

RESOLUTION 09/06
ON MARINE TURTLES

The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC),

RECALLING Recommendation 05/08 *On Sea Turtles*;

AWARE that the populations of the six species of marine turtles under the *Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia* (IOSEA MoU) are listed as vulnerable, endangered or critically endangered on the IUCN - The World Conservation Union Red List of Threatened Species;

RECOGNISING that the 26th FAO-COFI Session in March 2005 adopted the *Guidelines to Reduce Sea Turtle Mortality in Fishing Operation* (hereinafter referred to as “the FAO Guidelines”) and recommended their implementation by regional fisheries bodies and management organizations;

RECOGNISING that some fishing operations carried out in the Indian Ocean can adversely impact marine turtles and the need to implement measures to manage the adverse effects of fishing in the Indian Ocean on marine turtles;

ACKNOWLEDGING the activities undertaken to conserve marine turtles and the habitats on which they depend within the framework of the IOSEA MoU in particular its *Resolution to Promote the Use of Marine Turtle Bycatch Reduction Measures by IOSEA Signatory States* adopted by the Fifth Meeting of the Signatory States.

NOTING the Scientific Committee’s concern that the expansion of gillnet fishing from traditional fishing grounds into high seas might increase the interaction with marine turtles and lead to increased mortality;

FURTHER NOTING the Scientific Committee’s adoption of a status report on marine turtles at its eleventh session and its finding that there is an urgent need to quantify the effects of Indian Ocean fisheries on non-target (bycatch) species and to develop mitigation measures to reduce adverse effects on these species;

ADOPTS in accordance with paragraph 1 of Article IX of the IOTC Agreement, that:

1. Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties (hereinafter referred to as “CPCs”) will implement, as appropriate, the FAO Guidelines.
2. CPCs shall collect (including through logbooks and observer programs) and provide to the Scientific Committee all data on their vessels’ interactions with marine turtles in fisheries targeting the species covered by the IOTC Agreement. CPC shall also furnish available information to the Scientific Committee on successful mitigation measures and other impacts on marine turtles in the IOTC Area, such as the deterioration of nesting sites and swallowing of marine debris.
3. CPCs shall report to the Commission, in accordance with Article X of the IOTC Agreement, their progress of implementation of the FAO Guidelines and this Resolution.
4. CPCs shall require fishermen on vessels targeting species covered by the IOTC Agreement to bring aboard, if practicable, any captured hard shelled turtle that is comatose or inactive as soon as possible and foster its recovery, including aiding in its resuscitation, before safely returning it to the water. CPCs shall ensure that fishermen are aware of and use proper mitigation and handling techniques and keep on board all necessary equipment for the release of turtles, in accordance with guidelines to be adopted by the IOTC.

5. CPCs with gillnet vessels that fish for species covered by the IOTC Agreement shall:
 - (a) Require that operators of such vessels record all incidents involving marine turtles during fishing operations in their logbooks⁷ and report such incidents to the appropriate authorities of the CPC;
 - (b) Provide the results of the reporting under paragraph 5(a) to the Commission as part of the reporting requirement of paragraph 2.
6. CPCs with longline vessels that fish for species covered by the IOTC Agreement shall:
 - (a) Ensure that the operators of all longline vessels carry line cutters and de-hookers in order to facilitate the appropriate handling and prompt release of marine turtles caught or entangled, and that they do so in accordance with IOTC Guidelines to be developed. CPCs shall also ensure that operators of such vessels are required to carry and use, where appropriate, dip-nets, in accordance with guidelines to be adopted by the IOTC;
 - (b) Encourage the use of whole finfish bait where appropriate;
 - (c) Require that operators of such vessels record all incidents involving marine turtles during fishing operations in their logbooks⁸ and report such incidents to the appropriate authorities of the CPC;
 - (d) Provide the results of the reporting under paragraph 6(c) to the Commission as part of the reporting requirement of paragraph 2.
7. CPCs with purse seine vessels that fish for species covered by the IOTC Agreement shall:
 - (a) Ensure that operators of such vessels, while fishing in the IOTC Area:
 - (i) To the extent practicable, avoid encirclement of marine turtles, and if a marine turtle is encircled or entangled, take practicable measures to safely release the turtle.
 - (ii) To the extent practicable, release all marine turtles observed entangled in fish aggregating devices (FADs) or other fishing gear.
 - (iii) If a marine turtle is entangled in the net, stop net roll as soon as the turtle comes out of the water; disentangle the turtle without injuring it before resuming the net roll; and to the extent practicable, assist the recovery of the turtle before returning it to the water.
 - (iv) Carry and employ dip nets, when appropriate, to handle turtles.
 - (b) Encourage such vessel to adopt FAD designs which reduce the incidence of entanglement of turtles;
 - (c) Require that operators of such vessels record all incidents involving marine turtles during fishing operations in their logbooks⁹ and report such incidents to the appropriate authorities of the CPC;

⁷ This information should include, where possible, details on species, location of capture, conditions, actions taken on board and location of release

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(d) Provide the results of the reporting under paragraph 7(c) to the Commission as part of the reporting requirement of paragraph 2.

8. All CPCs are requested to:

(a) Where appropriate undertake research trials of circle hooks, use of whole finfish for bait, alternative FAD designs, alternative handling techniques, gillnet design and fishing practices and other mitigation methods which may improve the mitigation of adverse effects on turtles;

(b) Report the results of these trials to the Scientific Committee (SC), at least (60 days) in advance of the annual meetings of the SC.

9. The Scientific Committee shall request the Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch to:

(a) Develop recommendations on appropriate mitigation measures for gillnet, longline and purse-seine fisheries in the IOTC Area;

(b) Develop guidelines for the appropriate handling and release of marine turtles that are impacted by fisheries under the purview of the IOTC;

(c) Develop regional standards covering data collection, data exchange and training;

(d) Produce a marine turtle identification guide for the Indian Ocean.

The recommendations of the Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch shall be provided to the Scientific Committee for consideration at its annual session in 2010. In developing its recommendations, the Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch shall examine and take into account the information provided by CPCs in accordance with paragraph 8 of this measure, other research available on the effectiveness of various mitigation methods in the IOTC area, mitigation measures and guidelines adopted by other relevant organizations and, in particular, those of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission. The Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch will specifically consider the effects of circle hooks on target species catch rates, marine turtle mortalities and other bycatch species.

10. At its annual session in 2011 the Commission shall consider the recommendations of the Scientific Committee, together with socio-economic considerations, with a view to adopting further measures to mitigate interactions with marine turtles in fisheries covered by the IOTC Agreement.

11. CPCs should continue to undertake research and development to improve the mitigation of adverse affects on marine turtles and provide research outcomes to the Scientific Committee.

12. In researching new mitigation methods, consideration should be given to ensuring that methods do not cause greater harm than they prevent and do not adversely impact other species (particularly threatened species) and/or the environment.

13. CPCs are encouraged to collaborate with the IOSEA and take into account the IOSEA MoU including the provisions of the Conservation and Management Plan in the implementation of bycatch mitigation measures for marine turtles.

14. The IOTC and IOSEA secretariats are encouraged to intensify their collaboration and exchange of information on marine turtle issues in accordance with the protocols agreed by the Commission.

⁹ This information should include, where possible, details on species, location of capture, conditions, actions taken on board and location of release

15. CPCs are encouraged to support developing countries in their implementation of the FAO Guidelines and this Resolution.
16. The Scientific Committee shall annually review the information reported by CPCs pursuant to this measure and, as necessary, provide recommendations to the Commission on ways to strengthen efforts to reduce marine turtle interactions with IOTC fisheries.