

**RESOLUTION 6.24**

**NEW AREAS OF CONSERVATION OF CETACEAN HABITATS**

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

Aware that habitat degradation is one of the main causes of population decline for many cetacean species,

Concerned that, although some protected areas devoted to cetacean conservation have already been established in the ACCOBAMS area, many of the sites known to be particularly important for cetaceans still remain unprotected,

*Recalling:*

- Article II, paragraph 1, of the Agreement providing that Parties, in order to achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for cetaceans shall co-operate to create and maintain a network of specially protected areas to conserve cetaceans,
- Article V, paragraph 2, of the Agreement providing that each Sub-regional Coordination Unit, in consultation with the Scientific Committee and the Agreement Secretariat, shall facilitate the preparation of a sub-regional directory of important areas for cetaceans,
- Article XI, paragraph 1, of the Agreement according to which the provisions of ACCOBAMS shall not affect the right of any Party to maintain or adopt more stringent measures for the conservation of cetaceans and their habitats,
- The Conservation Plan (Annex 2 to the Agreement), which forms an integral part of the Agreement and requires the Parties to endeavour to establish and manage specially protected areas for cetaceans corresponding to the areas which serve as habitats of cetaceans and/or which provide important food resources for them. Such specially protected areas should be established within the framework of the appropriate international instruments,

*Welcoming* United Nations General Assembly Resolution 68/70 on oceans and the law of the sea and *recalling* that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out,

*Recalling* Resolution 11.25 of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), including, where applicable, the provisions of paragraph 6 and 7 calling upon Parties to develop transboundary area-based conservation measures, including protected and other areas systems, and urging them to promote ecological networks and connectivity through, for example, the development of further site networks within the CMS Family or other fora and processes,

*Considering* that ACCOBAMS is an appropriate tool for achieving an updated and revised strategic plan and targets for biodiversity for the period 2011-2020 within the framework of the CBD,

*Noting* that 9 of the 15 Mediterranean Ecological or Biological Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs) adopted by Parties of CBD (Pyeongchang, Republic of Korea, October 2014) were, mostly or in part, based on the presence in such areas of cetacean critical habitat,

*Conscious* that establishing a network of marine protected areas:

- constitutes an important element of maritime spatial planning and will help achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for cetaceans,
- requires comprehensive inventories of sites that contain critical and/or important habitats for cetaceans,

*Convinced* that, particularly as regards highly migratory species, to be efficient, these protected areas must be of a sufficient extent and, as such, they require frequently transboundary cooperation,

*Noting* with satisfaction that protected areas specially devoted to cetacean conservation in the ACCOBAMS Area have already been established,

*Taking into account*, the “criteria for the selection and format of proposals for marine protected areas for cetaceans” adopted by the Third Meeting of the Parties,

*Welcoming* efforts undertaken by ACCOBAMS, RAC/SPA and MedPAN on this issue during the two previous triennia, in particular the “Cetacean Manual for MPA Managers”,

*Considering* a Strategic Alliance among ACCOBAMS, GFCM, IUCN-Med, UNEP/MAP through SPA/RAC and in collaboration with MedPAN, concerning Spatial-based Protection and Management Measures for Marine Biodiversity Resolution 6.11,

*Welcoming* the Roadmap for a Comprehensive Coherent Network of Well-Managed MPAs to Achieve Aichi Target 11 in the Mediterranean adopted by the 19<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and its Protocols,

*Welcoming* the first workshop on the Identification of Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) in the Mediterranean Sea, organized by the IUCN Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force, in collaboration with ACCOBAMS and the Tethys Research Institute (Chania, Greece, 24-28 October 2016),

1. *Welcomes* the recommendations issued by the ACCOBAMS Workshop on the effectiveness of marine protected areas within Cetacean Critical Habitats (CCH) (Gammarth, Tunisia, 9-12 June 2015) during the Joint RAC/SPA-GFCM-ACCOBAMS meetings;
2. *Takes note* of the Revised Guidelines for the Establishment and Management of Marine Protected Areas for Cetaceans (ACCOBAMS/MOP6/2016/Doc33) and of the progress report on the threat based management approach (ACCOBAMS/MOP6/2016/Doc34);
3. *Invites* the Permanent Secretariat to disseminate the document “Place-based conservation of cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Area: a handbook on management effectiveness” (ACCOBAMS/MOP6/2016/Doc35) and encourages MPA managers of areas within CCH to implement relevant management actions;
4. *Encourages* Parties and other Governments to:
  - update regularly the list of areas containing habitats for cetaceans in collaboration with the Scientific Committee;
  - use the scientific information regarding the description of areas meeting CCH criteria, in relation with the Sub Regional Coordination Units, in order to promote adequate conservation mechanisms, such as designation of protected areas;
5. *Requests* the Scientific Committee, in particular the Task Manager on CCH, the regional representatives and the coordinators of conservation plans, to :
  - revise the existing CCHs, taking into account (i) the candidates IMMAs proposed and the Areas of Interest identified during the first workshop on the Identification of Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) in the Mediterranean Sea , and (ii) the threat-based management approach,
  - evaluate effectiveness of adequate management of protected areas within CCH using existing initiatives, such as MedPAN, and
  - revise and update the tools for adequate management of areas within CCH, after an assessment has been implemented;
6. *Requests* the Permanent Secretariat to continue facilitating the description of areas meeting CCH criteria through the organization of relevant workshops and to share all relevant information in NETCCOBAMS;

7. *Encourages* the Permanent Secretariat to pursue and reinforce its collaboration on this issue with other relevant organizations in particular by participating actively to a Strategic Alliance among the Secretariats of ACCOBAMS, GFCM, IUCN-Med, UNEP/MAP through SPA/RAC and in collaboration with MedPAN, concerning Spatial-based Protection and Management Measures for Marine Biodiversity.