

MARINE DEBRIS

Recalling the UN Sustainable Development Goal 14, which sets a target to prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution, including marine debris and nutrient pollution, by 2025,

Recalling CMS Resolution 12.20 *Management of Marine Debris*, ACCOBAMS Resolution 7.15 *Assessing Marine Litter Impacts on Cetaceans*, and IWC Resolution 2018-3 *Ghost Gear Entanglement among Cetaceans*,

Taking note of the Joint ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS/SPA-RAC Workshop on marine debris and cetacean stranding (April 2018), and the Third IWC Workshop on Marine Debris (December 2019),

Considering marine debris to include any anthropogenic, manufactured or processed material, irrespective of its size, present in the marine environment, including all materials discarded into the sea, on the shore, or brought indirectly to the sea by rivers, sewage, storm water or winds,

Concerned that marine debris, including abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) and plastics, negatively impact substantial numbers of marine mammals,

Aware that cetacean entanglement in and ingestion of marine debris are both conservation and welfare concerns,

Also aware that marine debris may have the potential to increase the bioavailability of toxic substances and pathogens,

Concerned that all parts of the marine food chain may be impacted by marine debris,

Welcoming United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) Resolution 1/6 *Marine Plastic Debris and Micro Plastics* (2014), Resolution 2/11 *Marine Plastic Litter and Microplastics* (2016), Resolution 3/7 *Marine Litter and Microplastics* (2017), and Resolution 4/6 *Marine Plastic Litter and Microplastics* (2019),

Welcoming the OSPAR Marine Litter Regional Action Plan (2014), the HELCOM Marine Litter Action Plan (2015), the G20 Action Plan on Marine Litter (2017), the EU Plastics Strategy (2018), and the EU Directive (EU) 2019/904 on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment (2019),

Recalling that litter and micro-litter and any adverse effects of which on marine mammals (through ingestion, entanglement, other types of injury or mortality, or health effects), is addressed by Descriptor 10 and its related criteria under the EU Marine Strategy Framework Initiative (Directive 2008/56/EU and Decision 2017/848/EU),

Recognizing United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 74/19 *Oceans and the law of the sea*, which emphasizes the importance of protecting and preserving the marine environment and its living marine resources against pollution and physical degradation,

Acknowledging the substantial work on this subject being undertaken by other regional and global instruments, including inter alia the United Nations Environment Programme Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (GPA-Marine), the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (RSCAPs), the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML), the Global Partnership on Waste Management (GPWM), the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution From Ships (MARPOL), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the International Whaling Commission (IWC), and the

Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter (London Convention),

Emphasizing that preventing waste from reaching the marine environment is the most effective way to address this problem, and that moving to a more circular economy reducing the amount of waste generated is the only sustainable solution, and *recognizing* the key role of industry and Governments in establishing this circular economy,

Welcoming the efforts of ASCOBANS Parties to monitor marine debris and reduce plastic waste.

The Meeting of the Parties to ASCOBANS

1. *Encourages* Parties and non-Party Range States to collaboratively identify, prioritise and mitigate impacts of marine debris on marine mammals;
2. Further encourages Parties and non-Party Range States to use available information from cetaceans to inform policy-making and help address the marine debris problem;
3. *Agrees* to support efforts to end unnecessary use of single-use plastics across the Agreement Area and to address abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear, including retrieval and recycling projects;
4. *Agrees* that the marine debris threat to small cetaceans in the ASCOBANS region requires further research, which includes:
 - a) Long-term efforts to document the presence of marine debris, both ingested and entangled, also including reporting zero values from post-mortem examinations and debris related lesions;
 - b) Post-mortem examinations conducted using clearly defined diagnostic approaches which reflect current international best practice, such as those detailed in the joint ASCOBANS/ACCOBAMS protocol *Best Practice on Cetacean Post-mortem Investigation and Tissue Sampling*. This should include quality assurance and quality control procedures, data and sample archive management as well as reporting;
 - c) Identifying that there may be species-specific vulnerabilities to different components of marine debris; and
 - d) Accurately recording debris in a standardised manner;
5. *Encourages* the collection of information about marine debris during cetacean population and other surveys, when possible, in accordance with international best practice protocols, that should include collection of data relating to benthic debris, pelagic/floating and beach-cast debris and plastics, with an aim to identify hotspots, sources and those debris that are most abundant and problematic;
6. *Encourages* Parties to collaborate with initiatives focused on mitigating this problem including *inter alia* Fishing for Litter¹ and the Global Ghost Gear Initiative²; and
7. *Requests* the ASCOBANS Secretariat to explore ways of increasing coordination and collaboration with regional and international organizations to share information and develop and implement best practices.

¹ <http://www.fishingforlitter.org/>

² <https://www.ghostgear.org/>