

Draft Resolution No. 4: Conservation of Common Dolphins

Conscious that the common dolphin is one of the most widespread cetacean species in the eastern North Atlantic and, like other cetacean species, plays a key functional role within the ecosystem as a top predator;

Concerned that the most recent assessment of the conservation status of the eastern North Atlantic population under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive estimated that two-thirds of the European Atlantic population was in an unfavourable condition;

Further concerned that the unfavourable conservation status is related to bycatch as the greatest anthropogenic threat to this species, which is also affected by other pressures such as pollution and underwater noise;

Noting that in 2016, ICES advised that the most recent review of national reports under Regulation 812/2004, based on data from the year 2014, suggests that bycatch of common dolphins may be unsustainable;

Recognizing that coordinated actions are required in order to improve the conservation status of the common dolphin in the eastern North Atlantic;

Noting that the Advisory Committee at its 22nd Meeting established a steering group to develop a Conservation Plan for the Common Dolphin;

Noting also other related resolutions adopted at this meeting, in particular Resolution No. [5] on Monitoring and Mitigation of Small Cetacean Bycatch, Resolution No. [7] on Impacts of Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs), Resolution No. [9] on Managing Cumulative Anthropogenic Impacts on the Marine Environment, and Resolution No. [11] on CMS Family Environmental Impact Assessment Guidelines for Marine Noise-generating Activities;

The Meeting of the Parties to ASCOBANS

1. *Encourages* Parties to undertake the following actions required for the conservation of common dolphins in the eastern North Atlantic
 - (a) continue work towards establishing a management framework procedure for bycatch in order to enable specified conservation objectives to be met;
 - (b) coordinate their monitoring programmes on other direct and indirect pressures, including chemical pollution and anthropogenic noise, to allow assessment of the effects on the population;
 - (c) support the research necessary, using both genetic and ecological markers, for a thorough assessment of the range boundary and any subdivisions of the eastern North Atlantic population(s) in order to re-assess the management unit;
 - (d) coordinate their bycatch monitoring programmes to allow assessment of the population bycatch rate;
 - (e) apply appropriate bycatch mitigation strategies for all high- and medium-risk fisheries;

- (f) monitor population status through large- and small-scale surveys at appropriate intervals in order to estimate trends in abundance and detect changes in distribution;
 - (g) monitor health and nutritional status, reproductive parameters, pollutant burdens, and causes of mortality using samples and data collected from stranding and bycatch monitoring programmes;
 - (h) continue to review of the effects of anthropogenic noise and other threats and pressures on common dolphins, including an evaluation of the population level consequences of disturbance;
 - (i) assess the independent, in-combination and cumulative effects of multiple stressors;
 - (j) continue requesting overarching legislation for cetaceans in European waters that ensures the effective protection of cetaceans from all threats;
 - (k) establish a coordinated and regionalized approach;
2. *Requests* the steering group established by the Advisory Committee to continue its work to develop a comprehensive conservation plan for the common dolphin in the eastern North Atlantic;
3. *Further requests* the steering group to present its draft, if feasible, a minimum of three months before the 23rd Meeting of the Advisory Committee to enable national consultations to take place;
4. *Calls on* Parties and *invites* non-Party Range States of the species to support the development of the conservation plan by participating in the drafting process and by involving all stakeholders;
5. *Invites* other relevant stakeholders such as the European Commission, intergovernmental bodies including ACCOBAMS, ICES, NAMMCO and OSPAR, Advisory Councils for European fisheries, other relevant bodies such as NGOs, universities and other institutes, and other appropriate stakeholder representatives, to support the development of the conservation plan by participating in the drafting process;
6. *Mandates* the Advisory Committee, following appropriate time for national consultations on the draft conservation plan, to finalize the conservation plan and circulate it to the Parties for adoption;
7. *Requests* the Advisory Committee, if applicable supported by a steering group for the implementation of the conservation plan, to continue reviewing new information on the conservation status of common dolphins in the Agreement Area and to make recommendations to Parties as appropriate.