

FOOD AVAILABILITY AND RESOURCE DEPLETION

Noting that small cetacean distribution is influenced by the distribution of main prey species and prey diversity, and that small cetacean health is influenced by the quality of prey,

Concerned that resource depletion may represent a significant threat to populations of small cetaceans within the Agreement Area, as evidenced by the poor status of several fish stocks that are important prey for small cetaceans (e.g. Iberian sardine, western Baltic spring spawning herring; historically, North Sea sand eel; general deteriorated status of the Baltic ecosystem); evidence of poor condition and/or starvation in some stranded animals; range shifts (for example in North Sea porpoises) thought to be linked to prey availability, and the known susceptibility of small cetaceans to prey depletion, particularly those with high metabolic rates (for example Common Dolphins) and limited fat reserves (such as Harbour Porpoises),

Acknowledging the international efforts under the European Union, ICES and other organizations to move towards an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management and an integrated ecosystem approach to marine monitoring, assessment and management,

Recalling Resolution 8.9 *Managing Cumulative Anthropogenic Impacts in Marine Environment*, Resolution 8.3 *Revision of the Recovery Plan for Baltic Harbour Porpoises (Jastarnia Plan)*, Resolution 8.4 [(Rev.MOP9)] *Conservation of Common Dolphins*, and Resolution 7.1 *Conservation of Harbour Porpoises and Adoption of the Conservation Plan for the Western Baltic, the Belt Sea and the Kattegat*, and further recalling ACCOBAMS Resolution 2.25 *Prey Depletion*.

The Meeting of the Parties to ASCOBANS

1. *Encourages* Parties to prioritize and support relevant monitoring, assessment and research and in particular to:
 - a) ensure adequate monitoring of dietary consumption, preferences and requirements, overall health status, condition, life history parameters, distribution and abundance, and trends therein, in small cetacean species across the ASCOBANS range, with particular emphasis on species considered to be susceptible to negative impacts of resource depletion such as Harbour Porpoises and Common Dolphins, on evidence of poor condition and/or starvation (accounting for the underlying health status of such animals);
 - b) develop appropriate nutritional/condition indicators for the cetacean species concerned (drawing on existing environmental monitoring and assessment, e.g. under the MSFD, where appropriate);
 - c) report on declines in key prey species (e.g. fish, cephalopods) as assessed by ICES and/or the EU and on changes in fish size or nutritional content that might adversely affect predators, and on geographic areas where such changes have been recorded including changes in distribution of potential prey species due to climate change or other reasons;
 - d) be aware of current fishery management advice for exploited marine fish and invertebrates, in particular information on stock status, trends and distribution, especially for those species of importance as prey to cetaceans and in particular for cetacean species known to be impacted by fishery bycatch or climate change;
 - e) report on the extent to which management advice for fishing on key resource species is successfully implemented, especially if there are issues with quotas being exceeded or instances of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing;

- f) work to improve monitoring and assessment of the status of data-deficient and non-commercially exploited marine fish and invertebrate species of importance to cetaceans, again including collection of data on stock status, trends and distribution, where appropriate applying emerging technology such as eDNA; and
- g) assist with the evaluation of current threats to cetacean populations from resource depletion and propose and implement appropriate mitigation measures.