



## **French Shipowners Association calling on Members helping to protect endangered whales**

OceanCare Press release

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The international marine conservation organisation OceanCare welcomes today's announcement by Armateurs de France, the French shipowners' association, calling on its members to adopt voluntary action towards the protection of two endangered whale populations. The around 60 member companies, navigating around 1000 vessels, including cargo and container ships as well as fast passenger ferries, are asked to «re-route and/or reduce vessel speed» in the Hellenic Trench off Greece and south of Sri Lanka.

The measures are recommended in support of protecting endangered sperm whales and blue whales from being hit by ships which is the main single direct cause of death to the populations in these areas. OceanCare is seeking close collaboration with the shipping sector in instigating measures directly, while it calls on decision makers within the IMO, as well as within national governments to adopt mandatory measures to re-route shipping around high-risk zones identified by researchers to prevent endangered whales being hit.

«Any such measure taken by the shipping industry contributes to increasing the chance for the survival of these endangered whales which remain low in numbers. It is testimony of practical conservation efforts» says Nicolas Entrup, Director International Relations at OceanCare who has been exchanging information with Armateurs de France.

The Hellenic Trench is a recognized Important Marine Mammal Area (IMMA) for the deep diving sperm whales and Cuvier's beaked whales. Sperm whales in the Mediterranean Sea are classified as Endangered by the IUCN Red List, while from the eastern Mediterranean population only around 200 animals remain. OceanCare is working within a coalition of the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), the Pelagos Cetacean Research Institute and WWF Greece reaching out to shipping companies urged to re-route away from the most important whale habitat.

The waters southwest to eastern Sri Lanka are also a recognized IMMA for blue whales and sperm whales. The Sri Lankan population of blue whales are found in the waters south of Sri Lanka year round. Local researchers have also discovered they have distinct vocalisations and behaviours that differentiate them from other populations. They are listed by the IUCN as endangered.

Diverting shipping lanes away from whale habitat, called re-routing, is the most effective measure to protect whales from ship strikes. Where re-routing is not an option, the only proven effective measure when navigating through a core habitat to reduce the risk of collisions with whales is to reduce vessel speed, ideally to no more than 10 knots.

In 2022, the Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC) imposed re-routing measures for the Hellenic Trench and Sri Lanka. The German Shipowner Association (VDR) urged their Members to also re-route in both areas. This call was later in the year supported by the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) in stressing that such measures are a positive contribution to protect endangered wildlife.

For further information: Nicolas Entrup, Director International Relations, M. + 43 660 211 9963, [nentrup@oceancare.org](mailto:nentrup@oceancare.org)

Ilka Franzmann  
communication manager OceanCare  
Telefon: +49 – 170 - 280 51 81  
E-Mail: [ifranzmann@oceancare.org](mailto:ifranzmann@oceancare.org)

OceanCare setzt sich seit 1989 passioniert und mit großer wissenschaftlicher Expertise für lebendige Ozeane ein. Die NGO mit Sitz in der Schweiz ist UNO-Sonderberaterin und trägt international zur Erreichung der Nachhaltigkeitsziele der Agenda 2030 bei. Meeresverschmutzung und Klimakrise, Artensterben und Bejagung, der Schutz der Meereslebewesen und nachhaltige Fischerei sind unsere Themen. Wir bringen bahnbrechende Reformen in die Welt, von funktionierenden Meeresschutzgebieten über ein starkes UNO Hochseeabkommen bis zu einem globalen Vertrag zur Plastikvermeidung und dem Ziel, die Öl- und Gassuche im Meer zu unterbinden. Wir bewirken Entscheidendes. OceanCare. Für lebendige Meere. Mehr unter [www.oceancare.org](http://www.oceancare.org)