

Marine Conservation on Paper? An urgent call for action to protect cetaceans

We, the undersigned institutions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), note that despite the positive intent of the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS) and the commitment of ACCOBAMS Parties demonstrated through many Resolutions, Recommendations at previous and in particular at this 3rd Meeting of the Parties, an equivalent degree of essential, tangible conservation activity has not yet taken place.

We are conscious and appreciative of the significant depth of work that has been developed for the Parties by the Scientific Committee of ACCOBAMS in order for them to mitigate threats to cetaceans. We also recognise that several Parties have made progress in implementing Resolutions and some ambitious decisions have been made and Resolutions adopted at this MOP3 of which we highly appreciate. However, although recognizing the overall will by Parties to improve the protection and conservation status of cetaceans in the Agreement area, we wish to express a strong call for action, recognizing that a slow response in implementing decisions and conservation measures would mean the objectives of the Agreement will not be reached.

We note in particular the following concerns:

1. the critically endangered, endangered, or vulnerable status of most cetacean populations in the Mediterranean and Black Seas (as recognized in Resolution 3.9)
2. the continued use of driftnets in part of the Agreement area, causing an unacceptable level of cetacean bycatch and a destructive impact on marine ecosystems in general, including in the PELAGOS Sanctuary
3. the continuation of the employment of non-selective fishing methods, the growing intensity of fishing, and the widespread impact of over-fishing leading to ecosystem damage and depletion of cetacean prey
4. the continued lack of implementation of appropriate mitigation measures to reduce underwater noise

We therefore urge all Parties to take immediate and concrete action to fully meet their commitments under ACCOBAMS and thereby ensure the survival of cetacean populations within the Agreement area.

Signed on 25th October 2007 by:

WDCS, the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, International
International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW)
Ocean Care, Switzerland
Delphis, Italy
Oceana Europe
Morigenos – Marine Mammal Research and Conservation Society, Slovenia
Animal Friends, Croatia
Blue World Marine Institute for Research and Conservation, Croatia
Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)