decisions.

¹ Available for download from <https://iwc.int/resolutions>

13. CMS Resolution 10.15 (Rev.COP12) *Global Programme of Work on Cetaceans* predates the policy-related discourse on the positive role of whales in marine ecosystems and accordingly does not touch on this subject. It does, however, request the advice of the Aquatic Mammals Working Group of the Scientific Council on engagement with the IWC. In view of the global scope of the work on the role of cetaceans in the ecosystem functioning under IWC, it seems appropriate to lift the work of CMS out of the regional context and consider it in conjunction with the implementation of the *Global Programme of Work on Cetaceans*. Accordingly, related proposed Decisions have been included in Annex 2.

Recommended Actions

14. The Conference of the Parties is recommended to
- a) take note of the update on issues affecting Red Sea Cetaceans contained in Annex 1;
 - b) adopt the draft Decisions contained in Annex 2 of this document;
 - c) note that the entire Decision 12.51 is proposed for deletion in Document 26.2.5.;
 - d) delete Decision 12.16.

ANNEX 1**UPDATE ON ISSUES AFFECTING RED SEA CETACEANS**

(Prepared by Laetitia Nunny, Mark P. Simmonds, Giuseppe Notarbartolo di Sciara)

Introduction

1. In 2017, the CMS Secretariat published a new edition in its Technical Series entitled “Cetaceans of the Red Sea” in which it was noted that the region’s cetaceans are not well-known and that there are many gaps in our knowledge (Notarbartolo di Sciara et al., 2017). Indeed, in a recent review of global threats to marine mammals which reviewed >1,780 publications and created risk maps, the Red Sea was not highlighted in any of the maps (Avila, Kaschner and Dormann, 2018). This was partly because the Red Sea is not considered as core habitat for marine mammals but also because there was a dearth of documented threats for this region (I. Avila, pers. comm., 28 September 2018).
2. In the last thirty years, the Red Sea has started to experience the effects of an ever-increasing human population along its coastlines. Habitats such as coral reef, seagrass and mangroves have been impacted, fish stocks are being depleted and pollution is entering the environment from various sources (Notarbartolo di Sciara et al., 2017).
3. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species provides information about the conservation status of many cetacean species (including those present in the Red Sea) at a global level (IUCN, 2018). In 2003, the IUCN published guidelines for assessing conservation status at regional and national levels (National Red List, 2018). However, no Red List is currently available for the Red Sea region nor for any of the countries bordering it (National Red List, 2018).

Red Sea Cetaceans

4. Species that regularly occur in the Red Sea are listed in Table 1 along with their CMS listings and global IUCN Red List categories. Other species that have been recorded in the Red Sea, are considered rare visitors e.g. Omura’s Whale (*Balaenoptera omurai*), Humpback Whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*), Short-finned Pilot Whale (*Globicephala macrorhynchus*), Dwarf Sperm Whale (*Kogia sima*), Striped Dolphin (*Stenella coeruleoalba*), Rough-toothed Dolphin (*Steno bredanensis*) and Orca (*Orcinus orca*) (Notarbartolo di Sciara et al., 2017).

Table 1: Species found regularly in the Red Sea and their CMS and IUCN listings (CMS and IUCN listings refer to global population, not specifically to Red Sea)

Scientific name	Common name	Occurrence in the Red Sea (Notarbartolo di Sciara et al., 2007 & Notarbartolo di Sciara et al., 2017)	CMS Appendix I	CMS Appendix II	CMS Instruments	IUCN Red List	Population Trend (IUCN)
Balaenoptera edeni	Bryde's Whale	Regular, infrequent.		2002	CMS, Pacific Islands Cetaceans	Least Concern	Unknown
Delphinus delphis tropicalis	Indo-Pacific Common Dolphin	Regular in southern waters.	2005 (Delphinus delphis)	1988 (Delphinus delphis)	CMS, ASCOBANS, ACCOBAMS, Western African Aquatic Mammals, Pacific Islands Cetaceans (Delphinus delphis)	Least Concern (Delphinus delphis)	Unknown (Delphinus delphis)
Grampus griseus	Risso's Dolphin	Regular, infrequent. Deep waters, throughout region.		1988	CMS, ACCOBAMS, ASCOBANS, Western African Aquatic Mammals, Pacific Islands Cetaceans	Least Concern	Unknown
Pseudorca crassidens	False Killer Whale	Regular, infrequent. Deep waters, throughout region.			ACCOBAMS, ASCOBANS, Pacific Islands Cetaceans, Western African Aquatic Mammals	Near threatened	Unknown
Sousa plumbea	Indian Ocean Humpback Dolphin	Regular in coastal waters.		1991 (Sousa chinensis)	CMS, Pacific Islands Cetaceans (Sousa chinensis)	Endangered	Decreasing

Scientific name	Common name	Occurrence in the Red Sea (Notarbartolo di Sciara et al., 2007 & Notarbartolo di Sciara et al., 2017)	CMS Appendix I	CMS Appendix II	CMS Instruments	IUCN Red List	Population Trend (IUCN)
Stenella attenuata	Pantropical Spotted Dolphin	Regular. Deep waters, throughout region.		1999	CMS, Western African Aquatic Mammals, Pacific Islands Cetaceans	Least Concern	Unknown
Stenella longirostris	Spinner Dolphin	Regular. Deep waters and reefs throughout the region.		1999	CMS, Western African Aquatic Mammals, Pacific Islands Cetaceans	Data Deficient	Unknown
Tursiops aduncus	Indian Ocean Bottlenose Dolphin	Regular in coastal waters. Mostly in the north.		1979	CMS	Data Deficient	Unknown
Tursiops truncatus	Common Bottlenose Dolphin	Regular. Coastal waters throughout the region.		1991	ASCOBANS, Western African Aquatic Mammals, CMS, ACCOBAMS	Least Concern	Unknown

Threats to Red Sea Cetaceans

5. Avila, Kaschner and Dormann (2018) identified seven threat categories, which affect marine mammals globally: incidental catch, direct harvesting, pollution, traffic, pathogens, resource depletion and ocean-physics alteration. They ranked the threats according to how many species were affected and found that, globally, bycatch threatens the most marine mammal species (112 species), followed by pollution (which threatens 99 species), direct harvesting (89 species) and traffic (86 species) (Avila, Kaschner and Dormann, 2018).
6. Notarbartolo di Sciara et al. (2017) regarded climate change, chemical and noise pollution, disturbance of critical habitat and direct killings as the main threats to cetaceans in the Red Sea.
7. The IUCN Red List details which threats are faced by each cetacean species and Table 2 shows the threats that are faced by those found in the Red Sea. However, it must be noted that these threats are those faced by the species on a global level and do not relate specifically to the Red Sea. Indeed, Notarbartolo di Sciara et al. (2017) suggested that some threats are, so far, insignificant in the Red Sea including bycatch, prey depletion from overfishing and ship-strikes.
8. Pollution levels are generally low in the Red Sea (when compared with other marine areas) but there is a high risk of major oil spills considering the number of oil tankers crossing the Red Sea every year (Notarbartolo di Sciara et al., 2017). Chemical and noise pollution are localized threats in the Red Sea occurring in areas where construction is taking place (Notarbartolo di Sciara et al., 2017); in fact, pressure on the coastal zone is projected to become more important in future years (e.g., Saudi Arabia), and should raise concern. Climate change is another threat which has not yet been detected amongst Red Sea cetacean populations (although there is evidence of Red Sea biota, mainly coral reefs, being affected by climate change).
9. Tourism which directly targets dolphin resting areas is a serious threat in some places and to some species e.g. Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphins in Hurghada, Egypt and spinner dolphins in Satayah, Egypt (Notarbartolo di Sciara et al., 2017). Notarbartolo di Sciara et al. (2009) detail how a management plan was put in place to protect Spinner Dolphins in Samadai. However, in other important resting locations, e.g. Fanous Reef and Satayah, no management plans are in place and disturbance effects are of high concern (Fumagalli et al. 2018).
10. There are cases of dolphins being killed in order to use their meat as bait for shark fishing but this is not considered to be a threat to any species at a conservation level (Notarbartolo di Sciara et al., 2017).
11. A recent study looked at the health of some Red Sea cetaceans. Faecal samples taken from free-ranging Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphins (*Tursiops aduncus*) in Hurghada, Egypt identified 10 protozoan and 11 metazoan parasite species (Kleinertz et al., 2014). Some of these parasites are potentially pathogenic, for example *Nasitrema attenuata* can, if it invades the brain, cause extensive necrosis and fatal meningoencephalitis in small cetaceans. The study also found *Diphyllbothrium* eggs in the faecal samples. Dolphins that are infected with mature *Diphyllbothrium* tapeworms may become debilitated and may die if their parasitic burden is high (Kleinertz et al., 2014).

Table 2: Global threats to Red Sea cetacean species from the IUCN Red List. Note: threats are identified at the global level here and are not specific to the Red Sea (Refs: Baird, 2018; Bearzi et al., 2012; Braulik et al., 2017; Cooke and Brownell, 2018; Hammond et al. 2008; Hammond et al., 2012abc; Taylor et al., 2012)

Threat		Species threatened	Timing
Transportation & service corridors	Shipping Lanes	Balaenoptera edeni	Ongoing
		Sousa plumbea	
		Tursiops aduncus	
		Tursiops truncatus	
Biological resource use	Fishing & harvesting aquatic resources	Intentional use: (large scale) [harvest]	Past, unlikely to return
		Balaenoptera edeni	
		Delphinus delphis	
		Stenella attenuata	
		Intentional use: (subsistence/small scale) [harvest]	Ongoing
		Grampus griseus	
	Pseudorca crassidens		
	Stenella attenuata		
	Stenella longirostris		
	Tursiops aduncus		
	Tursiops truncatus		
	Unintentional effects: (subsistence/small scale) [harvest]	Ongoing	
	Grampus griseus		
Pseudorca crassidens			
Sousa plumbea			
Stenella attenuata			
Tursiops truncatus			
Unintentional effects: (large scale) [harvest]	Ongoing		
Delphinus delphis			
Pseudorca crassidens			
Sousa plumbea			
Stenella longirostris			
Tursiops aduncus			

Threat			Species threatened	Timing	
		Persecution / Control	Pseudorca crassidens Stenella attenuata Tursiops truncatus	Ongoing	
Pollution	Industrial & military effluents	Oil spills	Balaenoptera edeni Sousa plumbea	Ongoing	
		Type unknown/unrecorded	Pseudorca crassidens Sousa plumbea Tursiops aduncus Tursiops truncatus	Ongoing	
			Garbage & solid waste	Pseudorca crassidens	Ongoing
			Excess energy	Noise pollution	Grampus griseus Tursiops aduncus
	Domestic & urban waste water	Run-off	Sousa plumbea	Ongoing	
		Type unknown/unrecorded	Sousa plumbea Tursiops aduncus Tursiops truncatus	Ongoing	
			Agricultural & forestry effluents	Herbicides & pesticides	Delphinus delphis
	Type unknown/unrecorded	Tursiops aduncus Tursiops truncatus		Ongoing	
	Invasive and other problematic species, genes & diseases	Problematic native species/diseases	Delphinus delphis Tursiops aduncus Tursiops truncatus	Ongoing	
			Climate Change & severe weather	Habitat shifting & alteration	Delphinus delphis Grampus griseus
Residential & commercial development				Housing & urban areas	Sousa plumbea Tursiops aduncus Tursiops truncatus

Threat		Species threatened	Timing
	Commercial & industrial areas	Sousa plumbea	Ongoing
		Tursiops aduncus	
		Tursiops truncatus	
	Tourism and recreation areas	Tursiops truncatus	Ongoing
Human intrusions & disturbance	Recreational activities	Stenella longirostris	Ongoing
		Tursiops aduncus	
		Tursiops truncatus	

Recommendations for the CMS Secretariat

12. Notarbartolo di Sciara et al., (2017) recommended that the status of Red Sea cetaceans needs to be carefully monitored, whilst Carvalho et al. (2019) recommend a precautionary approach to the management of cetaceans in the Red Sea due to the lack of information about them and their conservation statuses.
13. More specifically, it is recommended that:
 - a. the CMS Secretariat investigate the potential for the development of an Action Plan for the cetaceans in the Red Sea region;
 - b. pending the availability of suitable funding, the CMS Secretariat organise a workshop of interested parties including scientists, researchers and conservationists from the Red Sea region to identify how to best take forward cetacean conservation there and, specifically, to assist in the development of an Action Plan; and
 - c. the CMS Secretariat consult with suitable regional bodies to seek their support to take forward the Action Plan.

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PROPOSED DECISIONS

GLOBAL PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR CETACEANS

Directed to Parties

13.AA Parties are requested to:

- a) liaise with the Secretariat regarding the potential for the development of an Action Plan for the cetaceans in the Red Sea region;
- b) provide voluntary contributions support the implementation of these Decisions.

Directed to the Aquatic Mammals Working Group of the Scientific Council

13.BB The Aquatic Mammals Working Group shall, [subject to the availability of resources](#):

- a) ~~(12.16) [subject to the availability of resources](#), the Scientific Council should review the regional threats for the CMS-listed aquatic mammals not included in the Global Programme of Work for Cetaceans and prepare for the CMS Conference of the Parties at its 13th meeting a robust assessment of threats and regional priorities as well as similar work programmes for these other aquatic mammal species.~~
- b) based on this assessment of threats and regional priorities and subject to the availability of resources, prepare work programmes for these other aquatic mammal species for consideration by the Scientific Council at its 5th or 6th Meeting of the Sessional Committee;
- c) if applicable, provide advice on and input to the development of an Action Plan for cetaceans in the Red Sea region.

Directed to the Scientific Council

13.CC The Scientific Council shall, [subject to the availability of resources](#):

- a) review the assessments of regional threats and resulting work programmes developed by the Aquatic Mammals Working Group and provide recommendations to the Conference of the Parties at its 14th Meeting;
- b) if applicable, review the draft Action Plan for the cetaceans in the Red Sea region and provide recommendations to the Conference of the Parties at its 15th Meeting.

Directed to the Secretariat

13.DD The Secretariat shall, subject to the availability of resources:

- a) consult Red Sea Range States to investigate the potential for the development of an Action Plan for the cetaceans in the Red Sea region;
- b) ~~subject to the availability of resources~~, organize a workshop of interested Parties, scientists and conservation organizations working in the Red Sea region to identify how to best take forward cetacean conservation there and, if so desired by Parties, to assist in the development of an Action Plan;
- c) consult with suitable regional bodies including the Secretariat of the Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden (PERSGA) to seek its support to take forward cetacean conservation in the Red Sea, as recommended by the abovementioned workshop;
- d) liaise with the IWC Secretariat with a view to co-hosting a workshop on the role of cetaceans in ecosystem functioning to review the existing data and research and identify opportunities to expand this work.
- e) report on the outcomes of the workshop to the next meeting of the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council.