

*Accord sur la Conservation des Cétacés de la
Mer Noire, de la Méditerranée et de la zone
Atlantique adjacente*



*Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans
of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and
contiguous Atlantic Area*

Report of the Third Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Bureau



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Report of the Third Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Bureau

The Third Meeting of the Bureau of ACCOBAMS was convened to take place in Monaco in the premises of the Agreement's Secretariat on 1 and 2 December 2005. It was attended by the Bureau's members, the Executive Secretary, the Chair of the Scientific Committee of ACCOBAMS and the Staff of the Secretariat. The List of Participants appears as Annex 1 to this report.

The Chair of the Bureau (Mr. Miguel AYMERICH HUYGHUES, Sp.) welcomed the participants and opened the meeting at 2.00 p.m., Thursday the 1st of December 2005.

1. Adoption of the Agenda

The Secretariat introduced the draft Agenda and the List of Documents. The Meeting adopted the Agenda as Annex 2 to this report.

2. Agreement membership

The Executive Secretary introduced Document BU3/Doc 5 and reported on the status of ratifications and her recent visits to countries to promote membership of the Agreement. She emphasised that Cyprus had ratified the ACCOBAMS and that the ratification instruments were expected to reach the Depository shortly.

She also provided the participants with the following information:

- Slovenia: the Executive Secretary met in November 2005 the Minister of the Environment of Slovenia, who informed her that his country would start the process of ratifying ACCOBAMS in 2006. A National Focal Point for ACCOBAMS was appointed.
- Serbia & Montenegro: a National Focal Point was appointed in 2005 and the Executive Secretary met the Minister of the Environment of the Republic of Montenegro, who informed her that his Government would shortly start on the accession process and inform the Secretariat and the Depository in due time.
- Turkey: during her recent visit to Turkey, the Executive Secretary was informed that the Turkey's accession to the ACCOBAMS would be impeded because some non-scientifically backed reports had suggested that increases in cetacean populations had generated the decline of the Black Sea anchovy stocks. The Secretariat of ACCOBAMS is working with experts to provide the Turkish authorities with a compilation of scientific data to clarify the reasons behind the anchovy stock decline in the Black Sea.
- United Kingdom: the Executive Secretary met with the United Kingdom's Minister of Environment and informed him that Cyprus had ratified ACCOBAMS, recalling that in the past, the UK had envisaged joining ACCOBAMS on the grounds that the UK had a military base located on the Island of Cyprus.
- Egypt: the relevant authorities informed the Secretariat that they needed further scientific information about the cetacean population in the Egypt's Mediterranean waters to support the process of ratifying ACCOBAMS. The Secretariat informed the Meeting that thanks to the support of Italy a field survey was being planned in Egypt for 2006.
- Russian Federation: the Secretariat needed to strengthen its contacts with the relevant authorities in the Russian Federation. Its previous initiatives had not been successful. Further attempts were being planned for 2006.
- Israel: the Executive Secretary met in November 2005 a representative from Israel. She was informed that the authorities in Israel were aware of the Agreement and its activities, but there was no new information concerning the ratification process.
- Algeria: the Secretariat had informal contacts last November with the Algerian representative at the COP of CMS in Nairobi. The Secretariat will make official contacts in 2006 to encourage the Algerian authorities.

The Meeting also discussed the possibilities of non-riparian States joining ACCOBAMS and decided, given the sensitivity of this issue, to submit it to the next MOP.

Main decisions taken by the Bureau in relation to this agenda item

- The Bureau invited the Secretariat to pursue its efforts aimed at encouraging Riparian States to join ACCOBAMS and seek to this end the support of the Chair where necessary
- The Bureau decided to address very carefully the issue of accepting countries, which are not riparian, but have interests in the Mediterranean. The Bureau invited the Executive Secretary to submit to the next MOP a report on the alien fleets activities in the Agreement area that could interfere with the cetacean conservation.

3. Relationship with the Sub-Regional Coordination Units

The Executive Secretary introduced Document BU3/Doc 6 and presented the MoCs between the Secretariat and the Sub-Regional Coordination Units (SRCUs). She especially recalled that the MOP2 had recommended defining concrete actions aimed at strengthening SRCU involvement.

The Executive Secretary informed the Bureau that she was waiting for a reply from the Black Sea Commission; concerning the Mediterranean SRCU, a Meeting with the new director of RAC/SPA was planned to take place in Tunis (early December 2005) with the view of setting up a joint work plan.

She emphasised that the SRCUs were expected to contribute actively to the ACCOBAMS activities, especially developing the sighting database and MEDACES.

Main decisions taken by the Bureau in relation to this agenda item

The Bureau took note of the progress so far made by the Secretariat in strengthening SRCU involvement and invited the Executive Secretary to finalise the establishing of the MoCs with RAC/SPA and the Black Sea Commission.

4. Budgetary matters

4.1. Budgetary issues 2004

The Executive Secretary introduced Document BU3/Doc 7. She stressed that for the year 2004, 2/3 of the expenses were covered by voluntary contributions. As to the administrative activities, the main expenses were related to preparing the MOP, organising meetings and hiring consultants.

4.2. Budgetary issues 2005

The Secretariat presented Document BU3/Doc 10 on the status of the budget for the current year 2005 stressing that the voluntary contributions were 70% greater than in 2004, since Italy had decided to pay the whole of its contribution. The main expenses related to the convening of the Third Meeting of the Scientific Committee, capacity building activities and administrative functions. She also informed the Meeting about the main expenses expected before the end of the year.

4.3. Provisional budgetary issues for 2006

The Executive Secretary submitted to the Bureau Document BU3/Doc 8 and proposed a modification of some budgetary allocations. She stressed that the amount of 13,000 Euros allocated for 2006 in the "Travel on business" budget line could be insufficient, which would hamper the proper implementation of the Secretariat's activities, especially those related to promoting the membership of the Agreement and the participation in important meetings. She explained that the Secretariat will carry out in 2006 missions to the riparian countries not yet Parties to promote the accession to the Agreement. In this context, the Executive Secretary proposed using, where necessary, the unspent resources under budget line 930 (Habitat protection).

4.4. Status of the contributions

The Executive Secretary presented the status of the Trust Fund and the allocation of the voluntary contributions appearing in Document BU3/Doc 9. The Meeting reviewed the status of the unpaid contributions and investigated ways to encourage the concerned Parties to fulfil their budgetary obligations to ACCOBAMS.

4.5. Establishment of the Supplementary Conservation Grants Fund (BU3/Doc 11)

Given the offer by the Italian Government to provide a voluntary contribution corresponding to 50% of the annual ordinary contribution (27,790 Euros), the Executive Secretary proposed allocating this sum to the establishment of the Supplementary Conservation Grants Fund. This Fund is devoted to the implementation of national or sub-regional projects whose budgets are less than €15,000. S. Nicolaev presented the aim, the objectives and the methodology of the "Project for the assessment of the extent of present cetacean by-catch and strandings in the Romanian Black Sea area". He stressed that the Institute will work under the supervision of the Ministry of the Environment and in close cooperation with the Fishery authorities.

The Chair of the Scientific Committee noted that the project aimed at implementing the recommendations made by the Scientific Committee, and suggested that the monitoring of strandings be done within an existing stranding network. He also suggested including in the Project's Objective 4 the establishing of areas of conservation interest for *Tursiops truncatus* and *Phocoena phocoena*.

Main decisions taken by the Bureau in relation to this agenda item

- The Bureau congratulated the Secretariat on its efforts to obtain supplementary contributions to the Agreement's budget and expressed its gratitude to Italy for its major contribution and support for the Agreement.
- The Bureau approved the proposal by the Secretariat to use in 2006 the unspent budget under budget line 930 to offset, where necessary, the deficit that might occur in budget line 1600 in relation to the Secretariat's missions in the countries to promote ratification of and accession to ACCOBAMS.
- The Bureau suggested informing the Foreign Affairs Ministries of Libya, Greece and Georgia that, considering the amount of unpaid pledges by these Parties, the Secretariat cannot envisage providing financial support to field activities in these countries.
- The Bureau agreed to allocate the funds made available by Italy's voluntary contribution to the establishment of the Supplementary Conservation Grants Fund.
- The Bureau agreed to provide financial support (€15,000 from the Supplementary Conservation Grants Fund) to the Project presented by Romania.
- The Bureau asked the Secretariat to prepare a standard form to be used for submitting applications for funding from the Supplementary Conservation Grants Fund. The Form should include criteria for the evaluation of the application.

5. Partners

5.1. Review of Resolution 1.13 on ACCOBAMS Partnership

The Executive Secretary presented an overview of the collaboration developed with the Partners and introduced Document BU3/Doc 12. She indicated that some Partners had provided no contribution to the implementation of ACCOBAMS and she proposed revising the application form to include information about how the candidate Partner intends to develop its collaboration with ACCOBAMS. The Executive Secretary highlighted the support provided by some ACCOBAMS Partners, especially WDCS.

5.2. New requests for ACCOBAMS Partnership

The Secretariat presented the new requests for partnership; the Meeting reviewed these applications and decided to accept all of them. The Partner Status was thus conferred to:

- *Conservation Biology Research Group, University of Malta*, represented by Adriana Vella
- *Dipartimento di Biologia dell'Università di Genova*, represented by Maurizio Würtz
- *Groupe de Recherche sur les Cétacés*, represented by Alexandre Gannier
- *Morigenos – Marine Mammal Research and Conservation Society*, represented by Tilen Genov
- *Nature Trust*, represented by Sarah Muscat

Main decisions taken by the Bureau in relation to this agenda item:

- The Bureau congratulated WDCS on its valuable collaboration with the Agreement and adopted the application form (Annex 3 to this report).
- The Bureau conferred the Status of Partners on the 5 Organizations, agreed to establish a periodic Meeting of the Partners and recognized that new Partners should submit a program of collaboration to the Secretariat within three months.

6. Progress report on the activities of the Scientific Committee

6.1. Issues arising from the Third Meeting of the Scientific Committee

The Chair of the Scientific Committee presented the main issues of the last Meeting of the Committee referring to Document BU3/Doc 15. He informed the Meeting about the progress made in the activities of the Scientific Committee concerning the following topics:

Cetacean population estimates and distribution in the ACCOBAMS area,

Sighting databases in collaboration with Pelagos and CIESM

Species conservation plans

Live stranding

Tissue banks

Anthropogenic noise

Whale Watching

Marine Protected Areas of importance for cetaceans

Emergency Task Force

He also informed the Bureau that the next meeting of the Scientific Committee is planned for November 2006 in Monaco.

Main decisions taken by the Bureau in relation to this agenda item

- The Bureau took note of the progress report on the activities of the Scientific Committee and recommended that the Secretariat contact the Black Sea Countries and invite them to support the Black Sea Conservation Plan for Cetaceans.
- The Bureau recommended that the Parties support the projects of ACCOBAMS especially in the European Commission context.

7. MOP2 follow up

7.1. Proposal for an Extended Bureau

The Secretariat introduced the proposal it had prepared in accordance with the decision of the MOP2 on establishing an interface between the Scientific Committee and the Meeting of Parties, referring to Document BU3/Doc 13.

The Secretariat's proposal consisted in amending the Bureau's Rules of Procedure to allow it to devote its meeting that precedes each Meeting of Parties to preparing the MOP, and to rely for this on a working group of 11 members whose composition is representative of the Countries bordering on the Mediterranean, to examine, particularly,

- the progress made in the activities of the Secretariat and the Sub-regional Coordinating Units
- the proposals made by the Scientific Committee, and
- the draft recommendations and resolutions to be submitted to the Meeting of Parties.

The Bureau reviewed the proposal made by the Secretariat.

7.2. Implementation of the Agreement by the Parties

The Executive Secretary introduced Document BU3/Doc 17 and explained that it had been prepared on the basis of feedback provided by some National Focal Points about the activities undertaken in their respective countries within the framework of the implementation of ACCOBAMS. She expressed her disappointment about the lack of feedback from some countries.

7.3. Reporting online

The Secretariat presented the preliminary format of the online reporting system being prepared as follow-up to the MOP2 decision. The system will be available on the Internet through password access. Considering the difficulties in some countries to have efficient Internet connection, an interface for off-line reporting will be provided.

7.4. Visa requirements and procedures

The Executive Secretary drew the attention of the Bureau to the difficulties many country representatives had entry visas to attend meetings and workshops organized within the framework of ACCOBAMS. The

Bureau's members expressed concern about this issue and invited the Secretariat to consult with other international organizations on how they facilitated visa-obtaining procedures.

Main decisions taken by the Bureau in relation to this agenda item

- Following an extensive debate on establishing an interface between the Scientific Committee and the Meeting of Parties, the Bureau approved the Secretariat's proposal to amend the Bureau's Rules of Procedure and asked the Secretariat to submit to the next MOP a new version of Document BU3/Doc 13, taking into account the views and opinions expressed by the Bureau's members.
- The Bureau noticed the gap between political intent and implementation. It encouraged the Secretariat to pursue its initiative to collect and compile information about the activities undertaken by Parties to implement the Agreement's provisions and to submit synthesis to the Bureau and the MOP.
- The Bureau took note of the preliminary format of the system for online reporting and invited the Secretariat to present the finalized system at the next MOP, with one example of national online reporting done by a volunteer country.

8. Matters of emergency

8.1. Bycatch in the Agreement area

8.1.1. Driftnets in Mediterranean

The Chair of the Scientific Committee presented the issue of driftnets in the Mediterranean making reference to Document BU3/Doc 20. He explained that driftnets were still used in spite of the ban on them and are a certain cause of significant bycatch. He stressed that considering that EU countries are more likely to solve the problem, the issue should be raised within the EC also with regard to non-EU countries.

8.1.2. Bycatch in the Black Sea

Item cancelled. The Executive Secretary informed the Bureau that the relevant document had not been received by the Secretariat.

8.1.3. News on the ACCOBAMS Bycatch project

The Secretariat reported on the progress made in developing the ACCOBAMS project to mitigate the impact of bycatch and interactions between fisheries and cetaceans. The project was prepared in collaboration with GFCM and RAC/SPA. The Secretariat informed the Bureau that the GFCM's Scientific Advisory Committee recognized the importance of this issue and that the COP 8 of CMS adopted a Resolution on bycatch whose text was totally in line with the ACCOBAMS project.

Some of the project actions could be implemented as small projects at national level, while a regional project is needed to ensure harmonization of and support for the national initiatives. The Secretariat proposed preparing a funding request to GEF jointly with GFCM and RAC/SPA.

8.2. Cetaceans in captivity in the ACCOBAMS area

The Chair of the Scientific Committee summarized this issue briefly and explained its relevance to ACCOBAMS. He informed the Meeting that the Scientific Committee had identified many elements of great concern, especially about the cetacean captivity in the Black Sea.

While recognizing the role of dolphinariums in raising general public awareness about the conservation of cetaceans, the Bureau expressed its concern about the issue of cetacean captivity in the ACCOBAMS area and invited the Secretariat to consult with the CITES Secretariat about international dolphin transfer, especially in the Black Sea.

8.3. A case for urgent actions: the Common Dolphin in the Mediterranean Sea

The Chair of the Scientific Committee informed the Meeting that scientific evidence was recently provided indicating that overfishing of small pelagics in the Kalamos coastal area was likely responsible for a substantial depletion of the stocks causing, among other things, a sharp decline of the common dolphin population in that area. He suggested encouraging the Greek authorities to establish a fishery reserve aimed at recovery of small pelagic stocks. ACCOBAMS, jointly with GFCM and the

relevant DGs of the European Commission, could play a significant role in helping establish the fishery reserve.

Main decisions taken by the Bureau in relation to this agenda item

- The Bureau took note of the seriousness of the issue of driftnetting, approved the proposed recommendation and agreed on redrafting point 22:
The ACCOBAMS Secretariat should enter into contact with the European Commission, ICCAT and GFCM to investigate possible ways of stopping illegal driftnetting activities remaining in the Mediterranean, in both national waters (in co-operation with national authorities) and the High Sea.
- The Bureau took note of the progress made in developing the ACCOBAMS Project on mitigating the impact of bycatch and other fishery-cetacean interactions and invited the Secretariat to circulate the Project to the countries and coordinate with GFCM and RAC/SPA in preparing a funding request to GEF.
- The Bureau invited the Secretariat to submit to the next MOP a draft Resolution about the control of cetacean captivity in the ACCOBAMS Area.
- The Bureau mandated the Secretariat to approach the relevant Greek Authorities to assist them in an *ad hoc* stock assessment, and establishment of a fishery reserve and recovery plan for small pelagic fish stocks in the Kalamos area, with the view of improving the state of Common Dolphin population in the area.

9. 2010 targets

The Secretariat introduced Document BU3/Doc 24 and emphasized that the ACCOBAMS constituted one of the appropriate tools that could help achieve the 2010 targets of reducing the current rate of biodiversity loss. In this context, it suggested paying special attention to the conservation of cetacean habitats and using to this end the ACCOBAMS' protected areas programme being prepared in follow-up of Resolution 2.14 "Protected Areas and cetacean conservation".

The Meeting approved the Secretariat proposal and recommended working closely with relevant initiatives, especially the Natura 2000 and the SPAMI networks.

Main decisions taken by the Bureau in relation to this agenda item

The Bureau encouraged the Secretariat to provide its assistance to the Parties in achieving the 2010 targets with a special focus on the cetacean habitat conservation. It strongly recommended coordinating with the existing initiatives for natural sites conservation and to integrate the cetacean habitat protection into the existing networks rather than creating new protected areas.

10. Promotion of the Agreement and collaboration with other instruments (BU3/Doc 25)

The Executive Secretary reported about the main initiatives undertaken to strengthen the collaboration with other instruments. She mentioned in particular the side events and receptions held at the occasions of 14th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and the COP8 of CMS organized in collaboration with the WDCS with the support of the Principality of Monaco. She also informed the meeting about the collaboration with UNEP, RAC/SPA, the Black Sea Commission and the CMS for the production of the educational kit on cetaceans.

She also presented the list of events planned for 2006 and in particular those related to the celebration of the 10th anniversary of ACCOBAMS.

The Secretariat presented some proposals for a pay off to be quoted in the communication issues and to be joint to the ACCOBAMS logo and explained the need of such slogan to better express the nature and the mission of the Agreement.

Main decisions taken by the Bureau in relation to this agenda item

The Bureau took note of the Secretariat initiatives and expressed its satisfaction with the collaboration links established with other organisations and conventions. It invited the Secretariat to work on the identification of a neat nickname for ACCOBAMS.

11. Other business

No discussion occurred under this item.

12. Next Meeting

The Bureau agreed to meet by the end of March beginning April 2007. The Secretariat will consult with the Chair to define the venue and the exact dates and inform the other Bureau's members.

ANNEX 1

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ANNEX 2

Agenda

- 1. Adoption of the Agenda**
- 2. Agreement membership**
- 3. Relationship with the Sub Regional Coordination Units**
- 4. Budgetary matters**
 - 4.1 Budgetary issues 2004
 - 4.2 Budgetary issues 2005
 - 4.3 Provisional budgetary issues for 2006
 - 4.4 Status of the contributions
 - 4.5 Establishment of the Supplementary Conservation Grants Fund
- 5. Partners**
 - 5.1 Review of the Resolution 1.13 on ACCOBAMS' Partnership
 - 5.2 New requests for ACCOBAMS partnership
- 6. Progress report on the activities of the Scientific Committee**
 - 6.1 Issues arising from the Third Meeting of the Scientific Committee
- 7. MOP2 follow up**
 - 7.1 Proposal for an Extended Bureau
 - 7.2 Implementation of the Agreement by the Parties
 - 7.3 Reporting on line
 - 7.4 Visas requirements and procedures
- 8. Matters of emergency**
 - 8.1 By catch in the Agreement area
 - 8.1.1 Driftnets in Mediterranean
 - 8.1.2 Bycatch in the Black Sea
 - 8.1.3 News on the ACCOBAMS By catch project
 - 8.2 Cetaceans in captivity in the ACCOBAMS area
- 9. 2010 targets**
- 10. Promotion of the Agreement and collaboration with other instruments**
 - 10.1 Collaboration with UNEP
 - 10.2 The IWC Conservation Committee
 - 10.3 COPs side events
 - 10.4 2006: 10 years of ACCOBAMS
- 11. Other business**
- 12. Next Meeting**

ANNEX 3

Application form for the Status of ACCOBAMS Partner

To the ACCOBAMS Secretariat
Les Terrasses de Fontvieille, Jardin de l'UNESCO
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The _____ (*name of the Organization/Institution*)
represented by _____ in quality of _____, with the aim to
apply for the ACCOBAMS' Partner Status and in accordance with Annex 1 to Resolution 1.13, declares to
fulfill the characteristics among the ones below :

	YES	NO
1. Having a statement of purpose that explicitly, or by clear implication, includes conservation of Cetaceans and of their habitat, or Man-Cetacean interactions, or other activities relevant to the Agreement		
2. Having a track record of experience in providing support to and/or implementing on-the-ground projects of research, collection and analyses of information, or other educative and training activities that contribute to Cetacean Conservation, or for having realized these projects		
3. Having demonstrated experience in implementing partnership ventures such as training and education, technical and/or scientific expertise, policy development, and/or evaluation and assessment particularly when such ventures would bring new and additional benefits to the functioning of the ACCOBAMS partnership		
4. Having a positive reputation for being willing and able to cooperate with National and International Bodies, including both Governmental and Non-Governmental ones		
5. Having stated their readiness to actively contribute on a regular basis to further development of policies and tools of the Agreement and their application, particularly by assisting Contracting Parties to meet their obligations under the Agreement		
6. Being prepared to exchange letters with the Secretariat, within which the partnership agreement should be clearly defined		



Provides as well some additional information:

Statute and mission of the Organization/Institution	
Activities carried out on cetacean conservation	
Collaboration with other organizations	
Main reasons for the envisaged partnership	Benefits to the Organization/Institution:
	Benefits to ACCOBAMS:
Planned or proposed activities to be carried out jointly in the frame of the partnership and relevant for the achievement of ACCOBAMS' objectives	

Date and place

Signature