

Dear President,

Dear Colleagues,

I am very pleased to attend MOP 7 of ACCOBAMS on behalf of UNEP MAP Secretariat and Gaetano Leone, UNEP/MAP coordinator and congratulate the Parties to Accobams as well as the Secretariat on the work undertaken since MOP6 and successes and significative results achieved through your cooperation, commitment and dedication. I would like to thank the Turkish Government for their hospitality.

During the last 20 years, ACCOBAMS and UNEP/MAP, notably through our SPA/RAC Regional Activity Centre, have been working together to achieve and maintain a favorable conservation status for cetaceans in the Mediterranean, in the spirit of the recommendations Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention at their COP 14 (Portoroz, November 2005) concerning the relation between the implementation of ACCOBAMS and the SPA/BD Protocol.

Main challenges of cetacean conservation in the Mediterranean deal with the improvement of knowledge about the state of cetaceans, the reduction of human pressures on cetaceans, the reinforcement of national capacities and the enhancing of effective conservation of cetacean critical habitats.

Our joint efforts with the Mediterranean countries were marked, during the last triennium, by the strengthening of the national capacities through the implementation of the ACCOBAMS SURVEY INITIATIVE (ASI) capacity building Component on cetacean monitoring (collection, preparation and use of data). This component has been achieved in close synergy with the EU funded EcApMedII Project. 2 regional workshops were conducted in 2018 (pre-campaign phase) and 4 sub-regional workshops during 2018/2019. Support was also offered to some Mediterranean countries to carry out national field surveys in order to fill key knowledge gaps for vulnerable and highly mobile species and to assess their interaction with fishery activities (Bycatch, Depredation, etc.), thanks to the MAVA Foundation fund.

I would like to extend special thanks to Accobams Secretariat for the great work done with regards to noise monitoring in the context of the implementation of IMAP for the Mediterranean, which was adopted in 2016 by COP 19 of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention.

Thanks to the work of Accobams and MED POL programme of UNEP/MAP, and also to the EU-funded QuietMed project, fact sheets for two marine noise related indicators of IMAP were recently reviewed by the UNEP/MAP governing bodies. We look forward to their follow-up and implementation by all our Contracting parties in establishing their national marine noise monitoring programmes.

Meanwhile, the Joint Cooperation Strategy On Spatial-Based Protection And Management Measures For Marine Biodiversity among the Secretariats Of ACCOBAMS, GFCM, IUCN-MED AND UNEP/MAP aiming to address the issue of common interest related to the adoption of spatial based management and conservation measures, including their promotion and fund raising, has been amended and will be submitted for consideration by the 21st Meeting of the UNEP/MAP Contracting Parties.

The ASI survey data collected on Cetaceans but also on other species like marine turtles, birds as well as on marine litter and particularly plastics are very precious and useful for IMAP and could be very useful

to define the baseline for the QSR 2023. The data collected on highly mobile species are also useful to define conservation areas linked to relevant species such as IMMA (Important marine mammals areas) and eventually for MPAs declaration. On the other hand, this survey is done for the first time in the world. So, it could be presented as Mediterranean/Black sea/contiguous region of the Atlantic Flagship initiative during the CBD COP15 in Beijing 2020, and could inspire the post2020 action in other marine parts of the world.

Finally, we will convene the 21th meeting of the CP to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols. COP 21 will be held in Naples, Italy on 2-5 December in Castello dell'Ovo a famous landmark of Italian heritage, culture and history. We expect to receive two important mandates of relevance to Accobams scope of work related to the development of the new/revised SAP BIO and Mid term Strategy for MAP. We count on our stronger cooperation with you Accobams Parties and Secretariat to maximize our synergies towards the respective shared goals taking also into account the forthcoming post 2020 Biodiversity agenda.

Congratulations again for your contribution to our common and shared agenda and I wish you a very successful MOP 7 of delivery!