

Draft Resolution No. 5:

Monitoring and Mitigation of Small Cetacean Bycatch

Concerned that despite the efforts made so far by Parties, bycatch remains one of the major cause of mortality for small cetaceans in the Agreement Area;

Conscious that available data indicate that levels of bycatch in the Agreement Area may threaten the conservation status of some small cetacean populations, for example common dolphins and harbour porpoises;

Further conscious that different regions present different risks to cetaceans depending upon fishing practices, and the occurrence and conservation status of cetacean species;

Concerned that many human activities in the marine environment have a negative impact on small cetaceans and their habitats, and that consequently these species face multiple, cumulative and often synergistic threats with possible effects over large areas, including from activities taking place outside the Agreement Area, such as bycatch, prey reduction, pollution, habitat degradation, underwater noise, hunting and climate change;

Aware that bycatch in fisheries is not only a threat to the conservation status of small cetaceans and other marine species, but also has significant animal welfare implications;

Recalling the Conservation and Management Plan annexed to the Agreement, according to which modifications of fishing gear and fishing practices shall be applied in order to reduce bycatch where data indicates unacceptable interaction;

Also recalling previous related decisions on incidental take adopted by the Meeting of the Parties, in particular Resolution No.3 of MOP3 and Resolution No.5 of MOP5;

Taking into account the outcomes of the ASCOBANS Expert Workshop on the Requirements of Legislation to Address Monitoring and Mitigation of Small Cetacean Bycatch (Bonn, Germany, January 2015) and the ASCOBANS Workshop on Further Development of Management Procedures for Defining the Threshold of 'Unacceptable Interactions' – Part I: Developing a Shared Understanding on the Use of Thresholds / Environmental Limits (London, United Kingdom, July 2015);

Following the submission of agreed Recommendations of ASCOBANS on the Requirements of Legislation to Address Monitoring and Mitigation of Small Cetacean Bycatch, to the European Commission in October 2015;

Conscious of the related work underway under the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and *recalling* related decisions adopted by the Conference of the Parties to CMS, in particular Resolution 9.18 on Bycatch and Resolution 10.14 on Bycatch of CMS-listed Species in Gillnet Fisheries;

Mindful that Parties that are also EU Member States moreover have obligations for a system of strict protection under the EU Habitats Directive, as well as to monitor and reduce bycatch under the Habitats Directive, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the Common Fisheries Policy and EU Regulation 812/2004;

Noting the review of Bycatch-related Fisheries Legislation in the ASCOBANS Area, presented to this meeting as MOP8/Inf.6.2.1;

The Meeting of the Parties to ASCOBANS

1. *Reaffirms* the positions previously agreed in Resolution No.3 of MOP3 that
 - (a) the general aim should be to minimise (i.e. to ultimately reduce to zero) anthropogenic removals (i.e. mortality), and in the short term, to restore and/or maintain biological or management units to/at 80 per cent or more of the carrying capacity;
 - (b) in order to reach this objective, the intermediate precautionary aim is to reduce bycatch to less than 1 per cent of the best available population estimate;
 - (c) a total anthropogenic removal (e.g. mortality from bycatch and vessel strikes) above 1.7 per cent of the best available estimate of abundance is to be considered unacceptable in the case of the harbour porpoise;
 - (d) if available evidence suggests that a population is severely reduced, or in the case of species other than the harbour porpoise, or where there is significant uncertainty in parameters such as population size or bycatch levels, then “unacceptable interaction” may involve an anthropogenic removal of much less than 1.7 per cent;
2. *Requests* the Advisory Committee to
 - (a) complete its ongoing work in defining unacceptable interactions including consideration of scientifically-based environmental limits and triggers for further conservation action, consideration of a management framework, and re-evaluation of 1b, 1c and 1d above;
 - (b) keep under review new developments in bycatch monitoring techniques;
3. *Requests* Parties and *calls upon* non-Party Range States to ensure (by species and management unit) that
 - (a) monitoring programmes ensure robust estimation of cetacean bycatch for all relevant fisheries (this may include for different vessel sizes and through dedicated observers, remote electronic monitoring, rapid bycatch assessment methods and other measures as appropriate);
 - (b) appropriate technical and other measures to mitigate cetacean bycatch are developed, implemented and evaluated (this may include alternative fishing methods that are ecologically sustainable, pingers not audible to seals and alerting devices proven to be effective for appropriate mitigation, or gear-exchange schemes aiming at reducing bycatch);
4. *Calls upon* Parties to
 - (a) work closely with the fishing sector in order to make use of its valuable knowledge and expertise to jointly tackle the issue of bycatch;
 - (b) make available their implementation reports on EU legislation regarding cetacean bycatch to ASCOBANS as part of their national reports;
 - (c) facilitate the provision of dead bycaught animals for scientific research purposes;
 - (d) to allocate the necessary funding for bycatch related issues in national and European financial planning and support schemes, including through the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund;

- (e) and other stakeholders to take note of the best practice advice contained in the report of the ASCOBANS Workshop on Remote Electronic Monitoring with Regards to Bycatch of Small Cetaceans (The Hague, Netherlands, October 2015), which covers stakeholder involvement, sampling design, data collection and analysis;
 - (f) and other stakeholders to take into account potential effects on other species, such as other marine mammals, seabirds, marine turtles and sharks, when choosing mitigation measures, and to monitor such effects;
5. *Agrees* that the Secretariat and the Advisory Committee continue to input into the further development of assessment requirements relating to cetacean bycatch under relevant agreements and European legislation;
6. *Requests* the Secretariat and Advisory Committee to monitor, engage and participate as appropriate in relevant bycatch related work including the ICES Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species (WGBYC), the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) established by the European Union, the Regional Coordination Groups, and work undertaken by CMS, ACCOBAMS, IWC, NAMMCO, HELCOM and OSPAR and other relevant organizations.