



United Nations  
Environment  
Programme



UNEP(OCA)/MED WG.28/5  
26 August 1991

Original: ENGLISH

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MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN

Meeting of Experts on the protection  
of Mediterranean cetaceans

Copanello, Italy, 25-26 August 1991

**REPORT OF THE MEETING OF EXPERTS ON THE PROTECTION  
OF MEDITERRANEAN CETACEANS**



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FOR REASONS OF ECONOMY, DELEGATES  
ARE KINDLY REQUESTED TO BRING THEIR  
DOCUMENTS TO THE MEETING

## INTRODUCTION

1. The last Joint Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Committee and the Socio-Economic Committee of the Mediterranean Action Plan (Athens, 6-10 May 1991), decided to convene a meeting of experts on Mediterranean cetaceans with a view to elaborate and present to the forthcoming meeting of the Contracting Parties to the convention for the protection of the Mediterranean Sea against pollution and its related Protocols (Cairo, 8-11 October 1991) a draft action plan for the protection of Mediterranean cetaceans. The European Association of Art and Science of Italy offered and the Joint Meeting accepted to host the experts' meeting in Italy during the month of August 1991. The organization also offered to cover the travel and the accommodation for two days of one expert from each Contracting Party. The meeting was organized with the technical support of Greenpeace International.

2. The meeting was convened in Copanello, Italy on 25 and 26 August 1991.

## PARTICIPANTS

3. The following Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention for the protection of the Mediterranean Sea against pollution and its related protocols were represented at the meeting: Albania, EEC, Israel, Monaco and Turkey.

4. The following relevant non-governmental organizations were represented by observers: Greenpeace International, World Conservation Union (IUCN), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Planning and Consultative Committee for Global Plan of Action for Marine Mammals (PCC) and the European Association of Art and Science of Italy.

5. The full list of participants is attached as Annex I to this report.

### Agenda Item 1: Opening of the meeting

6. The opening session was chaired by Senator Angelo Donato, President of the Promotion Committee for the Mediterranean project. He welcomed participants from various countries and organizations as well as the mass media representatives. He stressed the importance of protecting the endangered Mediterranean cetaceans and the need for concrete actions to be taken on the national, regional and international levels. He stressed the historical relations which links the people of the North and the South of the Mediterranean.

Mr. M. Furriolo, Mayor of Catanzaro and Mr. Veraldi welcomed the participants on behalf of the local administration.

Mr. Sergio Illuminato, President of the European Association of Art and Science welcomed the participants on behalf of his organization and made introductory remarks concerning the issue before the meeting.

7. Mr. I. Dharat, Programme Officer, Mediterranean Action Plan extended the appreciation of UNEP/MAP to the European Association of Art and Science for organizing and hosting the meeting. He also thanked the representatives of the local administration for their hospitality. He gave brief information on the Mediterranean Action Plan and its various components and the commitments of the Contracting Parties which they have undertaken in order to prevent, abate and

combat pollution of the Mediterranean Sea Area. He pointed out that the Mediterranean ecosystems are rich, diverse and uniquely linked with the way of life and the economies of the Coastal States. Thus the marine pollution, the population expansion and other human activities constitute a serious threat to the ecological equilibrium of the Mediterranean marine environment, to its resources and its biodiversity. He stressed that development to be sustainable should be geared towards achieving vitally needed economic growth while at the same time preserve the natural resources base and environment upon which future generations depend. He pointed out the increasing threat of loss of species in the Mediterranean Sea such as turtles, monk seals and cetaceans due to habitat destruction, which necessitate an urgent national, regional and international action in order to protect these endangered species. Finally, he informed the meeting that it is expected that an Action Plan for the conservation of Mediterranean cetaceans will be finalized by the present meeting for submission to the Seventh Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties (Cairo, 8-11 October 1991), for its consideration and final approval.

8. Mr. G. Notarbartolo, IUCN representative, Mr. L. Sabatini, Greenpeace Italy Responsible for Special Projects for the Mediterranean and Mr. F. Fabbri, from Greenpeace Mediterranean campaign made brief remarks on the activities of their organizations in the field of protecting Mediterranean cetaceans.

Agenda item 2: Rules of procedure

9. The meeting decided that the Rules of procedure adopted for the meetings and conferences of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the protection of the Mediterranean Sea against pollution and its related protocols (UNEP/IG.43/6, Annex XI) would apply mutatis mutandis to this meeting.

Agenda item 3: Election of officers

10. The meeting decided to entrust the responsibility of the Chairmanship to the representative of the Co-ordinating Unit of the Mediterranean Action Plan Mr. Ibrahim Dharat. Furthermore, it elected Mr. François Boillot (EEC) as Vice-Chairman and Ms. Gülsen Kugu (Turkey), as Rapporteur.

Agenda item 4: Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

11. The meeting adopted the provisional agenda contained in document UNEP(OCA)/MED WG.28/1 and the programme of work contained in document UNEP(OCA)/MED WG.28/2.

Agenda item 5: Consideration of the technical report on the State of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea and the draft Action Plan for the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean

12. The representatives of the Secretariat and Greenpeace International introduced the technical report contained in document UNEP(OCA)/MED WG.28/3 and the draft Action Plan contained in document UNEP(OCA)/MED WG.28/4.

13. As regards the technical report, general comments were made by the participants during which suggestions were made to incorporate some additional information in the report on the status of the Mediterranean cetaceans.

14. A round table discussion was undertaken, during which participants were invited to make presentation on the state of cetaceans in their countries, level of protection measures adopted, scientific research, etc.

15. The observers from non-governmental organizations briefed the meeting on the activities of their organizations relevant to the conservation of Mediterranean cetaceans.

16. During the ensuing debate the meeting requested the Secretariat to transmit the report contained in document UNEP(OCA)/MED WG.28/3 to all Contracting Parties and relevant non-governmental organizations seeking their comments and inputs which should be sent to the Secretariat not later than 30 November 1991. Moreover, the meeting decided to entrust the work of finalizing the technical report, on the basis of comments received, to the Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC) in close co-operation with Greenpeace and the World Conservation Union (IUCN).

17. At the end of the discussion the meeting took note of the technical report contained in document UNEP(OCA)/MED WG.28/3.

18. As regards the draft Action Plan for the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean contained in document UNEP(OCA)/MED WG.28/4, the meeting thoroughly reviewed the draft Action Plan paragraph by paragraph, made necessary amendments and approved it for the final consideration by the Seventh Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties (Cairo, 8-11 October 1991). The revised draft Action Plan is contained in Annex II to this report.

Agenda item 6: Other business

19. The representative of WWF International reminded the delegates that on September 27 and 28 in Ajaccio, Corsica, there will be a meeting of the recently created Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas Network, whose secretariat has been entrusted to the French Marine Park of Port Cros. Considering that the present draft Action Plan for the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea is also based on future protection of their specific habitats, the WWF representative stressed the importance of closer co-operation and co-ordination between the Network and MAP-SPA/RAC.

20. In parallel to the experts' meeting, a Mediterranean campaign was organized by the host organization in co-operation with some non-governmental organizations, during which brochures on the protection of Mediterranean endangered species, in particular, Mediterranean cetaceans were distributed. Lectures by Italian experts on the protection of the Mediterranean cetaceans were delivered during this campaign and video films and projector slides were shown. A press conference was organized at the end of the meeting.

Agenda item 7: Adoption of the report

21. The meeting adopted its report on 26 August 1991.

Agenda item 8: Closure of the meeting

22. In closing the meeting, the representative of the Secretariat informed the participants that the text adopted by the meeting on the draft Action Plan for the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean would be presented to the forthcoming meeting of the Contracting Parties to be held in Cairo from 8 to 11 October 1991 for its final approval.

23. The meeting expressed its thanks and appreciation to the European Association for Art and Science (Illuminato Initiative) and in particular to its President Mr. Sergio Illuminato for hosting the meeting in Copanello.

24. After the customary exchange of courtesies, the Chairman declared the meeting closed on Monday 26 August 1991.

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ANNEX II

DRAFT ACTION PLAN FOR THE CONSERVATION OF CETACEANS  
IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

**INTRODUCTION**

1. The Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution and its related protocols, included among their priority targets for the period 1985-1995 the protection of marine endangered species (Genoa Declaration, 1985).

2. When the Genoa Declaration in which these priority targets were included was adopted, the monk seal and the sea turtle were mentioned as examples of endangered marine species in the Mediterranean. Action plans for these species were adopted in 1987 and in 1989.

3. There is now clear evidence that some cetacean populations in the Mediterranean Sea Area are also endangered. Consequently, measures to enhance their protection should be considered a priority within the Mediterranean Action Plan.

4. *Many important aspects of cetacean biology, behaviour, range and habitats in the Mediterranean are poorly known, but the actual degradation of the populations is such that action can no longer be postponed, in line with the precautionary principle adopted by the Contracting Parties in 1989. Using the available information, it is possible to prepare an Action Plan for the conservation of Mediterranean cetaceans. This Plan will be adjusted, as necessary, when more information becomes available.*

5. Concrete protection measures, co-ordinated programmes for scientific research and public awareness campaigns can ensure the survival and assist in the recovery of cetacean populations.

6. Effective and durable cetacean protection in the Mediterranean Sea Area implies the co-operation with existing programmes and plans, such as:

- at the international level: the global conventions regarding the protection of the marine environment (in particular the 1973/78 MARPOL Convention and the London Dumping Convention), the conventions on endangered species (i.e UNEP Global Plan of Action for Conservation of Marine Mammals, adopted in 1984, the Bonn Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals and CITES (Washington Convention) ) and fisheries management plans;

Furthermore, considering the relevant work carried out within the framework of the International Whaling Commission (IWC), the Contracting Parties agree to address an appeal to the IWC to designate the Mediterranean Sea Area as a whale sanctuary;

- at the regional level: all relevant regional agreements, (in particular FAO General Fishery Council for the Mediterranean, FAO/GFCM and the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats);
- at the national level: the measures adopted, or to be adopted, by the Mediterranean States.

7. The most serious threats to cetaceans are:

- taking, defined as to harass, hunt, capture or kill or attempt to harass, hunt capture or kill any cetaceans;
- pollution, as defined by the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution;
- reduction or depletion of food resources;
- incidental catches in fishing gear;
- degradation and disturbances of habitats caused by other factors.

8. This Action Plan for the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea Area outlines objectives, priority actions, and co-ordinating structures. These different components are mutually reinforcing and must be taken together to have the best chance of success.

### **OBJECTIVES**

9. The objectives of this Action Plan are:

- (a) Protection, conservation and the recovery of the cetacean populations in the Mediterranean Sea Area.
- (b) Protection and conservation of cetacean habitats include feeding, breeding and calving grounds, without however, being restricted to these aspects.

### **PRIORITIES**

10. The following general priorities are recommended:

- prohibition of deliberate taking;
- prevention and elimination of pollution;
- elimination of incidental catches in fishing gear;
- prevention of over-exploitation of fishery resources;
- protection of feeding, breeding and calving grounds;
- monitoring, research and data collection and dissemination with regard to biology, behavior, range and habitats of cetaceans;
- educational activities aimed at the public at large and fishermen.

## OBLIGATIONS

11. The Contracting Parties shall take all the necessary measures to ensure a favourable conservation status for cetaceans by protecting them and their habitats from undue and cumulative effects resulting directly or indirectly from activities under national jurisdiction or control.

Such measures should include:

- the prohibition of any deliberate taking of cetaceans as well as ensuring enforcement of existing laws;
- the adoption of fishery policies that avoid the adverse effects of fisheries on the conservation status of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea Area;
- the regulation of fishing gear and practices in order to eliminate by-catches and to prevent fishing gear from being lost or discarded at sea;
- a ban on the use of large-scale driftnets;
- the safe release of any cetaceans incidentally caught in fishing gear;
- the adoption of national and regional strategies to phase-out the discharge of toxic compounds in the Mediterranean Sea Area, giving priority to those substances contained in the black and grey lists of the Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution from Land-Based Sources;
- the establishment of port reception facilities for the collection of ship generated garbage and of bilge and ballast waters;
- the development of scientific research and monitoring, using non-destructive and non-invasive procedures in order to:
  - (a) assess the status, dynamic and seasonal movements of the populations concerned
  - (b) identify present and potential threats to the various species
  - (c) make full use of the information that becomes available by establishing an efficient system for reporting by-catches and stranded specimens and carry out full autopsies in order to collect tissues for further studies and reveal possible cause of death, with special regard to contaminant loads, stomach contents, disease incidents and any physiological or anatomical abnormalities.
- the creation of a network of marine protected areas, including feeding, breeding and calving grounds for cetaceans;
- the development of widespread campaigns to increase public and fishermen awareness to support the conservation measures and to encourage the establishment of voluntary observer programmes to report sightings and strandings.

The conservation status will be taken as "favourable" when:

- population dynamic data indicate that cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea Area are maintaining themselves on a long-term basis as a viable component of the ecosystem;
- the range of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea Area is neither currently being reduced, nor is likely to be reduced on a long-term basis;
- there is, and will be in the foreseeable future, sufficient habitat in the Mediterranean Sea Area to maintain cetaceans on a long-term basis.

12. The Contracting Parties shall apply the conservation measures prescribed in this Action Plan and co-operate closely to achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for cetaceans.

#### CO-ORDINATING STRUCTURE

13. It is necessary to co-ordinate the activities envisaged in this Action Plan. It is considered that the Specially Protected Areas/ Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC) of the Mediterranean Action Plan is the most appropriate centre for this co-ordination in co-operation with other bodies concerned.

14. Its major function will be:

- (a) collect and evaluate data relating to the conservation status of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea Area;
- (b) disseminate and exchange information;
- (c) assist and/or organise expert meetings on specific topics regarding cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea Area;
- (d) contribute to the identification, selection and establishment of marine protected areas for cetaceans;
- (e) prepare recommendations for the Contracting Parties aimed at the protection and conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea Area as well as a time-table and financial proposals for their implementation.
- (f) Organize training courses in this field.

15. The conservation status of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea Area, the content of this Action Plan and its implementation shall be reviewed every four years.