Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area, concluded under the auspices of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)

Accord sur la Conservation des Cétacés de la Mer Noire, de la Méditerranée et de la zone Atlantique adjacente, conclu sous l’égide de la Convention sur la Conservation des Espèces Migratrices appartenant à la Faune Sauvage (CMS)

REPORT OF THE FOURTH CONFERENCE ON CETACEAN CONSERVATION IN SOUTH MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES
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Oran (Algeria)
11 - 13 November 2017

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INTRODUCTION

The organization of Conferences on Cetacean Conservation in South Mediterranean Countries (CSMC) comes from an initiative launched by the ACCOBAMS Permanent Secretariat in 2009. The First edition of the Conference (CSMC1) was organized in 2009 in Tabarka (Tunisia), CSMC2 took place in El Jadida (Morocco) in 2011 and the CSMC3 was convene in Jounieh (Lebanon).

The CSMC4 has been organized in Oran (Algeria) from 11 to 13 November 2017, in collaboration with the « Direction Générale de la Pêche et de l'Aquaculture » of the Algerian Ministry of Agriculture, Rural development and Fisheries, and with the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (SPA/RAC -MAP-UNEP). CSMC4 was financially supported by a voluntary contribution from the Principality of Monaco and by a voluntary contribution from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This Conference was organized back to back with the International Exhibition of Fishing and Aquaculture of Oran (SIPA 2017).

More than 40 participants from 8 Mediterranean Countries (Algeria, France, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia and Syria) and from 3 International Organizations (ACCOBAMS, GFCM, SAP/RAC) attended the Conference (the list of participants appears in Annex 1).

OBJECTIVE OF THE CONFERENCE

The Conference is organized in order to assess the available knowledge on cetaceans in the South of the Mediterranean, to identify gaps and stimulate the development of conservation actions in order to promote the implementation of the ACCOBAMS. The Conference provides an opportunity to the cetacean specialists, active in the South of the Mediterranean, to discuss the best approaches and priority actions for a better knowledge of cetacean populations in this part of the Mediterranean Sea. This Conference also aims at involving the student community and at rising awareness of managers and stakeholders on marine issues.

The main topics of this conference are:
- national monitoring and the national action plans,
- cetacean stranding monitoring,
- interactions between cetaceans and fisheries activities,
- cetacean habitats protection,
- seismic surveys and Marine Mammals Observers.

The final agenda of the CSMC4 appears in Annex 2 of the report.
The working languages of the Conference were English and French. A simultaneous translation was available during the entire Conference.

1. Opening of the Conference

The Conference was opened on 11th November 2017 by Mr. Taha HAMMOUCHE, Director General of Fisheries and Aquaculture in Algeria. He welcomed the participants and pointed out that this conference was organized specifically in Oran in order to pay tribute to Professor Zitouni BOUTIBA, who was very much involved in the ACCOBAMS.

Mrs. Florence DESCROIX COMANDUCCI, Executive Secretary of ACCOBAMS, expressed her gratitude to the Algerian authorities for hosting the Conference back to back with the International Exhibition of Fishing and Aquaculture. She also thanked the Government of the Principality of Monaco, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Regional Activity Center for Specially Protected Areas of the Barcelona Convention for their financial support in the organization of this Conference. The participation of most Southern Mediterranean countries was highlighted as a real desire to collaborate on conservation issues in order to make actions more and more effective.

Mrs. Rahima BERKAT, ACCOBAMS Focal Point in Algeria recalled that the Conference was organized in order to assess the knowledge acquired on cetaceans in the South of the Mediterranean, identify potential gaps and stimulate the development of conservation actions in order to promote the implementation of the ACCOBAMS. She thanked all the experts for their participation and wished the participants a fruitful and pleasant meeting.

2. Working Sessions

During the three days of the Conference, 6 oral presentation sessions were organized and punctuated by 3 poster sessions. Summaries of all these presentations are available in the abstract book (ACCOBAMS-CSMC4/2017/Doc05).

At the end of these presentation sessions, a round table was organized to determine the conservation status of cetaceans in Southern Mediterranean countries.

Finally, the last day was devoted to a pilot training workshop on Marine Mammal Observers and Passive Acoustic Monitoring operators.

The first session was devoted to the importance of collaborations within ACCOBAMS and the presentation of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative (ASI). The following interventions were presented:

- Florence DESCROIX COMANDUCCI - Presentation of ACCOBAMS
- Alain JEUDY DE GRISSAC - Presentation of International Organizations relevant for the Conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea
- Maÿlis SALIVAS – NETCCOBAMS: a collaborative network to strengthen cooperation between all stakeholders for the conservation of cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS area
- Florence DESCROIX COMANDUCCI – Development and implementation of the ASI
- Simone PANIGADA - Scientific objectives of the ASI

This session ended with a session poster:

- The ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative: the first large-scale cetaceans survey in the whole Mediterranean
The ACCOBAMS Call for proposals: a tool to support concrete conservation actions for cetaceans in the Mediterranean and Black Sea
- Les crustacés épibiontes et écto-parasites des cétacés dans les eaux tunisiennes
- Epidémiologie-surveillance des pathologies de la faune sauvage et impact sur la santé animale et publique
- Caractéristiques des cétacés peuplant le littoral Oranais, Nord-Ouest Algérien
- Chevauchement des habitats des Grands dauphins (Tursiops truncatus) et des dauphins communs (Delphinus delphis) au Nord-Est de la Tunisie

The second session was devoted to National Monitoring and National Action Plans. The following interventions were presented:
- Joan GONZALVO - Introductive Conference regarding National Action Plan
- Adib SAAD - Cetaceans species recorded on the Syrian coast during the period: 2002-2016
- Gaby KHALAF - National monitoring program for cetacean in the Lebanese marine waters
- Souad LAMOUTI - Contribution à la connaissance de la diversité et de la répartition des cétacés de la cote algérienne
- Kamel LARBI DOUKARA - Statut de la population des Dauphins communs (Delphinus delphis) dans le littoral occidental algérien
- Ibahem BEN AMER - Ecology of Bottlenose Dolphin in Northern Tunisian

The third session, dedicated to the cetacean stranding monitoring, allowed the following presentations:
- Assia HENDA - Notes sur les échouages des cétacés le long du littoral Centre Algérien
- Hédia ATTIA EL HILI - Evaluation du fonctionnement du Réseau National des Echouages
- Imane TAI - Intervention sur les échouages au Maroc

A poster session ended the debates on this topic:
- La faune des cétacés son statut actuel en Méditerranée marocaine orientale et dans la lagune de Nador: Biodiversité et menaces
- Rétrospectives et perspectives des échouages au Liban

The fourth session was devoted to the interactions between cetaceans and fishing activities. The following interventions were presented:
- Abdelali LOUDHIRI - Introductive Conference regarding fisheries / cetaceans Interactions: Dilemma between conservation and socio-economic imperatives
- Houssine NIBANI - Interactions entre le grand Dauphin et les engins de pêche dans la zone d’Al Hoceima, défis et perspectives
- Mohamed Nejmeddine BRADAIF (présentation faite par Sami KARAA)- Les interactions du grand dauphin avec la pêche à la palangre de fond dans la région de Zarzis (Sud-Est de la Tunisie)
- Nejla BEJAOUI - Exploitation piscicole et Delphinidés : interactions et modèles de comportement de l’espèce Tursiops truncatus dans l’environnement de cages off-shore en Tunisie
- Rimel BENMESSAOUD - Détermination des variables suscitant le phénomène de déprédaton entre Tursiops truncatus et les filets de sardiniens senneurs de la région de Kélibia (Tunisie)

The fifth session focused on habitats protection. The following three interventions were presented:
- Léa DAVID - Introductive Conference regarding Cetacean Critical Habitats
• Lobna BEN NAKHLA - La conservation des espèces dans le cadre de la Convention de Barcelone – projets en cours au CAR/ASP
• Mouina BADRAN - Proposed Important Marine Mammals Areas (IMMA) in Syria and conservation plans

A poster session ended the debates on the two last topics:
• Mitigating interactions between cetaceans and fishing activities in the Mediterranean
• Etude des interactions négatives entre Tursiops truncatus et les filets de pêche des petits pélagiques dans la région de Kélibia (Tunisie)
• Nord-Est de la Tunisie : entre IMMA et CCH pour les Grands dauphins (Tursiops truncatus)
• Les activités sismiques pétrolières au large de la Tunisie
• Les enjeux liés à la prospection sismique dans le littoral algérien et leur effet sur le peuplement cétologique. Cas de projet SPIRAL
• The Status of sperm whale in the Tunisian waters

During the sixth session, on seismic surveys and Marine Mammal Observers, the following interventions were presented:
• Maylis SALIVAS - Introductive Conference regarding needs for MMO in the ACCOBAMS Area
• Léa DAVID - rôle des Observateurs de Mammifères Marins (MMO)
• Medjber BOUZIDI - rôle des opérateurs de Surveillance Passive acoustique (PAM= Passive Acoustic Monitoring)
• Mohammed RAMDANI - Cetacean sightings in the Atlantic off the territorial waters of Morocco during oil exploration aboard six 3D seismic vessels: Biodiversity and the sperm whale (Physeter macrocephalus) behavior

The Round Table debates were led by two members of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee: Mr. Simone PANIGADA and Mr. Joan GONZALVO. Its objectives were to define conservation needs and priorities for cetaceans in the South Mediterranean Countries, by reiterating the main elements of the presentation sessions. The conclusions and recommendations resulting from the discussions appear in the following section of the report.

The last day, a pilot training workshop on Marine Mammal Observer Training (MMO) / Passive Acoustic Monitoring (PAM) was conducted in order to raise awareness of the importance of this profession. The workshop took place in two stages:
- The first part on MMO was led by Léa DAVID.
  First, she introduced the ACCOBAMS MMO / PAM certificate and explained the interest of developing such tool in the ACCOBAMS area in order to ensure standardized, consistent and high quality trainings.
  After a presentation of human activities generating impulse noise, including oil and gas industry, the expert explained the role of MMOs / MAP operators during seismic surveys (pre-survey phase, survey and post-survey). Tools for visual detection and measurements were presented to the participants. Particular attention was paid to the importance of the data, from their collection to their analysis.
  This first part ended with a presentation on the “life style” aboard seismic survey boats, the security rules and data confidentiality that MMOs commit to respect.
- The second part on PAM operators was provided by Medjber BOUZIDI.
  First, the expert introduced some notions of acoustics, then he presented fundamental prerequisites to become a good PAM operator: (i) to know how to correctly connect PAM systems, (ii) to know how to recognize sounds of marine mammals (iii) to know how to visualize and read a spectrogram (iv) to know how
to use a software dedicated to the PAM system. In order to have a more concrete idea of the basics needed to use a PAM system, Pamguard software was distributed to all interested participants and exercises were proposed by the expert.

This first pilot training workshop allowed all participants to better understand the role and the work of MMOs and PAM operators, which are real professions and not hobbies.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SESSION 1: COLLABORATIONS AND ACCOBAMS SURVEY INITIATIVE (ASI)

Participants stressed the need to:

1) Establish and reinforce collaborations, in particular between South Med Countries, and further promote exchange of scientific knowledge. In this context, the Conference on Cetacean Conservation in South Mediterranean Countries (CSMC) could provide a significant contribution.

2) Link data resulting from the ASI project with data from other existing national projects, to integrate long term series and to provide additional data to be used in analysis and modelling frameworks.

3) Assess the feasibility of the use of drones for the ASI, considering that drones may be efficient platforms for the assessment of cetacean populations, taking into account also the legal aspects and other requirements at country level.

4) Integrate data and other outcomes of the ASI project with the information on population structure and threats including, at medium and long term, such as climate change.

5) Create or strengthen relevant national networks as well as collaboration between countries.

6) Ensure the long-term viability of NETCCOBAMS. This new tool which has just been launched is meant to facilitate and reinforce exchanges and collaboration of all actors in cetacean conservation. This tool could evolve and could be adapted to meet more specific country needs.

SESSION 2: NATIONAL MONITORING AND NATIONAL ACTION PLANS

Participants stressed the need to:

7) Improve data collection mechanisms at the national level, using as appropriate the monitoring processes set at country and regional levels under the Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) and the EU Marine Strategy (MSFD).

8) Pursue scientific research efforts, in particular by strengthening cetacean observation networks.

9) Review the current situation regarding National Action Plans (NAPs) for the Conservation of Cetaceans in all South Mediterranean Countries. While some NAPs might have been effectively implemented and carried out (at least partially), others may need further input to be completed and updated as necessary. Support from ACCOBAMS and SPA/RAC will be needed.
10) For cetacean monitoring, use the field campaigns carried out for fish stock assessments. Specific trainings and the use of appropriate standardized protocols should be promoted to further integrate cetacean monitoring in these campaigns.

**SESSION 3: CETACEAN STRANDING MONITORING**

Participants stressed the need to:

11) Ensure that analysis of stranding causes is undertaken by skilled and authorized scientists (veterinarians, marine biologists, etc.) in accordance with the applicable national regulations. ACCOBAMS can assist Countries with the implementation of training modules at veterinary schools and continued training for veterinarians and marine biologists in the field of cetacean post-mortem diagnosis and monitoring of diseases transmissible to human beings.

12) Improve the communication and outreach of results, particularly with schools, as well as the feedback of information to the field actors.

13) Ensure that the general public is aware of the health risks linked to stranded cetaceans and informed about what to do or avoid.

14) Strengthen human and material resources for stranding networks.

15) Establish a mechanism for assessing the functioning of national cetacean stranding networks, e.g. by using the Critical Control Point (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points, HACCP) approach used in food industry.

16) Encourage the entities responsible for the stranding monitoring to liaise and use the MEDACES database (in accordance with the ACCOBAMS Resolution 4.16).

**SESSION 4: INTERACTIONS BETWEEN CETACEANS AND FISHERIES**

Participants stressed the need to:

17) Promote studies of dolphin behaviour to better understand the mechanisms of interactions with fisheries.

18) Follow a socio-ecosystem approach in addressing the issue of interactions between dolphins and fishing activities.

19) Encourage projects on the real-time use of available oceanographic data (Open Source) to better orient fishermen to avoid interactions with cetaceans.

20) Encourage collaboration, exchange of information and complementarity between countries regarding the efforts to identify mitigation measures of interactions between dolphins and fishing gears.

21) Consider and better understand the impact of aquaculture on the ecology, in particular habitat, diet composition and behavior of dolphin species,

22) Consider evaluating the potential negative interactions between cetaceans and fish farming.

23) Assess the possible impact of dolphin watching around fish cages (evaluate the potential threats, effects, etc.) and the risk for unregulated swim-with dolphins programmes.
SESSION 5: CETACEAN HABITATS PROTECTION

Participants stressed the need to:

24) Encourage scientists of the ACCOBAMS area to provide the Task Manager on Marine Habitats with any data on cetacean distribution and threats due to human activities (ship strikes, bycatch, depredation, harassment, etc.) in the ACCOBAMS area, to allow revision of the CCHs map (Cetacean Critical Habitats) by the Scientific Committee.

25) Encourage harmonization between existing or to be established protection regimes - such as MPAs (Marine Protected Areas) and SPAMIs (Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance) - and ongoing effort on assessing presence of IMMAs (Important Marine Mammals Areas) or CCHs, using either a place-based or a threat based approach.

SESSION 6: PROSPECTIONS SISMHIQUES ET OBSERVATEURS DE MAMMIFERES MARINS

Participants stressed the need to:

26) Encourage the implementation of the ACCOBAMS Certification for Highly Qualified Marine Mammals Observers.

27) Identify relevant trainers in the ACCOBAMS area, taking into account information from Annex 2 of the ACCOBAMS Resolution 6.18.

28) Disseminate and sensitize all relevant stakeholders about this certification.

29) Create a working space on NETCCOBAMS concerning MMO/PAM issues.

DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT CONFERENCE ON THE CONSERVATION OF CETACEANS IN SOUTH MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES

The Lebanon representative, Mr. Gaby KHALAF proposed to organize the Fifth Conference on the Conservation of Cetaceans in Southern Mediterranean Countries in his Country in 2020. This proposal was warmly welcomed by all participants.

CLOSURE OF THE CONFERENCE

Mrs. Florence DESCROIX COMANDUCCI thanked all the experts, speakers and organizers for being once again involved in the works of this regional conference. She stressed that all the recommendations resulting from the active debates during this meeting allow a better identification of the experts expectations from the South Mediterranean Countries and thus a better understanding of relevant measures required for the implementation of ACCOBAMS.

Mrs. Rahima BERKAT indicated that the Algerian authorities were delighted to organize the fourth Conference on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Southern Mediterranean Countries. After having warmly invited the participants to visit the city of Oran, she closed the Conference on Monday 13th November 2017 at 15:00.
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### ANNEX 2 - AGENDA

#### DAY 1: Saturday 11th November 2017

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<td>8:30 - 9:30</td>
<td>Participants' Registration</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:30 - 10:00</td>
<td>Opening session</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Mr. Taha HAMMOUCHE, Directeur Général de la Pêche et de l’Aquaculture</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Mrs. Florence DESCROIX COMANDUCCI, Executive Secretary of ACCOBAMS</td>
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<td>10:00 - 11:30</td>
<td>ACCOBAMS &amp; relevant collaboration (Chair of the session: Mrs. Rahima BERKAT)</td>
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<td>- Florence DESCROIX COMANDUCCI, Presentation of ACCOBAMS</td>
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<td>- Alain JEUDY DE GRISSAC - Presentation of International Organizations relevant for the Conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea</td>
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<td>Coffee break (10:30-11:00)</td>
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<td>- Maÿlis SALIVAS – NETCCOBAMS : a collaborative network to strengthen cooperation between all stakeholders for the conservation of cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS area</td>
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<td>11:30 – 12:00</td>
<td>ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative (Chair of the session: Mrs. Rahima BERKAT)</td>
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<td>- Florence DESCROIX COMANDUCCI – Development and implementation of the ASI</td>
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<td>- Simone PANIGADA – Scientific objectives of the ASI</td>
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<td>12:00 – 12:30</td>
<td>Posters Session</td>
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<td>- The ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative : the first large-scale cetaceans survey in the whole Mediterranean</td>
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<td>- The ACCOBAMS Call for proposals: a tool to support concrete conservation actions for cetaceans in the Mediterranean and Black Sea</td>
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<td>- Les crustacés épibiontes et écto-parasites des cétacés dans les eaux tunisiennes</td>
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<td>- Epidémio-surveillance des pathologies de la faune sauvage et impact sur la santé animale et publique</td>
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<td>- Caractéristiques des cétacés peuplant le littoral Oranais, Nord-Ouest Algérien</td>
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<td>- Chevauchement des habitats des Grands dauphins (Tursiops truncatus) et des dauphins communs (Delphinus delphis) au Nord-Est de la Tunisie</td>
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<td>12:30 – 14:00</td>
<td>Lunch break</td>
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<td>14:00 – 16:00</td>
<td>National Monitoring and National Action Plan (Chair of the session: Gaby KHALAF)</td>
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<td>- Joan GONZALVO - Conférence introductive sur les Plans d’Action Nationaux</td>
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<td>- Adib SAAD - Cetaceans species recorded on the Syrian coast during the period: 2002-2016</td>
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<td>- Gaby KHALAF - National monitoring program for cetacean in the Lebanese marine waters</td>
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<td>- Souad LAMOUTI - Contribution à la connaissance de la diversité et de la répartition des cétacés de la cote algérienne</td>
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<td>- Kamel LARBI DOUKARA - Statut de la population des Dauphins communs (Delphinus delphis) dans le littoral occidental algérien</td>
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<td>- Ibahem BEN AMER - Ecology of Bottlenose Dolphin in Northern Tunisian</td>
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16:30 – 18:00  Cetacean Stranding Monitoring (Chair of the session: Souad LAMOUTI)
- Assia HENDA - Notes sur les échouages des cétacés le long du littoral Centre Algérien
- Hédia ATTIA EL HILI - Evaluation du fonctionnement du Réseau National des Échouages
- Imane TAI - Intervention sur les échouages au Maroc

18:00 – 18:30  Posters Session
- The Action Plan for Conservation of Cetaceans in Libya after 10 years, what has been achieved so far?
- La faune des cétacés son statut actuel en Méditerranée marocaine orientale et dans la lagune de Nador: Biodiversité et menaces
- Rétrospectives et perspectives des échouages au Liban

DAY 2: Sunday 12th November 2017

9:00 – 10:30  Interactions between cetaceans and fisheries activities (Chair of the session: Chedly RAIS)
- Abdelali LOUDHIRI - Introductive Conference regarding fisheries / cetaceans Interactions: Dilemma between conservation and socio-economic imperatives
- Houssine NIBANI - Interactions entre le grand Dauphin et les engins de pêche dans la zone d’Al Hoceima, défis et perspectives
- Mohamed Nejmeddine BRADAI - Les interactions du grand dauphin avec la pêche à la palangre de fond dans la région de Zarzis (Sud-Est de la Tunisie)
- Nejla BEJAOUI - Exploitation piscicole et Delphinidés : interactions et modèles de comportement de l’espèce Tursiops truncatus dans l’environnement de cages off-shore en Tunisie
- Rimel BENMESSAOUD - Détermination des variables suscitant le phénomène de déprédation entre Tursiops truncatus et les filets de sardiniens senneurs de la région de Kélibia (Tunisie)

Coffee break (10:30 – 11:00)

11:00 – 12:30  Habitats Protection – (Chair of the session: Almokhtar SAIED)
- Léa DAVID - Conférence introductive sur les Habitats Critiques pour les Cétacés
- Lobna BEN NAKHLA - La conservation des espèces dans le cadre de la Convention de Barcelone – projets en cours au CAR/ASP
- Mouina BADRAN - Proposed Important Marine Mammals Areas (IMMA) in Syria and conservation plans

12:30 – 14:00  Lunch break

14:00 – 15:00  Posters Session
- Mitigating interactions between cetaceans and fishing activities in the Mediterranean
- Etude des interactions négatives entre Tursiops truncatus et les filets de pêche des petits pélagiques dans la région de Kélibia (Tunisie)
- **Nord-Est de la Tunisie : entre IMMA et CCH pour les Grands dauphins (Tursiops truncatus)**
- **Les activités sismiques pétrolières au large de la Tunisie**
- **Les enjeux liés à la prospection sismique dans le littoral algérien et leur effet sur le peuplement cétologique. Cas de projet SPIRAL**
- **The Status of sperm whale in the Tunisian waters**

**15:00 -16:00** Seismic surveys & Marine Mammals Observers – *(Chair of the session: Nejla BEJAOUI)*

- Maylis SALIVAS - Introductive Conference regarding needs for MMO in the ACCOBAMS Area
- Léa DAVID: Roles of Marine Mammals Observers (MMO)
- Medjber BOUZIDI : Roles of Passive Acoustic Monitoring (PAM) operators
- Mohammed RAMDANI - Cetacean sightings in the Atlantic off the territorial waters of Morocco during oil exploration aboard six 3D seismic vessels: Biodiversity and the sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*) behavior

Coffee break(16:00 -16:30)

**16:30 -18:30** Round table - State of conservation of cetaceans in South Mediterranean Countries: what are the needs and priorities?

- Facilitators : Joan GONZALVO, Simone PANIGADA

**DAY 3: Monday 13th November**

8:00 -13:00 **Training workshop** on Marine Mammal Observers (MMO)/ Passive Acoustic Monitoring (PAM) Operators

**Trainers** : Léa DAVID & Medjber BOUZIDI

13:00 – 14:00 **Lunch break**

14:00 – 15:00 Conclusions and Recommendations of the Conference

Date and place of the next Conference on the Conservation of Cetaceans in South Mediterranean Countries

Closing of the Conference

15:00 – 18:00 **Sightseeing in Oran organized by Algerian authorities**