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MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN

Meeting of the National Focal Points
for Specially Protected Areas in the
Mediterranean
Athens, 26-30 October 1992
including joint consultation concerning
the conservation of cetaceans in the
Mediterranean and the Black sea
Athens 26-27 October 1992

Action plan for the conservation
of cetaceans in the Mediterranean region.

FORWARD

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- The secretaries of the Barcelona Convention for the protection of the Mediterranean Sea against pollution, of the Bonn Convention for the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals and of the Bern Convention for the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, with the technical support of Greenpeace met in Palma (Spain) to review the technical report of cetaceans in the Mediterranean and to prepare a provisional version of the Action Plan for the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Mediterranean region.

3- Many non governmental organizations are interested to the conservation of cetaceans and are willing to improve their knowledge about cetacean population in the Mediterranean and are cooperating with the national and international instances so that concrete measures are taken for the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean sea.

4- The Joint Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Committee and the Socio-Economic Committee of the Mediterranean Action Plan (Athenes, 6-10 May 1991), has approved the proposition of which the Action Plan for the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean will be established by the secretariat in close consultation with Greenpeace and the World Wild Fond for nature (WWF) with the view to be reviewed and approved later in a meeting of Mediterranean experts, convened to take place before the Meeting of the Contracting Parties (Le Caire, 8-11 octobre 1991). The European Association of Art and Science of Italy offered and the Joint Meeting accepted to host the experts' meeting in Italy. The Meeting was organized with the technical support of Greenpeace International.

5- The Meeting was convened in Copanello, Italy on 25 and 26 August 1991. The meeting thoroughly examined the project of the Action Plan on Conservation of Cetaceans in the Mediterranean, made necessary amendments and approved it for the final consideration by the Seventh Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties. The revised Plan is contained in the present document for review by the Meeting.

6- During the Seventh Ordinary Meeting (Cairo, 8-11 october 1991), the Contracting Parties adopted the draft Action Plan and decided to mandate the meeting of the National Focal Points for Specially Protected Areas to further elaborate the Action Plan for implementation by the Contracting Parties.

The Action Plan as adopted by the Seventh Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties figures in the present document. This National Focal Point Meeting is invited to:

- 1- comment the content of the present document and give suggestions with the view of a final elaboration.
- 2- give suggestions for their countries or regions with the view to implement the Action Plan.
- 3- define precisely the priorities for the actions to implement by the Centre SPA, including the mechanisms of cooperation and coordination with the other concerned institutions, notably the Convention of Bern and Bonn here present.

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 th 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.