



Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

Secretariat provided by the United Nations Environment Programme



Statement of CMS, ASCOBANS and ACCOBAMS

to the 66th Meeting of the International Whaling Commission

Portorož, Slovenia, 24-28 October 2016

BACKGROUND ON CMS AND ITS FAMILY OF AGREEMENTS

1. As an environmental treaty under the aegis of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the **Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)** brings together the States through which migratory animals pass, the Range States, and lays the legal foundation for internationally coordinated conservation measures throughout a migratory range. It currently has 124 Parties.
2. CMS provides the legal framework for conservation measures throughout the migratory range and strives to maintain or restore a favourable conservation status of the species and their habitats. The Convention provides a platform to develop and tailor measures according to particular conservation needs, and is actively engaged in a large range of broader environmental oceanic matters such as unsustainable fishing, including bycatch, ocean noise, chemical pollution and marine debris. CMS complements and co-operates with a number of other international organizations, NGOs and partners in the media as well as in the corporate sector.
3. Migratory species threatened with extinction are listed on **Appendix I** of the Convention. CMS Parties strive towards the strictly protection of these animals, conserving or restoring the places where they live, mitigating obstacles to migration and controlling other factors that might endanger them. Appendix I currently lists 16 cetacean species.
4. **Appendix II**, which currently lists 44 cetacean species, includes migratory species that need or would significantly benefit from international co-operation. For this reason, the Convention encourages the Range States to conclude global or regional agreements. In this respect, CMS acts as a framework Convention. The development of models tailored according to the conservation needs throughout the migratory range is a unique capacity of CMS.
5. Such mechanisms include two legally-binding cetacean Agreements: **ASCOBANS** (Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas) and **ACCOBAMS** (Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area). In addition, two non-binding regional agreements have been concluded, the **Pacific Cetaceans MOU** (Memorandum of Understanding for the Conservation of Cetaceans and their Habitats in the Pacific Islands Region) and the latest addition, the **Western African Aquatic Mammal MOU** (Memorandum of Understanding concerning the Conservation of the Manatee and Small Cetaceans of Western Africa and Macaronesia).
6. For more information, please refer to www.cms.int.
7. Below is a joint report of activities on cetacean conservation, undertaken by the Convention on Migratory Species, and its two cetacean-related Agreements, namely ASCOBANS and ACCOBAMS, since the 65th Meeting of the IWC.

PROGRESS REPORTS

A. Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (UNEP/CMS)



8. CMS continues to build up its coverage and activities on cetaceans and especially small cetaceans. Forty-two cetacean-related resolutions have been passed by the Parties since the 1st CMS Conference of the Parties in October 1985, addressing issues such as species status and urgent conservation action on bycatch, captures, climate change and chemical and noise pollution.

I. 11th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties

9. The 11th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP11, Quito, Ecuador, 4-9 November 2014) adopted a record 34 resolutions (available at <http://www.cms.int/en/meeting/eleventh-meeting-conference-parties-cms>). Several are directly relevant for cetacean conservation:

- a. **Live Captures of Cetaceans from the Wild for Commercial Purposes** (Resolution 11.22), addressing issues of capture, transfer and import of live cetaceans
- b. **Conservation Implications of Cetacean Culture** (Resolution 11.23), recognizing the increasing evidence that populations of some species are better delineated by cultural behaviour than genetic diversity or geographic isolation, and establishing an expert group to consider the case for all taxonomic groups covered by CMS
- c. **Programme of Work on Climate Change and Migratory Species** (Resolution 11.26)
- d. **Sustainable Boat-Based Marine Wildlife Watching** (Resolution 11.29), establishing basic principles to adhere to when adopting measures to promote ecologically sustainable wildlife watching, and requesting the development of guidelines for different taxonomic groups, including cetaceans
- e. **Management of Marine Debris** (Resolution 11.30, based on three full reviews available as UNEP/CMS/COP11/Inf.27 “Migratory Species, Marine Debris and its Management”, UNEP/CMS/COP11/Inf.28 “Marine Debris and Commercial Marine Vessel Best Practice” and UNEP/CMS/COP11/Inf.29 “Marine Debris Public Awareness and Education Campaigns”), identifying strategies for governments to address this problem at source
- f. **Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2015-2023** (Resolution 11.02), based on the Aichi targets and designed to guide all efforts for migratory species conservation, both within and outside the CMS Family

10. COP11 also added many species to the Appendices of the Convention. Among these were many marine species, especially sharks and rays, and the listing of **Mediterranean population of Cuvier’s beaked whale (*Ziphius cavirostris*)** on Appendix I of CMS. At the same meeting, the population was also included in the list of Concerted Action Species, signalling its need for urgent attention for their protection.

II. 1st Meeting of the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council

11. At the 1st Meeting of the Sessional Committee of the CMS Scientific Council (ScC-SC1, 18-21 April 2016, Bonn, Germany), progress in the implementation of these resolutions was assessed. The report of the Meeting will shortly be published here: <http://www.cms.int/en/meeting/first-meeting-sessional-committee-scientific-council-scc-sc1>.

12. The ScC-SC1 report will also contain the work plan agreed by the Sessional Committee for implementation of COP11 resolutions and the substantive preparations for the 12th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Manila, Philippines, 22-28 October 2017). Planned activities of particular relevance to the IWC include:

- a. Establishing collaboration with the IWC and CITES on **Live Captures of Cetaceans from the Wild for Commercial Purposes**
- b. Developing cooperation with the Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management and the IWC to address the impact on CMS-listed species that are likely to be subject to utilization as **aquatic bushmeat**
- c. Finalizing the development of **CMS Family Guidelines on Environmental Impact Assessments for Marine Noise-generating Activities** (see <http://www.cms.int/en/guidelines/cms-family-guidelines-EIAs-marine-noise>)
- d. Assessing the potential impact of **dolphin swim-with programmes** on CMS-listed species
- e. Convening a second workshop on the **conservation implications of animal culture and social complexity** (tentatively planned for early 2018)
- f. Assessing relevance of the concept of **Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs)** to CMS
- g. Addressing key gaps in knowledge and future research directions relating to migratory species impacted by **climate change**, in particular through the analysis of existing long-term and large-scale datasets
- h. Review existing agreed guidelines, existing good practice and underpinning scientific evidence of the issues of concern, and based on this review develop **guidelines** as appropriate on **marine boat-based wildlife watching** for different taxonomic groups, differentiated if necessary by geographic areas – *presenting an excellent opportunity to collaborate with the IWC*
- i. Advance the Convention's work on the **marine debris** issue and investigate the feasibility of close cooperation with other biodiversity-related agreements, such as CBD, IWC, ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS, by means of a multilateral working group
- j. Producing a review of the **micro plastics** threat to migratory species
- k. Working closely with other international competent bodies such as FAO and relevant RFMOs, to ensure **bycatch management** approaches are promulgated in working fisheries
- l. Review information on **bycatch mitigation measures** for fishing methods known to impact migratory species

III. Regional Memoranda of Understanding for Cetacean Conservation

13. The 4th Meeting of the Signatories to the **Pacific Cetaceans MOU** is planned for September 2017, back-to-back with the Annual SPREP Meeting. More information will become available in due course at <http://www.cms.int/en/legalinstrument/pacific-islands-cetaceans>.

14. In the period covered by this report, no meetings of the **Western African Aquatic Mammal MOU** took place. More information on the MOU can be found at <http://www.cms.int/en/legalinstrument/western-african-aquatic-mammals>.

15. A progress report of these and all other MOUs concluded under CMS is included in UNEP/CMS/COP11/Doc.22.1.

III. Publications

16. Translations into French, German and Spanish of the leaflet entitled "Oceans Full of Plastic: Marine Debris – A Global Problem", published in English in 2014 jointly with ASCOBANS, are now available as PDF for download: <http://www.cms.int/en/publication/oceans-full-plastic>. The leaflet is aimed at the general public, including children, and contains helpful tips on how everyone can be part of the solution.

B. Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas (UNEP/ASCOBANS)



17. The ASCOBANS Agreement is one of the regional instruments concluded under CMS. The UNEP/CMS Secretariat provides secretariat services for it.

I. Meeting of the Parties

18. The 8th Meeting of the Parties was held in Helsinki, Finland, from 30 August to 1 September 2016. All related documents including the final resolutions are available at <http://www.ascobans.org/en/meeting/MOP8>, where the final report will also be published shortly. The following conservation-related resolutions were passed:

- a. **National Reporting** (Resolution 8.1), changing the reporting procedure so that only one comprehensive report in the four-year cycle would be required, with shorter topic-related reports in the other years, which will be reflected in the agenda for the Advisory Committee Meeting in the year in which the report is received
- b. **Work Plan for the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee and Secretariat 2017-2020 and Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2015-2023** (Resolution 8.2), outlining the activities of the AC and Secretariat as well as adopting the Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2015-2023, which is based on the Aichi Targets and intended for migratory species conservation in general
- c. **Revision of the Recovery Plan for Baltic Harbour Porpoises (Jastarnia Plan)** (Resolution 8.3), which has been developed in consultation with the Jastarnia Group in the light of new data, and following a template agreed by ASCOBANS Parties in 2015, based on the format used by the IWC
- d. **Conservation of Common Dolphins** (Resolution 8.4), setting out a series of desirable actions and mandating the development of a fully-fledged conservation plan for common dolphins
- e. **Monitoring and Mitigation of Small Cetacean Bycatch** (Resolution 8.5), identifying and agreeing ASCOBANS positions and recommendations regarding the requirements of legislation to address bycatch monitoring and mitigation effectively
- f. **Ocean Energy** (Resolution 8.6), specifically focussing on tidal and wave energy devices on the impacts of which only limited data are available, but which seem to be some risk to species covered by ASCOBANS
- g. **Impacts of Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs)** (Resolution 8.7), setting research priorities and encouraging measures to avoid further input of PCBs into the marine environment
- h. **Addressing the Threats from Underwater Munitions** (Resolution 8.8), outlining the concerns related to conventional and chemical weapons and the threats from noise from explosions and poisoning from leakages of chemicals, and calling on UNEP and NATO to take the lead in addressing this issue
- i. **Managing Cumulative Anthropogenic Impacts in the Marine Environment** (Resolution 8.9), identifying measures aimed at minimizing the exposure of animals and impacts on the wider marine environment
- j. **Small Cetacean Stranding Response** (Resolution 8.10), encouraging the establishment of effective national strandings response networks and recommending that updated necropsy protocols and best practice guidelines for stranding responses and necropsies be developed collaboratively with the IWC, ACCOBAMS and the European Cetacean Society – a direct call to collaborate with the IWC

- k. **CMS Family Guidelines on Environmental Impact Assessments for Marine Noise-generating Activities** (Resolution 8.11), welcoming the progress made in developing this document and inviting the CMS Conference of the Parties, following some further consultations, to consider their adoption

II. Advisory Committee and Working Groups

19. The **21st Meeting of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee** (AC21) met from 29 September to 1 October 2014 in Gothenburg, Sweden. The report of the meeting as well as relevant documents can be accessed at <http://www.ascobans.org/en/meeting/AC21>.

20. The **22nd Meeting of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee** (AC22) met from 29 September to 1 October 2015 in The Hague, Netherlands. This meeting was the last AC meeting before the 8th Meeting of the Parties and served to prepare the substantive inputs to MOP8. The report of the meeting as well as relevant documents can be accessed at <http://www.ascobans.org/en/meeting/AC22>.

21. The following standing working groups report to the Advisory Committee:

- **Jastarnia Group**
This group was established in 2003 to carry forward the Agreement's Recovery Plan for Baltic Harbour Porpoises (Jastarnia Plan). Reports of the annual meetings, which contain recommendations to the Advisory Committee of the Agreement, can be accessed at <http://www.ascobans.org/en/workinggroup/jastarnia-group>. The most recent meeting (JG12) was held in April 2016 in Hel, Poland.
- **North Sea Group**
This group was formed to facilitate the implementation of the ASCOBANS Conservation Plan for Harbour Porpoises in the North Sea and started operating in late 2010. Reports of the annual meetings can be accessed at <http://www.ascobans.org/en/workinggroup/north-sea-group>. The most recent meeting (NSG5) was held in September 2016 in The Hague, Netherlands.
- **Bycatch Working Group**
Created in 2010, this group has been set specific tasks by each AC meeting and reported back to the following one. Its progress reports are all accessible through <http://www.ascobans.org/en/workinggroup/bycatch-working-group>.
- **Noise Working Group**
This working group jointly serves the needs of the two cetacean Agreements, ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS, as well as of the CMS Scientific Council. Established in 2009 with the terms of reference updated several times, the annual progress reports of the group can be accessed at <http://www.ascobans.org/en/workinggroup/underwater-noise-working-group>.
- **Extension Area Working Group & Informal Working Group on Large Cetaceans**
First established in 2011, the experts supporting this activity produce joint reports, mainly related to the western extension of the Agreement Area, which came into force in 2008. This working group also considers the issue of ship strikes. Since ASCOBANS only covers small cetaceans, the work relating to large cetaceans aims to identify major issues likely to be having a negative effect upon large cetacean populations in the Agreement Area, assessing the extent to which they can be addressed alongside small cetaceans, and making informal recommendations of appropriate mitigation measures. Reports can be accessed at <http://www.ascobans.org/en/workinggroup/extension-area-working-group> and <http://www.ascobans.org/en/workinggroup/informal-working-group-large-cetaceans>.
- **Joint ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS Working Group on the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)**
This group was established in 2011 and is being co-chaired to cover the unique situation in the ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS Areas while allowing for synergies. Its reports and

more information on its terms of reference are available at <http://www.ascobans.org/en/workinggroup/marine-strategy-framework-directive-working-group>.

- **Pollution Working Group**

This working group is formed ad-hoc at each Advisory Committee Meeting, producing a compilation of recently published articles related to chemical pollution to be annexed to the meeting report as a resource for the Parties. More information can be accessed at <http://www.ascobans.org/en/workinggroup/pollution-working-group>.

22. AC22 further established steering groups for intersessional work streams focusing on:
- A joint workshop organized by the European Cetacean Society, ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS on synergies between the cetacean-relevant legislative frameworks for the seas around Europe
 - The finalization of an ASCOBANS position on the requirements of legislation to address, monitor and mitigate small cetacean bycatch (see <http://www.ascobans.org/en/species/threats/bycatch> for results)
 - The Agreement's work relating to "Unacceptable Interactions"
 - The development of a new national reporting form based on the outline adopted by MOP8
 - The revision of the terms of reference for the coordination of the Harbour Porpoise Action Plans
23. The **23rd Meeting of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee** (AC23) will meet in autumn 2017 (time and place to be determined). All relevant information and meeting and information documents will be made available at <http://www.ascobans.org/en/meeting/AC23> in due course.

III. Implementation of the ASCOBANS Work Programme

24. At each meeting of the Advisory Committee, the Secretariat produces an overview of progress made in the implementation of the **Work Plan** adopted by the MOP, which focuses on tasks for the Advisory Committee, its Working Groups and the Secretariat. The AC Meetings also make recommendations on actions to be taken by Parties. The most recent progress report is available as [AC22/Doc.1.3 Rev.1](#).

25. ASCOBANS continues to place great emphasis on **outreach- and education**-related activities. Details can be found in the most recent report of the Secretariat on outreach and education activities, published as [AC22/Doc.7.1 Rev.1](#). At MOP8, the ASCOBANS Outreach and Education Award was given for the fifth time. The jury formed by AC22 had unanimously decided that Whale and Dolphin Conservation (WDC) be given this recognition for its dedicated efforts in many countries to educate and inspire people so they can support efforts to protect cetaceans.

26. While annual calls for project proposals have been suspended, ASCOBANS still had the opportunity to fund a few **research and conservation projects**. Three projects have been finalized since 2014 and their final reports published at AC22:

- Pollutant exposure in coastal top predators: assessing current levels of exposure and toxic effects ([AC22/Inf.8.1.a](#))
- Preparations for SCANS-III ([AC22/Inf.8.1.b](#))
- Approaches to an Impact Indicator in the Light of Descriptor 11 (MSFD) ([AC22/Inf.8.1.c](#))

C. Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS)



I. Management of the Agreement

a. Administrative matters

27. As of September 2016, there are **23 State Parties** to the Agreement.

28. A **proposal for the extension of the ACCOBAMS** to cover the Atlantic EEZ of Spain and Portugal was adopted by the MOP4. By September 2016, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Monaco, Montenegro, Spain, Slovenia and Ukraine deposited their instrument of acceptance with the Depository.

29. **The 6th Meeting of the Parties to ACCOBAMS** will be held from 22 to 25 November 2016, in Monaco.

30. **The 10th Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee** was held from 20 to 22 October 2016, in Nice. During this meeting, twelve Recommendations were approved by the Members. They will be the basis of the scientific draft Resolutions presented to Parties during MOP6.

31. **The 1st Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Follow-up Committee** was convened in Monaco on 2 March 2016. By consensus, the Committee decided that its President shall be Mr. Victor Escobar Paredes and its vice-President Mr. Draško Holcer, until the end of their mandate in the Committee.

b. Regular communication

32. The **20th Anniversary of ACCOBAMS** will be celebrated on 24 November 2016, in Monaco, where the Agreement was established in 1996. In this context, particular attention was devoted by the Secretariat to implement relevant activities to improve general communication in ACCOBAMS as public awareness: ACCOBAMS cetaceans day, a photo exhibition, a workshop for Partners, an ACCOBAMS network under construction (NETCCOBAMS).

II. Conservation Actions

a. Improve knowledge about the state of cetaceans

33. **Cetacean population estimates and distribution:** important progress in the development and fundraising of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative was made and **the project will be officially launched during MOP6 in November 2016**. As designed, the "ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative" is a pilot initiative aimed **at establishing an integrated and coordinated monitoring system for cetaceans throughout the Agreement Area**, in coordination with riparian countries, and in line with their commitments related to the implementation of the European and regional policies (MSFD, EcAP, BSIMAP). In particular, the ASI project will contribute to provide a thorough estimate of the abundance and distribution of the cetacean populations in the ACCOBAMS area based on robust data.

34. **Cetacean Population Structure:** the draft CITES Resolution prepared by ACCOBAMS on the establishment of (an) individual identification system(s) of cetaceans kept in captivity was presented by Ukraine at CITES COP in October 2016. Even though an amended text was adopted as a Decision focusing on *Tursiops truncatus ponticus* (subspecies of the Black Sea), Parties are encouraged to use genetic analyses, to establish repositories for data and to report to the CITES Animals Committee on exports of *Tursiops truncatus ponticus* and their origins.

b. Reduce human pressures on cetaceans

35. **Interaction with fisheries:** The ACCOBAMS Secretariat is coordinating with the Secretariat of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (i.e. the competent Regional Fisheries Management Organization for the Mediterranean and Black Sea), a joint project of which one of the objective is to enhance the conservation of cetaceans, sea turtles and seabirds by **mitigating interactions with fisheries considering both incidental catches and depredation issues**. Pilot actions in selected fisheries of the Central and Western Mediterranean Sea (i.e. in **France, Spain, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria**) are implemented by relevant national institutions and NGOs with the aim of identifying the nature of such interactions and of testing mitigations measures.

36. **Anthropogenic noise:** ACCOBAMS is leading the Ecosystem Approach process (ECAP) of the Barcelona Convention, related to the **Ecological Objective (EO) 11 on Energy including underwater noise**. In this context, a **basin-wide strategy for underwater noise monitoring in the Mediterranean**, in the framework of the EcAP process of the Barcelona Convention was prepared by some experts of the Joint CMS/ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS Noise Working Group (JNWG). An **Overview of the noise hot spots in the ACCOBAMS area – Part I, Mediterranean Sea** was prepared and the implementation of a **noise demonstrator** in the ACCOBAMS area is ongoing.

37. **Ship strikes:** ACCOBAMS Secretariat supported and participated to the annual training course for professional and student ship crews at the French National Superior School of Shipping of Marseille (March 2015 and March 2016)..

38. **Cetacean watching:** since 2014, the "High Quality Whale Watching®" has been implemented in France and in Monaco. Two documents will be proposed for adoption to Parties: (i) Guidelines for monitoring programmes aimed at maximizing the chance of detecting potential adverse impacts of whale watching activities on individual cetaceans and on populations and (ii) common procedure (data collection system) for whale watching vessels to be implemented in the ACCOBAMS Area

39. **Marine Debris:** ACCOBAMS is part of Regional Cooperation Platform on Marine Litter in the Mediterranean. Moreover, the Secretariat collaborated with the Prince Albert II Foundation which held an international workshop in Monaco, on 10-11 March 2015 "Plastics in the Mediterranean. Beyond observations, what are the solutions?"

40. Species conservation plans:

- At the request of the previous CMS Conference of Parties (Bergen, Norway 2011), the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee prepared [a proposal to include the Mediterranean Cuvier's beaked whale \(*Ziphius cavirostris*\)](#) in Appendix I of CMS (granting to this species the endangered status) to be presented to the CMS COP 11 in 2014. The proposal was adopted at the CMS COP 11 in November 2014.
- RAC/SPA assisted the ACCOBAMS Secretariat in the revision of the Action Plan for the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea together with the identification of priorities for the period 2016-2020. It was adopted at the UNEP/MAP COP in February 2016.
- ACCOBAMS, in collaboration with the Black Sea Commission Permanent Secretariat, undertook the revision of the existing Conservation Plan for **Black Sea Cetaceans**.

41. **Captivity-related issues:** In the framework of the revision of the existing Conservation Plan for Black Sea Cetaceans, an inventory of Black Sea bottlenose dolphins kept in captivity was compiled.

c. Improve Communication, Awareness and Capacity-Building

42. **Capacity to use cetaceans photo ID and undertake aerial surveys:** training sessions on photo-identification techniques for cetaceans were held during (i) the 3rd Biennial Conference on Cetacean Conservation in South Mediterranean Countries organized by ACCOBAMS on 21-23 October 2014 (Lebanon), and during (ii) the ECS Conference on 21 March 2015, in Malta.

43. **Cetacean conservation and postgraduate programmes:** The ACCOBAMS teaching module is designed to enrich students' knowledge of cetacean conservation through a multidisciplinary approach. It was implemented at Malta University in March 2015. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the implementation in the Black Sea was postponed to 2017.

d. Enhance effective conservation of cetaceans critical habitats

44. **Protected areas for cetaceans:** a Workshop on “the effectiveness of protected areas within critical habitats for cetaceans” was held in Gammarth, Tunisia, on 8-12 June 2015. The list of Marine Protected Areas in the ACCOBAMS area, including cetacean habitats, was partially reviewed.

45. Two documents were prepared for the MOP6: (i) the Revision of Guidelines for the Establishment and Management of Marine Protected Areas for Cetaceans, and (ii) an Handbook on the evaluation of the effectiveness of place-based conservation for cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS area

46. ACCOBAMS and the IUCN Marine Mammal Task Force are organizing a workshop in **October 2016**, gathering the experts of all the Mediterranean Sea in order to propose sites as “**Important Marine Mammal Areas**” (IMMA, IUCN label). This approach tallies with the identification of new Cetacean Critical Habitats (CCH). The results of this workshop will thus make it possible to advance even more quickly towards the objectives.

III. 2016 ACCOBAMS Call for proposals

47. After consultation with the Bureau of the Parties, a new call for proposals was launched in January 2016 by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat. In view to support contributions towards the implementation of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative, and as advised by the Scientific Committee, the projects proposed under this call for proposals addressed the issues related to **cetaceans' distribution and abundance**.

48. On the basis of the evaluation of the eligible proposals made by the Scientific Committee, the Bureau of the Parties decided on **the three project proposals to be financially supported by the ACCOBAMS Supplementary Conservation Fund (SCF)**:

- “*Increase the regional capacity for developing cetacean distribution and abundance studies*” from the NGO Mare Nostrum (Romania),
- “*Tunisian Dolphin Project : population size and habitat use for bottlenose and common dolphins*” from the Association Nationale du Développement Durable et de la Conservation de la Vie Sauvage (Tunisia),
- “*Identification and initial assessment of cetacean groupings in coastal waters of the north-western Black Sea, Ukrainian sector*” from the Ukrainian Scientific Center of Ecology of the Sea (Ukraine).