

**RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE  
 4<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE ASCOBANS COMMON DOLPHIN GROUP**

*(Adopted by the Advisory Committee)*

These recommendations were made at the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Common Dolphin Group (CDG4, 9-10 January 2024), which reviewed the latest information related to bycatch and other significant threats. The CDG made the following recommendations:

<b>CDG4 /Rec #</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Long-/short-term + Deadline if possible</b>	<b>Priority (High / Medium / Low)</b>
<b>Surveys</b>			
1.	Parties and Non-Party Range States are encouraged to allocate adequate funding to future SCANS summer (June-July) and winter surveys in a timely manner to ensure that such surveys are undertaken in as short a time as possible, noting the Common Dolphin is a highly mobile species and the abundance in an area may vary greatly between seasons. (CDG3/Rec1*)	Long-term	High
<b>Strandings</b>			
2.	Considering the increase in cases of infectious disease and starvation reported in the UK and Ireland, Parties should ensure sufficient funding is available for stranding programmes to assess health status, and monitor changes in causes of death. The CDG also recommends this to Non-Party Range States. The need for a consistent and holistic approach to collection and analysis of data and samples from stranded animals should be borne in mind. (CDG3/Rec2)	Long-term	Medium
3.	Parties and non-Party Range States should continue efforts to harmonize and coordinate assessments for Common Dolphin and other cetaceans for reporting under the MSFD and Article 17 of the Habitats Directive, including employing OSPAR's common indicators. (CDG3/Rec9*)	Long-term	High
4.	Parties and non-Party Range States should enhance their pollution monitoring programmes to ensure sufficient data for reporting to OSPAR, to facilitate the Marine Mammal persistent pollutant indicator assessment.	Long-term	Medium
5.	Parties and non-Party Range States are recommended that North-east Atlantic-wide information on life history parameters be collected and analysed from stranded and bycaught animals to assess for evidence of temporal changes in those parameters at the population level that may have resulted from anthropogenic activities. (CDG2/Rec7*)	Long-term	Medium

CDG4 /Rec #	Recommendation	Long-/short-term + Deadline if possible	Priority (High / Medium / Low)
<b>Bycatch</b>			
6.	Parties and non-Party Range States are urged to quantify the effects of their bycatch reduction measures to ensure that they minimize and where possible eliminate the incidental catches of Common Dolphins in fisheries in the Bay of Biscay. The 25 October 2023 Joint Recommendation of the South Western Waters High-Level Group lacked an evaluation of their proposed measures. This includes information on pingers that will be employed, together with their technical and operational specifications and the proof of their effectiveness on Common Dolphins, as outlined by STECF (2023). As well as knowledge on the scale of pinger deployment, both spatially and temporally. Caution should be exercised with the use of powerful acoustic deterrent devices, considering their potential impacts on species, such as the Harbour Porpoise, but including Common Dolphins as well. A more detailed strategic plan for pinger deployment is required.	Immediate action; long-term activity	High
7.	France is urged to provide a clear action plan for the reduction of bycatch in the Bay of Biscay. The Steering Group is concerned by the delayed development of the action plan, based on the information received at its 4 <sup>th</sup> meeting. France is also recommended to consider the relevant ICES advice (2020, 2023).	Short-term	High
8.	Parties and non-Party Range States are urged to include all stakeholders (scientists, fishers, governmental entities, and NGOs) to discuss and implement practical measures to combat bycatch. Collaborative and inclusive approaches in developing mitigation strategies should be applied at all stages of the process.	Immediate action; long-term activity	High
9.	Parties and non-Party Range States are encouraged to continue to review and test a range of mitigation options to reduce bycatch of Common Dolphins, including acoustic deterrents, gear modifications, fishing practices, time-area closures, move-on procedure etc., mitigation measures that could be implemented at the fleet level. (CDG2/Rec4*)	Long-term	High
10.	Parties and non-Party Range States should encourage fishers to adopt less harmful alternative gears, and to develop the economic viability of fishing gear substitution/adaptation.	Immediate action; long-term activity	High
11.	Parties and non-Party Range States should request the fishing industry to enhance their reporting of fishing effort.	Medium-term	High
12.	Parties and non-Party Range States should better target their bycatch monitoring efforts at the areas and métiers of high bycatch risk for the Common Dolphin. These include particularly static net fisheries (GNS and GTR) over the Biscay shelf (subareas 8a and 8b) and the coastal zone of the Iberian Peninsula (subareas 8c, 9a, 9b) where	Long-term	High

CDG4 /Rec #	Recommendation	Long-/short-term + Deadline if possible	Priority (High / Medium / Low)
	current monitoring effort covers only a very small fraction of fishing effort. (CDG3/Rec6)		
13.	Portugal and Spain are encouraged to actively increase observer coverage and remote electronic monitoring in small vessel fisheries for estimating bycatch and monitor the effectiveness of mitigation measures, given the increase in strandings of bycaught Common Dolphins in recent years. (CDG3/Rec7)	Medium-term	High
<b>Other</b>			
14.	Parties are encouraged to conduct further analysis towards fine-scale risk-mapping of anthropogenic noise sources and consider the cumulative impacts of exposure in the future on the Common Dolphin.	Medium-term	Medium
15.	Letters of invitation to be sent from the Secretariat to request Non-Party Range States' participation in implementation of the SAP on Common Dolphins. (CDG2/Rec10)	Short-term	High
16.	SAP Range States to complete the 'Achievements Table' by end of the year to identify data gaps, as well as actions and funding that are required going forward. The Steering Group should then set priorities for each country. (CDG2/Rec11)	By end of 2024	High

\* Updated/edited.