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

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

REPORT OF THE SIXTH MEETING OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

Casablanca 11-13 January 2010

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SUMMARY

ANNEX LIST

Introduction

1. The Sixth Meeting of the Scientific Committee (SC6) of ACCOBAMS was convened in Casablanca from the 11th to the 13th January 2010. It was attended by members of the Scientific Committee, representatives from the Sub-Regional Coordination Units, representatives from International Organisations and observers including partners of ACCOBAMS.

2. The full list of participants appears as Annex 1 to this report.

1. Opening of the Meeting

3. The Chair opened the Meeting at 9.00 a.m. on Monday 11th January 2010. He welcomed the participants and invited Abdelouahed Benabbou, National Focal Point (NFP) of the host country and Abdellatif Berraho, General Director of the INRH, to address the participants. The full text of the NFP speech appears as Annex 2.

4. The representative of ASCOBANS, Stefan Bräger, expressed his appreciation to the ACCOBAMS Secretariat for the invitation to participate in the Sixth Meeting of the Scientific Committee. He conveyed the regards of the Advisory Committee and confirmed the strong interest of ASCOBANS to intensify collaboration with the sister agreement. Two areas of possible cooperation suggested among others might be the mitigation efforts of underwater noise and of bycatch.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

5. The Chair introduced the provisional agenda of the Meeting contained in the Document SC6/Doc02Rev3 and invited the participants to review and comment it.

6. The Meeting adopted the agenda as it appears in Annex 3 and the proposed timetable.

7. The Executive Secretary informed the Meeting that at their last ordinary Meeting, the Contracting Parties decided to establish an Extended Bureau whose mandate will be to assist the Bureau in the preparation of the Meeting of the Parties (MOP) through reviewing the working document of the Bureau Meeting there are inviting to attend and check the social and economic relevant of the proposed recommendations/resolutions. She emphasised that considering the possible overlap between the Extended Bureau and the Scientific Committee (SC), the Bureau invited the Secretariat to appoint an independent expert to evaluate the functioning of the SC. In this context, she introduced Andreas Demetropoulos, selected by the Chair of the Bureau to carry out the evaluation of the SC functioning.

8. Andreas Demetropoulos introduced himself stating that he was involved in the marine conservation issues at national level and also at international level since he collaborated with many environmental international organisations.

3. Implementation of the Work Programme

3.1. Population and distribution studies

3.1.1. Dedicated surveys

9. Greg Donovan, a member of the Steering Group for the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative, presented a summary of the programme. At its 2nd meeting in 2003, the Scientific Committee drew the attention of the ACCOBAMS Parties to the 'fundamental importance of obtaining baseline population[1] estimates and distributional information of cetaceans within the area as soon as possible'. It stressed that without such information (and a suitable monitoring programme) it will be impossible to *inter alia* determine whether ACCOBAMS is meeting its conservation objectives. The great importance of such information in the assessment of risk, the determination of appropriate mitigation measures and the associated determination of priority actions, has been highlighted in many discussions of the Scientific Committee, including past and recent discussions on bycatches, MPAs, fin whales, the conservation plans for Mediterranean common dolphins, Mediterranean bottlenose dolphins and Black Sea cetaceans and (see recommendations of the SC since SC2 adopted by the Parties). On a number of occasions the Committee has reiterated that such work represents the highest priority for conservation research within the area (although this should not be interpreted as meaning that other work cannot continue in parallel). The Parties have accepted this by Resolution and many countries have indicated their desire to co-operate in some way (e.g. via direct and/or indirect funding).

10. Considerable work has been undertaken in the intervening years to develop this proposal, including the holding of a number of expert workshops. The project is, and needs to be, extremely ambitious – and correspondingly it will be expensive.

11. Its primary components are:
    a. a major summer synoptic survey of the Black Sea region, the Mediterranean Sea and the contiguous Atlantic waters;
    b. parallel work on stock structure;
    c. development of cost-effective monitoring schemes;
    d. development of management framework(s) for evaluating threats.

12. The primary limitations now relate to questions of funding, logistics and administration – the fundamental scientific work is completed. Sadly, this limitation has been led to relatively little progress since the last MOP. He stressed that if ACCOBAMS is to be seen to be taking its conservation responsibilities seriously, it is essential that these problems are overcome and at least the synoptic survey component is undertaken within the next three years. The Initiative cannot be taken further forward now by volunteers and the Scientific Steering Group does not contain the necessary expertise to solve the questions of funding, logistics and administration. In response to a question, he noted that while a synoptic survey including the Black Sea region was ideal, the available information on stock structure suggests that it would be possible to carry out the survey in the Black Sea region in a different year to that of the Mediterranean Sea and the contiguous Atlantic waters. For progress to be made, an appropriate institution is needed.

[1] Use of the word population here implies obtaining knowledge on stock structure as well as abundance

13. The representative of the French *Agence des Aires Marines Protégées*, François Gauthiez, made a brief presentation about the Agence and its objectives. He informed the Meeting that the Agence organized, as part of its activities, many aerial surveys whose results were used for Marine Protected Areas (MPA) planning and that the Agence would be interested in promoting the dedicated survey being prepared under ACCOBAMS. The decision will be made before the next MOP. The Scientific Committee was extremely grateful at the interest shown by the *Agence*, which has the potential to turn an ambitious project into a realised project – with the tremendous benefits to conservation in the region that this would bring. It looks forward to receiving a decision on whether it will be able to take on this co-ordinating role before the next MOP. Meanwhile, the Steering Group will be delighted to provide any assistance it can.

14. The representative of the Black Sea Commission informed the meeting that the survey initiative project for the Black Sea will be revised and re-submitted for funding under the Joint Operational Program, www.blacksea-cbc.net - ENPI initiative of EU for the Black Sea region. The objective of the revised project is to combine cetacean survey with other environmental concerns, such as marine litter and illegal oil discharges from ships. She emphasized that the next step should be to find volunteers for the preparation of the application forms after the next call of the Program which will be announced in the first half of 2010.

15. The Executive Secretary informed the meeting about the contacts she had with *DG Mare* of the European commission concerning the possible financial support from the Commission to the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative. According to these contacts, there were prospects for financial support from the EC, however, the survey project should be revised to concentrate on cetaceans species and to refine the budget estimates.

16. Ana Strbenac informed the Meeting that partners from Italy, Slovenia, Croatia and Albania submitted a project proposal on cetacean conservation in the Adriatic Sea (NETCET) to the EU preaccession programme IPA – Adriatic. One of the project's component is abundance and distribution of cetacean survey in the Adriatic using methodology elaborated in the ACCOBAMS survey project proposal. The information on project proposal status is expected in the next few months.

17. Léa David informed the Meeting that the French GIS3M (Scientific Group of Interest for Mediterranean Marine Mammals) was leading ongoing studies in the Pelagos Sanctuary concerning the distribution of large whale species (Sperm whale and Fin whale) in the north-western Mediterranean Sea. In parallel it also established a database for commercial maritime traffic (passengers and cargo) and mapped its distribution to highlight high traffic areas. Finally, the superposition of maps of cetaceans and of maritime traffic will allow determining the high risk areas of collision in this part of the Mediterranean Sea that can be used for identifying mitigation measures. The results will be available within six months.

18. The ASCOBANS representative informed the Meeting that after two years of preparation, scientists from seven Baltic Sea countries have just started a basin-wide acoustic survey called SAMBAH. This LIFE+ project will include two years of field work (2011-2012) with approximately 300 Static Acoustic Monitoring (SAM) units spread more or less evenly in Baltic waters of 10-80 m depth. The project is led by Mats Amundin and colleagues from Sweden and aims to obtain the long-needed information on the distribution and abundance of the threatened Baltic Sea harbour porpoise (and thus extending SCANS surveys to the East). More details on the other important objectives of the project will be presented during a workshop at the ECS conference in Stralsund in March 2010.

19. Simone Panigada presented Document SC6/Inf12, illustrating how systematic monitoring of density and abundance of the most common cetacean species is essential to inform conservation measures throughout the Basin and it is one of the current priorities of the Italian Ministry of the Environment. These monitoring programmes are among the priority actions mentioned in the Pelagos Sanctuary Management Plan, and those listed by ACCOBAMS and by the Specially Protected Areas and Biodiversity Protocol under the Barcelona Convention.

20. As part of the development of the programme, two aerial surveys have been conducted within the borders of the Pelagos Sanctuary in winter (the first time the full Sanctuary area has been covered) and summer 2009, providing estimated abundance of striped dolphins both in the winter and in the summer, while the estimated abundance of fin whales was possible only for the summer period.

21. The programme thus far has illustrated the value of aerial surveys for monitoring, allowing high coverage of the area and allowing the determination of more robust estimates with lower CVs and CIs, than would have been possible with more traditional ship based surveys. In addition, during these surveys other megafauna has been observed, with species such as the loggerhead turtle, the giant devil ray and the basking shark which have been listed in the Annexes II of the SPA/BD Protocol within the Barcelona Convention and therefore need specific conservation measures.

22. These results represented vital baseline data for the Pelagos Sanctuary. The distribution data from the two surveys strongly suggested that the Sanctuary did not cover full population ranges for either fin whales or striped dolphins. Some preliminary conclusions can be drawn from this dataset. Such as:
    a. a simple comparison with data from past shipboard surveys suggests an appreciable decrease in presence and density of fin whales in the Pelagos Sanctuary area in the summer;
    b. appreciable variations in density and abundance were detected between the winter and the summer aerial surveys, with higher numbers using the Sanctuary area during the summer months, when human activities (and potential impact on cetaceans) reach maximum levels;
    c. these density and distribution data provide valuable baseline information for the proposed ACCOBAMS Survey initiative and will contribute to actions within that program related to the monitoring of trends.

23. The results indicated the need for long-term monitoring and an expansion of the survey area. Further monitoring actions have been funded by the Italian Ministry of the Environment and will be conducted during winter and summer 2010, with similar protocols to allow comparisons between different years and to provide baseline data for assessing trends over the years. In particular, a first aerial survey will be conducted in the Strait of Sicily in winter 2010, to assess cetacean presence and density and to aid in suggesting borders for an eventual SPAMI in the area. During the summer months, the northern and central Tyrrhenian Sea will be surveyed, to monitor any geographical shifts in annual cetacean distribution and presence.

24. The Italian Ministry of the Environment recognizes the importance and robustness of this methodology and supports its wide use to assess cetacean populations and trends over time.

25. The Committee welcomed this information from the Italian surveys and thanked the Italian Government for funding this important and innovative work that will inter alia contribute greatly to the work on the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative as well as to improved conservation in the surveyed areas.

26. Tim Lewis presented Document SC6/Inf13 which provided an abundance estimate of sperm whales in the SW Mediterranean from an acoustic line-transect survey carried out by IFAW. Details of the survey design, methodology, results and analysis were provided. The absolute abundance estimate for the survey block was 561 animals with CV=0.273 ($\hat{D}$ = 0.186 x 10-2 animals/km²). The survey was aimed at providing information for the conservation of sperm whales (e.g. numbers for IUCN listing, distribution relevant to ship-strikes). The detection rate and developments in the methodology and analysis techniques were aimed at being useful for the Survey Initiative. Ongoing developments of the analysis were also presented.

27. The SC was very appreciative of the work conducted by IFAW in this field, and more generally thanked IFAW for its extensive scientific work and support to ACCOBAMS to date. The SC was therefore very disappointed to hear that the marine mammal fieldwork programme of IFAW has been greatly reduced. It reiterates the value of this work to conservation in the ACCOBAMS area and hopes that this work can be restored in due course. It was pleased that analytical work of existing data is still being carried out and strongly encourages IFAW to complete the acoustic analyses described above. The Committee requested Tim Lewis to pass on these sentiments to IFAW.

28. Lewis noted that the IFAW research vessel "Song of the Whale" is available for charter for research work in the Mediterranean, and that IFAW were continuing with the analysis of data already gathered in the region.

29. The meeting decided to prepare a recommendation on the survey initiative (Recommendation 6.1) and submit it to the Contracting Parties.

In brief: Greg Donovan recalled the primary components of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative programme. He informed the meeting that the two surveys (Mediterranean and Black Sea) could be carried out separately. The limitations of the programme relate to questions of funding, logistics and administration and it is essential that these problems are overcome and at least the synoptic survey component is undertaken within the next three years.
The Executive Secretary informed the meeting about the possible financial support from the Commission to the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative which should be revised to concentrate on cetaceans species and to refine the budget estimates.
François Gauthiez informed the meeting that the *Agence des Aires Marines Protégées* would be interested in promoting the dedicated survey being prepared under ACCOBAMS.
BSC, GIS3M, IFAW and Italian Minister of the Environment presented their project assessment. Partners from Italy, Slovenia, Croatia and Albania submitted a project proposal on cetacean conservation in the Adriatic Sea (NETCET) to the EU preaccession programme IPA – Adriatic.
The meeting decided to prepare a recommendation on the survey initiative (Recommendation 6.1) and submit it to the contracting Parties.

3.1.2. Genetic studies

30. The Chair presented Document SC6/Inf05 and commended the work done by Ada Natoli and Stefania Gaspari for the elaboration of the document. He emphasized that the conservation relevance of the detection of structure within cetacean populations in the Agreement area is well known, and making progress in this direction is very important. Considering the very high budget indicated in the annex to the document, it was noted that this was mostly related to the second phase of the programme (i.e., the collection of samples and their analysis), whereas the first phase, more organisational (inventory of available samples, programming of work, etc.) is more affordable. Furthermore, it is amenable to be shared with other organisations having similar goals, such as ASCOBANS.

31. The Meeting decided to prepare a recommendation on the subject (Recommendation 6.2) and submit it to the contracting Parties.

The very high budget indicated in the annex to the document SC6/Inf05 was mostly related to the second phase of the programme (i.e., the collection of samples and their analysis) and is amenable to be shared with other organisations having similar goals, such as ASCOBANS.
The Meeting decided to prepare a recommendation on the subject (Recommendation 6.2) and submit it to the contracting Parties.

3.1.3. Sighting database

32. The Chair introduced the Document SC6/Doc07 by briefly describing the background on the issue. He emphasised that considering the substantial human and financial resource requirement of the scheme, an alternative path was investigated to allow the fruition of sighting data, which involved the channelling of sighting information directly from the data owners into the Ocean Biogeographic Information System Spatial Ecological Analysis of Mega Vertebrate Populations (OBIS-SEAMAP) global online database for marine mammals, sea birds and turtles (http://seamap.env.duke.edu/). This was in line with what was proposed during the previous meeting of the Scientific Committee and approved by the Meeting of the Parties, with the encouragement of the Bureau.

33. The Scientific Committee welcomed this initiative and recommended to the Secretariat to mandate to a consultant the task of creating and inventory of research groups in the ACCOBAMS area known to own significant cetacean sighting datasets. The consultant should suggest/recommend to each to contribute sighting data to OBIS SEAMAP, do an initial vetting of the data quality, and facilitate communication with OBIS SEAMAP for the inclusion of the data in the database. ACCOBAMS would act as facilitator in the initial relationship between the data owners and OBIS SEAMAP, ensuring that proper communication is established, and helping providing the prospective contributor with all the information relevant to a positive decision. In this part of the process, the cooperation of ACCOBAMS data owners that already have contributed to OBIS SEAMAP (e.g., Alnitak) should be solicited.

34. The Committee agreed that the Chair would establish a small working group to draft terms of the reference for the consultant within two months. It was noted that a considerable amount of relevant work has been undertaken with respect to the inventory as part of the planning for the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative. The ToR will also take into account ways to incorporate the valuable CIESM historical database.

The Chair emphasised the necessary fruition of sighting data, which involved the channelling of sighting information directly from the data owners into the Ocean Biogeographic Information System Spatial Ecological Analysis of Mega Vertebrate Populations (OBIS-SEAMAP) global online database.
The Scientific Committee welcomed this initiative and recommended to the Secretariat to mandate to a consultant the task of creating and inventory of research groups in the ACCOBAMS area known to own significant cetacean sighting datasets.
The Committee agreed that the Chair would establish a small working group to draft terms of the reference for the consultant within two months.

3.2. Species Conservation Actions

3.2.1. Black Sea cetaceans

35. The representative of the Black Sea Commission presented Document SC6/Doc8 and informed the meeting about the progress made so far in the implementation of the regional 'Conservation Plan for Black Sea Cetaceans'), which was adopted by the ACCOBAMS MoP3, Res. 3.11, October 2007. The Plan is not yet formally adopted in the Black Sea region; however, its main activities are incorporated in the new BS Strategic Action Plan (BS SAP) for the Protection and Rehabilitation of the Black Sea, which was signed by the BS States in April 2009. The following priorities in Cetaceans conservation will be targeted in the Black Sea region during the next 5-10 years through the new BS SAP:

    a. The regional Conservation Plan for Black Sea Cetaceans is approved by the BSC;
    b. National Plans for Conservation of Cetaceans developed;
    c. Strandings and by catch Networks developed;
    d. Endangered Cetacean species abundance, distribution and threats assessed;
    e. Established national and transboundary MPAs eligible for the conservation of Cetaceans;
    f. Methodology developed to reduce significant by-catches of Cetaceans.

36. As the anticipated outputs of actions are envisaged for 2014-2019 in the new BS SAP, the deadlines approved by ACCOBAMS (Res. 3.11, October 2007, foreseeing implementation of the regional plan in 2008-2012) need to be extended.

37. Certain progress is obvious in the implementation of the Black Sea regional plan for conservation of Cetaceans, however, the monitoring of cetacean population dynamics, by-catch and strandings was qualified as not yet satisfactory. Small scale projects are mainly implemented, insignificant commitment and interest of Black Sea State authorities was mentioned, and insufficient funding provided for conservation of Cetaceans. The reporting of by-catch and strandings to the BSC is rather poor, no survey initiative has been undertaken, though planned years ago. Designation of MPAs identified previously as eligible for the conservation of cetaceans is not yet sufficiently promoted. The findings of projects need to be better communicated and brought to the attention of decision-makers. However, all mentioned problems are not Black Sea-specific, they exist in other ACCOBAMS areas as well.

The following priorities in Cetaceans conservation will be targeted in the Black Sea region during the next 5-10 years through the new BS SAP: a) The regional Conservation Plan for Black Sea Cetaceans is approved by the BSC; b) National Plans for Conservation of Cetaceans developed; c) Strandings and by catch Networks developed; d) Endangered Cetacean species abundance, distribution and threats assessed; e) Established national and transboundary MPAs eligible for the conservation of Cetaceans; f) Methodology developed to reduce significant by-catches of Cetaceans.
As the anticipated outputs of actions are envisaged for 2014-2019 in the new BS SAP, the deadlines approved by ACCOBAMS need to be extended.
Certain progress is obvious in the implementation of the Black Sea regional plan for conservation of Cetaceans, however, the monitoring of Cetacean populations dynamics, by-catch and strandings was qualified as not yet at the satisfactory level.

3.2.2. Mediterranean Common dolphins

38. Mark Simmonds summarised Document SC6/Doc09 noting that the short-beaked common dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*), once one of the most common cetacean species in the Mediterranean, is now well known to have declined throughout the region during the last 30-40 years. This matter had been repeatedly discussed by the Scientific Committee. The causes remain poorly understood but are thought to include prey depletion caused by overfishing, bycatch in fishing gear and habitat degradation. The history of this matter is as follows:

- Determining the conservation status of Mediterranean common dolphins was cited as a priority in past cetacean action plans of the IUCN Species Survival Commission. The 2000-2010 IUCN Action Plan for the world's cetaceans noted that common dolphins had declined dramatically in the central and eastern Mediterranean and stressed that conservation action was urgently needed to prevent extirpation in this portion of the species' range;
- In 2003 the Mediterranean population of common dolphins was classified as Endangered in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals;
- In 2004, ACCOBAMS presented a comprehensive 90-page Conservation Plan for Mediterranean common dolphins. The Plan was "strongly welcomed" by the 2nd Meeting of the Parties of ACCOBAMS (Resolution 2.20);
- In 2005, the Mediterranean population of common dolphins was included in Appendix I and II of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (Bonn Convention - CMS);
- Also in 2005, the Scientific Committee of ACCOBAMS recommended immediate financial and institutional support to small-scale projects for common dolphin conservation;
- In 2007, the 3rd Meeting of the Parties to ACCOBAMS was “deeply concerned that despite the strong scientific evidence, strategic planning and multiple expressions of concern and recommendations, *inter alia* by the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee and relevant ACCOBAMS Partners, insufficient action has been taken to ensure recovery of the common dolphin in the region”. The Parties were therefore urged to implement the conservation plan for common dolphins and introduce relevant activities into their national action plans. The Secretariat of ACCOBAMS was requested to convey the international concern for common dolphins to the environment and fisheries directorates of the European Commission, in particular for the inclusion of the common dolphin in Annex 2 to the Habitat Directive.

39. He also noted the ‘Urgent Call for the Conservation of one of the last strongholds of the Mediterranean Common Dolphin’ which had been signed to date by thirteen international and national non-governmental bodies united and coordinated via the Cetacean Alliance (http://www.cetaceanalliance.org/) and that this statement extended to a call for action to also conserve tuna, marine biodiversity, ecosystem services and for the sustainability of fisheries.

40. Joan Gonzalvo emphasised that the waters east of Lefkada and around Kalamos in western Greece — a Natura 2000 area GR2220003 known as 'Inner Ionian Sea Archipelago'— are (or used to be) one of the last places where short beaked common dolphins can be found in the central Mediterranean Sea. The immediate risk of complete eradication from the area of the common dolphins has been documented thanks to the intensive research carried out by Tethys Research institute since 1991. Common dolphin numbers decreased from 150 to only 15 animals in ten years. Competition between dolphins and fisheries in this coastal area was shown to have minor effects on fisheries. Conversely, prey depletion resulting from fishing can negatively affect cetaceans, common dolphins in particular. He noted that under the present circumstances, if no concrete action is taken in this Natura 2000 area, where a clear cause-effect between fisheries mismanagement and dolphin population declines because of prey depletion has been well documented, little hope is left for those other regions of the Mediterranean where common dolphins are still regularly sighted.

41. On a brighter note, Dan Kerem suggested that particular attention be awarded to the south-eastern corner of the Mediterranean (waters bordered by Egypt, Gaza, and Israel). This in light of numerous recent near-shore sighting of groups of short-beaked common dolphin with a size range of 20 to 70 animals, following a decade of very few sightings of single animals and small groups.

42. The Meeting decided to prepare a recommendation on the subject (Recommendation 6.3) and submit it to the Contracting Parties.

Mark Simmonds noted that the short-beaked common dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*) is now well known to have declined throughout the region during the last 30-40 years. The causes remain poorly understood but are thought to include prey depletion caused by overfishing, bycatch in fishing gear and habitat degradation.
Joan Gonzalvo emphasised that within the waters east of Lefkada and around Kalamos in western Greece — a Natura 2000 area GR2220003 – the Common dolphin numbers decreased from 150 to only 15 animals in ten years.
Dan Kerem suggested that particular attention be awarded to the SE corner of the Mediterranean.
The Meeting decided to prepare a recommendation on the subject (Recommendation 6.3) and submit it to the Contracting Parties

3.2.3. Mediterranean Bottlenose dolphins

43. The Chair presented Document SC6/Doc10, which had been prepared by Caterina Fortuna who could not attend the Meeting. The Chair explained that the document only provides a state-of-the-art of the programme of work, which was described in greater detail in documents presented at previous meetings. He was glad to announce that Caterina Fortuna had agreed to serve as coordinator of the programme. A table was then presented showing the different sub-areas and the names of the experts who have agreed to serve as coordinator for that sub-area (the table appears in Annex 4). It was noted that although not all sub-areas are currently covered by a coordinator, this could be considered a "warming up" phase during which the mechanism would be tested and the process improved as it progresses.

44. A question was raised concerning whether sub-area 12 (the Levantine Sea) should stay as it was listed in the document or subdivided into two (sub-area 12 and sub-area 13), and the answer was postponed to a clarification between Caterina Fortuna and Dani Kerem, to be done as soon as possible.

45. Léa David – listed in the table as coordinator of sub-area 5 – informed the committee that this was not sorted out yet, the coordinator role possibly to be undertaken by Guido Gnone of the Genoa Aquarium.

46. The Scientific Committee welcomed the offer Rebecca Greenberg from Oceana to be the coordinator for area 4 and of Guido Gnone for area 5.

47. Joan Gonzalvo from the Tethys Research Institute presented the special case of bottlenose dolphins, described in document SC6/Inf11 and indicated that the virtually closed ecosystem of the Amvrakikos Gulf (Western Greece) is exposed to high and growing anthropogenic impact. Eutrophication and pollution, in particular, have been rapidly increasing in recent years and the resulting threats are not mitigated or even addressed by management action. Common bottlenose dolphins in this area constitute a geographically and otherwise distinct group with little demographic exchange.

48. In discussing the document, the Scientific Committee agreed that application of the standard criteria provided by the IUCN Red Listing system, this 'subpopulation' would qualify as Endangered. While local density of dolphins is among the highest recorded anywhere in the Mediterranean Sea and the population numbers during the past few years remained stable, this is not indicative of favourable conservation status. On the contrary, these dolphins face a very high risk of extinction due to their reproductive isolation, small population size and small extent of occurrence (300 km^2), as well as to acute and growing anthropogenic impacts in their semi-closed shallow habitat. In Amvrakikos "many dolphins" just means much dolphin prey; not necessarily clean/healthy sea and certainly not healthy dolphins or long-term survival. Management of human pressures is an obvious way of reducing such a risk, consistent with national and regional commitments to protect this coastal area and cetaceans generally.

The Chair was glad to announce that Caterina Fortuna had agreed to serve as coordinator of the programme. A table was then presented showing the different sub-areas and the names of the experts who have agreed to serve as coordinator for that sub-area.
A question was raised concerning whether sub-area 12 (the Levantine Sea) should stay as it was listed in the document or subdivided into two (sub-area 12 and sub-area 13), and the answer was postponed to a clarification between Caterina Fortuna and Dan Kerem, to be done as soon as possible.
The Scientific Committee welcomed the offer Rebecca Greenberg from Oceana to be the coordinator for area 4 and of Guido Gnone for area 5.
Joan Gonzalvo indicated that the virtually closed ecosystem of the Amvrakikos Gulf (Western Greece) is exposed to high and growing anthropogenic impact. Common bottlenose dolphins in this area constitute a geographically and otherwise distinct group with little demographic exchange.
The Scientific Committee agreed that application of the standard criteria provided by the IUCN Red Listing system, this 'subpopulation' would qualify as Endangered.

3.2.4. Fin Whale and ship strikes

49. The Meeting decided to address the issue of ship strikes under this agenda item. Simone Panigada presented Documents SC6/Doc11 and SC6/Doc27/Rev1, dealing with the issue of ship strikes with large whales, which has been discussed and addressed in the Mediterranean Sea for several years, with major effort from the Scientific Committees of the IWC and ACCOBAMS.

50. He informed the meeting that in 2009, the Italian Ministry of the Environment provided ACCOBAMS with financial support for a project to assess and identify priority conservation and mitigation measures in the Mediterranean Basin concerning the interaction between maritime traffic and cetaceans.

51. He also noted that different projects have been carried out throughout the year to reach the aims foreseen by the research project, and these include:

a. document mortality from ship strikes to obtain reliable estimates of rates of human-caused removals, to generate a database for analysis;

b. conduct feasibility studies to assess the efficiency of onboard dedicated observers to detect whales (a) to collect data and (b) as a mitigation measure;

c. conduct an ad-hoc study on the "detectability" of whales from merchant ships (especially high-speed craft);

d. further develop and implement real-time networks between commercial ships to report the position of large cetaceans to limit collision risks (REPCET);

e. map the temporal and geographic distribution and abundance of large cetaceans in relationship to similar information on vessel traffic to identify potential higher risk areas;

f. use AIS (Automatic Identification System) data collected during cetacean surveys to describe patterns of shipping density and relate them to whale presence and distribution and risk of ship strikes;

g. conduct public awareness campaigns to inform the public at large about this threat for large whales.

52. Donovan reported on the current stage of planning for the Joint IWC-ACCOBAMS Workshop on Reducing Risk of Collisions between Vessels and Cetaceans which will be held in Monaco from 21-24 September 2010. He noted that the IWC ship strikes database (http://www.iwcoffice.org/sci_com/shipstrikes.htm) is now up and running on IWC website, including the online submission of data. It contains over 760 validated records worldwide to date and a quality control group has been established to evaluate newly found historical data as well as new data submitted online. The primary objective of the database is to collate and make available reliable data for assessment of the extent of the problem of ship strikes at the population level in order to better understand factors that contribute to ship strike and thus to be able to prioritise mitigation measures and regions.

53. The Committee recommended that a link be created between the IWC database and an *ad hoc* database on the ACCOBAMS website, so that entries in the IWC database relative to the ACCOBAMS area could automatically accrue the ACCOBAMS database.

54. The workshop will bring together stakeholders (including scientists, technicians, ship owners, regulators, etc.) that will be involved in developing and implementing successful mitigation measures. While it is of worldwide relevance, the Mediterranean Sea and the Canary Islands will be important case studies given the amount of data and information already available for these regions. The Terms of Reference for the workshop can be summarised as follows:

    a. exchange, evaluate and analyse data on temporal and geographical distribution of cetaceans, shipping and reported collision incidents, with a view to:
        - identifying priorities for mitigation in terms of species, populations and areas; and
        - identifying ways to improve data collection and assignment of cause of death;

    b. examine and evaluate existing mitigation approaches/regulations, identify and assess the likely efficacy of potential new ones:

    c. identify mitigation measures for priority populations/areas as appropriate and methods to examine efficacy;

    d. develop scientific and conservation recommendations and a two-year work plan for consideration by the IWC, ACCOBAMS, IMO and others.

55. To ensure the workshop is productive, a number of analyses/presentations have been commissioned to facilitate discussion. The broad topics for the draft agenda include:
    - overview of data requirements & existing data;
    - data modelling;
    - reporting;
    - maritime industry's views;
    - measures for reducing collision risk;
    - mitigation priorities;
    - recommendations;
    - two-year work plan.

56. The expected outcome will be the report of the Workshop that will include a series of detailed research and conservation actions and a two-year work plan to be considered in the framework of the collaboration between the IWC and ACCOBAMS. It will be submitted to the IWC and ACCOBAMS and made publicly available on their websites. An effort will be made to organize a side event at the MOP.

57. The Committee welcomed this summary and endorsed the plans for the Workshop.

58. Pauline Gauffier, representing CIRCE, informed the meeting that in the Strait of Gibraltar, a land-based Project for large cetaceans started in 2009, using theodolite tracking for boats and whales, and supported by AIS receiver on land. Mean vessel speed in June-July was faster than 13 knots for all three categories, with only 45.5% of cargos, 15.6% of ferries, 7.1% of fast-ferries complied with the 13 knot-recommendation in the Strait of Gibraltar. This could suggest that the recommendation is poorly known by the mariners; in that case it would be improved by the Notice being broadcasted regularly by VHF radio as originally planned and the training of the ferry companies. Vessels could also have chosen not to follow the recommendation; in that case this measure may not be strong enough, as at least one new collision occurred in 2009 in the Strait of Gibraltar between a ferry and a whale. The study also showed a high abundance of fin whales and sperm whales in winter, which could request the extension of the recommendation from April to August to the rest of the year.

59. Next steps are the comparison of the existing fin whales and sperm whales catalogue of the Strait with other organisations to better understand migration patterns, the training of the shipping companies and the implementation of a whale real time detection program (e.g. in collaboration with REPCET).

60. The Meeting decided to adopt a recommendation on the subject (Recommendation 6.4).

Donovan noted that the IWC ship strikes database is now up and running on IWC website, including the online submission of data. The Committee recommended that a link be created between the IWC database and an *ad hoc* database on the ACCOBAMS website.
The reference terms for the workshop have been summarised and a number of analysis/presentations have been commissioned. The expected outcome will be the report of the Workshop and will be submitted to the IWC and ACCOBAMS and made publicly available on their websites. An effort will be made to organize a side event at the MOP.
Pauline Gauffier, the representative of CIRCE informed the meeting that in the Strait of Gibraltar, a land-based Project for large cetaceans started in 2009. The study also showed a high abundance of fin whales and sperm whales in winter, which could request the extension of the recommendation from April to August to the rest of the year. Next steps are the comparison of the existing fin whales and sperm whales catalogue of the Strait with other organisations.
The Meeting decided to adopt a recommendation on the subject (Recommendation 6.4).

3.2.5. Cuvier's beaked whales

61. Ana Cañadas recalled that the 4th Scientific Committee agreed that a habitat use modelling exercise should be attempted for the Cuvier´s beaked whale in the Mediterranean Sea (or, at least, for the areas where enough survey effort has been carried out to some extent) and she was designated to co-ordinate this effort and undertake the analysis. The modelling initiative is a collaborative effort with all those holding suitable effort and sightings data in the area. Up to now, fifteen organizations/researchers have contributed their data. The most recent data (from Sirena08 and MED09 surveys, Alnitak´s survey along the North African coast and EcoOcean Institute) were received in November 2009. There has been sufficient time to organize and analyze them together with the previous data yet. This work will be completed during 2010 and the relevant report sent to all participants for review and then to the ACCOBAMS SC and Secretariat.

62. She noted that it is worth highlighting that the Sirena08 and MED09 surveys have produced a large amount of *Ziphius* encounters in the Alboran Sea. This will be reflected in the future report when the analyses are completed.

Ana Cañadas recalled that the 4th Scientific Committee agreed that a habitat use modelling exercise should be attempted for the Cuvier´s beaked whale in the Mediterranean Sea. This work will be completed during 2010 and the relevant report sent to all participants for review and then to the ACCOBAMS SC and Secretariat.

3.2.6. Other species

63. Mark Simmonds asked if the SC should be considering other species and populations that were not included in the plans to date. Further to a discussion it was noted that the situation of the harbour porpoise in the North Aegean was not well understood (including its relationship to other populations) and similarly *Steno bredanensis* was little studied in the agreement area. Data gained during an IFAW survey included visual and acoustic detections of *Steno* and the acoustic data are being further analysed to consider the presence of this species. The SC was particularly encouraged by the work on *Steno* acoustics and strongly encourages Lewis and colleagues to undertake a retrospective analysis of extant acoustic datasets.

64. The SC agreed that work on the lesser known species and populations should be encouraged and ways will be sought to do this. The SC will welcome future contributions on this theme and draft a new agenda item with be established to consider 'Other species' to facilitate this.

The SC encouraged the research on the lesser known species and will welcome future contributions on this theme.

3.3. Marine Protected Areas

65. The Chair presented the document SC6/Doc16, recalling that to date the SC has completed an initial programme of work on marine protected areas (MPAs) fulfilling the requests of the Parties. At MOP3 (Dubrovnik, 2007), the Parties adopted Resolution 3.22 supporting in principle the creation of seventeen MPAs in the region, as well as others to be defined, and welcoming the criteria and guidelines for setting up additional MPAs which include management plans to address threats to cetaceans. To date, however, there has been minimal progress from the Parties who have the responsibility of carrying forward these actions, with only one of the seventeen areas being designated (Regno di Nettuno/ Ischia), in addition to the ongoing process for designation of the Cres Losinj Marine Protected Area, one of four pilot areas proposed in 2002 by the SC and also adopted by the Parties.

66. Positive developments to advance the work of MPAs included several key international meetings at which the ACCOBAMS region and ACCOBAMS scientists were represented, namely the International Conference on Marine Mammal Protected Areas (ICMMPA, Hawaii, March 2009), the IUCN World Conservation Congress (WCC, Barcelona, October 2008), and the International Marine Conservation Congress (IMCC, Virginia, May 2009). Actions at these meetings included a new strategy for coordinating data from apex predators to show important hot spots, which helps to build a stronger case for the locations of the seventeen proposed MPAs, important strategies for developing MPA networks, and a strong critique and way forward proposed for the Pelagos Sanctuary to develop new management and governance regimes to make this a real protected area and in particular by the creation of a management body.

67. The Chair noted that it is recognized that MPAs and MPA networks are not the only route for habitat conservation. In some national waters and potential areas of the high seas, marine spatial planning, including ocean zoning, could provide a framework for accommodating the widest range of stakeholders or ocean-users in a potentially less combative process. It is envisioned that some countries, especially those that have been slow to embrace the idea of MPAs and MPA networks, might engage in marine spatial planning including habitat protection for cetaceans in MPAs, special zones, or the equivalent.

68. Lobna Ben Nakhla, the representative of RAC-SPA informed the Meeting that with the aim of supporting the Mediterranean countries to achieve the CBD's target by establishing a representative network of MPAs in the Mediterranean sea, RAC-SPA elaborated a programme of work for the development of MPAs in consultation with ACCOBAMS, WWF MedPO, MedPAN and IUCN centre for Mediterranean cooperation. These organizations agreed to provide the Mediterranean Countries upon their request with technical and when possible financial assistance to undertake the activities of the work programme.

69. Within the framework of the promotion of the establishment a network of SPAMIs in Mediterranean Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ, a.k.a. High-Seas), a first phase of a project funded by the European Commission was recently concluded by the UNEP MAP-RAC-SPA, in which 10 EBSAs (Ecologically or Biologically Significant Areas, as defined by the Convention of Biological Diversity) were identified in the Mediterranean ABNJ, containing potential SPAMIs. The second phase (2010-11) will address the economic, social, and political aspects of SPAMI establishment and will promote field surveys co-organized with parties and regional organizations to support the preparation of a first set of SPAMI proposals. These proposals will be submitted to the next meeting of the contracting parties to the Barcelona Convention, expected in 2011. Many of the proposed SPAMIs were considered, amongst other things, on the basis of the known existence of cetacean critical habitat in the area.

70. Lobna Ben Nakhla also informed the Scientific Committee that during their last Meeting in Marrakesh (Morocco), 3-5 November 2009 the Parties to the Barcelona Convention adopted the inclusion of the following four protected areas in the List of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMI): Punta Campanella and Capo Caccia – Isola Piana (Italy), Bouches de Bonifacio (France) and Al Hociema (Morocco). These areas join the Pelagos Sanctuary and twenty marine and coastal protected areas in France, Italy, Spain and Tunisia, bringing to a total of twenty-five the number of areas included in the SPAMI List, and significantly contributing to a greater geographical balance for the protected area system within the Barcelona network. In terms of cetacean habitat, all of the proposed areas may protect some bottlenose dolphin habitat, although due to their small size (particularly Miramare) their protection extends only to part of such habitat.

71. The representative of the BSC informed the meeting that an overview of the status of MPAs designation in the Black Sea region at present is available in the SAP1996 Implementation report of the BSC (http://www.blacksea-commission.org/_publ-BSSAPIMPL2009.asp) and the 2008 Annual report of the CBD AG (Conservation of Biodiversity Advisory Group) of the BSC, which will be presented during the annual meeting of the BSC on 20-21st of January 2010. A new project aimed to support the designation of MPAs in the Black Sea region will be discussed with EC during the mentioned annual meeting. The designation of MPAs is an ongoing process with significant developments in Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine, however, management plans are mainly missing (except in the Danube reserve). There are no high seas in the Black Sea, the designation of MPAs is a national responsibility. The BSC monitors and facilitates the process, e.g. recently a 'Guidelines for the Establishment of Marine Protected Areas in the Black Sea' were developed and will be proposed for an adoption by the BS states.

72. The Meeting decided to adopt a recommendation on the subject (Recommendation 6.5).

The Chair recalled that to date the SC has completed an initial programme of work on marine protected areas (MPAs) fulfilling the requests of the Parties. However, minimal progress from the Parties for carrying forward these actions was noticed, with only one of the seventeen areas being designated (Regno di Nettuno/ Ischia).
A strong critique and way forward were proposed for the Pelagos Sanctuary to develop new management and governance regimes to make this a real protected area.
RAC-SPA, WWF, MedPO, MedPAN, IUCN and ACCOBAMS agreed to provide the Mediterranean Countries upon their request with technical and when possible financial assistance to undertake the activities of the work programme.
Lobna Ben Nakhla informed the Meeting that the Parties to the Barcelona Convention adopted the inclusion of four protected areas in the List of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMI) and emphasised that all the proposed areas may protect some bottlenose dolphin habitat.
The representative of the BSC stressed that the designation of the MPAs is an ongoing process with significant developments in Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine. However, management plans are mainly missing. There are no high seas in the Black Sea; the designation of MPAs is a national responsibility and 'Guidelines for the Establishment of Marine Protected Areas in the Black Sea' were developed and will be proposed for an adoption by the BS states.
The meeting decided to adopt a recommendation on the subject (Recommendation 6.5).

3.4. Anthropogenic noise

73. It was recalled that at SC5, the Scientific Committee had been informed that MOP3 had not reached agreement on the proposed Guidelines on anthropogenic noise developed within the Scientific Committee. Rather, the Contracting Parties decided to establish a separate Working Group outside the Scientific Committee to consider this issue further and report directly to MOP4.

74. Gianni Pavan presented document SC6/Doc17 concerning the ongoing efforts of the ACCOBAMS Working Group on Anthropogenic Noise which last met in Paris on 7th January 2010. He noted that this document had been requested by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat to provide a concise summary of actions for preventing or mitigating acoustic pollution that could be a threat to marine mammals in the Agreement area. It was noted that the noise working group was now finalizing five technical documents for the MOP which will be based on its latest draft guidelines (which will be maintained as a non-binding technical reference).

75. The Committee reaffirmed its concern about acoustic pollution in the marine environment and the impacts on cetaceans. It reiterates that the Guidelines submitted to MOP3 still represent its best advice at this time and that it had given this matter full consideration at its previous meetings.

76. The SC produced a new recommendation on noise pollution (Recommendation 6.6).

It was recalled that the Contracting Parties decided to establish a separate Working Group outside the Scientific Committee to consider this issue further and report directly to MOP4. The noise working group was now finalizing five technical documents for the MOP which will be based on its latest draft guidelines (which will be maintained as a non-binding technical reference).
The SC produced a new recommendation on noise pollution (Recommendation 6.6).

3.5. Strandings

77. The representative of the Sub-Regional Coordinating Unit for the Mediterranean presented an update of the work of MEDACES, the stranding database promoted by the RAC/SPA and ACCOBAMS and maintained by the University of Valencia. The Chair, while expressing the full appreciation of the Scientific Committee to the management of MEDACES for the work done, again expressed his regret noting that the sizeable amount of data on cetaceans stranded in Italy are still missing from MEDACES. Gianni Pavan (who manages the Italian stranding database funded by the Ministry of the environment) informed that the data are "owned" by the Ministry of the environment and that he was unable to transfer them to MEDACES without an authorization. The Meeting recommended that the Secretariat formally requests such authorisation through the national Focal point. The Morocco representative agreed to send their data to MEDACES.

78. Following a remark about the use of the data available in MEDACES, the SC agreed that clear provisions on this issue be included in the deontology code of MEDACES.

79. Introducing the document SC6/Doc20 the Chair raised the subject of procedures to adopt in the case of live strandings. The document contained an initial list of contacts (to be completed with the support of SC members and experts) potentially useful in the case of live strandings in the ACCOBAMS area, and a "triage protocol" developed by experts in the United Kingdom that could be adopted for the ACCOBAMS area.

80. He emphasised that the subject of live strandings is inherently difficult and, although good progress was made with the workshop organised in Monaco in 2006, creating an efficient contingency mechanism remains a considerable challenge. Problems are related mostly to the significant effort and logistical and technical difficulties often required to intervene to rescue one or more animals stranded, the very low potential of effectively rescuing the animals' life in many cases due to their conditions before and/or during the stranding, and the delicate aspects of correctly dealing with the public's opinions and expectations. He recalled the recent event occurred in Apulia (southern Italy) one month before, when seven sub-adult male sperm whales stranded alive for still unknown causes. In that occasion, which saw the intervention of colleagues, amongst others, from the Universities of Padua, Siena, Teramo and Las Palmas (members of the ACCOBAMS Emergency Task Force), the Italian Ministry of the environment decided to plan the organisation in 2010 of a workshop to discuss the various options for intervention and help drafting guidelines to support such occurrences in the future. He therefore suggested that ACCOBAMS could offer its support to Italy for the organisation of such workshop, contributing to providing to it an international dimension, and helping to draft the guidelines. The Committee agreed with the Chair's suggestion, and recommended that the Secretariat will contact the Italian National Focal Point to this effect.

81. Mark Simmonds recommended that the considerable work done during the 2006 Monaco meeting, and all the information material that was produced on that occasion, be made available through the Internet on the Agreement's website, including a clear interaction of advice as how to respond to stranded cetaceans.

82. Greg Donovan reported that the IWC is holding a workshop on welfare issues associated with the entanglement of large whales that will develop guidelines for dealing with entangled whales, including development of a decision tree and consideration of appropriate methods for euthanasia in circumstances when this is the most appropriate course of action. The workshop will be held from 13-15 April 2010 in Maui, Hawaii and the report made publicly available.

83. Finally, the Chair drew the meeting's attention on Document SC6/Doc19, prepared by WDCS, which contains an inventory of facilities in countries bordering on the ACCOBAMS area holding cetaceans in captivity. It was suggested that this document be posted on the Agreement's website, and WDCS agreed to endeavour to keep the inventory updated.

The SC recommended the Secretariat to formally request to the Ministry of Environment in Italy through the National Focal Point the authorisation to transfer the stranding data to MEDACES. The Morocco representative agreed to send their data to MEDACES.
The SC agreed that clear provisions on the use of the data available in MEDACES be included in the deontology code of MEDACES.
An initial list of contacts in case of live strandings should be completed with the support of SC members and experts and a "triage protocol" developed by experts in the United Kingdom could be adopted for the ACCOBAMS area.
The Italian Ministry of the Environment decided to plan the organisation in 2010 of a workshop on live strandings to discuss the various options for intervention and help drafting guidelines to support such occurrences in the future. The SC suggested that ACCOBAMS could offer its support for the organisation. The Document SC6/Doc19 prepared by WDCS and the work done during the 2006 Monaco meeting should be made available through the Internet on the Agreement's website. WDCS agreed to keep the inventory updated.

3.6. Emergency Task Forces (ETFs)

84. The Chair recalled to the Meeting that an Emergency Task Force Working Group had been created during the interim between meetings of the SC, and that Marie Françoise Van Bressem had agreed to act as coordinator of the Working Group. Dr. Van Bressem had also prepared two documents, SC6/Doc21 and SC6/Doc23, containing guidelines, respectively, for a "coordinated cetacean stranding response during mortality events caused by infectious agents and harmful algal blooms", and "concerning best practices and procedures for addressing cetacean mortality events related to chemical, acoustical and biological pollution". The Meeting agreed to formally adopt both guidelines (which had been already examined by correspondence during the interim), and recommended that they be posted on the ACCOBAMS website.

The Meeting agreed to formally adopt both guidelines "coordinated cetacean stranding response during mortality events caused by infectious agents and harmful algal blooms", and "concerning best practices and procedures for addressing cetacean mortality events related to chemical, acoustical and biological pollution" and recommended that they be posted on the ACCOBAMS website.

3.7. Tissue banks

85. The Chair presented the document SC6/Doc24 prepared by Prof. Bruno Cozzi and containing the state-of-the-art and update on the Mediterranean Marine Mammal Tissue Bank hosted at the University of Padua. The Committee expressed its high appreciation for the work done by Prof. Cozzi, and recalled the importance that existing tissue banks in the ACCOBAMS area be assured continuity by the States were they were established. The Committee also suggested that their number should increase to create a network able to ensure storage and availability of tissues for study deriving from stranded and bycaught cetaceans. To this end, coordination should be established and maintained between the tissue bank network and the stranding networks, also through the support of MEDACES.

The SC suggested that coordination should be established and maintained between the tissue bank network and the stranding networks, also through the support of MEDACES.

3.8. By-catch and Depredation

86. The Chair recalled that during the interim work has proceeded on the issue of depredation and the possible use of acoustic devices to mitigate the problems caused by operational interactions between cetaceans and fisheries. Based on decisions and ToR adopted at SC5, a consultant was appointed to produce a document reviewing the effectiveness of acoustic devices and depredation mitigation, as demonstrated in field studies to date, and draft guidelines for the testing and use of acoustic mitigation devices for depredation mitigation in the ACCOBAMS area (respectively, SC6/Doc25 and SC6/Doc26). The Committee welcomed the work done, adopted the guidelines, and recommended that they be posted on the ACCOBAMS website as soon as possible. Furthermore, the usefulness of the protocol developed by Simon Northridge and Caterina Fortuna (2008) was recalled and the Committee recommended that it be posted on the website.

87. The representative of ASCOBANS informed the Meeting that during its 6th Meeting of Parties in September 2009, ASCOBANS started a new bycatch mitigation initiative in close collaboration with fishermen by forming a steering committee tasked with organizing a workshop on bycatch mitigation. This workshop will take place as a joint ECS/ASCOBANS workshop in conjunction with the ECS conference in Stralsund, Germany on 20th March 2010 (http://www.ozeaneum.de/en/ecs-2010/programme.html). The workshop objectives will be:

a. to review recent developments in bycatch and its mitigation (before lunch, open to ECS public) as well as;

b. to initiate direct communication with fishermen by developing a strategy for conducting smaller local workshops in local languages along European coasts in subsequent months and years to discuss bycatch and to recommend mitigation methods (afternoon, by invitation).

88. He emphasised that discussed mitigation methods likely extend beyond the use of alerting devices (so-called pingers) to include gear change and exclusion zones for certain gear types as well as any other measure that can be made acceptable to fishermen.

89. Besides inviting the members of the Scientific Committee of ACCOBAMS to attend the ASCOBANS/ECS workshop in two months time, this initiative – once it has proven to be successful – might provide another area for future collaboration between the two sister Agreements.

90. Following a discussion about the issue of bycatch of cetaceans in the Black Sea, that is known to represent a major source of anthropogenic mortality for Black Sea harbour porpoises (*Phocoena phocoena relicta*) and bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus ponticus*), the Scientific Committee expressed its great concern about the wide use of the conventional bottom-set gillnets with a mesh size ≥ 100 mm. The Meeting decided to prepare a recommendation on the subject (Recommendation 6.7) which includes addressing the issue of the use of acoustic devices, recommended by the Government of Bulgaria.

91. The Secretariat recalling the Agreement amendment decided by the last MOP concerning the ban of driftnets in the ACCOBAMS area, suggested that a definition of drift nets be elaborated and adopted within the framework of ACCOBAMS. Considering the fishery implications of the issue, the Scientific Committee suggested that the definition be elaborated by the Extended Bureau.

The SC adopted the guidelines for the testing and use of acoustic mitigation devices for depredation mitigation in the ACCOBAMS area and recommended that these guidelines and the document reviewing the effectiveness of acoustic devices and depredation mitigation be posted on the ACCOBAMS website as soon as possible, as well as the protocol developed by Simon Northridge and Caterina Fortuna (2008).
The Meeting was informed about a joint ECS/ASCOBANS workshop on bycatch mitigation which will take place in Stralsund, Germany on 20th March 2010.
The SC decided to prepare a recommendation on the bycatch of cetaceans in the Black Sea (Recommendation 6.7) and suggested that the definition of drift nets be elaborated by the Extended Bureau.

3.9. Climate change

92. Simmonds presented Document SC6/Doc28. He noted that the last two years have witnessed some significant progress in the consideration of the effects of climate change on cetaceans. There have been a number of new publications and two relevant workshops in early 2009, one organized by the government of Costa Rica and WWF on the Eastern Pacific and the other by the International Whaling Commission (IWC). The IWC also passed a resolution by consensus on climate change.

93. In the report based on the Costa Rica workshop, Hoffman et al. (2009)[2] commented: that "While the uncertainty cited by many workshop participants is most certainly real, it should not be an impediment to action. The output of the workshop demonstrates the breath of adaptation avenues that can be identified, even in the absence of complete knowledge. There will always be uncertainty, so we must learn to act, to set policy, to plan in the face of uncertainty while working to reduce uncertainty where we can". Hoffman et al. (2009) also made a number of recommendations intended to reduce vulnerability to climate change in the ETP. The primary adaptation actions (after addressing climate change itself) are to reduce non-climate stressors, and to develop spatial management schemes that protect key feeding, breeding, and migration areas based on plausible future as well as current conditions.

94. Within the context of climate change vulnerability assessment and adaptation, prioritizing and conducting research to fill key information gaps should include improved monitoring of relevant biological, oceanographic, and climatic variables, as long-term data sets are essential for understanding ecosystem function and change as well as for adjusting management practices for enhanced effectiveness.

95. The second IWC workshop on climate change (the first being in 1996) was held in Siena, Italy in February 2009, attended by 27 experts[3]. The primary goal of the workshop was to determine how climate change may affect cetaceans, how to best determine these effects, and how to improve conservation under climate changes described in the 4th report of the International Panel on Climate Change. The workshop examined case studies from both large and small cetaceans and covered a number of topics including the evaluation of analytical and modelling approaches to investigating the linkages between whales and their environment, with an emphasis on climate change.

[2] http://assets.panda.org/downloads/taller_cetaceos_etp_y_adaptacion_informe_4_junio_09_1.pdf
[3] http://www.iwcoffice.org/_documents/sci_com/SC61docs/SC-61-Rep4.pdf)

96. The IWC workshop made a number of recommendations all of which were endorsed by the IWC. The key general research recommendations were to (a) give priority to developing models that can integrate the demographic and spatial consequences of climate change; (b) explore the value of developing ecosystem models that begin with baleen whale dynamics; (c) evaluate whether the present scenarios examined in the IWC's management procedures adequately address climate impacts or need further modification; (d) try to find datasets that allow further correlative studies to be undertaken that will improve the conceptual understanding of population processes, and hence enable the development of a set of testable hypotheses; (e) carefully review the predictions and levels of uncertainty with respect to the many IPCC modelling exercises in order to determine those most appropriate (including taking into account temporal and spatial scales and separating out factors such as mean overall SST warming from the changes in the positions of fronts and water masses) for incorporation into modelling exercises with respect to cetaceans; (f) increase telemetry studies and explore the data for correlation between movement patterns and environmental variables - the results of these analyses may be used as basis for developing hypotheses regarding the mechanisms which determine movement; (g) determine analytical approaches to take into account cumulative effects in any modelling work done on individual factors recognizing that where the parameter of interest is population abundance and trends, this in effect represents the integration of all effects both individually and cumulatively; (h) emphasis is given to studies which allow comparison between contrasting regions where data on a wide range of ecosystem components are available. The IWC SC will also now run a further workshop considering in more detail effects on small cetaceans (the date of this is still being considered).

97. The IWC Workshop also drew attention to those recommendations that were of immediate relevance to the IWC Governments and relevant organizations: (1) that potential effects of climate change on cetaceans are taken seriously and included these in relevant conservation management initiatives, including implementation of emission control; (2) that funding be provided to ensure the continuation of long-term datasets given their great value; and (3) The Scientific Committee also requested that the Commission urges policy makers, regulators and others involved in cetacean management to consider tertiary effects of climate change via appropriate risk assessment approaches. It therefore also recommended that management plans are devised to address these impacts in addition to primary and secondary impacts. A further workshop on determining research recommendations with respect to climate change and small cetaceans will be held some time in 2010.

98. Mark Simmonds noted that the Document SC6/Doc28 also provides a list of other relevant recent literature. Climate change will clearly act as a further stressor to cetacean populations. Much of the focus in the literature concerns polar regions and the vulnerability of polar species, especially those adapted to live on, under or around the now retreating ice edge. More generally there is concern about those that will not be able to move their populations away from conditions that become less favourable to them to better ones. Gambaiani et al. (2009) in their recent review commented: "In the Mediterranean Sea, changes in bio-chemical and physical seawater properties resulting from global warming are likely to alter marine biodiversity and productivity, trigger trophic web mismatches and encourage diseases, toxic algal bloom and propagation of thermophilic species. This review stresses the emergent necessity for more integrated regulations and policies for the protection of marine biodiversity."

99. The SC discussed the way forward with climate change work in the Agreement area, noting that ACCOBAMS has already made a commitment to further work in this area and this is reflected in its Work Programme (Resolution 3.4): *"The Secretariat is directed to organise, in cooperation with the Scientific Committee and concerned ACCOBAMS partners and other related organisation (IWC, IOC, etc.), a meeting of experts to discuss (a) prospected and suspected impacts of a sea temperature increase on the cetacean populations in the Agreement area, (b) implications of such impacts for the current conservation effort (e.g., a discussion of the application of current IUCN Red List criteria in the light of climate change), (c) recommendations for monitoring and research programmes to understand and detect climate change effects on cetaceans in the Agreement area, and (d) suggest possible mitigation measures."*

100. The SC discussed the previous instruction to hold a workshop on climate change, noting that it had been waiting on the results of the IWC workshop and concluded that it would give consideration as to whether a further workshop would be useful at this time.

101. In order to determine whether the time was ripe for a regional workshop, the Committee agreed that a working group of interested members could develop a proposal for such a workshop. The Committee suggests that the proposal should include objectives, likely datasets and analyses and expected outcomes. It could perhaps use as a model, the workshop held in Costa Rica. The Committee could then consider the merits of a proposal and determine if such a workshop would be productive and if so, when it could be held. The Chair of the SC will progress with this as soon as possible.

102. The Meeting decided to adopt a recommendation on the subject (Recommendation 6.8).

The SC agreed that a working group of interested members could develop a proposal for a workshop. The Meeting decided to adopt a recommendation on the subject (Recommendation 6.8).

3.10. IUCN Red List

103. The Chair presented the document SC6/Doc29, prepared by Randall Reeves (who was unable to attend the Meeting), which contains a summary of the state of the art concerning the IUCN Red List assessments of cetacean populations in the ACCOBAMS area. Four populations (defined as "sub-populations" in Red List language) are already formally included in the Red List. These are: Mediterranean short-beaked common dolphins, *Delphinus delphis* (EN), Black Sea short-beaked common dolphins, D. *delphis ponticus* (VU), Black Sea common bottlenose dolphins, *Tursiops truncatus ponticus* (EN), and Black Sea harbour porpoises, *Phocoena phocoena relicta* (EN). Assessments concerning the remaining Mediterranean populations have recently been reviewed, and all (with the exception of striped dolphins, *Stenella coeruleoalba*, still in the works) have been submitted to the Red List Authority in Cambridge for consideration and future inclusion. The Committee took notice of the progress and expressed its appreciation for Randall Reeves for the work done.

The SC was informed that four populations are already formally included in the Red List. The Committee took notice of the progress and expressed its appreciation for Randall Reeves for the work done.

3.11. Whale watching

104. Mark Simmonds presented the Document SC6/Doc30 containing the guidelines for commercial whale watching in the ACCOBAMS area. Following the discussion on this document, the SC stressed that these guidelines were only intended to act as illustration of good practice without being prescriptive. The guidelines were revised and accepted subject to some further small amendments. The new Pelagos guidelines were also noted. Further actions were agreed on whale watching and included in the draft work programme.

105. Philippe Robert presented the document SC6/Doc31 containing a progress report on the elaboration of the PELAGOS/ACCOBAMS Label for Whale Watching. He summarised the actions to be carried out as follows:

a. establishment of a timetable (and budget) for a communication plan with the general public (including creation of an identity logo for the label and according a special attention to a creditation scheme for operators);
b. application of legal and technical recommendations in each of the Countries (an operational document may be necessary), also according special attention to an accreditation scheme for operators;
c. establishment of an advance timetable, setting up the first training session and awarding of the label in France and Monaco;
d. update of the database of whale watching operators and prescribers in Italy;
e. extension of the course in Italy.

106. The Scientific Committee commended the work being done and stressed the importance of organising trainings for whale watching operators.

The SC revised the guidelines for commercial whale watching in the ACCOBAMS area, noted the new Pelagos guidelines and stressed the importance of trainings for whale watching operators.

3.12. Impact of pollution

107. The Chair presented the document SC6/Doc32.Rev2 prepared by Cristina Fossi presenting information on cetacean ecotoxicological studies conducted by the University of Siena.

108. The Committee welcomed this report and reiterated its view of the importance of studying the occurrence and effects of pollutants (including novel xenobiotics) on cetacean populations in the region. Chemical pollution can be an anthropogenic threat to cetacean populations in the ACCOBAMS area and has been strongly implicated, for example, in the increased susceptibility of striped dolphins to morbillivirus through a suppressed immune system.

109. Greg Donovan reported that the IWC Scientific Committee has also been addressing issues related to pollutants and cetaceans for a number of years. ACCOBAMS had endorsed Phase 1 of the POLLUTION 2000+ programme that had been was completed two years ago. Initial work on developing Phase II has been underway and a workshop to finalise plans for Phase II will be held in California this spring to finalise details of Phase II of the programme. It is expected that Phase II will develop an integrated modelling and risk assessment framework to assess cause-effect relationships between pollutants and cetaceans at the population level, extend the work to new species and pollutants as appropriate, and further validate biopsy sampling techniques to address issues related to pollution, including legacy and new contaminants of concern and associated indicators of exposure or effects.

110. The Scientific Committee welcomed this news and looked forward to seeing the report from the workshop and, where possible, integrating the results into its own considerations of this issue.

111. Dan Kerem suggested asking Cristina Fossi to identify potential pollution impacts relevant to the ACCOBAMS area with recommendations to the SC on how to address them.

112. Philippe Robert informed the Meeting that a joint workshop will be organised on this issue by Pelagos and RAMOGE.

The SC looked forward to seeing the report from the IWC workshop and, where possible, integrating the results into its own considerations of this issue.
Dani Kerem suggested asking Cristina Fossi to identify potential pollution impacts relevant to the ACCOBAMS area with recommendations to the SC on how to address them. Philippe Robert informed the Meeting that a joint workshop will be organised on this issue by Pelagos and RAMOGE.

4. Agenda item 4: Working Programme for the new triennium

113. The Meeting formed working groups in order to draft the scientific part of the draft work programme to be proposed for the Parties for the next three years.

5. Agenda item 5: Recommendations

114. The Meeting reviewed and adopted the recommendations appearing in Annex 5.

115. In addition to the recommendations related to the agenda items, the Scientific Committee also adopted two other documents:
   a) a recommendation concerning the minimum funding for the Scientific Committee (recommendation 6.9), and
   b) a declaration expressing the Committee's concern about the slow and/or limited level of implementation of the Agreement to effectively address the conservation problems affecting cetaceans in the Agreement area (Annex 6).

6. Agenda item 6: Any other business

116. The Committee noted the importance of collaborative studies and data sharing for conservation research in the region (e.g. the *Ziphius* modelling exercise) but recognised that this can cause problems with respect to the rights of data holders. The need for such studies will only increase and the Committee requests that Donovan develops a draft general agreement for data sharing under the auspices of ACCOBAMS, based on the IWC's data availability agreement (SC6/Info7) for consideration at the next meeting of the Scientific Committee.

The SC requested that Donovan develops a draft general agreement for data sharing under the auspices of ACCOBAMS, based on the IWC's data availability agreement (SC6/Info7) for consideration at the next meeting of the Scientific Committee.

7. Agenda Item 7: Date and venue of the next meeting

117. The Secretariat informed the Meeting that the next meeting of the Scientific Committee is planned for early 2011.

8. Agenda Item 8: Adoption of the Report

118. The Meeting approved the present report on the basis of a draft prepared by the Secretariat and reviewed by the participants.

9. Agenda Item 9: Closure of Meeting

119. After the customary exchange of courtesies, the Chair closed the meeting at 4.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 13 January 2010.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: List of participants

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Annex 2: Welcome Opening by the National Focal Point of Morocco

Madame la Présidente de l'ACCOBAMS, Monsieur le Président du Comité Scientifique, Madame la Secrétaire Exécutive, Mesdames et Messieurs,

Je suis particulièrement heureux de vous souhaiter au nom de Monsieur le Ministre de l'Agriculture et de la Pêche Maritime, la bienvenue au Maroc à l'occasion de l'ouverture de la Sixième réunion du Comité Scientifique de l'ACCOBAMS qui s'inscrit dans le cadre de la concertation et l'examen des sujets importants permettant la mise en œuvre de l'Accord sur la Conservation des Cétacés de la Mer Noire, de la Méditerranée et de la zone Atlantique adjacente (ACCOBAMS).

J'espère que votre séjour au Royaume du Maroc soit agréable et fructueux.

Je suis particulièrement fier que le Maroc accueille les travaux de cette session du Comité Scientifique de l'ACCOBAMS et je vous remercie pour votre présence parmi nous pour les travaux de cette réunion que nous souhaitons que vous menez avec succès.

Votre présence aujourd'hui témoigne de la priorité que vous accordez à la préservation des mammifères marins, préoccupation que nous partageons tous ensemble.

Permettez-moi de vous confirmer que le Maroc est particulièrement honoré d'abriter cette rencontre qui se tient après une conjoncture délicate d'autant plus que la Conférence sur le climat qui s'est tenus à Copenhague en décembre 2009, n'a pas émis d'orientations précises et spécifiques concernant les Océans et les Mers.

Notre souci et nos préoccupations quant à l'avenir des mammifères marins sont grandement justifiés par l'évolution inquiétante de certains facteurs qui pèsent sur la survie et la croissance de cette population.

Les mammifères marins, bien qu'ils ne soient pas visés par la pêche, sont exposés à de nombreux dangers qui peuvent mettre leur vie en péril. Les cétacés, particulièrement, sont victimes de la pêche accidentelle, la pollution, le trafic maritime, etc.

Devant les menaces qui pèsent sur leurs populations, de nombreux efforts se sont concentrés sur ces cétacés, pour des raisons non seulement scientifiques ou écologiques mais aussi culturelles et étiques. De nombreuses organisations se sont penchées sur l'étude des cétacés, afin d'évaluer la situation réelle de leurs populations.

Des études sont en effet nécessaires pour estimer les effectifs de ces mammifères, connaître leurs voies de migration, leurs sites de reproduction et les échanges génétiques entre les différents sites de reproduction.

L'ACCOBAMS a pour objectif de réduire les menaces sur tous les cétacés présents dans la région et d'améliorer les connaissances scientifiques relatives à ces espèces. Il a pour responsabilité de mettre en place des outils et des mécanismes qui permettent l'instauration des mesures de conservation spécifiques aux mammifères marins.

L'ACCOBAMS n'a ménagé aucun effort pour aider les pays membres à mettre en place des dispositifs scientifiques et juridiques pour protéger le patrimoine biologique des cétacés.

Le Maroc à l'instar des autres pays méditerranéens, a toujours manifesté du soutien et de l'appui aux positions prises au sein des instances internationales et régionales, et ce, en respect total des principes de préservation rationnelle des cétacés.

C'est dans ce contexte que le Maroc soutien les recommandations qui visent la préservation des ressources marines et la nécessité d'assurer leur pérennité à travers des programmes de recherche multidisciplinaires et régionales.

J'espère aussi qu'à la fin de cette session nous serons en mesure de tirer des conclusions scientifiques concrètes sur la situation actuelle des populations des cétacés. Ces conclusions nous permettront de développer de nouvelles actions et stratégies pour assurer une bonne politique de conservation des populations des cétacés.

Nous proposons ainsi de soutenir les positions qui émanent de cette réunion scientifique, pour permettre à cette organisation de jouer pleinement et efficacement son rôle d'organe influent de conservation et de protection des cétacés en prenant en considération la logique scientifique.

Je suis sûr que notre étroite collaboration contribuera de façon significative au succès des travaux de cette sixième session et je vous remercie tous les participants pour le temps et les efforts qu'ils vont consacrer à l'examen des questions importantes et des recommandations qu'ils vont élaborer.

Je souhaite plein succès à vos travaux et un excellent séjour à Casablanca.

Annex 3: Agenda

1. **Opening of the meeting**
2. **Adoption of the Agenda**
3. **Implementation of the Work Programme**
   - *3.1. Population and distribution studies*
     - 3.1.1. Dedicated surveys
     - 3.1.2. Genetic studies
     - 3.1.3. Sighting database
   - *3.2. Species conservation actions*
     - 3.2.1. Black Sea cetaceans
     - 3.2.2. Mediterranean common dolphins
     - 3.2.3. Mediterranean bottlenose dolphins
     - 3.2.4. Fin whales (ship strikes)
     - 3.2.5. Cuvier's beaked whales
     - 3.2.6. Other species
   - *3.3. Marine Protected Areas*
   - *3.4. Anthropogenic noise*
   - *3.5. Stranding*
   - *3.6. Emergency Task Forces (ETFs)*
   - *3.7. Tissue banks*
   - *3.8. Bycatch and Depredation*
   - *3.9. Climate change*
   - *3.10. IUCN Red List*
   - *3.11. Whale watching*
   - *3.12. Impact of pollution*
4. **Working Programme for the new triennium**
5. **Recommendations**
6. **Any other business**
7. **Date and venue of next meeting**
8. **Adoption of report**
9. **Closure of the meeting**

Annex 4: List of coordinators for the Mediterranean Bottlenose Dolphin Action Plan

Area	Coordinator
Area 1. Gibraltar & adjacent Atlantic	Marina Sequeira
Area 2. Alboran Sea	Ricardo Sagarminaga
Area 3. Algerian sea	Zitouni Boutiba
Area 4. Balearic and Catalan seas	Rebecca Greenberg (Oceana)
Area 5. Gulf of Lions and Pelagos Sanctuary	Guido Gnone
Area 6. Tyrrhenian Sea, Pelagos Sanctuary excluded	Giancarlo Lauriano
Area 7. Sicily Channel and Gulf of Gabes	To be identified
Area 8. Adriatic sea	Drasko Holcer
Area 9. Ionian Sea	To be identified
Area 10. Aegean Sea	Ayhan Dede for Turkish side Coordinator to be identified for the Greek side
Area 11. Turkish strait system	Byram Ozturk
Area 12. Levantine basin	Ayaka Öztürk

Annex 5: Recommendations of the sixth Scientific Committee

Recommendation 6.1

ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative

At its 2nd meeting, the Scientific Committee drew the attention of the ACCOBAMS Parties to the 'fundamental importance of obtaining baseline population[4] estimates and distributional information of cetaceans within the area as soon as possible'. It stressed that without such information (and a suitable monitoring programme) it will be impossible to *inter alia* determine whether ACCOBAMS is meeting its conservation objectives. The great importance of such information in the assessment of risk, the determination of appropriate mitigation measures and the associated determination of priority actions, has been highlighted in many discussions of the Scientific Committee, including past and recent discussions on bycatches, MPAs, fin whales, the conservation plans for Mediterranean common dolphins, Mediterranean bottlenose dolphins and Black Sea cetaceans (see recommendations of the SC since SC2 adopted by the Parties).

Once again, the Committee **reiterates** that such work represents the highest priority for conservation research within the area (although this should not be interpreted as meaning that other work can not continue in parallel).

The Scientific Committee again **strongly endorses** the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative plan for further work. It thanks the Steering Group and the Secretariat for the considerable work already undertaken on a largely voluntary basis. However, it believes that it is now essential that this programme is rapidly implemented and in particular that the synoptic survey section of the initiative takes place within the next triennium. It is greatly encouraged by the expression of interest in taking a major co-ordinating and logistical role by the French *Agence des Aires Marines Protégées*.

Consequently, the Committee **recommends** that the Parties:

(1) Reaffirm their earlier commitment to the project given in Resolution 2.19, and promote the initiative at the national and international levels;

(2) Ensure that any proposed national programmes on the study of abundance and distribution of cetaceans are evaluated in the context of the Survey Initiative (the Steering Group is available to advice and support any proposal of small-scale survey in the light of their contribution to the Survey Initiative).

(3) Facilitate the process of obtaining permits for vessels and aircraft to operate in the waters under their jurisdiction;

(4) Give high priority within their national research budgets to offering financial or in-kind (e.g. in the form of appropriate vessels, aircraft and/or observers) support for the survey;

(5) Provide any essential seed funding required to allow the essential planning and co-ordinating to continue.

[4] Use of the word population here implies obtaining knowledge on stock structure as well as abundance

Recommendation 6.2

Programme of work on population structure

The Scientific Committee has frequently stressed the importance of a good understanding of population structure: abundance estimates and threats need to be considered in relation to appropriate 'units-to-conserve'. For example, the importance of information on population structure had been recognised in the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative. To facilitate this vital work, the Committee has formed a population structure working group or PSWG (a similar group exists within the IWC Scientific Committee and ASCOBANS has also recognised the importance of stock structure studies in a conservation context).

Genetic methods represent an important tool in the suite of techniques that are of value in determining units-to-conserve (some others include photo-identification studies, telemetry, morphology and distribution) and the initial efforts of the PSWG may focus on genetic analyses. A high priority for the initial work in the ACCOBAMS area is to develop an inventory of the available genetic samples (both analysed and yet to be analysed) on a species/geographical/temporal basis. This can then be used to develop targeted collections of new data and/or analyses where appropriate, to best meet ACCOBAMS conservation needs.

The PSWG has developed an ambitious two-phase three-year programme of work to complete a population genetic survey to assess the population identity and structure of the cetacean species regularly encountered in the ACCOBAMS area (SC6/Info5) and the Committee **endorses** the overall programme. The overall cost of both phases of the project is high (the collection and analyses of genetic data for all species throughout the ACCOBAMS area is necessarily expensive).

The PSWG is working hard to minimise the costs for Phase I of the programme and the Committee recommends that the ACCOBAMS MoP and individual governments make every effort to provide the funds for at least this consolidation phase (see Funding Recommendation).

The aim will be to provide a comprehensive, detailed summary of information available for each species in the ACCOBAMS area in terms of material relevant for genetic analyses, develop a communications network to facilitate the collection of new samples and to create a public database that is accessible on the ACCOBAMS web site. This will provide the necessary framework to undertake Phase II of the programme and to allow a determination of the most cost-effective way of undertaking that phase, including the establishment of smaller sub-projects within the overall framework, recognising that Phase II may take longer than envisioned in SC6/Info5.

Recommendation 6.3

Conservation of Mediterranean Common Dolphins

Once one of the most common cetacean species in the Mediterranean, the common dolphin has declined throughout the region during the last 30-40 years. Conservation problems for the species have been recognised since the 1970s when the UNEP Mediterranean Action Plan (Barcelona, 1975) recommended strong conservation measures to protect the species. The 2000-2010 IUCN Action Plan for the world's cetaceans noted that common dolphins had declined dramatically and called for urgent conservation action to prevent their extirpation from the region. In 2003 the Mediterranean population of common dolphins was classified as Endangered in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals. In 2005, the Mediterranean population of common dolphins was included in Appendix I of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS)[5]. The ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee has repeatedly drawn attention to this issue: in 2004, a comprehensive Conservation Plan for Mediterranean common dolphins, endorsed by the Scientific Committee, was welcomed at the 2nd Meeting of the Parties to the Agreement; in 2006 the Committee adopted a Recommendation (SC4.1) on the "Conservation of Mediterranean Common Dolphins".

Despite all the strong scientific evidence, strategic planning and the multiple expressions of concern, and recommendations, it continues to be a matter of **grave concern** to this Committee that no relevant action has been taken so far that may result in common dolphin recovery in the region. On the contrary, the threats which are thought to be causing decline (primarily bycatch in fishing gear and prey depletion caused by overfishing) are continuing to jeopardise the survival of relict groups and the Mediterranean population at large. This is particularly serious since the question of bycatch could be largely addressed by Parties enforcing existing laws.

Once again, the Scientific Committee **reiterates** that the implementation of the Mediterranean Common Dolphin Conservation Plan (MCDCP) is a high priority in the region. It **stresses** to the Parties that failure to act to preserve common dolphins can only be interpreted as a failure of the Parties to the commitment they made when signing the agreement to 'maintain a favourable conservation status for cetaceans in the area'. The most urgent and feasible actions that need to be taken were discussed during the Fourth Meeting of the Scientific Committee and the discussion can be found in the Meeting's report.

Despite the agreement to appoint a MCDCP Coordinator at the 2nd Meeting of the Parties to ACCOBAMS (Resolution 2.20), this has not occurred for financial reasons. As a practical way forward in this critical situation the Scientific Committee **strongly recommends** that a small Steering Committee is created immediately to facilitate the implementation of the priority actions of the plan and to coordinate with the relevant authorities. It **draws the attention of the Parties** to the fact that this will require seed funding (see Recommendation 6.9).

[5] The population was also already included in Appendix II but the listing - formerly limited to a "western Mediterranean population" - was extended to the whole Mediterranean population of common dolphins.

Given the key role of fisheries in the survival of the common dolphin in the Mediterranean, the Scientific Committee also **recommends** that the Secretariat, the Parties and the Scientific Committee, as appropriate, cooperate to ensure that**:**
(1) the international concern for common dolphins be conveyed to the relevant EU authorities, and appropriate strategies and funding opportunities be identified;
(2) continue in the participation of appropriate members of the ACCOBAMS (its Scientific Committee or Secretariat) at fisheries meetings such as those organized by FAO (GFCM, ICATT), such that information on the impact of fishing activities on Mediterranean common dolphins is provided and collaborative efforts encouraged;
(3) the situation of common dolphins in the Mediterranean Sea will be a matter of particular attention (including with the organisation of a workshop) for the collaboration between ACCOBAMS and GFCM as far as both ecological and operational interactions are concerned;
(4) that work with the CMS Secretariat will start on a joint approach to encourage the Parties to implement conservation action, consistent with the decisions taken so far and the listing of Mediterranean common dolphins in Appendix I of CMS.

The Scientific Committee also wishes to highlight for the Parties the issue of prey depletion as a factor in common dolphin decline, as witnessed by in the waters of Kalamos, Western Greece, and suspected through work in the Gulf of Vera, Spain. For the former area, which is located in the Natura 2000 area GR2220003 also known as 'Inner Ionian Sea Archipelago', research indicates a high risk of local disappearance of common dolphins in the very near future unless fishery management measures are implemented immediately to reduce overfishing. As discussed at the 6th Scientific Committee meeting, such measures —advocated and described in a Call for Action signed by 13 local and regional NGOs (http://www.cetaceanalliance.org/call), which would benefit the large small-scale fishermen community and may allow for the recovery of a coastal ecosystem that has been considerably damaged by overfishing, also creating the conditions for common dolphin recovery, include: 1) the strict enforcement of national legislation and of Council Regulation 1967/2006, and appropriate penalties for illegal fishing; 2) the immediate moratorium on purse seining and trawling; 3) the prompt implementation of the ban of beach seining by May 31st, 2010, as demanded by Council Regulation 1967/2006; and 4) the adoption of larger mesh sizes (current practice is 20-22 mm knot-to-knot minimum), for all bottom-set nets of coastal fishermen in order to increase selectivity, as voluntarily done by fishing communities operating in other coastal areas of Greece, and already discussed with local artisanal fishermen representatives. In addition, measures should be taken to ensure that the present fishing capacity does not increase.

Recommendation 6.4

Ship strikes

Following resolution 3.14, approved during the last ACCOBAMS MoP in Dubrovnik, a Steering Group on ship strikes has been created, aiming to increase the knowledge on ship strikes and cetacean in the ACCOBAMS area and to identify particular risk area where suggest appropriate mitigation measures. The steering group has worked closely with the ACCOBAMS Secretariat and Parties, the PELAGOS Sanctuary Secretariat, the IWC, IMO, and other relevant experts in the region and has selected a list of actions that will benefit from support from the ACCOBAMS Parties.

The Committee therefore recommends that the Parties:

- adopt and support recommendations presented by international bodies such as IMO or REMPEC; prepare and present joint documents to IMO – MEPC; consider adapting systems such as the Mandatory Ship Reporting Scheme under the IMO framework.

- Facilitate collaborations between countries for specific issues (e.g. exchange of information on traffic and to address ship strike issues) in targeted areas (for example between Spain and Morocco).

- Enhance involvement of the Administrations in facilitating exchange of information between the scientists and the shipping companies (i.e. organize meetings).

- Support the Basin Wide survey initiative, since such effort will provide detailed information on whales' abundance and distribution throughout the Mediterranean, identifying high risk areas for cetaceans and ship strikes.

- Facilitate the consideration of ship strikes with cetaceans as a topic for training watchmen and crew on deck (i.e. STCW Committee in IMO).

- Facilitate detailed necropsies following dedicated protocols to assess the cause of death for large stranded cetaceans.

- Allow access to ship traffic data (e.g. AIS data, LRIT, radars) to relate traffic information to cetacean presence thus allowing identification of high risk area for ship strike.

- Under reporting of ship strike is a major issue in the Mediterranean, Parties should encourage or render it mandatory to report ship strikes and fill the appropriate database that has been developed.

- Support the REPCET program tested in the Pelagos area, with the French and Italian shipping companies.

The Parties are also encouraged to follow the recommendations and the protocols from the joint **IWC/ACCOBAMS** on reducing the risk of collisions between vessels and cetaceans to be held in Monaco on 21-24 September 2010, the Mediterranean area being a key case study region discussed during the workshop.

Recommendation 6.5

Marine Protected Areas

The Scientific Committee wishes to provide advice to ensure that cetacean habitat protection is adequately covered, and plans to review the coverage and management plans across the Agreement area.

In order to assist the process of strengthening MPAs in the ACCOBAMS area, the SC calls on Parties, with the assistance of NGO partners, the Bureau and others as appropriate to:

- fulfil the mandate of Resolution 3.22 before the agreed 2012 deadline;
- share with the SC their draft plans for MPA networks that include cetacean habitat as well as additional proposals for MPAs with cetacean habitat; this will allow the SC to evaluate proposals across the entire region to facilitate assessment of regional coverage and conservation needs;
- examine existing MPAs (including SACs, RAMSAR wetlands, marine reserves, SPAMIs and national parks, etc.) in the ACCOBAMS region for the presence of cetacean habitat;
- encourage and implement the development of High Seas SPAMIs as part of a regional network, working in conjunction with UNEP MAP/RACSPA; this will include, among other things. encouraging Morocco, Algeria and Spain to cooperate on the designation of the proposed Alborán Sea MPA in national waters of the 3 countries as well as on the High Seas through a SPAMI;
- in particular, to encourage parties to the Pelagos Agreement to create a legally-binding and properly financially-supported management body, to implement a management plan and the ten agreed resolutions from MoP4, and by doing this show some real progress;
- encourage Greece to implement conservations actions in the Amvrakikos Gulf, which has a range of designations but, to date, no concrete protection for bottlenose dolphins;
- encourage Croatia to finalise the process of establishment of Cres-Losinj MPA containing bottlenose dolphin critical habitat, given preventive protection in the period of 2006-2009;
- encourage Greece to conserve its population of harbour porpoises in the N. Aegean Sea thereby fulfilling its EU obligation of introducing protected areas in core distribution areas of the population (after a required survey).

Recommendation 6.6

Anthropogenic Noise

At SC5 in Rome in 2008, the Scientific Committee had been informed that at MOP3 in Dubrovnik, agreement had not been reached on the proposed Guidelines on anthropogenic noise developed within the Scientific Committee. Rather, the Contracting Parties decided to establish a separate Working Group outside the Scientific Committee to consider this issue further and report directly to MOP4. The Scientific Committee received a brief progress report on the work of this group that has not yet been completed.

As at SC5, the Scientific Committee again reaffirms its concern about acoustic pollution in the marine environment and the impacts on cetaceans. It reiterates that the draft Guidelines submitted to MOP3 still represent its best advice at this time. The Committee noted that it had given this matter full consideration at its previous meetings.

The Committee recognises the ongoing work of the Working Group on sound and trusts that it will be able to complete its work in good time for the MOP to take action. It **recommends** that the Working Group considers the following general principles in its work:

(1) the need to address fully the issue of anthropogenic noise (including cumulative effects) in the marine environment in the light of the best scientific information available should be formalised (e.g. embedded in the legislation of Parties), particularly with respect to the need for thorough environmental impact assessments being undertaken before granting approval to proposed noise-producing activities, and in management plans of MPAs;

(2) in determining whether approval should be given, the emphasis should be on the need for a precautionary approach and the incorporation of appropriate mitigation measures with a provision for expert review by specialists – such measures should include a provision for the action to be taken if unusual events occur (e.g. mass strandings);

(3) the Scientific Committee is willing to provide scientific review of potential effects and appropriate mitigation measures to the Parties if requested;

(4) consideration be given to Parties providing the ACCOBAMS Secretariat with a listing of activities that have been approved that include a noise component within the region, so that in the unfortunate occurrence of an unusual event, such as a mass stranding, it will be possible for investigators to examine possible causes.

The Scientific Committee will keep this item on its agenda and in particular provide a regular review of new information

Recommendation 6.7

Monitoring, assessment and reducing cetacean bycatches in the Black Sea

The problems posed to cetacean conservation by bycatches in the region are well known and have been documented by the Scientific Committee since its inception. The Committee **repeats** its previous recommendations on this matter, including SC4.2 on the use of driftnets in the Mediterranean Sea. The Committee **reaffirms** its view of the importance of this matter and **recommends** that Parties make every effort to reduce cetacean bycatch levels. With respect to the use of acoustic mitigation measures, it **recommends** that the Parties follow the guidelines provided in SC6-Doc25 and **endorsed** under Item 3.9.

In addition, the Committee wishes to draw the attention of the MOP to the situation in the Black Sea.

Conventional bottom-set gillnets with a mesh size =>100mm are known to represent a major source of anthropogenic mortality for Black Sea harbour porpoises (*Phocoena phocoena relicta*) and bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus ponticus*). The Scientific Committee is greatly concerned that these fishing gears are still widely used (legally and illegally for turbot, spiny dogfish and sturgeon fisheries) in the Black Sea subregion including territorial waters and EEZs of all six riparian states in the Black Sea proper and contiguous areas (the Azov Sea, the Kerch Strait and the Turkish Straits System). This practice results in significant and, likely, unsustainable cetacean losses roughly estimated per year at least as several thousands for harbour porpoises and some hundreds for bottlenose dolphins.

Therefore, the Scientific Committee **urges** the Black Sea Parties of ACCOBAMS to:

- set up regular onboard monitoring programmes to quantify cetacean bycatch;
- estimate bycatch magnitude for different types of legal fisheries and for illegal, unreported or unregulated (IUU) fishing and ghost fishing;
- evaluate sustainable bycatch levels for each cetacean species with regard to their distribution and abundance;
- develop and implement specific national programmes, with well-defined management objectives for reducing bycatches, and a focus on co-operation with the fishing communities;
- invite other Black Sea riparian states to join the effort of the ACCOBAMS parties in reducing human-induced cetacean mortality;
- follow the guidelines for the use of acoustic mitigation devices given in SC6-Doc25.

Recommendation 6.8

Climate change

Global climate change is occurring and some scenarios envisage rapid environmental changes to occur in particular in the marine ecosystems of the Agreement area. A related and potentially exacerbating issue is marine acidification.

The Scientific Committee is ready to continue to consider issues of climate change and acidification, particularly in the light of any new information that becomes available for the agreement area with respect to related anthropogenic activity or information on actual or potential effects on cetaceans.

Taking into account the results of recent workshops on climate change and cetaceans (ref to IWC and Costa Rica) and Resolution 3.19, the Scientific Committee will review the timeliness of holding a targeted region-specific workshop on this issue within the next triennium (in cooperation with ACCOBAMS partners, and other related organizations). This review will include consideration of any detailed proposals for such a workshop, including terms of reference, available data and likely output) that may be presented to the Committee. The review will take into account progress with other relevant aspects of the Committee's work. The Committee will continue to monitor the results from work on this topic of other organisations including the IWC Scientific Committee.

Parties are encouraged to support the SC activities and to take necessary actions to reduce anthropogenic contributions to climate change and marine acidification and to assist in the work described above.

Recommendation 6.9

Minimum funding for the Scientific Committee

As was the case before MoP3, the Scientific Committee is well aware of the budgetary constraints facing national and international organisations. It recognises that up until now it has not directly requested funding from ACCOBAMS as a body or its Parties. However, it is increasingly concerned that certain high priority conservation recommendations it has made in the past have either not been implemented or have been considerably delayed for financial reasons.

Given this, and in the light of certain key recommendations it has made at this and previous meetings, it **once again respectfully requests** that serious consideration be given to the allocation within the budget of ACCOBAMS, *minimum seed funding* to ensure that some action occurs on the highest priority issues, noting that this funding is not to carry out the actions themselves but to enable progress to be made in terms of co-ordination and the search for full funding.

(1) Mediterranean common dolphin conservation plan (Recommendation SC4.1, SC6.3): this represents the most serious conservation problem in the Mediterranean and to date no actions have been taken. The seed funding will allow for the necessary liaison with the various fishery bodies and other authorities, fishermen themselves, stakeholders including NGOs, the development of appropriate capacity building and public awareness measures, travel etc. The Committee estimates that will require some €30,000 for the year 2011.
(2) Progress on Phase I of the stock structure programme: As stressed in the Committee's report, effective conservation requires a strong scientific basis and the two areas of major deficiency concern stock structure and abundance. Thus seed funding [amount to be determined] is requested to enable completion of Phase I of the stock structure programme (see Recommendation 6.2)

The Committee **stresses** that without this minimum seed funding, work on these priority items may not occur. In making this request, it is certainly not suggesting that this should be considered sufficient for the work of the Committee to be completed on these essential conservation issues. It **emphasises** that Parties are invited to make voluntary contributions or adopt as national projects for all of its recommendations. The present request is rather to ensure that this minimum level of seed funding is realised. As always the Committee is open to offering advice to the Secretariat on other aspects of its work that have budgetary implications.

The Committee also wishes to reiterate to the Parties its willingness to provide advice and review proposals for work intended to make a contribution to the work of ACCOBAMS. It is aware that many individual Parties allocate funds for national ACCOBAMS-related research and it believes it can provide a valuable service to the Parties in assisting in identifying work that is (a) most directly in accord with the conservation priorities identified in Resolutions adopted by the Parties and (b) will directly assist the Committee in its priority work. Similarly, the Committee is pleased to work with the Secretariat in this regard and believes that will also assist greatly in forwarding the conservation agenda of ACCOBAMS and maximising the value of the Committee for the Parties.

Annex 6: Declaration of the Sixth Scientific Committee

The Scientific Committee of ACCOBAMS, during its 6th Meeting (Casablanca, 11-13 January 2010), recognises the positive intent of the Agreement and the commitment of ACCOBAMS Parties demonstrated through the many Resolutions adopted at Meeting of the Parties, many in response to key recommendations from the Scientific Committee. However, in developing its recommendations for the forthcoming MOP, several of which are almost identical to previous recommendations (e.g. Conservation Plans, the Survey Initiative), the Committee is extremely concerned that the level of implementation of the agreement provisions and of the resolutions adopted is generally too slow and/or limited to effectively address the existing, and in some cases rapidly developing, environmental problems in the Agreement area, which are providing increasing stresses on the population status of cetaceans in the region, many of which continue to be classified as critically endangered, endangered or vulnerable.

The Committee is fully aware that implementing effective conservation actions in small, semi-enclosed basins such as the Mediterranean and Black Seas, where human activities are so intense and diverse, is fraught with difficulties. We also recognise the current global financial climate. However, if the rate of implementation of effective conservation actions continues to be as slow as at present, it will become increasingly difficult and eventually impossible, to reach the Agreement's goals; we can expect this to have a significant negative effect on the status of whales, dolphins and porpoises in the Agreement area. It is for this reason that it also essential to adequately monitor the status of the cetacean populations and evaluate the success of mitigation measures that are put into place to address recognised threats.

Therefore Committee members respectfully suggest that as a matter of urgency, the Parties of ACCOBAMS:

(1) analyse and review the mechanisms for the implementation of the Agreement's provisions at the national and international level;

(2) assess the effectiveness and challenges of the various conservation actions implemented so far, with a view to clarify the reasons why progress has been so slow; and

(3) propose actions to improve the Agreement's performance (e.g., through the adoption of a compliance mechanism).