

RESOLUTION 8.20
MARINE LITTER AND CHEMICAL POLLUTION

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

Stressing that marine litter (or marine debris) pollution is a global environmental concern that heavily affects the Mediterranean Sea, and a recognized threat to the welfare, biology and ecology of marine wildlife, in particular cetaceans, which are being harmed or killed by marine litter ingestion, entanglement and its toxic effects,

Deeply concerned by the fact that such threat heavily affects areas overlapping with the distribution and habitats of several cetacean species, as demonstrated, *inter alia*, by the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative, and strongly impacts on all ecological compartments of the ACCOBAMS Area, like the sea-surface, water column, seafloor and coastal shores,

Aware of the related ongoing work under the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), and *recalling* its related decisions, in particular CMS Resolution 12.20 on Management of Marine Debris, as well as other ongoing work, *inter alia*, in the framework of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, Annex V to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), the Protocol to the London Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter and the FAO's Voluntary Guidelines for the Marking of Fishing Gear,

Recalling that litter and micro-litter ingested by marine animals is addressed by Descriptor 10 and its related criteria under the European Union Marine Strategy Framework Directive and Commission Decision 2017/848/EU, as well as by Ecological Objective 10 of the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria (IMAP) of the Barcelona Convention,

Considering that common best practices for stranding events have been drafted and discussed in several fora, in order to contribute to the evaluation of the current and potential harmful effects of marine litter, including entanglement in abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) and direct ingestion of both macro- and micro-plastics, and other threats posed to cetaceans,

Recalling the joint ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS/SPA-RAC Workshop on Marine Debris and Cetacean Stranding held on 8 April 2018 in La Spezia, Italy, and the joint ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS Workshop on Harmonization of Best Practices for Necropsy of Cetaceans and the Development of Diagnostic Frameworks, held on 24-25 June 2018 in Legnaro, Italy,

Recalling the Workshop on Marine Debris held by the Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission from 13 to 17 May 2013 at the Quisset Campus of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, United States; the International Whaling Commission Workshop on Mitigation and Management of the Threats Posed by Marine Debris to Cetaceans, held on 5-7 August 2014 in Honolulu, United States; and the Workshop on Marine Debris held by the International Whaling Commission on 3-5 December 2019 in La Garriga, Spain,

Taking into account the recently adopted Resolution on Marine Plastic Pollution, adopted by the International Whaling Commission meeting held in October 2022 in Slovenia,

Aware that chemical contamination is detrimental for cetaceans' health, because it induces negative effects on their immune, nervous and reproductive systems,

Deeply concerned by the high occurrence and concentrations of legacy persistent organic pollutants and emerging contaminants, such as organochlorine pesticides (OCPs), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), polybrominated diphenyls (PBDEs), per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFASs), heavy metals, plastic additives and pharmaceutical and personal care products (PPCPs), in the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea,

Recalling Recommendation 14.9 of the Scientific Committee on marine litter and chemical pollution,

Considering that macro- and micro-plastics represent particularly harmful kinds of marine litter and sources of chemical pollution,

Referring to Resolution 7.14 on Best practices in monitoring and management of cetacean stranding,

Emphasizing that a multi-disciplinary approach delivered across different spatial and temporal scales is necessary to tackle the threat of marine litter effectively,

Marine litter

1. *Invites* Parties and all organizations that are competent in the field of marine pollution, such as the European Union, the International Maritime Organization and the Meeting of the Parties to the Barcelona Convention, as well as other relevant bodies, to improve and enforce their management measures regarding land- and ship-related litter pollution, considering that its harmful effects on cetaceans are already fully demonstrated and mitigation actions are urgently needed;
2. *Urges* Parties:
 - a. to support the ongoing work under the United Nations Environment Assembly Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee towards the development of an internationally legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, encompassing both land- and sea-based sources of plastic pollution and the whole life cycle of plastics to end plastic pollution; and
 - b. to engage all levels of stakeholders, from producers and users to decision-makers, to implement actions that can contribute to address plastic litter at source and stop plastics entering into the Mediterranean Sea, the Black Sea and the contiguous Atlantic area;
3. *Encourages* the Parties:
 - a. to undertake *post-mortem* investigations according to the best practice guidelines;
 - b. to support:
 - collective scientific efforts on the development of standardized methods to detect the occurrence and effects of marine litter, including micro-plastics, in cetacean species; and

- the use of standardized formats to report results across the ACCOBAMS Area in synergy with existing frameworks and relevant multilateral environmental agreements that request periodic reporting from *post-mortem* investigations;
 - c. to support the identification of hot-spot areas for marine litter accumulation and, through modelling of exposure to plastic ingestion and entanglement, identify the threat to cetacean species occurring in those areas to design targeted mitigation measures; and
 - d. to propose cetacean species as indicators of marine litter in the ACCOBAMS Area, in particular focusing on macro-litter effects on deep-diving species, such as sperm whale and Cuvier's beaked whales, and on micro-plastic effects on filter feeders, such as fin whales;
4. *Invites* the Scientific Committee to consider the results and recommendations from relevant projects, initiatives and workshops, including the Workshop on Marine Debris held by the International Whaling Commission on 3-5 December 2019 in La Garriga, Spain, as well as the Resolution on Marine Plastic Pollution, adopted by the International Whaling Commission meeting held in October 2022 in Slovenia;
5. *Encourages* increased international cooperation on this subject with other bodies, in particular those relevant for cetaceans, as well as regional initiatives on marine litter;

Chemical pollution

6. *Asks* the Parties:
- a. to develop a transboundary health monitoring network for stranded and free-swimming cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Area, which can facilitate the establishment of a common database on diseases and chemical burdens and cooperation among existing tissue banks for the assessment of the 'Favourable Conservation Status' of marine mammals under the European Union Habitats Directive, and equivalent national and regional legislation;
 - b. to develop an inventory of the institutions and laboratories within the ACCOBAMS Area that are willing to receive and analyze samples for legacy and emerging pollutants from those institutions that do not have appropriate facilities and expertise;
 - c. to ensure that existing measures for the mitigation of toxicological contamination in the ACCOBAMS Area are enforced, including through full compliance by Parties with the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants; and
 - d. to focus on the assessment of cumulative effects and multiple stressors, including chemicals, marine litter, climate change, and emerging pathogens, on cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Area, including new techniques, taking into consideration the recommendations from the International Whaling Commission Intersessional Workshop 'Pollution 2025' held on 1-4 November 2021.
7. *Decides* that the present Resolution replaces Resolution 7.15.