

RESOLUTION 8.15
CETACEAN STRANDING NETWORKS

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

Recalling Resolutions 1.10 “Cooperation between National Networks of Cetacean Strandings and the Creation of a Database”, 2.10 “Facilitation of Exchange of Tissue Samples”, 3.25 “Cetacean Live Stranding”, 4.16 “Guidelines for a Coordinated Cetacean Stranding Response”, 6.22 “Cetacean Live Strandings” and 7.14 “Best Practices in Monitoring and Management of Cetacean Stranding”,

Recalling the document on “Best Practices on Cetacean *post-mortem* Investigation and Tissue Sampling” resulting from the harmonization process in ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS (ACCOBAMS-MOP7/2019/Doc33),

Taking into consideration Recommendation 14.14 “Cetacean Stranding Networks (CSNs)” from the 14th meeting of the Scientific Committee,

Recognizing that:

- Cetacean Stranding Networks (CSNs) are an important source for complementing data on cetacean mortality, including bycatch occurrences,
- CSNs widely vary, depending on scientific requirements, political drivers, resources, infrastructure and personnel experience,
- a tiered approach to carcass triage allows investigations to be conducted at different levels, depending on the resources, facilities or experience of the stranding network, and offers a framework for data collection and interpretation appropriate and optimized to the resources available,
- in a large number of cases examined by the existing CSNs, the cause of death could not be identified, which indicates that there is still room for expertise improvement,

Acknowledging the significant efforts done by the Secretariat and both coordinators (University of Liege, Belgium, and University of Padua, Italy) to organise, despite the Covid-19 pandemic, online and in-presence trainings to forty ACCOBAMS experts on necropsy, following best practices on the investigation of causes of death, including incidental catches during fishing operations (bycatch) and marine litter ingestion, entanglement, noise, ship strikes and infectious diseases (“Best Practices on Cetacean *post-mortem* Investigation and Tissue Sampling” resulting from the harmonization process in ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS),

Recalling the Action Plan for the Conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea (IG25/13),

1. *Encourages:*

- Parties to establish and /or to ensure the continuous functioning of stranding networks,
- the Secretariat to continue supporting the establishment of such networks in collaboration with the Sub Regional Coordination Units;

2. *Requests* the Secretariat, in coordination with the Scientific Committee, to:
 - promote the use of new technologies, such as virtual reality and tele-necropsy, in order to increase the possibility of remote training, support and advice, in case of cetacean strandings,
 - increase capacity-building efforts to perform detailed necropsies and analyse tissues in order to determine the cause of death,
 - increase capacity-building efforts in developing tissue banks;
3. *Requests* the Scientific Committee to test these new approaches and technologies in selected pilot areas, in order to implement a continuous training programme, connecting experts with local scientists dealing with cetacean strandings, and to ensure a standardized approach to *post-mortem* investigations, data collection, tissue sampling, and analyses;
4. *Stresses* the need for the improvement of data collection on cetacean population genetics and pathology;
5. *Encourages* Parties to submit their relevant national data in MEDACES;
6. *Encourages* Parties to further collaborate at a regional level between tissue banks, so to facilitate the exchanges of tissue samples for joint analyses.