



Underwater Research Society
Mediterranean Seal Research Group

INTERNATIONAL MONK SEAL CONSERVATION ALLIANCE

i-MONK ALLIANCE

The International Monk Seal Conservation Alliance (*i-monk Alliance*) was founded on the 9th of November 2008 in Funchal, Madeira, Portugal. Its mission is to encourage the ecological conditions in which the critically-endangered Mediterranean monk seal, *Monachus monachus*, can recover and thrive, throughout the current and historical range of the species.

The founding members of the Alliance are CBD-Habitat (Fundación para la Conservación de la Biodiversidad y su Hábitat) of Spain, IFAW (International Fund for Animal Welfare), MOM (The Hellenic Society for the Study and Protection of the Monk Seal) of Greece, The Monachus Guardian (an international journal and website dedicated to monk seals), the Parque Natural da Madeira of Portugal and SAD-AFAG (Underwater Research Society / Mediterranean Seal Research Group) of Turkey — all of which have been working on monk seal conservation and research issues across the species' range. Members are environmental non-profit, non-governmental organizations as well as governmental institutions, devoted to the conservation of the Mediterranean monk seal and its threatened habitats.

The *i-monk Alliance* is the result of long-term and amicable collaboration among its founding members. Following many years of determined effort to protect the species, the founding members concluded that the time had come to join forces and create an international framework that would strengthen existing and support new conservation and research initiatives.

Much of the most significant conservation and research work conducted to date in the Mediterranean and Atlantic areas of the species' habitat range has been carried out by committed individuals, non-profit NGOs and governmental institutions, often with limited resources. Examples of this work are: the International Monk Seal Recovery Plan in the Eastern Atlantic, developed by Mauritania, Morocco, Portugal and Spain, and the establishment of Marine Protected Areas in the Aegean Sea, such as the National Marine Park of Alonnisos, Northern Sporades and the Foça Special Environmental Protection Area.

Despite such advances, founding members have expressed unanimous concern at insufficiencies in conservation actions, inadequate collaboration and ineffective coordination of efforts to counteract the decline of Mediterranean monk seal populations and the increasing degradation of its habitat.

The ***i-monk Alliance*** aims to develop and implement joint, collaborative actions, where warranted and agreed by its constituent members; document the joint efforts of its member organizations; disseminate information; raise awareness; promote marine conservation, and facilitate the recovery of the Mediterranean monk seal throughout its current and historical range.

Founding members have committed themselves to pursue the **Objectives of the Alliance**, which are:

1) To enhance collaboration between bodies involved in the conservation and research of the species and habitats, to promote the free-flow of relevant information between all involved parties, and to further develop capacity-building in conservation and research throughout the species' range;

2) To develop common strategies and policies, and to work collaboratively on critical issues affecting the conservation of the species and its habitats across its range;

3) To promote and/or to contribute to the establishment and effective management of protected areas across the species' range so as to ensure the long-term conservation of key populations and habitats, respecting in parallel the need for the ecologically-sustainable development of human communities living within them;

4) To encourage relevant stakeholders and the public of the need for concerted international action on the conservation of the species and its habitat;

5) To share the Alliance members' know-how and experience, individually or as a group, with third parties, which are or wish to become involved in the conservation of the species.

The ***i-monk Alliance*** is developing a plan of concerted actions for the immediate future. It is also hoped that other prospective members, whose work meets the founding principles and operating criteria of the Alliance, will consider applying for membership in due course. 'Observer' status may also be considered for organisations or individuals wishing to attend specific meetings or working group sessions, but which may not necessarily be applicable for full membership.

For further information, please contact, the ***i-monk Alliance*** Secretariat:

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