

RESOLUTION 5.12

WORK TOWARDS A CONSERVATION PLAN FOR FIN WHALES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

The Meeting of the Parties to the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area:

Recalling Resolution 3.16 "Conservation of Fin Whales in the Mediterranean Sea",

Taking in consideration the Recommendations of the Scientific Committee,

Aware that fin whales in the Agreement area face a number of actual and potential anthropogenic threats, including collisions with vessels, chemical and acoustic pollution, entanglement in fishing gear and disturbance by ships and climate change,

Aware also that the Pelagos Sanctuary can be an important reference area for both research work and the development of appropriate mitigation measures that can then be applied to the full range of the fin whales in the Mediterranean,

Considering that there is a need for appropriate habitat use and distribution studies to describe fin whales' habitat preferences, to investigate the existence of critical habitats for this species and to aid implementation of management measures for ship traffic, fishing and whale watching,

Relying on the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative (Comprehensive cetacean population estimates and distribution in ACCOBAMS area), which can provide the collection and analysis of information on the distribution, abundance and threats to fin whales in the Agreement area,

Looking forward to the establishment of a Conservation plan for fin whales in the Mediterranean Sea,

Stressing the great importance of collaboration among research groups to forward conservation of fin whales within the Agreement area,

1. *Urges* the Scientific Committee to promote the work to elucidate the population structure and movements of fin whales in the Agreement area, in particular in areas not yet investigated and in collaboration with scientists of relevant countries, especially with respect to photo-identification, acoustics, telemetry and genetics, with a view to the establishment of a Conservation plan for fin whales in the Mediterranean Sea;
2. *Agrees* on a number of priority actions, that the Parties are invited to carry out in co-operation with the Scientific Committee, Pelagos, the IWC Scientific Committee, the Secretariat of the Convention on Migratory Species and other relevant experts and research groups in the region such as:
 - a) the maintenance or establishment of long-term systematic programmes to monitor trends in abundance and shifts in distribution in selected targeted areas and in other areas of importance for fin whales such as:
 - the Gulf of Lion and in general the productive areas west of the Pelagos Sanctuary;
 - the Central Tyrrhenian Sea to the south of the Pelagos Sanctuary;
 - the Strait of Sicily, particularly in late winter-early spring;
 - the western Ionian Sea and possibly the southern Adriatic;
 - the eastern Mediterranean Sea;

- b) the use of existing photo-identification databases as a long-term management and conservation tool and, especially, to compare photo-identification data from the Strait of Gibraltar and western Mediterranean with data from the North Atlantic area;
 - c) the collection of information on fin whale population structure and movements, which can provide important information on destinations of fin whales in winter time and possible links with the wider North Atlantic;
3. *Asks* the Scientific Committee to work on the elaboration of a conservation plan for fin whales with the view to submit it to the next Meeting of the Parties;
 4. *Decides* that the present Resolution replaces Resolution 3.16.