



Monaco, 22 January 2008

**UNEP/CMS/ACCOBAMS – BARCELONA CONVENTION:  
A reinforced cooperation for the protection of the marine biodiversity**

*Almeria, 15 -18 January 2008* – The Ministers of Environment of Mediterranean Countries, the European Commission, and Governmental and Non-Governmental Organisations devoted to the protection of the “White Sea”, the Mediterranean, as named by Southern Countries, met for the XV<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention which focuses on the protection of the marine environment, the Mediterranean littoral and its Protocols.

The Governments have adopted 18 Decisions covering questions regarding the Sustainable Development (managing water resources, energy, climate change...), fight against pollution, and of course protection of the biodiversity.

It is within this domain that two points of importance for ACCOBAMS were adopted:

- Guidelines regarding **pleasure craft activities** and the protection of the marine environment incorporating recommendations for approaching whales and dolphins based on ACCOBAMS work;
- The acknowledgement of the **ACCOBAMS/IUCN Red List for Cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea** as an amendment tool to the annexes II and III of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and the protection of the Mediterranean marine biodiversity.

The question of **Marine Protected Areas** took an important place during the three-day Meeting. The outputs of the working programs adopted by the ACCOBAMS Parties, including those undertaken in collaboration with the Centre for Specially Protected Areas based in Tunis, have been presented (guidelines, criteria...): important tools intended for Governments in the establishment of Marine Protected Areas particularly for the creation of **Marine Protected Areas for cetaceans**.

The question of **climate change** was put forward: following a ministerial segment, various declarations were made regarding the current challenges posed by this new threat. All of them emphasized the urge for the reinforcement of the cross-borders cooperation.

The Executive Director of UNEP, M. Achim Steiner, speaking in an address relayed by video, underlined the role of regional Tools in fight against this new threat for the Mediterranean Sea and made clear that “*Climate change in fact presented an environmental and an economic opportunity that would ultimately benefit all, given the more efficient, intelligent and sustainable use of resources that it implied.*”

This issue will be discussed during the upcoming meeting of UNEP in Monaco from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2008.

Whales and dolphins already seem affected by climate change; ACCOBAMS scientists will discuss this matter during the next Committee meeting in Rome from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> of April 2008.

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