

RESOLUTION 8.18
SHIP STRIKES

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

Recalling ACCOBAMS Resolution 7.12 “Ship strikes”,

Taking into consideration Recommendation 14.7 “Ship strikes” from the 14th meeting of the Scientific Committee,

Reaffirming that ACCOBAMS and the International Whaling Commission (IWC) have long ago recognized the problem of ship strikes, particularly of large whales, such as fin and sperm whales, and have been working together to better understand the issue and to develop effective mitigation measures, *inter alia*, within the ACCOBAMS Area,

Noting that concerns relate to conservation issues, animal welfare and human safety,

Recalling that mitigation measures for ship strikes with fin whales have been discussed during dedicated IWC-ACCOBAMS workshops (Beaulieu sur Mer, France, 2010; Panama, Panama, 2014; Messinia, Greece, 2019), during which the following recommendations were suggested:

- the most effective measures are those that separate whales from vessels (or at least minimise co-occurrence) in space and time, where such measures are possible (using, *inter alia*, routing schemes),
- where routing to keep whales and vessels apart is not possible, the only demonstrated measure to reduce fatal collisions with most large whales is to reduce speed,

Recalling also that the IWC-IUCN-ACCOBAMS workshop (Messinia, Greece, 2019) recommends that the following steps be undertaken as part of a process to identify high-risk areas for ship strikes based on Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs):

- traffic information (such as on types of vessels, size, speed, flag, etc.): plotting major ship routes to understand if they cross IMMAs, which host significant or high-density populations of species that are threatened by, or vulnerable to, ship strikes,
- species information (such as on relative abundance, status, animal behaviour, seasonality, key lifecycle use of and within IMMAs),
- management and mitigation,

Recalling the ACCOBAMS Cetacean Critical Habitat process,

Recognising the usefulness of data from the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative and the available scientific information to support the process for the designation of a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) by the IMO in the North West Mediterranean Sea,

1. *Requests* the Secretariat, the Scientific Committee and its Ship Strikes Working Group to pursue their efforts in obtaining information on both cetaceans and vessel traffic, with a view to enable a better identification of areas

where cetaceans, especially fin and sperm whales, are likely (or potentially likely) to suffer from ship strikes, based on risk models incorporating information on whale and vessel distribution, as well as prediction of collision rates, notably by:

- a. encouraging Parties to report and map vessel movements and shipping density at appropriate geographical scales, including estimates from vessels not required to transmit Automatic Identification System (AIS) signals;
 - b. collaborating with maritime administrations, companies and vessel operators, involving both bottom-up (i.e., awareness, involvement) and top-down (i.e., regulatory) approaches;
 - c. mapping the temporal and geographic distribution and abundance of cetaceans in relation to similar information on vessel traffic to identify potential higher risk areas;
 - d. estimating the number of ship strikes, including data:
 - from stranding networks (including detailed necropsies);
 - from photo-identification studies (photographs may contain evidence of non-lethal encounters with vessels);
 - collected by the IWC ship strike database;
 - collected during campaigns at sea;
 - e. modelling exercises to assess the level of risk and potential conservation implications;
2. *Requests* the Secretariat and the Scientific Committee to pursue communication and cooperation with all stakeholders, through the following means:
- a. promotion of the Cetacean Critical Habitat process, and of the importance of reporting via a number of *fora*, including media;
 - b. further evaluation, including cost/benefit analysis, and dissemination of information on mitigation approaches;
 - c. fostering the development of incentive systems to shipping companies for adopting suggested mitigation measures;
 - d. additional co-operation with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and its Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC), via the IWC and the secretariats of agreements adopted within the framework of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), as well as through initiatives with IMO member States, as the most appropriate mechanism for IMO action;
 - e. improved cooperation with the Pelagos Agreement in regard to the organisation and implementation of initiatives carried out within the Pelagos Agreement area;
 - f. improved protocols for the identification of ship strikes through necropsies;
 - g. investigation of incidence with regard to the nature of ship strikes injuries within photo-identification studies (such as through the ship strikes project funded by the Pelagos Agreement);
 - h. encouraging studies that improve access to the temporal and spatial distribution of shipping, particularly vessels that do not transmit AIS information;
 - i. encouraging studies that improve the understanding of temporal and spatial distribution of cetaceans within the region, including telemetry studies;
 - j. encouraging studies to develop and evaluate mitigation measures, incorporating, *inter alia*, results from (g) and (h) above, recognizing that appropriate measures will need to be specific to an area, but that changes to shipping may also impact on other areas;
 - k. capitalization of results from ongoing and further projects addressing ship strikes, such as Sicomar plus and Life CONCEPTU Maris, with maps, collision risk assessments, webGIS implemented with AIS data, and collaboration with shipping companies;

3. *Recommends* Parties to implement, as a matter of urgency, mitigation measures in the following high-risk areas in the ACCOBAMS Area, where ship strikes with the following species are frequent:
 - Strait of Gibraltar - fin and sperm whales;
 - Balearic Islands - fin and sperm whales; Balearic Basin and Catalan Coast – fin and sperm whales;
 - Eastern Alborán Sea - fin and sperm whales;
 - Pelagos Sanctuary - fin and sperm whales;
 - Hellenic Trench, Greece - sperm whales;
4. *Encourages* researchers, scientific institutions and partner organizations engaged in the development of real time cetacean localization projects, which are designed to be used as complementary tools in avoiding ship strikes, to share and report their findings;
5. *Strongly encourages* Parties to submit data to the IWC Global Ship Strikes Database, which will both: (i) facilitate a proper evaluation, prioritisation and monitoring of ship strikes as a threat posed to various populations and regions; and (ii) assist in the development of mitigation measures;
6. *Recommends* Parties to support the designation process by IMO of a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) in the North West Mediterranean Sea so to mitigate the risk of collision between cetaceans and ships. This area includes ‘North West Mediterranean Sea Slope and Canyon System’ IMMA, the Pelagos Sanctuary, the Spanish Migration Cetacean Corridor Marine Protected Area, and the area between it and the coast;
7. *Asks* the Scientific Committee to assist Spain, France, Italy and Monaco in developing prospective protection measures in the PSSA once adopted;
8. *Recommends* that the Parties and the Secretariat pursue their cooperation efforts with IMO, as well as other intergovernmental organizations, national authorities, shipping industry, port authorities and the whale watching industry in order to implement effective mitigation measures, in particular through the Cetacean Critical Habitat (CCH) identification process launched by ACCOBAMS, which provides an overview resulting from overlapping information on known existing human threats and IMMAs.