

30th MEETING OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Bonn, Germany, 1–3 September 2026
Agenda Item 8.1

OVERVIEW OF CMS COP15 OUTCOMES RELEVANT TO ASCOBANS

(Prepared by the Secretariat)

1. The Fifteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS COP15) was held in Campo Grande, Brazil, from 23 to 29 March 2026. Many items on the agenda were relevant to ASCOBANS.
2. It should be noted that many other agenda items, such as those dealing with marine wildlife watching and recreational activities, deep-sea mining, connectivity, renewable energy, and cumulative effects assessments, are also relevant. Such adopted decisions can be found under Documents on the CMS website.

Conservation Measures Relevant for ASCOBANS Species

3. In line with [Resolution 14.9](#) *Conservation Priorities for Cetaceans*, [Decisions 15.72-74](#) encourage Parties to include cetaceans within their respective National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, and ensure that the goals and targets of the Kunming-Montral Global Biodiversity Fund (KMGBF) are applied in such a way that positively aligns with the conservation priorities for cetaceans. They are encouraged to increase data collection efforts for all CMS Appendix I-listed cetacean species for which they are Range States. Parties also agreed to **assess whether any take of Appendix I-listed cetaceans occurs within their jurisdiction and implement recommendations** contained in [CMS/COP15/Doc.25.4.1/Annex 1](#), assess the extent to which the welfare and conservation of cetaceans that occur within their jurisdiction is impacted by climate change and implement the recommendations contained in [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.25.4.1/Annex 2](#), and prepare in advance for the appearance of out of habitat cetaceans by creating protocols taking into account the recommendations included in [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.25.4.1/Annex 3](#).
4. In the adopted Decisions, CMS Scientific Council (ScC) is requested to synthesize research on the emerging understanding of how cetacean welfare can impact conservation outcomes. They are requested to review the **impacts of climate change on cetacean conservation and welfare** in collaboration with IWC, ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS. The ScC is asked to investigate the impacts of mass die-offs of cetaceans, including those linked to the presence of algal toxins.
5. [Decisions 15.75-76](#) on the *Role of Cetaceans in Ecosystem Functioning* request the ScC and the Secretariat to continue the collaboration with the IWC on this subject.

Area-based Conservation Efforts

6. Building on [Resolution 14.7](#) and [Resolution 12.13](#), COP15 adopted [Resolution 15.3](#) *Priorities for Area-based Conservation of Marine Migratory Species* covering multiple taxa groups, ensuring effective use of available information for commitments under CMS, KMGBF, and the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement).
7. [Decisions 15.52-56](#) request Parties to make use of the identified Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs), Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas EBSAs and Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) for marine spatial planning purposes. Parties that are members of Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs) are requested to encourage those bodies to collaborate closely with CMS, make existing fisheries and observer data available for IMMA and KBA delineation, and undertake further research on habitat of relevant species. Parties were also requested to make fisheries and observer data available and/or support IMMA with their analysis.
8. The ScC is requested to develop a report about improving the long-term effectiveness of protected areas dedicated to marine migratory species in the face of climate change and make recommendations to Parties to enhance their resilience. The ScC is also requested to collaborate with IUCN Commissions and the KBA Partnership to include data on CMS-listed species in the identification of IMMAs and KBAs.

Bycatch and Other Fisheries-induced Mortality

9. Among the drivers of biodiversity loss, overexploitation of natural resources is one of the most direct and pervasive, affecting both target and non-target species across all ocean regions. Amendments to [Resolution 12.22 \(Rev.COP15\)](#) *Bycatch and Other Fisheries-Induced Mortality* were adopted, which incorporated recommendations on addressing bycatch in the context of CMS Article III(5) for all aquatic species subject to bycatch, and streamlined the Resolution.
10. In [Decisions 15.26-29](#), COP15 agreed new mandates on *Bycatch and Other Fisheries-Induced Mortality* as a key aspect of overexploitation of aquatic species listed on CMS Appendices. Parties are requested to encourage RFBs and other relevant bodies to undertake population assessments for CMS-listed.
11. The ScC is tasked with identifying priority regions for reviewing bycatch levels of CMS-listed marine mammals in both commercial and artisanal fisheries. They are to collaborate with relevant organizations to develop regional reviews and appropriate bycatch mitigation measures, focusing on the highest-priority fisheries and areas. Furthermore, they are tasked to develop a report to quantify the contribution of bycatch and other fisheries-related mortalities of CMS-listed cetaceans to trophic downgrading and the health and function of marine ecosystems.
12. [Decisions 15.30-32](#) *Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs)* encourage Parties to apply the recommendations contained in [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.25.1.3/Annex1](#). The Secretariat shall compile information from the relevant Regional Fisheries Management Organizations on management and implementation of measures to regulate the use of FADs, in collaboration with the IWC.

Marine Pollution

13. COP15 adopted a new [Resolution 15.2](#) *Marine Pollution*, urging Parties to address pressing pollution issues and develop conservation strategies specifically for particularly vulnerable stages of the migratory cycle. The Resolution recognized related adopted CMS daughter agreements, including ASCOBANS Resolution 7.4 *Impacts of Chemical Pollution on Small Cetaceans*, Resolution 8.7 *Impacts of Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs)*, Resolution 8.8 *Addressing the Threats from Underwater Munitions*, and Resolution 9.3 *Marine Debris*.
14. [Decisions 15.42-44](#) request Parties to apply the recommendations contained in [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.25.2.1/Annex 1](#) and to facilitate collaboration between CMS and other relevant bodies to better address marine pollution risks to migratory species. The Secretariat was instructed to strengthen collaboration with these bodies.
15. The ScC is tasked with establishing a working group on marine pollution and to identify and evaluate species and populations, habitats and migratory/life stages that are most at risk, noting the preliminary list referenced in [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.25.2.1/Annex 1](#), as well as global hotspots where marine pollution and critical habitat for migratory species overlap. In addition, the ScC is to consider the application of 'vulnerability matrix' approaches that integrate species' sensitivity, exposure and adaptive capacity to both marine pollution and climate change to help prioritize conservation actions under future environmental scenarios.

Underwater Noise

16. Another significant source of pollution is anthropogenic *Underwater Noise*. [Resolution 12.14](#) *Adverse Impacts of Anthropogenic Noise on Cetaceans and Other Migratory Species* outlines CMS mandates on this topic. COP15 adopted [Decisions 15.45-47](#), in which the ScC is to conduct a comprehensive review of sources of underwater noise of concern and identify gaps in current guidance related to the mitigation of underwater noise impacts specifically on migratory species and their prey. The Joint Noise Working Group of CMS, ASCOBANS and ACCOBAMS was requested to review sources of underwater noise of concern ([Decision 15.46](#)). This is to include an assessment of the existing guidance and knowledge available from CMS and other relevant forums in order to identify gaps in the current guidance. To support the review, the Secretariat was called upon to convene an in-person workshop to assist the Joint Noise Working Group, and continue to provide updated information on the CMS website to assist Parties and stakeholders of effective mitigation measures.

Cumulative Effects Assessments

17. [Decisions 15.207-15.209](#) encourage Parties to integrate cumulative effects assessment into national policy and strengthen methodologies and criteria for identifying, evaluating and mitigating cumulative impacts on CMS-listed migratory species and their habitats, including cross-border cumulative effects and effects in underrepresented ecosystems. The ScC is requested to develop guidance for the assessment of cumulative effects on migratory species, including common methodologies suitable for application across CMS Parties.

Reducing Other Anthropogenic Pressures

18. Building on [Resolution 14.5](#) *Reducing the risk of vessel strikes for marine megafauna*, COP15 adopted [Decisions 15.57-60](#). The ScC is requested to identify additional populations and areas of at-risk CMS-listed species and areas where they are at risk of **vessel strike** by mapping shipping lanes against IMMAs, and present appropriate re-routing measures. Parties are requested to reach out to relevant stakeholders engaged in commercial, recreational or other vessel activities to encourage systematic reporting of all vessel strike incidents involving whales, dolphins or porpoises to the IWC Ship Strike Database.

19. [Decision 15.73](#) directed to the ScC requests a review of impacts of **climate change** on cetacean conservation and welfare, in collaboration with the IWC, ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS. Furthermore, [Decisions 15.216-218](#) direct Parties, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to identify potential climate-induced range shifts and improve understanding of the impacts of climate change on cetacean species and support their conservation in the face of climate change. Meanwhile, the ScC is directed to re-establish its Climate Change Working Group and identify overlaps between CMS activities related to migratory species and climate change and those of related multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), including both synergies and trade-offs.
20. [Decisions 15.69-71](#), focused on **marine wildlife watching**, promoted dissemination of existing CMS guidelines¹ to relevant organizations and operators in their countries, and mandated further scientific assessment of the long-term effects of disturbance effects, including investigating the desirability of developing guidance regarding the use of unmanned aerial and underwater vehicles, and other relevant technologies used around marine wildlife during recreational activities.
21. Parties reiterated the importance of implementing CMS [Resolution 14.6](#) *Deep-seabed mineral exploitation activities and migratory species*, which “Urges Parties not to engage in, or support, **deep-seabed mineral exploitation** activities until sufficient and robust scientific information has been obtained to ensure that deep seabed mineral exploitation activities do not cause harmful effects to migratory species, their prey and their ecosystems.” A report developed at the request of the COP, *Impacts of Deep-sea Mining on Migratory Species: A Review and Knowledge Gaps*², further illustrates these concerns, identifying limited understanding of pelagic impacts, acoustic disturbance, ecosystem connectivity and potential cumulative effects. [Decision 15.50](#) encourages CMS contribution to the development of environmental impact assessment guidance by the International Seabed Authority.

Other Matters

22. At CMS COP15, ASCOBANS Secretariat also delivered its progress report on activities since COP14, which is available [here](#).
23. The Earth Negotiations Bulletin / IISD summary report on CMS COP15 is available [here](#).

¹ CMS Secretariat (2025). International Guidelines for Sustainable Marine Wildlife Interactions: Boat-Based and In Water Activities. 69 pages. CMS Technical Series Publication No. 49. Accessible here: <https://www.cms.int/publication/international-guidelines-sustainable-marine-wildlife-interactions-boat-based-and-water>

² Thaler, Andrew D., (2026). Impacts of Deep-sea Mining on Migratory Species: Review and Knowledge Gaps. CMS Secretariat, Bonn, Germany. 54 pages. CMS Technical Series Publication No. 53. Available here: <https://www.cms.int/publication/impacts-deep-sea-mining-migratory-species-review-and-knowledge-gaps-0>