

RECOMMENDATION SC4.2

The use of driftnets in the Mediterranean Sea

The Scientific Committee draws the attention of the Parties to its previous recommendations (1.2 and 2.2) regarding bycatches and driftnets in the Mediterranean Sea:

The Scientific Committee yet again **stresses** that bycatches in driftnets are by far the primary cause of anthropogenic mortality for most pelagic cetacean populations within the Mediterranean Sea. In particular it highlights the severe problem they represent for the conservation status of striped dolphins, sperm whales and particularly common dolphins⁷, which appear to be continuing their rapid decline in many parts of the Mediterranean and which were classified by IUCN as Endangered in the Mediterranean.

Despite the banning of driftnets for the capture of highly migratory species within the Mediterranean Sea by EU regulation, and despite the ICCAT recommendation endorsed by GFCM^{8, 9} and the successive recommendations by this Committee endorsed by the Parties (e.g. Resolution 2.13), the number of driftnets operating in the Mediterranean Sea remains high¹⁰ due to both illegal operations and the exploitation of legal loopholes.

The Committee once again expresses its **grave concern** over this situation.

It **strongly urges** the Parties to take immediate action to ensure compliance by their nationals with the complete ban on driftnets and to encourage similar actions by relevant non-member states. The continued use of driftnets constitutes the most serious threat to cetacean populations in the Mediterranean Sea. Failure to enforce the driftnet ban can only be interpreted as a failure of the Parties to fulfil their commitment to 'maintain a favourable conservation status for cetaceans' when ratifying ACCOBAMS.

The Scientific Committee also noted that in order to justify relaxation of the driftnet ban, the deployment of pingers with driftnets had been presented to the EC as an effective mitigation measure. The Committee **stresses**, however, that existing relevant studies produced contradictory results^{11,12,13}. The Committee **insists** on the difficulty in conducting appropriate experiments to demonstrate the effectiveness or otherwise of pingers both in the short and long-term. It draws attention to the guidelines drawn up by the IWC Scientific Committee in this regard¹⁴. It **strongly emphasises** the need for the results of any pinger experiments and field trials to be thoroughly reviewed by appropriate experts before any management decisions are taken.

⁷ Tudela S., Kai Kai A., Maynou F., El Andalossi M., Guglielmi P. 2005. Driftnet fishing and biodiversity conservation: the case study of the large-scale Moroccan driftnet fleet operating in the Alboran Sea (SW Mediterranean). *Biol. Conserv.* 121:65-78.

⁸ EC (2006). Proposal for a Council Regulation amending Regulations (EC) No 894/1997, (EC) 812/2004 and (EC) No 2187/2005 as concerns driftnets. COM (2006) 511. Commission of European Communities. Brussels, 19 September 2006
EC (1997-1998). Council Regulation (EC) No 894/97 of 29 April 1997 laying down certain technical measures for the conservation of fishery resources (O J L 132, 23.5.1997) as modified by Council Regulation (EC) No 1239/98 of 8 June 1998 (O J L 171, 17.6.1998) until 31 December 2001.

⁹ GFCM (2005). Recommendation GFCM/2005/3 (A). Report of the twenty-ninth session. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Rome, 21–25 February 2005. ICCAT 03-04.
Recommendation by ICCAT relating to Mediterranean Swordfish (entered into force: June 19, 2004).

¹⁰ Oceana (2006) "Thonaille": the use of driftnets by the french fleet in the Mediterranean; Italian driftnetters 2006: the Oceana report.

¹¹ Imbert, G., Gaetner, J.C., Carbone S., Laubier, L. (2002). Effet des repulsifs sur les captures de dauphins dans les thonailles. Université d'Aix Marseille II. Commande 1 5241, rapport intermédiaire n°3 étape du 15 février 2002 à la région Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur, 36 p.

¹² Kastelein, R.A., Jeannings, N., Verboom, W.C., de Haan, D., Schooneman, N.M. (2006). Difference in the response of a striped dolphin (*Stenella coeruleoalba*) and a harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) to an acoustic alarm. *Marine Environmental Research* 61: 363-378.

¹³ GECEM. WWW.gecem.org/site.html

¹⁴ International Whaling Commission. 2001. Report of the Scientific Committee, Annex L. Report of the Workshop on Bycatch Mitigation Measures in Static Fisheries. *J. Cetacean Res. Manage. (Suppl.)* 3:292-6.