

**RECOMMENDATION BY ICCAT
ON THE BY-CATCH OF SEA TURTLES IN ICCAT FISHERIES**

RECOGNIZING that some fishing operations carried out in the Convention area can adversely affect sea turtles and there is a need to implement measures to mitigate these adverse effects;

EMPHASIZING the need to improve the collection of scientific data regarding all sources of mortality for sea turtle populations, including but not limited to data from fisheries within the Convention area;

CONSISTENT with the call for the minimization of waste, discards, catch of non-target species (both fish and non-fish species), and impacts on associated or dependent species, in particular endangered species, in the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and U.N. Agreement on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks;

GIVEN THAT the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) adopted the *Guidelines to Reduce Sea Turtle Mortality in Fishing Operations* at its Twenty-sixth Session of the Committee on Fisheries, held in March 2005, and recommended their implementation by regional fisheries bodies and management organizations;

NOTING the importance of harmonizing conservation and management measures with other organizations responsible for managing international fisheries, in particular following through on the commitments that have been made throughout the Kobe meeting process;

RECALLING the recommendation from the independent performance review in September 2008 that ICCAT “develop a stronger approach generally to by-catch and develop and adopt appropriate mitigation measures including reporting on the effectiveness of these measures throughout the fisheries”;

FURTHER RECALLING the *Resolution by the ICCAT on Sea Turtles* [Res. 03-11] and the *Resolution by ICCAT on Circle Hooks* [Res. 05-08];

**THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION
OF ATLANTIC TUNAS (ICCAT) RECOMMENDS THAT:**

1. Each CPC shall collect, and annually report to ICCAT no later than 2012 information on the interactions of its fleet with sea turtles in ICCAT fisheries by gear type, including catch rates that take into consideration gear characteristics, times and locations, target species, and disposition status (i.e., discarded dead or released alive). Data to be recorded and reported must also include a breakdown of interactions by sea turtle species, and, where possible, include the nature of the hooking or entanglement (including with Fish Aggregating Devices or FADs), bait type, hook size and type, and the size of the animal. CPCs are strongly encouraged to use observers to collect this information.
2. CPCs shall require that:
 - a) purse seine vessels flagged to that CPC operating in the Convention area avoid encircling sea turtles to the extent practicable, release encircled or entangled sea turtles, including on FADs, when feasible, and report interactions between purse seines and/or FADs and sea turtles to their flag CPC so that this information is included in the CPC reporting requirements specified in paragraph 1;
 - b) pelagic longline vessels flagged to that CPC operating in the Convention area carry on board safe-handling, disentanglement and release equipment capable of releasing sea turtles in a manner that maximizes the probability of their survival;
 - c) fishermen on pelagic longline vessels flagged to that CPC operating under their flag use the equipment specified in item 2b above to maximize the probability of sea turtle survival and are trained in safe-handling and release techniques.

3. In advance of the 2011 SCRS meeting, if possible, and no later than 2012, the ICCAT Secretariat shall compile the data collected under paragraph 1 as well as available information from the scientific literature and other relevant sea turtle by-catch mitigation information, including that provided by CPCs and report it to the SCRS for its consideration.
4. SCRS shall also provide advice to the Commission on approaches for mitigating sea turtle by-catch in ICCAT fisheries, including reducing the number of interactions and/or the mortality associated with those interactions. Such advice should be provided, as appropriate, whether or not an assessment as envisioned in paragraph 5 has been conducted.
5. Based on the activities undertaken in paragraph 3, SCRS shall initiate an assessment of the impact of the incidental catch of sea turtles resulting from ICCAT fisheries as soon as possible and no later than 2013. After the initial assessment is complete and the results presented to the Commission, SCRS shall advise the Commission on the timing of future assessments.
6. Upon receipt of advice from the SCRS, the Commission shall consider additional measures to mitigate sea turtle by-catch in ICCAT fisheries, if necessary.
7. As appropriate, the Commission and its CPCs should, individually and collectively, engage in capacity building efforts and other cooperative activities to support the effective implementation of this recommendation, including entering into cooperative arrangements with other appropriate international bodies.
8. In their Annual Reports to ICCAT, CPCs shall report on the implementation of this Recommendation, focusing on paragraphs 1, 2, and 7. In addition, CPCs should report on other relevant actions taken to implement FAO's *Guidelines to Reduce Sea Turtle Mortality in Fishing Operations* with respect to ICCAT fisheries in their Annual Reports.
9. This recommendation replaces the *Resolution by ICCAT on Sea Turtles* [Res. 03-11] in its entirety.