



# TARANTO CHART

## on critical issues and strategies for the protection of whales and dolphins of the Gulf of Taranto and the adjacent seas

### **The Michelagnoli Foundation,**

**Taking** into account the ideas expressed by the participants of the Workshop on the above subject held in Taranto, September 30, 2016,

**Being** committed to increasing knowledge of the state of the seas and the evolving trend of their ecological functions,

**Aware** of the need to protect and safeguard cetaceans and marine habitats,

**Acknowledging** the presence of cetaceans as an indicator of the health of the marine environment,

**Considering** that the existence of cetaceans, particularly dolphins, in the Gulf of Taranto and in the adjacent area of the Northern Ionian Sea (hereinafter “our seas”), is an undeniable reality beyond any scientific evidence,

**Recalling** that in our seas, in ancient times, has developed the mythology of the dolphin friend of the man who has found an echo even in the history of the foundation of Taranto and in its monetary symbols,

**Convinced** of the importance of the targets set by the European Union Member States with the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) for the achievement of good environmental status,

**Taking into account** the obligations arising under the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS) and the resolutions adopted by the Parties to the same Agreement,

**Whereas** the Gulf of Taranto, characterized by underwater canyons and sea mountains which develop from the west coast of the provinces of Taranto, Matera, Cosenza and Crotona, is an ideal habitat for pelagic species that migrate along the corridors of communication between coastal waters and the high seas,

**Considering** also that the deep waters of the Northern Ionian Sea are connected with the Gulf of Taranto (across the canyon of the Taranto Valley) and the areas of the Hellenic Trench and the Gulf of Corinth in which a specific Marine Protected Area (Eastern Ionian Sea & Gulf of Corinth MPA) has been proposed,

**Evaluating** the overlap between cetacean habitats and sites where there are anthropic risks envisaged in our seas,

**Convinced** that, as indicated by the EU MSFD, the conservation of cetaceans requires measures to ensure the integrity of the ecosystem of the seabed, reducing eutrophication of human origin, limit the input of waste and energy input into the sea , including underwater noise, at levels that do not have negative effects on the marine environment,

**1. DECLARES that it is useful to assume, as a non-binding subsidiary protection tool, a Marine Attention Precautionary Area for Cetaceans (MAPAC) spatially located in the internal waters of the Gulf of Taranto closed by the line joining Santa Maria di Leuca-Punta Alice. In this MAPAC, which includes, among other things, the natural habitat of the seabed of Cariati, the Amendolara Bank, the Mar Piccolo basin, the Cheradi Islands and the Shoals of Ugento, as well as the existing Marine Protected Area of Porto Cesareo, without prejudice to the application of laws on the protection of marine environment and fish stocks, we should:**

**a. conduct** the navigation of merchant and military vessels as well as pleasure crafts and fishing boat in order to reduce their impact on cetaceans;

**b. contain,** within the limits defined by the MSFD, underwater noise emissions, avoiding the use of equipment involving dangerous emissions for cetaceans;

**c. develop** a plan for the assessment of noise emissions already present or in progress, including those arising from the installation of wind farms;

**d. conduct** the activities of cetacean watching tourism according to codes of conduct recommended by ACCOBAMS;

## **2. CALL FOR:**

**a. the adoption,** for north-eastern area of the Ionian, of joint protection measures with Greece taking account of potential migration corridors of cetaceans in the waters of the two countries;

**b. the rethinking** of human activities in the Gulf of Taranto, including industrial and energy ones, which have effects on the sea, experimenting with innovative approaches to minimize the threats to cetaceans and their habitats;

**c. the development** and the use of increasingly silent technologies for seismic surveys, for the off-shore installation and the vessel traffic as well as the application of best practices available in all relevant activities;

**3. AFFIRMS** the opportunity to carry out in the Gulf of Taranto an Underwater Marine Observatory (UMO) that will integrate with the Ionian UMOs to constitute a monitoring network for the protection of cetaceans and the promotion of scientific and technological development in the area;

**4. UNDERTAKE to disclose in the regional context this Chart, in the spirit of the Agreement ACCOBAMS, to marine operators, local associations and authorities concerned, so that they strive to disseminate and apply its contents, as well as to transmit it to the competent ministerial authorities and to the ACCOBAMS Secretariat.**

*Taranto, September 30, 2016*

