

Medium Term Implementation Priorities from the Whale and Dolphin Action Plan 2013-2017 for the Pacific Cetaceans MoU

The following list represents the activities that have been identified as both a high priority are to implement in the immediate term (2013-2016)

Theme 1: INFORMATION, AWARENESS/EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION

OBJECTIVE 1: Develop communication strategies, training programmes and protocols for key issues within the Whale and Dolphin Action Plan

- 1.1: Identify key issues for each member and support development of appropriate education strategies and programmes (e.g. known threats; species ID; status).
- 1.2: Develop appropriate education and awareness tools incorporating scientific and traditional knowledge for different target audiences at a regional and national level.

OBJECTIVE 2: Increase awareness and understanding of whales and dolphins in the region

- 1.5: Implement educational and awareness tools in schools and/or communities using relevant networks and methods.
- 1.6: Provide materials and information to mass media in-country to inform public.

Theme 2: CAPACITY BUILDING

OBJECTIVE 1: Increase in-country expertise and capacity

- 2.1: Identify and address training needs and support proposal writing to implement WDAP at country and regional level, using existing processes such as National Capacity Self Assessment (NCSA).
- 2.2: Develop training packages on common priorities (e.g. stranding, data recording, legislation, communication, etc.) based on regional priorities and convene workshops based on identified needs.
- 2.4: Build in-country capacity to prepare relevant regulation, legislation and policy.
- 2.7: Develop database complementary to that under the Marine Turtle Action Plan.

Theme 3: THREAT REDUCTION

OBJECTIVE 1: Minimize the impacts of the major hazards listed below on whale and dolphin populations in the Pacific Islands region:

- (i) Fisheries interactions
- (ii) Climate change
- (iii) Coastal development
- (iv) Pollution/pathogens
- (v) Direct take

(i) Fisheries Interactions

- 3.1: Collaborate to improve data and share information on fisheries /cetaceans interactions, and successful and unsuccessful tactics for mitigation.
- 3.2: Foster industry / research institution / government partnership to develop and test mitigation techniques to reduce bycatch and depredation.
- 3.2B: Develop an active collaboration agreement with relevant RFMOs, including IATTC, CCSBT and WCPFC with the objective of measurably reducing cetacean bycatch (*CMS Resolution 10.15: Global Programme of Work for Cetaceans + CMS Resolution 10.14: Bycatch of CMS-Listed Species In Gillnet Fisheries*).

(ii) Direct take

- 3.3: Take actions to ensure a favourable conservation status of affected whale and dolphin species.
- 3.4: Ensure compliance with all relevant international regulations and conventions/agreements.

(iii) Climate Change

- 3.5B: Identify those CMS Appendix I and II listed species, as well as other migratory species on the IUCN Red List, that are most susceptible to climate

change, and subsequently consider whether these should be listed or uplisted on the CMS Appendices, as appropriate; and
Prepare single species action plans for those species listed on Appendix I considered to be most vulnerable to climate change
(*CMS Resolution 10.1: Migratory Species Conservation in the Light of Climate Change*)

(iv) Pollution and Pathogens

3.8: Encourage improved waste management at community and national levels (including fishing operations) to reduce plastics and other debris in the marine environment.

3.9: Reduce amount of discarded fishing gear in the ocean.

3.11: Consider and reduce impacts of underwater noise pollution from any source that could affect whales and dolphins.

Theme 4: ECOSYSTEM AND HABITAT PROTECTION

OBJECTIVE 1: Support and encourage the designation (establishment) of national whale/ marine sanctuaries, marine park, MPAs in SPREP member countries and territories

4.1: Support effort to declare/establish EEZ wide / national whale /marine sanctuaries, large MPAs and marine parks with technical /policy advice.

OBJECTIVE 3: Identify and protect critical habitat and migratory pathways

4.4: Identify (through research etc including the use of satellite tagging) and protect critical cetacean habitat and migratory pathways.

4.4B: Provide support identification of and where appropriate work on the protection of habitat (*CMS Resolution 10.15: Global Programme of Work for Cetaceans*).

Theme 5: LEGISLATION, POLICY AND MANAGEMENT/RECOVERY PLANS

OBJECTIVE 1: Develop country level legal, policy and institutional framework to support the effective implementation of the whales and dolphins action plan

5.1: Update legislative and policy review for SPREP member countries and territories and disseminate the final report. The review will include: identifying legislative inconsistencies and gaps; habitat and species protection measures including sanctuary declaration, MPAs, MPs and associated management plans; regulation of distant water and local fleets, including observer programme coverage to document commercial fishing impact and interaction with whales and dolphins.

OBJECTIVE 2: Develop and support implementation of regional/national whale and dolphin species management and recovery plans

5.6: Develop and implement national whale and dolphin action plans, including recovery plans, where necessary, based on the regional action plan, to promote and guide national whale and dolphin conservation programmes and initiatives.

Theme 6: CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE AND VALUE

OBJECTIVE 1: Document the range of cultural practices, values and knowledge associated with whales and dolphins and encourage a more cohesive approach in policies and legislation

6.3: Review and identify gaps and conflicts in relevant policies and legislation to support the protection and promotion of traditional resource management (TRM), traditional knowledge (TK), intellectual property rights (IPR), access and benefit sharing (ABS), and customary marine tenure (CMT).

OBJECTIVE 2: Preserve and protect the traditional knowledge and values associated with whales and dolphins

6.7: Identify and empower appropriate in-country authorities to hold, maintain and promote traditional knowledge.

OBJECTIVE 3: Ensure appropriate cultural knowledge, practices, and values inform and underpin management measures

6.10: Ensure traditional protocols and knowledge are respected in the design and implementation of biological surveys

6.11: Ensure national and local policies and management respect and draw upon traditional knowledge.

Theme 7: RESEARCH AND MONITORING (This Action Plan promotes only non-lethal techniques for research)

OBJECTIVE 1: Establish abundance/distribution of all cetaceans in the Pacific Islands region

7.1: Develop and maintain a web-accessible whale and dolphin sighting database.

7.2: Improve understanding of species diversity in all PICTs.

OBJECTIVE 2: Estimate key demographic parameters to help diagnose trends. Prioritization to be given to those species or populations known to be subject to direct or indirect threats, and/or have a data deficient or unfavourable conservation status.

7.8B: Develop a report on the twelve cetacean species and populations listed on the CMS Appendices for the Pacific Islands Region (*CMS Resolution 10.15: Global Programme of Work for Cetaceans*):

- i. Australian snubfin dolphin (*Orcaella heinsohni*) Appendix II
- ii. Blue whale (*Balaenoptera musculus*) Appendix I + Concerted/ Cooperative Action
- iii. Bryde's whale (*Balaenoptera edeni*) Appendix II
- iv. Dusky dolphin (*Lagenorhynchus obscurus*) Appendix II + Concerted/ Cooperative Action
- v. Fin whale (*Balaenoptera physalus*) Appendix I/II + Concerted/ Cooperative Action
- vi. Humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) Appendix I + Concerted/ Cooperative Action
- vii. Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin (*Sousa chinensis*) Appendix II + Concerted/ Cooperative Action
- viii. Killer whale / Orca (*Orcinus orca*) Appendix II (included for Concerted Action during CMS COP10)
- ix. Omura's whale (*Balaenoptera omurai*) Appendix II
- x. Pantropical spotted dolphin (*Stenella attenuata*) Appendix II + Concerted/ Cooperative Action
- xi. Sei whale (*Balaenoptera borealis*) Appendix I/II + Concerted/ Cooperative Action
- xii. Sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*) Appendix I/II + Concerted/ Cooperative Action

Including: an analysis of the extent and how their needs have been addressed by the Pacific Cetaceans MoU; a summary of the future conservation action needs of each of these species; and their relative priority within the Pacific Cetaceans MoU

(*Resolution 10.23: Concerted and Cooperative Actions*)

OBJECTIVE 3: Undertake research and monitoring to identify hazards and develop hazard mitigation strategies

7.9: Collate all available information on the scale of depredation, by-catch and fisheries interaction in order to better assess level of priority and possible mitigation actions.

7.10: Promote increased reporting of cetacean related information (sightings, fisheries entanglements or by-catch, depredation etc.) from all fishing vessels.

7.11: Include assessments of impacts in researches on abundance, structure, distribution, trends of humpback, minke, fin and sperm whales

OBJECTIVE 4: Improve data collection and database management systems

7.24: Promote the reporting of as much information as possible from any anecdotal or opportunistic sightings including ship strikes and fisheries interactions, as well as sighting reports from the community, boating/dive community records, ferries etc.

OBJECTIVE 5: Undertake comprehensive habitat mapping - *Prioritization should be given to those species or populations known to be subject to direct or indirect threats, and/or have a data deficient or unfavourable conservation status.*

7.29: Collate a listing of key habitat characteristics for as many PIR cetacean species as possible.

7.30: Undertake habitat mapping of relevant environmental variables on species identified in Action 7.29.

7.31: Ground truth proposed distribution of cetacean species as per habitat maps through research surveys.

OBJECTIVE 6: Improve information received on stranding events in the Pacific Island Region

7.32: Encourage as much information as possible to be collected at a stranding event. If possible, full necropsies should be undertaken, including examination for plastic ingestion.

Theme 8: WHALE AND DOLPHIN BASED TOURISM

OBJECTIVE 2: Ensure best practice management of whales and dolphins tourism in the PIR

8.6: Encourage annual stakeholder meetings (Govt, industry, scientists, NGOs) to assess management of the whale watch industry and use as a basis for industry review and reporting.

OBJECTIVE 3: Whale and dolphin based tourism watching is conducted responsibly with minimum impact and maximum education and economic values.

8.15: Ensure socio-economic benefits of whale and dolphin watching

Theme 9: NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION

OBJECTIVE 1: Promote and enhance national, regional and international coordination, collaboration and partnership for whale and dolphin conservation in the Pacific Islands Region

9.4: Promote cooperation and highlight achievements and lessons learned in whale and dolphin conservation at national regional and international fora.

9.7: Ensure integration of whale and dolphin conservation into national, regional and international initiatives including: NBSAPs; National Sustainable Development Strategies; Pacific Islands Regional Oceans Policy; Action Strategy for Nature Conservation, CROP Marine Sector Working Group; RFMOs; NBSAP Working Group),CTI, Micronesian challenge, Oceanscape, Funding opportunities e.g. GEF

9.7B: Confirm the current status of migratory species in respective country NBSAPs or other relevant national plan / policy and integrate relevant priority actions from the WDAP, into national plans (e.g.: NBSAPs etc.)

9.7C: Coordinate between CBD, UNFCCC and CMS National Focal Points to integrate ecological networks into national environmental planning, including plans currently being developed under the CBD NBSAPs and UNFCCC NAPs, and to report on experiences and progress to Pacific Cetaceans MoU MoS4.

9.9: Assess members capacity to implement the WDAP, CMS Cetacean MoU, CITES and CBD where relevant, using, e.g. the NCSA process already in place in countries.

9.9B: Secure base funding to hold annual meetings, to develop documentation, to support PICT attendance and to coordinate the work of the MoU.