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Agenda Item 10.3

ACCOBAMS REPORT FOR THE CMS COP15

(Prepared by the ASCOBANS Secretariat)

Summary:

This document contains a report on progress made on activities undertaken within the Agreement on the Conservation of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS) since the 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CMS (COP14).

ACCOBAMS REPORT FOR THE CMS COP15

1. MANAGEMENT OF THE AGREEMENT

As of February 2026, there are 24 State Parties to the Agreement. No new ratifications have been registered since MOP8.

The Ninth Meeting of the Parties (MOP9) was held in Limassol, Cyprus, from 18 to 21 November 2025. In preparation for and follow-up to MOP9, the Secretariat organised meetings of the Scientific Committee, Bureau meetings including extended Bureau Meeting, and the Sixth Meeting of National Representatives.

A new ACCOBAMS Bureau for the 2026 - 2028 triennium was elected:

- Chairperson: Mr. Lavrentios VASILIADES (*Cyprus*)
- Vice-Chairs:
 - Mrs. Yana VELINA (*Bulgaria*)
 - Ms. Nora SUSBIELLE (*France*)
 - Mrs. Cristina FARCHI (*Italy*)
 - Mr. Mohamed Yassine EL AROUSSI (*Morocco*)

The Work Programme 2026-2028 adopted (Resolution 9.5) builds on activities implemented since 2023 and focuses on large-scale monitoring, reduction of anthropogenic pressures, area-based conservation measures, capacity building and strengthened compliance mechanisms.

The Secretariat continued liaising with the Depositary and national authorities to promote accession to the Agreement and ratification of the Amendment extending the geographical scope of ACCOBAMS to the Atlantic. Twelve Parties have ratified the amendment (including Greece and Georgia since 2023). Entry into force remains subject to reaching the required threshold of 16 ratifications.

These governance efforts underpinned the adoption at MOP9 of key Resolutions, including [Resolution 9.2](#) (Long-term pending contributions), [Resolution 9.4](#) (Scientific Committee) and [Resolution 9.5](#) (Work Programme and Budget 2026 - 2028).

The [17th Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee](#) was held on 4 and 5 February 2026 in Tunis, Tunisia, and online.

2. CONSERVATION ACTIONS

a. Cetacean population monitoring and scientific knowledge

ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative II (ASI-II) and long-term monitoring (endorsed at MOP9 through [Resolution 9.11](#))

A major focus since 2023 has been the preparation and coordination of the second ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative (ASI-II) within the framework of the Long-Term Monitoring Programme. The Secretariat coordinated Party contributions, convened the Long-Term Monitoring Programme Contact Group, supported Scientific Committee reviews of protocols, and organised dedicated Bureau discussions.

ASI-II was officially launched during the Third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3) in June 2025, and the Mediterranean campaign will start in Spring/Summer 2026.

Population structure and Conservation Management Plans (endorsed at MOP9 through [Resolution 9.12](#))

Since 2023, ACCOBAMS supported work on population structure through expert exchanges, dissemination of best practices and targeted scientific events, including activities related to cetacean population genetics.

Four Conservation Management Plans (CMPs) are under development (fin whales, common dolphins, bottlenose dolphins and Risso's dolphins), with preparatory work initiated for additional species.

b. Reduction of anthropogenic pressures

Interactions with fisheries and bycatch (endorsed at MOP9 through [Resolution 9.14](#))

Interactions between fisheries and cetaceans, including incidental bycatch and depredation, have remained a major conservation concern since 2023, particularly in the Black Sea and several Mediterranean sub-regions.

A Joint ACCOBAMS – Black Sea Commission Meeting was organized in March 2024 (Istanbul, Türkiye), and a “Network for harbour porpoise bycatch in the Black Sea between the European Commission, DG Mare, GFCM, ACCOBAMS and the Black Sea Commission” was created.

ACCOBAMS Secretariat supported countries in monitoring and mitigating bycatch through improved data collection and targeted field-based mitigation projects, including FAO/GFCM-funded initiatives implemented in Italy, Türkiye and Morocco.

Technical coordination was strengthened through the Joint ACCOBAMS - ASCOBANS Bycatch Working Group, which held its second formal meeting in February 2025. Members shared experiences across fishing gears and regions, addressed transboundary activities and agreed on priorities for the 2025–2027 period.

Anthropogenic underwater noise (endorsed at MOP9 through [Resolution 9.15](#))

Since 2023, ACCOBAMS addressed anthropogenic underwater noise through monitoring, technical guidance, capacity building and policy dialogue, including contributions to the Mediterranean Quality Status Report and management of the regional noise registry.

A second joint workshop with national navies was organised in Toulon, France, on 26–27 November 2024, bringing together defence authorities and technical experts to exchange information on the impacts of underwater noise on cetaceans and to discuss possible mitigation measures.

ACCOBAMS participates in the Joint ACCOBAMS – ASCOBANS - CMS Noise Working Group.

Vessel strikes (endorsed at MOP9 through [Resolution 9.16](#))

Efforts to reduce vessel strikes focused on risk assessment, awareness raising and technical tools, particularly in the Northwestern Mediterranean. Key actions included the SHIPRINT

project, the involvement in the “Pelagos Consortium” project and development of NETCCOBAMS vessel-tracking functionalities.

Cetacean watching (endorsed at MOP9 through [Resolution 9.17](#))

With regard to cetacean watching, ACCOBAMS continued to promote sustainable management of commercial activities in the Agreement area. At MOP9, Parties reaffirmed the need for enforceable national regulations, improved data collection, and the use of the High Quality Whale-Watching® (HQWW) certification framework to support responsible practices.

Strandings and emergency response (endorsed at MOP9 through [Resolution 9.13](#))

The ACCOBAMS Emergency Task Force for Stranding Events was formally launched in early 2023. Training activities and improved data exchange strengthened preparedness and coordination among Parties.

Semi-captivity and management of cetaceans in semi-enclosed facilities (endorsed at MOP9 through [Resolution 9.19](#))

Since 2023, ACCOBAMS addressed issues related to cetaceans held in semi-captivity through the Advisory Committee on Semi-Enclosed Facilities.

Experts developed best practice guidelines for the installation and management of semi-enclosed facilities and a template for a genetic passport for cetaceans held in captivity.

c. Area-based conservation measures (endorsed at MOP9 through [Resolution 9.20](#))

ACCOBAMS refined its approach to CCH (areas of Cetacean Co-occurrence with Human activities) through expert workshops, integration of biological and human activity data, and coordination with relevant organisations.

d. Cetacean culture and emerging topics

Cetacean culture emerged as a topic of interest during the reporting period. The Secretariat facilitated scientific discussions and organised dedicated exchanges during international scientific events.

A joint ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS working group on cetacean culture was established, linked to a broader expert process coordinated under CMS.

e. Communication, outreach and capacity building

Throughout 2023–2025, the Secretariat strengthened communication and outreach through the NETCCOBAMS platform, social media, scientific events and targeted workshops.

Key activities included the Sixth Conference on Cetacean Conservation in South Mediterranean Countries (CSMC6), dissemination of ASI results, promotion of the High-Quality Whale Watching certificate, and participation in major international events including CMS Family, UNEP/MAP and UNOC3.