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6.3 Implementation of the Action Plan for the conservation of Cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea

Status of implementation of the Action Plan for the conservation of Cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea

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Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (RAC/SPA)
Boulevard du Leader Yasser Arafat
B.P. 337 - 1080 Tunis Cedex - Tunisia
E-mail: car-asp@rac-spa.org

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Status of implementation of the Action Plan for the conservation of Cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea

Considering clear evidence that some cetacean populations in the Mediterranean Sea were endangered, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention adopted in 1991 the Action Plan for the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea with the objectives of ensuring (i) protection and conservation of cetacean habitats including in particular feeding, breeding and calving grounds and (ii) protection, conservation and the recovery of cetacean populations in the Mediterranean Sea area.

The entry into force of the ACCOBAMS Agreement (Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area) in 2001 brought to the Mediterranean a new and more legally binding instrument for the conservation of cetaceans. In order to ensure a harmonised approach for their collaboration regarding the conservation of cetaceans, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, during their 14th Ordinary Meeting held in 2005 in Portoroz (Slovenia), invited the Mediterranean countries that were not yet Parties to ACCOBAMS to join the Agreement and to take note and implement as far as possible the pertinent resolutions and recommendations of the Meetings of its Contracting Parties. They also invited the Mediterranean countries to recognize that common obligations relating to cetaceans under the SPA and Biodiversity Protocol are fulfilled by the implementation of ACCOBAMS.

In accordance with the decisions of the Contracting Parties to ACCOBAMS and to Barcelona Convention, RAC/SPA started a close collaboration process with the ACCOBAMS Secretariat with the view of harmonising the implementation of the two instruments. In this context, RAC/SPA is ensuring the functions of the ACCOBASM subregional coordinating units for the Mediterranean.

The conservation of cetaceans was also considered within the framework of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM). In this context GFCM adopted in 2012 a Recommendation on the mitigation of incidental catches of cetaceans in the GFCM area (Recommendation GFCM/36/2012/2).

This information note presents a synthesis of the action undertaken at national level by the Mediterranean countries regarding cetacean conservation. It is based mainly on the information provided by the countries through the online reporting system to the Barcelona Convention.

Prohibition of any deliberate taking of cetaceans

Deliberate tacking is forbidden by law in all the Mediterranean countries through fisheries regulations and also through the regulations related to the conservation of endangered species. In some countries several cetacean species are list in the national lists of endangered species.

National action plans for the conservation of cetaceans

According to the available information, 7 Mediterranean countries elaborated, or are elaborating, a national action plan defining priorities and activities to be undertaken for the conservation of cetaceans. In this context, RAC/SPA, ACCOBAMS and UNDP provided technical and financial support to some countries, upon their request.

Regulation of fishing gear and practices in order to eliminate by-catches and to prevent fishing gear from being lost or discarded at sea

The most important measure taken in some Mediterranean countries to minimise by-catch of cetacean is the regulation of the use of drift nets. Regulations forbidding the discards at sea of fishing gear were enacted in some Mediterranean countries. For the European Union countries, three are also EU regulations concerning the use of acoustic devices in fishing gear and concerning the notification of

by-catch of cetaceans by fishing boats. There are also regulations providing clearly for the safe release of cetaceans caught in fishing gear.

However, reports by NGOs indicate that the regulations about the use of large driftnets is still not enforced in many Mediterranean countries.

Scientific monitoring

The monitoring of cetacean stranding is being carried out in most of the Mediterranean countries. However, only in some countries there are structured network allowing to monitor all the notified stranding events.

The monitoring of cetacean population is carried out only in a limited number of countries. In the southern countries, the programmes for scientific monitoring of cetaceans are developed by individual scientists or research organisation, usually as part of Master or PHD research.

Difficulties and constraints faced in the implementation of the Action Plan

Shortage in financial resources, administrative constraints and non-availability of technical capabilities were reported as the main difficulties encountered by the Mediterranean countries in the implementation of the Action Plan.

The Annex to this information note presents the information provided by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention about the implementation of the Action Plan for the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea, through the online reporting system set for the Barcelona Convention.

Annex:
**Information provided by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona
Convention about the implementation of the Action Plan for the
conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea**
(The text presented hereinafter represents the inputs of the Parties as
appearing in the reporting system, without translation and with only minor
editing changes)

Albania

Has the Party developed an action plan for the conservation of cetaceans? _____

Yes, with technical assistance of ACCOBAMS and financial support from ONDP

Has the Party created marine protected areas and/or SPAMIs to protect one or several species of cetacean?

Karaburun-Sazan National Park

Croatia

Has the Party developed an action plan for the conservation of cetaceans? _____

It is planned according to the Strategy and Action Plan for the Protection of Biological and Landscape Diversity of the Republic of Croatia. In the scope of the IPA Adriatic CBC project NETCET - Network for the Conservation of Cetaceans and Sea Turtles in the Adriatic (www.netcet.eu), Croatia is in process of gathering all available data and assessing the state of cetaceans in the Adriatic. At the beginning of 2015 regional (Adriatic) strategy for conservation of cetaceans will be drafted, followed with preparation of national action plan in the middle of 2015.

Has the Party conducted studies and set up scientific research programmes on cetaceans? _____

NGO Blue World Institute of Marine Research and Conservation performs the «Adriatic Dolphin Project » that is the longest study on the resident community of bottlenose dolphins in the Mediterranean Sea and the only one known in the Adriatic. The project includes monitoring of the Common bottlenose dolphin populations in Kvarnerić or rather the field study, mortality analysis and data processing, research of anthropogenic noise in the critical habitats, research of the Common bottlenose dolphins behaviour and research of genetic variations on dolphin's population in Kvarnerić. The population that inhabited Lošinj archipelago is still small, but investigations indicate to presence of Adriatic meta-population which is composed of smaller sub-populations. Also, it is determined that there are genetic variations among animals which inhabiting eastern and western side of Island of Lošinj. In addition, level of investigated anthropogenic noise was very high during the touristic season and it was going to decline during months of September and October. Croatian Natural History Museum (CNHM) in partnership with Blue World has been involved in the research activities carried out on the previously mentioned location in the Adriatic Sea. As a central depositor of the national natural-history collections CNHM is keeping samples collected from the stranded animals. General data about animals (samples) are available on request. Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and NGO "Val" are mostly involved in research of causes of mortality, health status, sex and age population structure, morphologic and genetic peculiarities of cetaceans (in cooperation with the Gesellschaft zur Rettung der Delphine from Germany). All marine mammal carcasses found by the Faculty in the Croatian part of the Adriatic Sea are being collected and analysed. Anatomical, pathological, parasitological and genetic analyses are performed. Age has been determined for each individual using GLG method. Also tissue samples have been collected for toxicological and other analysis. Faculty of Veterinary Medicine (FVM), NGO „Val“ and Blue World Institute of Marine Research and Conservation (BWI) have been involved in collection of cetacean stranding data. This information is gathered in the central database, organised by the State Institute for Nature Protection (SINP) and available through SINP's Information catalogue on request. These data includes species, geographic location, condition of animal, weight, sex, age, cause of death. In addition, data are filled in MEDACES database on regularly basis. Within IPA Adriatic CBC project NETCET - Network for the Conservation of

Cetaceans and Sea Turtles in the Adriatic project the aerial survey of cetacean and sea turtle abundance in the Adriatic Sea was carried out. The survey took place from July to August 2013. It was coordinated by ISPRA and BWI with support from International Whaling Commission.

Has the Party set up a network for monitoring cetacean strandings?

State Institute for Nature Protection runs a national stranding network for protected marine species (marine mammals, marine turtles and chondrichthyans) since 2010. Protocols for reporting and operation have also been developed. At the moment, the national network involves several veterinary ambulances on the coast and islands, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, which provides mortality analysis, Croatian Veterinary Institute, Marine Educational Center Pula (NGO) etc. All strandings are reported to the National emergency center which forwards information directly to SINP.

Has the Party created marine protected areas and/or SPAMIs to protect one or several species of cetacean?

These species enjoys protection within the territory of the protected areas according to Nature protection Act (NPA) (National park Mljet, National park Brijuni, National park Kornati, Nature park Lastovo archipelago, Nature park Telašćica). NATURA 2000 was prepared and adopted at national level with 6 sites for *Tursiops truncatus*: 1) Archipelago of Western Istria, 2) National park Kornati, 3) Archipelago of J. Molat-Dugi-Kornat-Murter Pašman-Ugljan-Rivanj-Sestrunj-Molat, 4) Archipelago of the island of Vis, 5) Lastovo and Mljet Channel and 6) Cres - Lošinj Archipelago. In the scope of the MedPan South project, management plans for two nature parks with proposed NATURA 2000 sites important for cetaceans were adopted: Telašćica (3) and Archipelago of the island of Lastovo (5).

France

Has the Party developed an action plan for the conservation of cetaceans?

La France n'a pas développé de plan d'action national mais, étant partie à de multiples conventions et accords de conservation de ces espèces développe une politique de conservation axée sur le développement des connaissances et la lutte contre l'impact des activités humaines (pollution, captures accidentelles, collisions, sons sous-marins, activités touristiques (compétitions nautiques, whale-watching), notamment dans le cadre du sanctuaire Pelagos et en application de l'accord ACCOBAMS auquel elle est partie. Dans le cadre d'ACCOBAMS-Pelagos, un label a été mis en œuvre à l'été 2014 pour la pratique des activités de whale-watching, interdisant entre autres le survol aérien et la pratique de la nage avec les cétacés. Une grille de critères pour délivrer les autorisations de compétition d'engins à moteurs rapides a également été élaborée et testée. Une charte avec les communes riveraines du sanctuaire Pelagos permet de développer des actions de sensibilisation, d'information et d'engagement par celles-ci à agir en cohérence avec la conservation des cétacés. La France a participé à tous les ateliers organisés par ACCOBAMS-Pelagos pendant la période de référence : trafic maritime et collisions, whale-watching, etc

Has the Party conducted studies and set up scientific research programmes on cetaceans?

Ces études sont essentiellement conduites dans le cadre du sanctuaire Pelagos depuis une dizaine d'années (une cinquantaine en 10 ans et visent à assurer une meilleure connaissance de la répartition et de l'abondance des cétacés ainsi que des interactions avec les activités humaines. Les moyens d'atténuer les effets de ces activités sont également recherchés, notamment les collisions avec les bateaux (système REPCET). La liste de ces travaux peut-être consultée sur le site de Pelagos : www.pelagos.org En 2010, la France a également lancé un programme parallèle suivant la même logique pour les grands pélagiques et les usages. Ce programme, appelé SAMM, vise à réaliser un suivi aérien des oiseaux, mammifères, requins, tortues, macro déchets et fréquentation sectorisée du plan d'eau, sur l'ensemble de la ZEE métropolitaine. Les résultats de ces travaux devraient être diffusés à l'automne et permettre la désignation de sites Natura 2000 plus appropriés à ces espèces migratrices.

Has the Party set up a network for monitoring cetacean strandings?

Au niveau national, les données sont centralisées à l'observatoire Pelagis de l'Université de la Rochelle depuis 1972. Au niveau méditerranéen, l'association GECEM assure la coordination régionale en Méditerranée. Voir le site : www.observatoire-pelagis.cnrs.fr. Le programme de recherche scientifique Pelagos appuie financièrement le Réseau échouage

Has the Party created marine protected areas and/or SPAMIs to protect one or several species of cetacean?

Le sanctuaire Pelagos a été désigné comme ASPIM Plusieurs sites Natura 2000 ont été désignés sur les côtes méditerranéennes, notamment pour la conservation du grand dauphin (voir inpn.mnhn.fr/site/natura2000/listeSites, le réseau devrait être à terme étendu en fonction des résultats du programme SAMM Le premier Parc Naturel Marin en Méditerranée française, dit du Golfe du Lion 4 019 km² d'espace marin pour environ 100 km de côtes et concerne 12 communes littorales. En 2012 a été créé le deuxième Parc National de Méditerranée française, dit des Calanques

Les difficultés à créer des aires marines protégées pour les cétacés sont principalement liées au caractère migrateur de la majorité d'entre elles.

Greece

Has the Party conducted studies and set up scientific research programmes on cetaceans?

Research on cetaceans is being conducted mainly by NGOs, Research Institutes and Universities. A research project was conducted in Northern and Central Aegean in summer of 2013 by International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and the Mediterranean Science Commission (CIESM) Awareness on cetaceans is included in the LIFE information project "Thalassa Campaign: Learn, Act, Protect/Awareness, Educational and Participation Campaign for Marine Mammals in Greece" that was running from 2010-2013. Beneficiaries of the project were Mom and WWF Greece and Participants Pelagos Cetacean Research Institute and Tethys Research Institute

Has the Party set up a network for monitoring cetacean strandings?

Stranded cetaceans are officially monitored by Port Police, according to a circular edited by the ex. Ministry of Merchantile Marine. According to this circular, Port Police is indicating at a specific signal : the species, the state (alive, dead, wounded), the area of finding, the date and if photos are taken. The circular is being sent to authorities, institutes and organizations, but other active at local level also deal with a small number of strandings, particularly at their local area of activation. Data from the signals of Port Police are officially stored in a database but organizations keep their own register and databases of stranded animals. There is no official national tissue bank. However, tissue samples are preserved and kept at Institutes and NGOs. The Ministry for Environment, Energy and Climate Change is trying to organize a nationally coordinated network for monitoring cetacean strandings.

Has the Party created marine protected areas and/or SPAMIs to protect one or several species of cetacean?

Natura 2000 network in Greece includes 124 sites with marine component, with appr. 690.000 ha of marine area, covering appr. 6,12% of territorial waters. Of these, 22 sites host the cetaceans of community importance *Tursiops truncatus* and *Phocoena phocoena*. Work on expanding marine Natura 2000 network is under way. Designated as protected areas with marine component in Greece are 2 National Marine Parks, 7 National Parks, 2 Nature Reserve areas, covering altogether 38% of the marine Natura 2000 area. The two National Marine Parks of Alonissos Vories Sporades and of Laganas Bay in Zakynthos, as well as the two National Parks of Amvrakikos wetlands and Messolonghi lagoons host important cetacean populations. All these sites are managed by specific Management Bodies.

Italy

Has the Party developed an action plan for the conservation of cetaceans?

The first proposal to IMELS for a national plan was presented in 2000 by ISPRA. The management plan of Pelagos Sanctuary has been approved in 2004.

Has the Party conducted studies and set up scientific research programmes on cetaceans?

There are many studies carried out on Cetaceans, mainly supported by IMELS in particular in the frame of Pelagos and ACCOBAMS agreements. In 2007 a popular special volume on Pelagic environment and Pelagos Sanctuary of the series "Italian Habitats" prepared by SIBM and edited by IMELS, printed both in Italian and English. ISPRA, in cooperation with CoNISMa and ISMAR CNR of Ancona, since 2006 has conducted a national monitoring programme on bycatch of the pelagic trawling of cetaceans and other protected species, in compliance with Regulation (EC) n. 812/2004. This programme, funded by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry (MiPAAF), includes an assessment of the Adriatic bottlenose dolphin's population structure, through genetic, toxicological and isotopic analyses. In 2010, an aerial survey over the entire Adriatic was funded by MiPAAF and IMELS. This survey led to the first assessment of the distribution and abundance of a number of cetacean species. IMELS funded projects to estimate abundance, distribution and density of cetaceans in the western Mediterranean Sea by mean of Aerial survey (2009-2011 - Tethys Research Institute and ISPRA). In the summer 2013 a new aerial survey was carried out within the framework of an IPA-project (NETCET), following the parameters of the previous ones supported by IMELS and MiPAAF.

Has the Party set up a network for monitoring cetacean strandings?

ISPRA has conducted special training workshops, focusing on the identification of marine protected species, directed at Coast Guard Personnel so as to facilitate statistical recording of stranded cetaceans. IMELS has commissioned the University of Pavia the coordination of a technical group to define the guidelines for the setup of a cetacean national stranding network. Since many years a network was organized by CSC (Center for Cetacean studies). Each year a report on strandings was published. At present this network is experiencing some problems. Italian Coast Guard has got a database with all the sight forms for cetaceans and all the other protected species present in Italian sea.

Has the Party created marine protected areas and/or SPAMIs to protect one or several species of cetacean?

This Agreement, signed in Rome on November 25th, 1999 by France, Italy and Principality of Monaco has established the Mediterranean Sanctuary for Marine Mammals (Pelagos). The objective of the Agreement is to maintain a favorable conservation status of marine mammal populations, and to make monitoring of cetacean populations, to strengthen enforcement of existing legislation on fishing activities and to reduce pollution, regulating whalewatching and improve the circulation of information to the public.

Israel

Has the Party developed an action plan for the conservation of cetaceans?

All marine mammals are fully protected by Israel law, enforced by INPA IMMRAC (Israel Marine Mammal Research & Assistance Center – an NGO) operate observations for marine mammals. IMMRAC recently accredited the status of Partner in ACCOBAMS (Agreement on the Conservation Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area)

Has the Party conducted studies and set up scientific research programmes on cetaceans?

There is academic research and monitoring by INPA in cooperation with IMMRAC

Has the Party set up a network for monitoring cetacean strandings?

INPA in cooperation with IMMRAC recently accredited the status of Partner in ACCOBAMS (Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area). IMMRAC and INPA operate observations. The public and mentioned above are required to report when encountering stranded or caught cetaceans. A procedure to handle such cases exists.

Lebanon

Has the Party developed an action plan for the conservation of cetaceans?

Lebanon has developed a national action plan for cetaceans. Furthermore, a study was done by the national center for marine sciences-CNRSL in 2013 on the distribution and relative abundance of the *Tursiops truncatus* in Lebanese marine waters, this study will be used to develop a strategy for the conservation of this species.

Has the Party conducted studies and set up scientific research programmes on cetaceans?

A study was done in 2013 by the National Center for Marine sciences-CNRSL to delimit the distribution and the relative abundance of *T. truncatus* in Lebanese Marine waters where 91 individuals were recorded.

Has the Party set up a network for monitoring cetacean strandings?

The National Center for Marine Sciences has a monitoring network occurring in irregular basis in some points in the Lebanese coast In addition, in 2014 the common chamber of marine operations of the Lebanese army has recorded dolphins in the military marine base in Beirut.

Montenegro

Has the Party developed an action plan for the conservation of cetaceans?

Due to the lack of capacities and financial resources there is no action plan for conservation of cetaceans, neither the scientific research programmes on cetaceans. The Parliament of Montenegro adopted Law on ratification of the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea and contiguous Atlantic area in November 2008.

Has the Party conducted studies and set up scientific research programmes on cetaceans?

Montenegro was involved in the realization of the regional project ‘‘Effective conservation in Mediterranean sea, Black sea and contiguous Atlantic waters trough cooperation, science and action’’. The overall objective of this project was to obtain the first baseline information on abundance for top predators (cetaceans, sea turtles and seabirds) at a regional level, as well as to create the maps of relative density and to identify the high density/biodiversity areas for individual species and for communities. Also, recently The NETCET project is financed by the IPA Adriatic CBC Programme, and Montenegro will participate. The general aim of this Cross-border Cooperation Programme is strengthening sustainable development capabilities of the Adriatic region through a concerted strategy of action among the partners of the eligible territories’’. The main objective of the NETCET project is to develop common strategies for the conservation of cetaceans and sea turtles in the Adriatic through regional cooperation (pan-Adriatic cooperation). One of expected results of this project will be improved knowledge of Adriatic cetaceans and sea turtles conservation populations, hot-spots and major threats.

Has the Party set up a network for monitoring cetacean strandings?

Montenegro was involved in the realization of the regional project ‘‘Effective conservation in Mediterranean sea, Black sea and contiguous Atlantic waters trough cooperation, science and action’’. The overall objective of this project was to obtain the first baseline information on abundance for top predators (cetaceans, sea turtles and seabirds) at a regional level, as well as to create the maps of relative density and to identify the high density/biodiversity areas for individual species and for communities. Also, recently The NETCET project is financed by the IPA Adriatic CBC Programme, and Montenegro will participate. The general aim of this Cross-border Cooperation Programme is strengthening sustainable development capabilities of the Adriatic region through a concerted strategy of action among the partners of the eligible territories’’. The main objective of the NETCET project is to develop common strategies for the conservation of cetaceans and sea turtles in the Adriatic through regional cooperation (pan-Adriatic cooperation). One of expected results of this project will be improved knowledge of Adriatic cetaceans and sea turtles conservation populations, hot-spots and major threats.

Spain

Has the Party developed an action plan for the conservation of cetaceans?

Resolution of 12 February 2011 of the Environment General Management Directorate of the Autonomous Community of Valencia, adopted a programme of actions for the conservation of cetaceans and sea turtles.

Has the Party conducted studies and set up scientific research programmes on cetaceans?

The Infrastructure, Planning and Environment Department of the Autonomous Community of Valencia carry out surveys of cetaceans and sea turtles together with the University of Valencia. The Infrastructure, Planning and Environment Department (CITMA) of the Autonomous Community of Valencia works with the "City of Arts and Sciences" on acoustic studies to determine the presence of cetaceans. Studies on Balleanoptera physallus in SPAMI Columbretes have been also conducted.

Has the Party set up a network for monitoring cetacean strandings?

Since 2008 is available the Database of Cetacean Strandings in Spain (BEVACET) which centralizes all cetacean strandings data in Spain, provided by the regional governments through their network of strandings.