

## **Press Statement UNEP/CMS – ACCOBAMS MoP3 – 25 October 2007**

The UNEP Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, also known as CMS or the Bonn Convention, is a global intergovernmental treaty concluded to protect the travellers in the animal world.

No species group is so much in the focus of CMS Conservation work as Marine Mammals, such as whales and dolphins. By adopting a regional approach for cetacean conservation, addressing the specific needs and threats of populations found in different areas, CMS serves as a framework for three regional treaties for cetaceans: ASCOBANS, concerned with small cetaceans in the Baltic and North Seas, ACCOBAMS for the Mediterranean and Black Seas and a Memorandum of Understanding for the Pacific Islands Region. A first negotiation meeting for a new small cetacean agreement for the Western African Atlantic, spanning from Morocco in the North to South Africa and including the Macaronesian Islands of the Canaries, Madeira, Azores and Cape Verde, was held in Tenerife last week, with people from 23 countries present. Their commitment to dolphin conservation and the urgent call by people from the region for the quick establishment of this new treaty to help them coordinate their conservation effort was truly inspiring.

Despite the challenges posed to conservation of these charismatic animals in the ACCOBAMS area, where many ecosystems are degraded, largely due to mismanagement, the Agreement serves as a model for the other CMS cetacean-related agreements. By means of a strong base in science and thanks to the Parties' will to commit to rigorous conservation action, specific threats can be reduced and especially vulnerable populations protected. We are confident that Parties will give priority to the speedy implementation of the crucial measures to protect the severely pressured populations of whales and dolphins, discussed and agreed on this week. In this way, the meeting will have a tangible effect for the cetaceans living in these beautiful waters, which we had in front of us throughout the meeting in this excellent venue. Our special thanks goes to the Croatian government for providing such an ideal setting and such generous support.

The CMS regards meetings like the one in Tenerife last week, starting a new initiative, and this one, setting the direction and pace for an existing agreement for the coming three years, as important milestones on the way to a better conservation status for all cetaceans. Having such encouraging meetings during this present Year of the Dolphin confirms that people from all walks of life take an interest in the charismatic marine wildlife and are willing to do their part in protecting them. The commitment by governments is reflected by the enthusiasm of people throughout the ACCOBAMS area who participate in Year of the Dolphin events such as Dolphin Days, teachers planning activities with their students, or tour operators offering wildlife watching experiences that respect the needs of the animals and inspire visitors to carry home the message that these animals need our protection. CMS is proud to have started this initiative together with ASCOBANS, ACCOBAMS, the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society and the tour operator TUI. This unique partnership has enabled us to reach many more people than we would have been able to individually, it has also strengthened the cooperation between the bodies in other areas. The Year of the Dolphin campaign truly is an example of something being more than the sum of its parts.

We are sure that the ACCOBAMS agreement area will continue to be a hot spot of activities for the conservation of cetaceans – during the Year of the Dolphin and beyond. Thank you.