



10<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE PARTIES  
Odense, Denmark, 10-12 September 2024  
Agenda Item 6.2.1

## **DRAFT RESOLUTION: CONSERVATION OF BEAKED WHALES**

*(Prepared by the Intersessional Working Group on Beaked Whales and the Secretariat)*

1. The topic of beaked whale strandings was raised at the 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties (MOP9, 2020) because of the unusual number of strandings that had occurred in the UK, Ireland, the Netherlands, Belgium, the Faroes and elsewhere. Many of the species concerned are categorised as Data Deficient by IUCN, reflecting that the level of monitoring at sea is inadequate. Given the recent number of strandings and what we know of beaked whale biology, there is considerable concern about the status of populations.
2. The Intersessional Working Group on Beaked Whales was established, as requested by MOP9, to bring together experts to review data about recent strandings, population abundances and distribution, to discuss potential reasons for the strandings, and key data gaps, and report back to the 26<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee (AC26, 2021). A report was submitted: *Overcoming Challenges to Protect Beaked Whales in the Northeast Atlantic – ASCOBANS Intersessional Working Group Report, September 2021* ([ASCOBANS/AC26/Doc.4.3](#)), and its recommendations endorsed by AC26. The report and discussions from AC26 were used to inform the draft Resolution.

### **Action requested:**

3. The Meeting of the Parties is requested to review and adopt the Resolution in Annex 1.

DRAFT RESOLUTION:

**CONSERVATION OF BEAKED WHALES**

*Acknowledging* the significant ecological role of beaked whales (family Ziphiidae) in the marine ecosystem, that for many species their biology remains poorly known, their well-reported vulnerability to anthropogenic impacts, and the urgent need for better ecological data about these species and concerted action to address the threats they face,

*Noting with concern* the known threats faced by beaked whales from active military sonar, and including but not limited to, exposure to other underwater noise sources, entanglement in fishing gear and marine debris, habitat degradation, chemical pollution, and climate change impacts,

*Concerned* about the high number of beaked whale strandings, including several Unusual Mortality Events (UME), recorded between 1990 and 2020 and the growing frequency and magnitude of UMEs,

*Emphasising* the need for enhanced international cooperation and coordination to address these threats effectively,

*The Meeting of the Parties to ASCOBANS*

1. *Urges* Parties to take all necessary measures, individually and collectively, to conserve and protect beaked whales in the ASCOBANS Area, including through the establishment and implementation of comprehensive conservation and management measures;
2. *Encourages* Parties to strengthen standardised long-term monitoring, particularly at-sea and strandings monitoring research, and support enhanced data collection and collation efforts to improve understanding of beaked whale biology, distribution, abundance, and threats;
3. *Further encourages* Parties to establish or improve long-term acoustic monitoring and analysis programmes in beaked whale habitats to better understand the tempo-spatial distribution and magnitude of impulsive noise and to support technological solutions toward this aim, such as autonomous vehicles and automated solutions to process sound files;
4. *Calls upon* Parties to mitigate and minimise and, where possible, eliminate anthropogenic impacts on beaked whales, particularly by implementing measures to prevent or minimise active sonar exposure, and *invites* Parties to collaborate with their militaries, other sound producers, and beaked whale experts to develop and implement effective and precautionary underwater noise mitigation strategies;
5. *Further calls upon* Parties to mitigate, minimise and, where possible, eliminate additional threats to beaked whales such as bycatch, entanglement in fishing gear and marine debris, habitat degradation, ingestion of plastics, and chemical pollution, and give consideration to the cumulative effects of these threats;
6. *Encourages* Parties to implement the *CMS Family Guidelines on Environmental Impact Assessment for Marine Noise-generating Activities*;
7. *Invites* Parties to implement measures recommended in *Overcoming Challenges to Protect Beaked Whales in the Northeast Atlantic - ASCOBANS Intersessional Working Group Report [(ASCOBANS/MOP10/...)]*;

8. *Requests* Parties to consider designating areas of importance for beaked whales as protected areas or other appropriate conservation measures, considering the best available scientific information and relevant international instruments;
9. *Encourages* Parties to raise the profile of the issues affecting the conservation of beaked whales, both through engagement with and conveying recommendations from *Overcoming Challenges to Protect Beaked Whales in the Northeast Atlantic - ASCOBANS Intersessional Working Group Report* [(ASCOBANS/MOP10/...)] to national navies and to NATO, and through distributing its findings widely, both nationally and internationally;
10. *Requests* the Secretariat to continue liaising with the International Whaling Commission, ACCOBAMS, and relevant bodies within the European Commission regarding the conservation issues affecting beaked whales; and
11. *Further encourages* Parties to develop and implement appropriate responses for when incidents occur with beaked whales in areas away from their usual habitat such as close to shore or in confined waters, such as rivers or lochs.