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|  | **CONVENTION ON**  **MIGRATORY**  **SPECIES** | UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.26.2.10  27 September 2019  Original: English |

13th MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

Gandhinagar, India, 17 - 22 February 2020

Agenda Item 26.2

**ScC-SC4 CRP 10.2.10**

**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.*

1. 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.*

1. 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)

1. Due to lack of capacity and resources, no progress has been made with respect to implementation of Decision12.16. It is recommended that the action be carried forward, and funds be made available to support its implementation.
2. In implementation of Decision12.51 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.
3. 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

1. 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]](#footnote-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.
2. 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.
3. 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

1. 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*](https://www.cms.int/en/publication/cetaceans-red-sea-cms-technical-series-no-33), 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)](https://www.cms.int/en/document/global-programme-work-cetaceans-0).
2. 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.
3. 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 Decision12.16 has been included in the proposed new Decisions.
4. 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

1. The Conference of the Parties is recommended to
2. take note of the update on issues affecting Red Sea Cetaceans contained in Annex 1;
3. adopt the draft Decisions contained in Annex 2 of this document;
4. note that the entire Decision 12.51 is proposed for deletion in Document 26.2.5.;
5. 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 Speciesprovides 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**

1. 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 |
| 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**

1. 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).
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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).
5. 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).
6. 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).
7. 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 *Diphyllobothrium* eggs in the faecal samples. Dolphins that are infected with mature *Diphyllobothrium* 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] | Balaenoptera edeni | Past, unlikely to return |
| Delphinus delphis |
| Stenella attenuata |
| Intentional use: (subsistence/small scale) [harvest] | Grampus griseus | Ongoing |
| Pseudorca crassidens |
| Stenella attenuata |
| Stenella longirostris |
| Tursiops aduncus |
| Tursiops truncatus |
| Unintentional effects: (subsistence/small scale) [harvest] | Grampus griseus | Ongoing |
| Pseudorca crassidens |
| Sousa plumbea |
| Stenella attenuata |
| Tursiops truncatus |
| Unintentional effects: (large scale) [harvest] | Delphinus delphis | Ongoing |
| Pseudorca crassidens |
| Sousa plumbea |
| Stenella longirostris |
| Tursiops aduncus |
| Persecution / Control | Pseudorca crassidens | Ongoing |
| Stenella attenuata |
| Tursiops truncatus |
| Pollution | Industrial & military effluents | Oil spills | Balaenoptera edeni | Ongoing |
| Sousa plumbea |
| Type unknown/unrecorded | Pseudorca crassidens | Ongoing |
| Sousa plumbea |
| Tursiops aduncus |
| Tursiops truncatus |
| Garbage & solid waste |  | Pseudorca crassidens | Ongoing |
| Excess energy | Noise pollution | Grampus griseus | Ongoing |
| Tursiops aduncus |
| Domestic & urban waste water | Run-off | Sousa plumbea | Ongoing |
| Type unknown/unrecorded | Sousa plumbea | Ongoing |
| Tursiops aduncus |
| Tursiops truncatus |
| Agricultural & forestry effluents | Herbicides & pesticides | Delphinus delphis | Ongoing |
| Type unknown/ unrecorded | Tursiops aduncus | Ongoing |
| Tursiops truncatus |
| Invasive and other problematic species, genes & diseases | Problematic native species/diseases | | Delphinus delphis | Ongoing |
| Tursiops aduncus |
| Tursiops truncatus |
| Climate Change & severe weather | Habitat shifting & alteration | | Delphinus delphis | Ongoing |
| Grampus griseus | Future |
| Residential & commercial development | Housing & urban areas | | Sousa plumbea | Ongoing |
| Tursiops aduncus |
| Tursiops truncatus |
| 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**

1. 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.
2. More specifically, it is recommended that:
3. the CMS Secretariat investigate the potential for the development of an Action Plan for the cetaceans in the Red Sea region;
4. 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
5. the CMS Secretariat consult with suitable regional bodies to seek their support to take forward the Action Plan.

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**ANNEX 2**

PROPOSED DECISIONS

**Global Programme of Work for Cetaceans**

***Directed to Parties***

13.AA Parties are requested to:

1. liaise with the Secretariat regarding the potential for the development of an Action Plan for the cetaceans in the Red Sea region;
2. 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:

1. *(12.16)*, ~~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. 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;
3. 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:

1. 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;
2. 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:

1. consult Red Sea Range States to investigate the potential for the development of an Action Plan for the cetaceans in the Red Sea region;
2. 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;
3. 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;
4. 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.
5. report on the outcomes of the workshop to the next meeting of the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council.

1. Available for download from <https://iwc.int/resolutions> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)