REPORT OF THE ACCOBAMS/PELAGOS WORKSHOP ON CETACEAN LIVE STRANDING

Monaco, 29-30 October 2014

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I. BACKGROUNG

Marine mammal strandings can sometimes involve national governments around the globe with specific challenges, in particular when they become a transboundary event. They can affect multiple jurisdictions, involve various policy sectors and require a rapid response, which must be delivered under conditions of media and social pressures. Due to this peculiar and emotive attention, cetacean strandings often become a crisis situation, in particular during alive or mass strandings and those related to epidemic or anthropic causes. The causes of stranding events can be hard to understand before the results of data sampling, and also because they stretch without barriers across the sea. The uncertainty deepens if services depend on information held by other colleagues of other countries, in fact information may not be immediately forthcoming, it may follow a different methodology, process or approach and, for this reasons, it may be misleading.

I.1. GENERAL SCENARIO

Thus the organization of an effective response to crisis is fundamental. To face the extraordinary effort that marine mammal strandings can require in specific areas, organizational pattern will have to mobilize different services and institutions. Rapid support, participation and cooperation from different stakeholders and within scientific organization are requested to ensure an effective response and an adequate coordination of people who have never worked together before. It may be really difficult to reach a good level of coordination under these possible conditions of uncertainty, urgency and stress and maybe without a clear chain of command or hierarchy.

I.2. TRANSBOUNDARY SCENARIO

Coordination is usually an important part in a stranding and becomes particularly relevant in a transboundary situation. In this case coordination and communication can be necessary among different jurisdictions provincial zones and even national governments, a situation that can originate sovereignty restrictions that can cause coordination difficulties. A transboundary event involving cetaceans can be considered well-defined cases occurring close to national borders or in specific areas interested by international agreements.
For instance, these situations are :
a) large cetaceans considered in a difficult condition swimming through international borders;
b) stranded animals released after rehabilitation in areas close to the national borders;
c) mass strandings, environmental incidents and d) epidemic outbreaks.

I.3. CREATING A TRANSBOUNDARY GENERAL COMMON SENSE

Considering that most of the national procedures used in case of strandings are often recent and in some case incomplete and general, information between countries could flow most easily between jurisdictions and within organizations that have had previous collaborations. Actually, in case of transboundary events it can be necessary to face a continuous change of information distributed over a large number of actors. During this information flow the general common sense making, as interpretation, analysis or decision-making, can be very different. That's way to create a transboundary shared "general common sense" may take a long time but could be facilitate through the creation of a bottom-up process so to overcome subjective limitations and to facilitate rapid decision-making. In this sense data sharing and analysis of origins, distribution and intensity of strandings in different countries could help.
One possible major barrier could be due to general difficulty of traditional public bureaucracies to produce dynamic responses. In order to better understand how transboundary response networks might be developed to produce effective responses, a important step is to develop a shared procedure

starting from a selection of best practices and a debate among different governments and experts belonging to different services and institutions.

I.4. SHARING PRIORITIES AND VERYFYING RESULTS OF COOPERATION

An ACCOBAMS common approach during transboundary emergencies involving cetaceans can give the chance to share the vision on priorities (for example: sharing information promptly, developing and adopting minimum standards and best practices). In the long term, the aim should be to follow a common progression from informal to more formal governance and implementation of the transboundary process. In fact there is not a unique effective model to work across boundaries. It could be also necessary to build capacity for some specific aspects on one or more sides of borders for effective transboundary collaboration and management. That's way it should be fundamental to monitor progress of the process and develop a system to measure outcomes, through performance and impact indicators.

II. TOWARDS A TRANSBOUNDARY COMMON PROCEDURE

The ACCOBAMS / Pelagos Workshop was held on Wednesday 29th and Thursday 30th October 2014, at the Congress Centre "Auditorium Rainier III" (Monaco).
The agenda of the workshop appears in Annex 1 of the report.

More than 40 experts from 11 Countries of the ACCOBAMS Area (Algeria, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Italy, Monaco, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Tunisia and Ukraine), as well as representative of the Joint ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS/CMS Working Group on noise, took part to the workshop (the list of participants can be found in Annex 2).

Two working groups were established: one with experts from the Pelagos Sanctuary and the other one with experts from the other Countries of the ACCOBAMS area.
The first working group was invited to propose to the workshop, elements for an administrative transboundary procedure in the Pelagos Sanctuary in order to facilitate response to emergency transboundary situation in this area.

The working group composed with experts abroad from the Pelagos Sanctuary were invited to extrapolate general guidelines that can be adaptable to the entire ACCOBAMS area in case of transboundary cetacean stranding.

Based on the General document on transboundary emergencies involving cetaceans (Annex 3) and on the proposal for the establishment of an harmonized procedure **in case of cetaceans live stranding in the Pelagos Sanctuary** (Annex 4) and for all the ACCOBAMS Parties (Annex 5), the following conclusions were established. They should be considered in view of the fulfillment of a Transboundary common Procedure.

II.1. HOMOGENEITY AND DIFFERENCES

The ACCOBAMS area presents quite important differences in the approach to alive and dead strandings. Procedures can be really informal or very well structured, services and equipments at disposal can be completely unsuitable or adequately organized, education and competences on the field can be at the forefront or totally insufficient. In view of the fulfillment of a Transboundary common Procedure a clear decision should be taken on which aspects homogeneity should be compulsory and on which aspects differences should be maintained.

II.2. A SHARED ROAD MAP

To this end a shared road map should be identified with timing and main actions to reach homogeneity in all the ACCOBAMS zone and on the other end to find effective procedures fitting with differences. As underlined in the General document on transboundary emergencies involving cetaceans (Annex 3), a learning by doing and step by step approach with a benefit-sharing perspective should be adopted and monitored on the long term. The road map should start considering the main shared elements among Parties and also the main big issues of Parties with more organizational e operative matters.

II.3. DOUBTS AND WORRIES

There are some doubts and worries about the fulfillment of a Transboundary common Procedure mainly linked to a narrow view on the matter. For countries where National strandings are official or at least well functioning there is the fear that possible changes could damage the balance achieved, in most of the cases, with difficulty. For countries where National strandings are not existing or operate on the base of the volunteers involvement there is the fear that a procedure based on the standards of more advanced countries could impose a non effective process too difficult to achieve.

II.4. COOPERATION

A space to cooperation should be considered to give the chance to experts to share experience both on analysis and diagnostics and interventions. This could represent a positive chance for countries with no official stranding networks and in general for all the ACCOBAMS zone in order to reach a harmonized approach. Cooperation should be encouraged also with specialized NGOs that in most countries have a crucial role in the phase of intervention and for this reason repository of important knowledge.

In relation with the live stranding concerns, it was underlined that carcasses of dead animals, in particular large specimens, could be considered as biological pollution drifting at sea (even before stranding). In this context, it was proposed that an alert stranding network of closest countries be included in an existing cooperative transboundary operational procedure for pollution, in order to coordinate efforts among relevant national authorities and share information.

II.5. STARTING FROM A COMMON DEFINITION

As underlined in the General document on transboundary emergencies involving cetaceans (Annex 3), it is fundamental to consider the presence of different approaches as possible barriers. So the starting point of the road map towards the fulfillment of a Transboundary common Procedure should be to provide a shared definition of all the stranding events that can be identified as transboundary situations. These indications arise also from comments on working documents after the meeting. This document could summarize all common definition (i.e. stranding situations, stakeholders and common alert system) with specific fact sheets as annexes. It is not clear if using a common alert system is considered as useful tool or not or if it could overlap with already existing alert system used by governmental stakeholders.

II.6. CONSIDERING EXPERTS AND SERVICES ON THE FIELD AND GOVERNMENTS NEEDS

In view of the fulfillment of a Transboundary common Procedure experts and services on the field and Governments real needs should be set apart. In order to create an effective procedure in fact the complexity linked to uncertainty and emergency in strandings should be considered to help experts on the field to face the event with more tools in terms of knowledge and realistic process to be followed.

On the other hand by the Transboundary common Procedure Governments should gain a more safety standards. In specific areas, already existing transboundary protocols adopted to face environmental emergencies, could be used trying to expand their fields of action including cetaceans: since they state the cooperation between states with the establishment of a common communication strategy between institutions, they are a useful base for a fruitful involvement of governmental stakeholders in case of transboundary situation. This could help to avoid any overlapping and repetition of work and efforts.

Proposals on procedures were elaborated for the entire ACCOBAMS Area, at the attention of different stakeholders involved in the management of cetacean live stranding: of general services (Annex 6), of national and local institutions and governments (Annex 7), of technical personal and volunteers (Annex 8), and of national and local media and public opinion (Annex 9).

II.7. IDENTIFYING REPRESENTATIVES

Communication between and among different countries should start from an official identification of the representatives involved in strandings and the annexed contact details. In particular in view of the fulfillment of a Transboundary common Procedure exchange of information among ACCOBAMS National Focal Points should be more continuous in general and more effective in case of mass strandings.

II.8. FOSTER POLITICAL WILL AND GOVERNMENTS COMMITMENTS

What clearly came to light is that in many cases experts are left alone with their responsibilities. For this reason ACCOBAMS Secretariat is seen as a potential “incubator” to foster political will and Governments commitments to consider cetacean conservation as a main topic in their agendas.

II.9. NEEDS OF CAPACITY BUILDING AND COMPARISON OF PROCEDURES

One of the expectation arise during the workshop and with following comments to the working documents, is capacity building: the experience with alive animals are limited to few cases per year and, in most of the countries of the ACCOBAMS area, there are no established protocols or skilled personnel. For these reasons, capacity building is necessary to create a common sense and common strategy through specific trainings and exchange of experiences and information. Sharing of procedures and guidelines built on the experience of rescue teams or experts has been considered fundamental and specific meeting are strongly recommended.

II.10. CONSERVATION BEYOND BORDERS

The fulfillment of a Transboundary common Procedure arises the issue of international waters. Considering that potential causes of strandings could originate in areas beyond national jurisdictions, ACCOBAMS Parties should face the subject in order to find possible solutions.

ANNEX 1: Agenda

1- Welcome and practical matters

1.1 - Welcome address
1.2 - Opening of the Meeting
1.3 - Presentation of ACCOBAMS and Pelagos Sanctuary

2- Introduction to the functional stranding networks and responses to emergency situation in the ACCOBAMS Area

2.1 - Black Sea
2.2 - Atlantic adjacent Area
2.3 - Mediterranean Sea

3- Addressing responses to emergency situation in the Pelagos Sanctuary

3.1 - Animal at risk for stranding
3.2 - Stranded animal during unusual mortality events
3.3 - Mass strandings
3.4 - Proposed best practices for national entities
3.5 – Proposals for the establishment of Guidelines for Transboundary Procedure in the Pelagos Sanctuary

4- General Guidelines adaptable to the entire ACCOBAMS Area

4.1 - Agreement on action points & recommendations on procedures to policy makers
4.2 - Proposal of General Transboundary Guidelines for the ACCOBAMS Area

5- Closure of the Meeting

ANNEX 2: List of participants

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ANNEX 3: General document on transboundary emergencies involving cetaceans

I. OBJECTIVE

Facilitate response to cetacean stranding events where transboundary situations occur and develop a collaborative process that can overcome possible barriers

II. PREFACE

Marine mammal stranding events can sometimes involve national governments around the globe with specific challenges, in particular when they become a transboundary event. They can affect multiple jurisdictions, involve various policy sectors and require a rapid response, which must be delivered under conditions of media and social pressures. Due to this peculiar and emotive attention, cetacean stranding events often become a crisis situation, in particular during alive or mass stranding and those related to epidemic or anthropic causes. The causes of stranding events can be hard to understand before the results of data sampling, and also because they stretch without barriers across the sea. The uncertainty deepens if services depend on information held by other colleagues of other countries, in fact information may not be immediately forthcoming, it may follow a different methodology, process or approach and, for this reasons, it may be misleading.

III. GENERAL SCENARIO

Thus the organization of an effective response to crisis is fundamental. To face the extraordinary effort that marine mammal stranding events can require in specific areas, organizational pattern will have to mobilize different services and institutions. Rapid support, participation and cooperation from different stakeholders and within scientific organization are requested to ensure an effective response and an adequate coordination of people who have never worked together before. It may be really difficult to reach a good level of coordination under these possible conditions of uncertainty, urgency and stress and maybe without a clear chain of command or hierarchy.

IV. TRANSBOUNDARY SCENARIO

Coordination is usually an important part in a stranding and becomes particularly relevant in a transboundary situation. In this case coordination and communication can be necessary among different jurisdictions provincial zones and even national governments, a situation that can originate sovereignty restrictions that can cause coordination difficulties. A transboundary event involving cetaceans can be considered well-defined cases occurring close to national borders or in specific areas interested by international agreements. For instance, these situations are a) large cetaceans considered in a difficult condition swimming through international borders; b) stranded animals released after rehabilitation in areas close to the national borders; c) mass strandings, environmental incidents and d) epidemic outbreaks.

V. CREATING A TRANSBOUNDARY GENERAL COMMON SENSE

Considering that most of the national procedures used in case of strandings are often recent and in some case incomplete and general, information between countries could flow most easily between jurisdictions and within organizations that have had previous collaborations. Actually, in case of transboundary events it can be necessary to face a continuous change of information distributed over a large number of actors. During this information flow the general common sense making, as interpretation, analysis or decision-making, can be very different. That's way to create a transboundary shared "general common sense" may take a long time but could be facilitate through the creation of a bottom-up process so to overcome subjective limitations and to facilitate rapid decision-making. In this sense data sharing and analysis of origins, distribution and intensity of strandings in different countries could help.

One possible major barrier could be due to general difficulty of traditional public bureaucracies to produce dynamic responses. In order to better understand how transboundary response networks might be developed to produce effective responses, an important step is to develop a shared procedure starting from a selection of best practices and a debate among different governments and experts belonging to different services and institutions.

VI. SHARING PRIORITIES AND VERYFYING RESULTS OF COOPERATION

An ACCOBAMS common approach during transboundary emergencies involving cetaceans can give the chance to share the vision on priorities (for example: sharing information promptly, developing and adopting minimum standards and best practices). In the long term, the aim should be to follow a common progression from informal to more formal governance and implementation of the transboundary process. In fact there is not a unique effective model to work across boundaries. It could be also necessary to build capacity for some specific aspects on one or more sides of borders for effective transboundary collaboration and management. That's way it should be fundamental to monitor progress of the process and develop a system to measure outcomes, through performance and impact indicators.

VII. DIFFERENT LANGUAGE SAME DEFINITIONS

VII.1. Animal/s at risk of stranding

Pelagic cetacean species, in particular large whales observed unusually in proximity to the coastline are considered at risk of stranding. Distance from the coasts depends on geography of the area. Also other species should be considered in this category when they are observed inside ports, estuaries, basins or in highly congested areas. Three types of cases are included in this category:

a) rare or vagrant cetacean/s in the area;
b) close to coastline, ports, estuaries, basins and within highly congested areas (proximity);
c) unusually in shallow water near the coast or on the beach (beached).

A Transboundary Procedure should be adopted in case of large pelagic cetacean (>5m) individual in proximity in areas/regions where the animals could overcome national marine borders (for instance Pelagos Sanctuary, Adriatic and Ionian Sea). Furthermore, these practices should be considered also in case of rare species or in case the species is considered rare or vagrant in the area and when an outbreak is on going. Common best practices for these cases are summarized in Appendix I.

VII.2. Entangled cetaceans

Cetaceans could be entangled in fishing gears and this condition impairs their swimming and diving abilities with influences on their feeding activities. Animals could be completely or partially entangled by nets and this can seriously affect their swimming capacity.
A Transboundary Procedure could be activated in those cases in which the animal cannot be disentangled and is swimming within international agreements or close to national borders and could enter waters of closest countries. Best procedures are considered in Appendix II.

VII.3. Stranded alive animal/s

A cetacean (whale, dolphin, or porpoise) is considered stranded when it is on the beach alive or in need of medical attention while free-swimming in shallow waters. Live-stranded animals are usually in need of medical attention and are unable to return to their natural habitat without assistance.
In these cases, a specific approach should be considered by any countries in order to face different situations. All interventions should be coordinated by a rescue team, where it is present, including an expert veterinarians able to understand, using its best knowledge and a well established triage procedure, if the animal is immediately releasable, releasable after a period of rehabilitation or if euthanasia is the only option. In general, medical condition, health status and the stranding feature (i.e., epidemic on going, mass strandings, etc.) are basic criteria to decide the possible release into the wild but any country could include behavioral responses, ecological and etiological parameters and

ethical statement in the decision process. Existing international protocols (i.e. British Divers Marine Life Rescue and NOAA guidelines) could be used as reference if a national guideline is not already adopted. More in detail, for release categories the following definitions are generally accepted:

a) **Releasable cetaceans**
Animals stranded alive whose ecological, ethological and health conditions, evaluated by skilled veterinarians, are considered appropriate for an independent life without any danger for wildlife population and public safety.

b) **Conditionally releasable cetaceans**
Animals stranded alive whose ecological, ethological and health conditions, evaluated by skilled veterinarians, are considered appropriate for an independent life without any danger for wildlife population and public safety, after further examinations or after a period of rehabilitation/quarantine, when national laws allows such procedures.

c) **Non releasable cetaceans**
Animals stranded alive whose ecological, ethological and health conditions, evaluated by skilled veterinarians, are considered NOT appropriate for an independent life without any danger for wildlife population and public safety, also after a period of rehabilitation/quarantine. Euthanasia or permanent captivity, when national laws allow such procedure, is the most suitable options.

A Transboundary Procedure should be adopted in case of animal/s released into the wild in water close to national borders in order to advice closest countries of the possible presence of a cetacean already stranded in the area and to receive advice of its possible stranding in order to obtain post-release information. Common best practices for these cases are summarized in Appendix III.

VII.4. Mass strandings

Mass strafing events involve more than two cetaceans (excluding cow/calf pairs) stranding at the same time and place. Several causes may be responsible for this event, including, but not limited to, extreme weather conditions, tidal changes, disease of one or several group members, or human-related events. Atypical mass stranding is used to define those events related to sonar exposure in which animals do not strand all together as a single cluster but in a very short and define space and time laps.
Often these events occurred in a single country but in specific cases, for instance those involving sound as a possible cause of death, could interest more than one state. In this cases strict cooperation and communication is necessary in order to investigate on stranding' causes and to have information on eventual post-release monitoring. General best practices are considered in Appendix III.

VII.5. Unusual mortality event (UME)

These conditions involve strandings or mortalities that occur abnormally (are unexpected, involve a significant die-off of marine mammals). Special investigation teams may be assembled to investigate the causes of these events. Main recognized causes are infections, biotoxins, human interactions (including environmental accidents) and malnutrition.
These cases require a continuous communication and information exchange between neighboring states in order to face the increase in strandings rate and to coordinate analyses and responses. Best practices are considered in Appendix III.

VIII. RISK COMUNICATION TO PREVENT CRISIS

Misinformation can go fast also across geographic boundaries before local organizations have activated their response. It would be very useful and desirable to set up a process of communication among different countries, governments and experts. The aim of setting up this process is to avoid the

use of communication only as a simply a reaction to crisis. In fact it should be considered a tool to overcome difficulties before they become real crisis situations. In a transboundary process it should be clear that risk communication requires a diversified approach that takes into account technological development, institutional, cultural and social habits. Additionally it should be considered that there could be a large difference between what should be done in every different stranding event and how people in charge to intervene determine what should be done. That's way a shared communication procedure among countries, governments and experts, could give the chance to better share information and so to prevent crisis in case of emergencies involving cetaceans with risks of transboundary impacts.
Considering the general scenario the communication process should follow a formal pattern for main issues and use the informal communication channel, for example phone calls, just to share operative news. The main difference between formal and informal communication is that the first one leaves a track, has less risk of wrong interpretations and allows spreading the message to more actors potentially involved.

VIII.1. An alert system

Considering the general scenario, the communication process should follow a formal pattern for main issues and use informal communication channel just to share operative news. The main difference between formal and informal communication is that the former leaves a track, has less risk of wrong interpretations and allows spreading information at large.
The adoption of a common alerts system code could identify different kind of strandings and facilitate communication between the states, both at an institutional and a technical-scientific level. These codes should be completed with the relevant information to be shared among the contiguous states (species, number of animals, geographic coordinates, dimensions, photos, videos). This information should be exchanged quickly and with essential systems (SMS, email, applications for smartphones).
The alert system should follow a specific shared pattern. First of all, starting from the contact points collected, a list of official emergency numbers and e-mail should be shared among countries, governments, services and experts. A list of operative and up-date website and eventually social networks used by institutions to inform about strandings should be shared also.
The alert system could follow for example a similar pattern:

- first alert with a text message (or other application like for instance WhatsApp) and e-mail with a correspondent relevant code describing the event. What is important in this phase is to spread promptly the first information;
- follow up by e-mail with official report and/or press release. Normally during a stranding event all the attention is directed to the event. Using official report and or press release, already prepared for being used inside a single country, could be an easy way to up date neighboring countries. A possible problem could be the need for translation;
- at the end of the intervention a standardized stranding report form in English or in French and Italian form could be filled in and collected on the ACCOBAMS website (and in Pelagos website if the event occurred in a Pelagos Party) so to create a sort of database.

VIII.2. The use of a common code system for strandings

CODE A: alive cetacean/s in danger
In this category are included animal/s that are still alive in the water but with obvious signs of troubles in swimming, abnormal behaviour for the species or unusual location possibly threatening their safety. No rehabilitation efforts are attempted because it is difficult to approach the animal in the water.

AIM: Alert stranding networks of closest countries of the possible presence of this/these animal in their waters.

CODE B: single alive animal refloated after stranding on the beach and rehabilitation or disentanglement.
Single animal rehabilitated and released after being stranded alive in shallow waters or lying on the beach or entangled and released after its health assessment.
AIM: Alert stranding networks of closest countries of the possible presence of this animal in their waters. If the animal strands, it should be consider as a re-stranding event in the triage procedure.

CODE C: mass strandings involving dead animals including atypical events
Simultaneous stranding of two or more not dependent dead cetaceans of the same species that are not recognized as mother and offspring. Also atypical mass strandings are considered.
AIM: Alert stranding networks of closest countries for possible presence of other individuals and for scientific purposes. It should be considered also a request to share information regarding previous presence of the animals in the area and eventual causes of strandings.

CODE D: mass strandings involving alive animals including atypical events
Simultaneous stranding of two or more not dependent alive cetaceans of the same species that are not recognized as mother and offspring. Also atypical mass strandings are considered.
AIM: Alert stranding networks of closest countries for possible presence of other individuals, to continue monitoring of stranded animals in case of refloation and for scientific purposes. It should be considered also a request to share information regarding previous presence of the animals in the area and eventual causes of strandings.

CODE E: Unusual mortality events
Increase in seasonal and/or regional stranding rates related to diseases or environmental factors (i.e. oil spills, biotoxins, peak of by-catch phenomenon) involving both alive and dead animals.
AIM: Alert stranding networks of closest countries to be prepared to face the phenomenon and share information and results of the analyses carried out; in case of refloated animals to alert for the possible presence of this animal in their waters. If the animal strands again, it should be consider as a second stranding event in the triage procedure.

CODE F: presence of anthropic activity using sound
The use of anthropic sound sources has been often related to mass strandings or unusual mortalities.
AIM: any stakeholder aware of the presence of anthropic activities emitting severe sounds, as military exercise using sonar or seismic surveys using air guns, should alert stranding networks of closest countries in order to be prepare to face possible mortalities.

Appendix I: best practices for animal at risk for stranding

When pelagic cetacean species are observed in proximity to the coastline they are considered at risk of stranding. Distance from the coasts depends on geography of the area. Also other species should be considered in this category when they are observed inside ports, estuaries, basins or in highly congested areas. A Transboundary Procedure should be adopted in case of large pelagic cetacean (>5m) individual in proximity, in areas/regions where the animals could overcome national marine borders (for instance Pelagos Sanctuary, Adriatic and Ionian Sea). Furthermore, these practices should be considered also in case of rare species or in case the species is considered rare or vagrant in the area and when an outbreak is ongoing.

A. RARE OR VAGRANT CETACEAN/S IN THE AREA

a) any individuals or cluster of animals belonging to species considered absent/rare/vagrant in the area/region should be reported to the coast guard o other competent maritime polices and to the contact person of the regional stranding network;
b) national contact points should advice other contact points in the area/region if the individual/cluster could cross national borders or in case of specific regional agreements;
c) species, numbers of the animals and estimated size should be registered and reported; furthermore, pictures of relevant individual marks should be taken; all information should be distributed to national experts and those of neighboring countries;
d) if possible, it/they should be monitored reporting periodically direction.

B. PROXIMITY TO THE COAST

a) coast guard or other competent maritime polices, together with the rescuing team (if one is established in the country), have to monitor the animal with at least two boats, preferably inflatable ones, at reasonable distance and between the coast and the animal;
b) If the coast guard or other competent maritime polices are not involved in the sighting, they should be alerted and involved in the monitoring activity;
c) closest veterinarians experts and regional emergencies group have to be alerted;
d) boats have to attempt approaching the animal tangentially in order to stimulate and check animal avoidance response; do not try more than 2-3 times every hour;
e) all actions should be coordinated by the rescue team coordinator where it is established or by a marine mammal strandings' expert
f) rescue team personnel (alternatively marine biologists and/or other cetaceans experts) have to be involved in monitoring;
g) animal behavior, respiratory rate and apneas time, physical body condition, evident external wounds and parasites, presence of any presence of cables, nets, ropes, pots entangled in the animal should be reported. Also size and weight of the animal should be estimated.
h) animal behavior, respiratory rate and apneas time have to be continuously monitored in order to underline possible anomalies;
i) Coast Guard should issue an alert to all vessels informing about the presence of the animal in the area in order to regulate speed and alert for possible strikes;
j) collect information about the presence of other cetaceans of the same species in the area;
k) information to media could not be necessary if it's not requested directly from the press;
l) information to the general public could be given to all stakeholders in the area (for example marinas, fishermen and port authorities);

m) if the animal leaves spontaneously the area, alert closest offices and contact points of countries in the region where reasonable risk for crossing national marine borders could be foreseen.

C. CETACEAN/S WITHIN PORTS AND BASINS

a) Coast guards and port authorities will follow same procedures described in point 1;
b) since close basins can cause a more stressful situation for all cetaceans due to noise, be careful when approaching it/them;
c) try to reduce marine traffic in the port / basin, if possible, until the animal lives the area; when this is not possible, advice all vessels to navigate very carefully and slow;
d) information to general public could be given to all stakeholders (for example marinas, fishermen and port authorities);
e) information to media could not be necessary if it is not requested from press or if the zone is not particularly crowded or when the intervention is expected to be finished within a short period of time (less than 1 day);
f) marine mammal observers have to be positioned also on the shores/decks and not only on boats;
g) if possible try to reduce or stop sound emissions (engines, work activities in the port / basin, etc.), in particular towards the exit of the port / basin;
h) study the structure of the port / basin and the materials of the decks in order to try to understand possible difficulties that may prevent the animal from leaving the area;
i) try to produce metallic sounds in an area between the decks and the animal, always to the port / basin exit;
j) in case the animal does not exit immediately, wait for the night since the area will be less noisy; if possible observers should remain placed along the coast;
k) if marine traffic or other activities could not be stopped, for small cetaceans, a coordinated effort to catch the animal using a net (avoid fishing gears) and release it if triage procedure gives positive results. This operation could be very dangerous for personnel and the animal itself and it is impossible for large whales.

Appendix II: best practices for cetaceans entangled in fishing gear

Cetaceans could be entangled in fishing gears and this condition impairs their swimming and diving abilities with influences on their feeding activities. Animals could be completely or partially entangled by nets and this can seriously affect their swimming capacity.

a) coast guard or other competent maritime polices, together with the rescuing team (if one is established in the country), have to monitor the animal with at least two boats, preferably inflatable ones, at reasonable distance and between the coast and the animal;
b) If the coast guard or other competent maritime polices are not involved in the sighting, they should be alerted and involved in the monitoring activity;
c) closest veterinarians experts and regional emergencies group have to be alerted;
d) boats have to attempt approaching the animal tangentially in order to stimulate and check animal avoidance response; do not try more than 2-3 times every hour;
e) all actions should be coordinated by the rescue team coordinator where it is established or by a marine mammal strandings' expert
f) rescue team personnel (alternatively marine biologists and/or other cetaceans experts) have to be involved in monitoring;
g) alert expert scuba divers (firemen, coast guards) in order to cooperate with the rescue team in any possible intervention to safely release the animal;
h) animal behavior, respiratory rate and apneas time, physical body condition, evident external wounds and parasites, presence of any presence of cables, nets, ropes, pots entangled in the animal should be reported. Also size and weight of the animal should be estimated.
i) animal behavior, respiratory rate and apneas time have to be continuously monitored in order to underline possible anomalies;
j) boats have to attempt approaching the animal tangentially in order to stimulate and check animal avoidance response; do not try more than 2-3 times every hour;
k) If the animal is partially entangled and is capable of diving and swimming and shows an avoidance response to any approach, be prepared to monitor the animal
l) if the animal is completely entangled and/or cannot dive and swim and/or shows an avoidance response, monitor the animal and organize an approach procedure in order to cut the fishing gear;
m) if no experts in cetaceans capture/release procedure are available in the area, recruit expert fishermen to try to release the animal;
n) Coast Guard should issue an alert to all vessels informing about the presence of the animal in the area in order to regulate speed and alert for possible strikes;
o) information to media could not be necessary if it is not requested directly from the press;
p) information to the general public could be given to all stakeholders in the area (for example marinas, fishermen and port authorities);
q) if the animal leaves spontaneously the area, alert closest offices and contact points of countries in the region where reasonable risk for crossing national marine borders could be foreseen.

Appendix III: best practices for cetacean stranded during single, mass stranding and unusual mortality events

A cetacean (whale, dolphin, or porpoise) is considered stranded when it is on the beach alive or in need of medical attention while free-swimming in shallow waters. Live-stranded animals are usually in need of medical attention and are unable to return to their natural habitat without assistance.

Single stranding involves one animal per event and may occur frequently, depending on the geographic area and time of year.

Mass strandings involve more than two cetaceans (excluding cow/calf pairs) stranding at the same time and place. Several causes may be responsible for this event, including, but not limited to, extreme weather conditions, tidal changes, disease of one or several group members, or human-related events.

Unusual Mortality Events involve strandings or mortalities that occur abnormally (are unexpected, involve a significant die-off of marine mammals, and demand immediate response). Special investigation teams may be assembled to investigate the causes of these events.

I. SINGLE CETACEANS

a) coast guard or other competent maritime polices, together with the rescuing team (if one is established in the country), have to monitor the animal conditions giving immediate first response and ensuring a security perimeter of at least 10 m from the animal, avoiding any contact with the public and/or domestic animals;
b) If the coast guard or other competent maritime polices are not involved in the sighting, they should be alerted and involved in the monitoring activity and in ensuring public order and the safety of the animal/s;
c) closest veterinarians experts; marine biologists and/or other cetaceans experts have to be involved in monitoring;
d) if the animal is already on the beach, time of stranding should to be estimated for triage medical procedure;
e) waiting for experts intervention, animal behavior, respiratory rate and apneas time, physical body condition, evident external wounds and parasites, presence of any presence of cables, nets, ropes, pots entangled in the animal should be reported. Also size and weight of the animal should be estimated. Animal response to external stimuli, respiratory rate and apneas time have to be continuously monitored in order to underline possible anomalies
f) shadowing of the animal has to be provided in sunny days and the skin must be kept wet at all times by gently spraying water. AVOID water in the blowhole.
g) ensure silence near the animal and reduce to a minimal any contact with humans, in particular in case of pelagic species;
h) information to media and public should be given;
i) in case of an animal in shallow waters with evident difficulties in swimming, ensure proper support by always maintaining the blowhole out of the water;
j) whenever possible local authorities should try to support the emergency team in terms of logistics needs and in maintaining a security perimeter

k) if the animal is considered to be releasable according to veterinarian, get at least two inflatable boat in order to support refloating;
l) if post-release monitoring is requested, advice any administration of the area/region giving identification features and asking for feedback.

II. MASS STRANDINGS

a) In case of clusters of pelagic species considered rare or vagrant in the area, please advise any competent institution of their presence and any contact points of nearest countries;
b) increase monitoring efforts;
c) when animals are on the beach or in shallow waters, follow the procedures as described in point I;
d) first care should be given to live animals before attending dead animals;
e) coordinate with all police and administration authorities to ensure a larger security perimeter in order to avoid any contact with the general public or domestic animals;
f) information to media and public should be given;
g) a designated person from the rescue team should coordinate with the local authorities all the necessary logistic support and, in particular, the establishment of a coordination center in order to ensure a prompt response and communication;
h) if refloating is successful ensure monitoring of the animal and advise any administration of the area giving identification features and asking for feedback for any similar alive or stranded animal;
i) for dead animals identify and define disposal procedures according to legislation in place before necropsies.

III. UNUSAL MORTALITY EVENTS

a) If the mortality event is characterized by live animals that single strand in different period, follow practices in point I;
b) if the mortality event is characterized by live animals that mass strand follow practices in point II;
c) results of any analyzes performed on dead animals resulting from a mass stranding have to be reported to the nearest countries periodically.

ANNEX 4: Proposals for the establishment of an harmonized Procedure in case of cetaceans live stranding in the Pelagos Sanctuary

1. Considering the potential health and pollution risks and danger for the navigation that represent the carcasses of marine mammals stranded dead or at sea, especially, for the mass and abnormal mortality events, it is proposed to insert, when it is possible, a part on the management of the marine mammals stranding events, in an existing transboundary operational plan (RAMOGEPOL for example). This will facilitate the information transfer and the pooled use of the human, technical and financial resources.

   *Considérant les risques potentiels sanitaires et de pollution liés à l'échouage de mammifères marins, en particulier pour les événements de masse et de mortalité anormale, il est proposé d'insérer dans la mesure du possible, un volet sur la gestion des échouages de mammifères marins dans un plan opérationnel transfrontalier existant (**par exemple RAMOGEPOL**) afin de faciliter le transfert d'information et l'utilisation mutualisée des ressources humaines, techniques et financières.*
   *Considerando i potenziali rischi sanitari e d'inquinamento connessi con lo spiaggiamento di mammiferi marini, in particolare per gli eventi di massa e di mortalità anomale, si propone di inserire per quanto possibile, un capitolo relativo alla gestione dello spiaggiamento di mammiferi marini in un piano operativo transfrontaliero esistente (**per esempio RAMOGEPOL**) per facilitare il trasferimento di informazioni e l'utilizzo condiviso delle risorse umane, tecniche e finanziarie.*

2. It is proposed that common codes are used by the RNE*. These ones would identify the different kinds of stranding and the communications that should be exchanged between the States, as well at the institutional level as at the technical and scientific levels. These codes should be completed with the relevant information that should be exchanged between contiguous States (species, number of animals, geographical coordinates, dimensions, photos, video). The information could be exchanged with quick and essential computer systems (SMS, email, Smartphone applications).

   Il est proposé que des codes communs soient utilisés par les RNE. Ceux-ci identifieraient les différents types d'échouages et les communications qui devraient être échangés entre les Etats, aussi bien au niveau institutionnel qu'au niveau technico-scientifique. Ces codes devraient être complétés avec les informations pertinentes à échanger entre les Etats contigus (espèces, nombre d'animaux, coordonnées géographiques, dimensions, photographies, vidéo). L'information pourrait être échangée avec des systèmes informatiques rapides et essentiels (SMS, email, applications Smartphone).*
   Si propone che dei codici comuni siano utilizzati dalle RNS. Essi identificherebbero le varie tipologie di spiaggiamenti e le comunicazioni che dovrebbero intercorrere tra gli stati, sia al livello istituzionale che a livello tecnico-scientifico. Tali codici dovrebbero essere completati con le informazioni rilevanti da condividere tra gli stati contigui (specie, numero di animali, coordinate geografiche, dimensioni, foto, video). L'informazione potrebbe essere scambiata con sistemi informatici veloci e essenziali (sms, email, applicazioni per Smartphone).*

3. It is proposed to organize national training programs, with a common content, dedicated to different institutional actors involved in the management of stranding events.

   Il est proposé d'organiser des programmes de formations nationaux, avec un contenu commun, dédiés aux différents acteurs institutionnels impliqués dans la gestion des échouages.
   Si propone organizzare dei programmi di formazione nazionali, con un contenuto comune, dedicati alle varie figure istituzionali coinvolte nella gestione degli spiaggiamenti.

4. It is proposed to plan some specific signs of clothing identification for a better identification of the RNE staff (volunteers, veterinarians, etc.) to make them easily identifiable on site.

   Il est proposé de prévoir des signes d'identification vestimentaires spécifiques pour une meilleure identification du personnel des RNE (volontaires, vétérinaires, etc.) pour les rendre plus facilement identifiables sur place.
   Si propone prevedere delle forme di vestiario specifiche per migliorare l'identificazione del personale delle RNS (volontari, veterinari, ecc.) per rendergli più facilmente identificabili sul campo.

5. It is proposed to plan the systematic exchange of the data on stranding event, according to a defined form, between the National Stranding Networks through the Permanent Secretariat of the Pelagos Sanctuary, in collaboration with ACCOBAMS, and the exchange of the experience feedback (for example by mailing list, forum, etc.).

   Il est proposé de prévoir l'échange systématique des données relatives à l'événement d'échouage selon un formulaire défini, entre les RNE à travers le Secrétariat Permanent du Sanctuaire Pelagos, en collaboration avec ACCOBAMS, et l'échange des retours d'expériences (par exemple par mailing list, forum, etc.).
   Si propone prevedere lo scambio sistematico dei dati relativi allo spiaggiamento secondo un formulario definito, tra le RNS attraverso il Segretariato Permanente del Santuario Pelagos, in collaborazione con l'ACCOBAMS, e lo scambio dei ritorni di esperienza (per esempio via mailing list, forum, ecc.).

6. It is proposed to advise RNE to agree, with the competent authorities, on a triage system to facilitate the decision-making system in order to determine if the animal should to be raised or euthanized (British Divers grid or NOAA).

   Il est proposé de conseiller aux RNE de s'accorder, avec les autorités compétentes, sur système de triage pour faciliter le système décisionnel pour définir si l'animal doit être renfloué ou euthanasié (grille British Divers ou NOAA).
   Si propone consigliare alle RNS di concordare con le autorità competenti, un sistema di triage per facilitare il sistema decisionale per definire se l'animale deve essere rimesso in acqua o subire un'eutanasia (griglia British Divers o NOAA).

** During the adoption of the report, not all the participants to the workshop of the Pelagos area agreed with the adoption of the common alert system proposed during the session because of some general doubts:*

- *"it could be more easy to describe the different situations than to learn the codes"*
- *"it could be a too formal system"*
- *"cooperation should not be limited to the common use of the codes"*
- *"it should be identified the fastest tool to communicate the code"*

Essentially doubts and worries are mainly linked to a narrow view on the matter and a lack of habit in cooperation among States. It will take time to adopt a common system and it will be fundamental to check results and to better adapt the codes proposed to the Pelagos reality.

ANNEX 5: Proposals for the establishment of an harmonized Procedure in case of cetaceans live stranding for all the Parties to ACCOBAMS

The experts from the working group on the establishment of an harmonized procedure in case of cetaceans live stranding for all the Parties to ACCOBAMS proposed the following:

1. Request the ACCOBAMS Secretariat to contact the ACCOBAMS Focal Points to remind Resolution 4.16 on "Guidelines for a coordinated cetacean stranding responses" and recommend experts to use protocol annexed to the Resolution in order to standardize data collection.

2. Request the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee to provide definition of all the stranding events that can be identified as transboundary situations.

3. Encourage Governments to have official national stranding network with collaboration between different authorities, institutes and national NGOs, in particular ACCOBAMS Partners, and to have official national database for cetaceans stranding.

4. Use ACCOBAMS bodies, such as the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee and the regional representative, to (i) identify national experts to be contacted for a better circulation of information in case of transboundary emergency situation, (ii) establish collaboration between experts and (iii) improve the communication also in cooperation with international NGOs.

5. Support, particularly in countries with no official stranding networks, the creation of informal regional stranding networks and encourage national experts to communicate with experts from neighboring Countries and report results to national relevant authorities.

6. Request the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee to list reference laboratories for analysis and diagnostic. In general, cooperation among states and communication among experts, should be more effective in order to reach an harmonized approach.

7. Request the ACCOBAMS Secretariat to include a section on stranding that can have transboundary impacts in the regional representative (of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee) report.

8. Request ACCOBAMS National Focal Points to specify transboundary stranding events in the national report.

9. The ACCOBAMS National Focal Point should inform
    a. the ACCOBAMS Secretariat in case of unusual strandings, and
    b. neighboring ACCOBAMS National Focal Points, through the ACCOBAMS Secretariat, in case of mass strandings.

10. Recommend ACCOBAMS National Focal Points to indicate their main national contact persons for strandings.

11. Special attention should be paid to areas beyond national jurisdictions, to understand potential causes of strandings originating in these areas and consider possibility for interventions.

12. Request ACCOBAMS Secretariat to consider organizing training on live stranding procedures.

ANNEX 6: Proposal on procedure for general services

The aim of effective communication to general services (coast guard, firemen, scuba divers, etc.)

- optimize efforts of the services involved
- make the operation more efficient
- better protect the animals endangered
- guarantee public security
- broadcast correct information
- ensure an update also in the long term

Effective communication can in fact avoid overlapping explanations; can face the diffusion of a bad attitude towards institutions and of a wrong culture on marine mammals habits. Furthermore could help to have functional logistic support and a rapid resolution of logistic and health related problem. Finally, an effective communication could help to support scientific and technical work on the field.

General actions:

a) identify relevant services needed in this operation depending on the animals involved (small dolphins, large whales and/or mass strandings) and on situations (animal in high water and animal on the beach)
b) give them all needed information in order to ensure effectiveness of their response
c) inform them on all the risks related to their intervention
d) ensure them a continuous technical support

First step:

a) define the situation and services that should be involved to give technical and logistic support, also for specific equipments
b) organize a briefing to coordinate operation and their involvement informing them on risks related to their interventions: more in detail, information on personal dangers are relevant as those related to the animal biology, anatomy and behavior in order to ensure its/their welfare
c) inform them on protocol and procedures that will be used
d) schedule their intervention

Following steps:

a) periodically update all the involved services on the situation and health status
b) in case of animals in high waters which request continuous monitoring, communicate periodically with them asking for updates
c) in any case, officially thank them for their efforts.

ANNEX 7: Proposal on procedure for national and local institutions and governments

The aim of effective communication to Institution and local government:

- optimize efforts of the services involved
- make the operation more efficient
- better protect the animals endangered
- guarantee public security
- broadcast correct information
- ensure an update also in the long term

Effective communication can in fact avoid overlapping explanations; can face the diffusion of a bad attitude towards institutions and of a wrong culture on marine mammals habits. Furthermore could help to have functional logistic support and a rapid resolution of logistic and health related problem. Finally, an effective communication could help to support scientific and technical work on the field.

General actions:

a) communicate the necessity to define a security perimeter to protect the animal/s from general public in order to ensure animal welfare and to avoid spread of potentially dangerous diseases
b) identify one person officially appointed for the resolution of logistic problems and to interact with local institutions
c) collect the main information on the stranding and communicate these information to main national and local institutions
d) ask for official documents/advice for stranding site interdiction
e) define and prepare an operations center
f) establish which are equipments and personnel necessary for animal movement/refloation/disposal
g) predispose official documents and communications to ensure that local and national procedures are followed

First step:

a) organize a briefing dedicated to institutions in order to inform them on the situation: which are the animal/s situation, main protocol and procedures, needed documents and equipments
b) answer to questions and doubts
c) ensure a rapid and effective security perimeter with police/authorities on site supported by scientific personnel in order to explain what happening.

Following steps:

a) update continuously institutions
b) check continuously the effectiveness of the security perimeter
c) give them any information to predispose official documents necessary for animal release/rehabilitation/disposal
d) organize a final briefing to thank all the participants for their efforts and give them feedback on the results of the interventions.
e) ensure official greetings when the event is officially finished.

ANNEX 8: Proposal on procedure for technical personal and volunteers

The aim of effective communication to technical personnel (veterinarians, biologists, etc.) and volunteers

- optimize efforts of the services involved
- make the operation more efficient
- better protect the animals endangered
- guarantee public security
- broadcast correct information
- ensure an update also in the long term

Effective communication can in fact avoid overlapping explanations, can face the diffusion of a bad attitude towards institutions and of a wrong culture on marine mammals habits. Furthermore could help to have functional logistic support and a rapid resolution of logistic and health related problem. Finally, an effective communication could help to support scientific and technical work on the field.

General actions:

a) identify one person officially appointed on the field for the volunteers and technical personnel coordination
b) communicate to all personnel involved in the stranding events making them aware of main procedures and risks related to the stranding event
c) establish roles and duties for each person on the field

First step:

a) organize a briefing dedicated to technical personnel in order to inform them on the situation and procedures and protocols
b) divide all people on the field in team and appoint one team leader who coordinate the work on the field: in particular at least one group dedicated to the animal, one appointed for logistic problem resolution and one for communication should be defined.
c) establish periodical briefing with team leader, in order to solve any problem.

Following steps:

a) periodically update all the teams encouraging all the teams underlining the relevance of their efforts
b) for group/s on the animal/s: periodically (30 min) collect all necessary information on the health status of the animal in order to create a bulletin to be transmitted to communication team
c) for logistic group/s: ensure the effectiveness of their work; in particular pay attentions to their organization and the continuous communication with the animal's team/s
d) for communication group/s: ensure them constant bulletin on the health status
e) create and define order of services in case of prolonged intervention
f) organize a final briefing

ANNEX 9: Proposal on procedure for national and local media and public opinion

The aim of effective communication to public opinion, to national and local media is to:

- optimize efforts of the services involved
- make the operation more efficient
- better protect the animals endangered
- guarantee public security
- broadcast correct information
- ensure an update also in the long term

Effective communication can in fact avoid overlapping explanations, can reduce the risk of exploitation of the event by fake experts trying to gain exposure, can face the diffusion of a bad attitude towards institutions and of a wrong culture on marine mammals habits.

General actions:

a) locate the security perimeter to protect the animal/s from photographers, cameramen and public
b) identify one official spokesman
c) collect the main information on the stranding
d) define with all the institutions involved which are sensitive contents not be disseminate
e) find out a megaphone
f) introduce the spokesman to the journalists and the public and explain the communication procedure that will be followed
g) distribute leaflets on marine mammals so to be more punctual on the specificity of the animal stranded

First step:

a) send the first press release to announce the stranding
b) collect the journalists already on the site in a position from where they can see the intervention at a reasonable distance and register them (if possible give an identification badge)
c) give the first information, answer to questions and ask for public and media cooperation
d) if possible check the social network so to refute wrong information through the official press releases and stop their diffusion
e) publish the press release on line on a website and only if you can follow the discussion on a social network

Following steps:

a) update continuously (every hour) the public and the media on the site
b) send a press release each time a new kind of intervention has been done or when there are new information
c) give realistic perspectives in term of timing and survival possibility of the animal
d) if the animal is releasable take official photographers and cameramen close to the animal explaining how to take pictures without stressing it or take official pictures and videos so to send them to national and local media and publish them on line
e) if the animal is releasable advise the public that they could see pictures and videos on the website
f) in case of release bring the press on a boat where the intervention can be seen and advise the public to keep the proper distance

g) in case of euthanasia prepare a detailed press release and give all the information to journalists and public on the site
h) even when the event is finished update national and local media upon the results on data and sampling collected and publish them on the website

In case of no respect of the security perimeter: give the main instructions to make aware public and media of main procedures and risks related to the stranding event.