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An ACCOBAMS certification for highly qualified marine mammals observers

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Based on the outputs issued from the ACCOBAMS Workshop “Developing Tools to Ensure High Quality MMOs in the ACCOBAMS Area”, held during the 30th ECS Conference in 2016, ACCOBAMS Parties expressed, during their Sixth Meeting in November 2016, the importance of providing a standardized training programme for Marine Mammals Observers (MMOs) operating during human activities generating noise. The Resolution 6.18 “Implementation of an ACCOBAMS Certification for Highly Qualified Marine Mammals Observers” was adopted in order to guarantee throughout the Agreement area a high quality standardized training of MMOs/PAM. It will: ensure the recognition of the ACCOBAMS Highly Qualified MMOs/PAM operators at the international level, improve the effectiveness of conservation measures to limit the impact of noise on cetaceans. Relevant trainer organizations will be accredited by the Permanent Secretariat based on requirements set up by the ACCOBAMS MMO WG. An “ACCOBAMS School”, composed by relevant experts identified by the ACCOBAMS MMO WG, will provide them with standard supports. The accredited trainer organizations will then train and certificate relevant experts to become “Highly Qualified MMO/PAM operators”. The objective is to encourage ACCOBAMS Parties to give, in priority, permits for activities in their national area, to industrial companies employing Highly Qualified MMOs/PAM operators or at least other internationally agreed certifications. Experts of the “ACCOBAMS School”, identified by the ACCOBAMS MMO WG, will be invited to propose formal standardized supports for trainings by June 2017. In parallel, there will be early this year a launch for organization to candidate for accreditation. The announcement of the ACCOBAMS MMO/PAM “certification” and the first accreditations for trainer organizations are planned to be delivered during the 31th ECS conference. The first ACCOBAMS Highly Qualified MMOs are planned to be certificated during the Fourth Biennial Conference for South Mediterranean Countries (Oran, October 2017).