



Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

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A Global Player Takes Action to Save Dolphins from Extinction

Cetacean conservation is a crucial component of the work of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), which aims to conserve whales and dolphins as well as their habitats. As a response to the plight of these marine mammals the Convention decided to develop agreements to conserve cetaceans.

Under its umbrella, two regional agreements were concluded: ASCOBANS was developed as the first agreement to help protect small cetaceans in the Baltic and the North Seas. ACCOBAMS covers cetaceans, among them large whales in the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. The world's largest whales, the Blue Whale, the Bowhead Whale and the Sperm Whale are listed on CMS Appendix I. States strive towards strictly protecting these animals, conserving or restoring their habitats. This includes controlling factors that endanger them: entanglement in fishing gear, overfishing, pollution, noise disturbance and climate change. Besides establishing obligations for each State that joins the Convention, CMS promotes concerted action among the States where these species occur.

Both agreements demonstrate that the Convention and its operational tools play a unique role in regional cetacean conservation. The relevance of CMS for the regional protection by the successes of ASCOBANS and ACCOBAMS. They set an example for conserving whales and dolphins on a global scale: CMS supports a research initiative to conserve cetaceans in the Bay of Bengal. This includes assessment of populations, the impact of bycatch and training of local scientists.

Whales and dolphins that are covered by the Convention and its agreements live in the sea and in rivers. The Franciscana Dolphin is the only river dolphin that lives in shallow coastal waters of the sea. CMS has supported a project to conserve the most endangered small cetacean in South America. The Irrawaddy Dolphin that lives in the waters of the Indian and Pacific Oceans and the Ganges River Dolphin are both listed on CMS Appendix II. The latter is also included in CMS Appendix I.

New initiatives are underway: an agreement to conserve South Pacific Islands cetaceans is ready for signature. The predominant threat to cetaceans in this region again is bycatch, the incidental capture in fisheries. CMS will develop an action plan to reduce threats and protect habitats in this region. Since many species are still unknown, CMS wants to better coordinate research to know more about the population status.

Furthermore, the Convention has a clear mandate for developing agreements to protect small cetaceans in tropical West Africa and in South East Asia.

In addition to conservation projects, CMS supports field surveys and training. The Convention also convened an international conference on marine mammals in the Philippines and a workshop in South America. CMS published the latest scientific findings as a result of the workshop.

The Convention on Migratory Species is the only UN Convention that protects dolphins along their migration route to their feeding and breeding grounds. CMS is a unique global advocate that reduces threats to their survival as well as to the ocean and river waters they live in.