



**CONVENTION ON
MIGRATORY
SPECIES**

UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.25.4.1

9 September 2025

Original: English

15th MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
Campo Grande, Brazil, 23-29 March 2026
Agenda Item 25.4.1

CONSERVATION PRIORITIES FOR CETACEANS

(Prepared by the Secretariat and the ScC Aquatic Mammals Working Group)

ScC-SC8 CRP 8.4.1/Rev.1 |

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE AQUATIC MAMMALS WORKING GROUP

Background

CMS Appendix I and II list many migratory aquatic mammal species. CMS COPs have also adopted several Resolutions that cover aquatic mammals, their habitats and the threats to which they are exposed. The Aquatic Mammals Working Group was established in 2011 through Resolution 10.15 *Global Programme of Work for Cetaceans*.¹

Purpose

- A. The primary objective of the Working Group is to support the delivery of relevant tasks contained in the Programme of Work of the Sessional Committee.
- B. It will receive its specific mandates through Decisions at each COP. In addition, the Working Group will support the implementation of relevant Resolutions and Decisions directed to the Scientific Council.
- C. The Working Group will support the implementation of aquatic mammal-related goals and targets within the Samarkand Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2024–2032, as well as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the further development of its monitoring framework.
- D. The Working Group will provide a platform to discuss and exchange information and scientific findings on aquatic mammal-related matters.

Membership

- A. Membership of the Working Group is open to:
 - a. Members of the Scientific Council;
 - b. Party representatives;
 - ~~c. Scientific Councillors;~~
 - ~~d. c.~~ Representatives of the scientific or advisory bodies of all CMS aquatic mammal agreements;
 - ~~e. d.~~ Representatives of relevant MEAs and NGOs;
 - ~~f. e.~~ Other relevant experts.
- B. The Working Group strives to maintain a balance of gender, regional representation and areas of expertise.
- C. The involvement of Working Group members is entirely on a voluntarily basis.
- D. If and when needed, additional experts interested in contributing to the objectives of the Working Group may occasionally be invited to join meetings or to support specific tasks.

¹ Resolution 10.15 was repealed and consolidated into Resolution 14.9 at COP14. Resolution 14.9 requests the Scientific Council to continue supporting this working group.

Organization of Work

- A. The Working Group will be chaired by the COP-Appointed Councillor for Aquatic Mammals. If the Chair has to leave her/his position, a new Chair will be appointed from among the remaining Scientific Council members of the Working Group.
- B. The Working Group will mainly operate electronically, making use of a dedicated workspace on MS Teams, supplemented by email communication if necessary. Meetings (in-person or virtual) will be held as required, with in-person meetings generally held as part of Sessional Committee meetings.
- C. The Chair of the Working Group will report on progress to the Sessional Committee.
- D. The Secretariat will support and facilitate the coordination of the activities and the organization of meetings of the Working Group.

Duration

The Working Group will remain in place until the Sessional Committee decides that its work is complete or an alternative arrangement is made.~~The duration of the Working Group is open-ended.~~

DRAFT DECISIONS

CONSERVATION PRIORITIES FOR CETACEANS

Directed to Parties

15.AA Parties are encouraged to:

- a) include cetaceans within their respective National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, and ensure that the goals and targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework are applied in such a way that positively aligns with the conservation priorities for cetaceans;
- b) assess whether any take of Appendix I-listed cetaceans occurs within their jurisdiction, and if so, review and implement, as appropriate, the recommendations contained in Annex 1 of UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.25.4.1 to address this;
- c) increase data collection efforts for all CMS Appendix I-listed species for which they are Range States, in particular population abundance and trends, migratory patterns, and domestic and regional trade, to further the understanding of the extent to which populations are subject to contemporary take as well as other threats;
- d) assess the extent to which the welfare and conservation of cetaceans that occur within their jurisdiction is impacted by climate change, and review and implement, as appropriate, the recommendations contained in Annex 2 of UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.25.4.1 to address this;
- e) prepare, in advance, for the appearance of out of habitat cetaceans by creating protocols covering topics such as communication, stakeholder consultation, responder training and human-wildlife conflict (HWC) resolution, taking into account, as appropriate, the recommendations included in Annex 3 of UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.25.4.1.

Directed to the Scientific Council

15.BB The Scientific Council, subject to the availability of resources and where applicable with support from the Aquatic Mammals Working Group, is requested to:

- a) synthesize research on the emerging understanding of how cetacean welfare can impact conservation outcomes, and make recommendations to Parties;
- b) in collaboration with the IWC, [ACCOBAMS](#) and [ASCOBANS](#), review impacts of climate change on cetacean conservation and welfare, and make recommendations to Parties;
- c) investigate the impacts of mass die-offs of cetaceans linked to the presence of algal toxins, and make recommendations to Parties;

- d) undertake, in cooperation with the IWC, a quantification of the contemporary whaling and aquatic wild meat takes of all CMS Appendix II-listed cetaceans in all regions, and make recommendations to Parties; and
- e) review the *Compilation of Recommendations that could be Directed to the Scientific Council at COP15 and Future COPs* contained in Annex 4 of UNEP/CMSCOP15/Doc.25.4.1 and make recommendations to the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties on priority actions to progress in the following intersessional period.

Directed to the Secretariat

15.CC The Secretariat ~~shall,~~

- a) ~~subject to the availability of resources, shall~~ support the Scientific Council, ~~subject to the availability of resources,~~ in the development of the reports and recommendations requested in Decision 15.BB₁;
- a)b) investigate the development of a joint work programme with the IWC Secretariat on the conservation of cetaceans, noting the MOU between both organizations.

ROLE OF CETACEANS IN ECOSYSTEM FUNCTIONING

Directed to the Scientific Council

15.DD The Scientific Council is requested, through the Aquatic Mammals Working Group, to provide advice to the Secretariat with regards to the work on the role of cetaceans in ecosystem functioning, noting the work done at the IWC, and provide input to the IWC as needs arise.

Directed to the Secretariat

15.EE The Secretariat shall continue to liaise with the IWC Secretariat regarding work on the role of cetaceans in ecosystem functioning.