Report of VI Meeting of the Scientific Committee

1) Presentation of participants and adoption of agenda
   Twenty-five participants representing 11 Parties, 2 IGOs and 3 NGOs, as well as the Chair of the COP and the newly appointed interim Secretariat were present (Annex I and II).

2) Election of Chair and Vice-chair
   J. Frazier was elected Chairman and R. Márquez, Vice-Chairman; the Secretariat agreed to assume the work of Rapporteur.

3) Definition of Priorities for the Scientific Committee
   The Chair of the COP gave a presentation and explained that the Scientific Committee: (a) needs to produce concrete recommendations; (b) should focus on fisheries issues in this meeting because of their importance; and (c) should also work inter-sesionally.
   **Note:** it was emphasized that the meeting’s focus on a topic in no way means that other topics – such as nesting beaches – are less important; it is a matter of providing concrete recommendations with the limited time and resources available to the Committee.

4) General comments from the meeting
   Several points that have been made in previous meetings were emphasized:
   A) communications between national Focal Points and members of the Scientific Committee could be improved;
   B) there is a pressing need for establishing, strengthening, and/or sustaining a national committee (independent of what it is actually called) in each country; it should integrate diverse sectors, and would have the structure and leadership determined by the country;
   C) in many cases NGOs provide unique and essential support for complying with the measures of the treaty;
   D) representation of the IAC at relevant meetings (including those organized by Parties) continues to be overlooked;
   E) Committee members should inform the Secretariat about activities that are related to the Convention, especially participation in them;
   F) changes in the individuals who attend meetings of the Scientific Committee, and the COP, presents problems in lack of continuity;
   G) there is a pressing need for Parties to value the instrument.

5) Past and pending work from previous meetings (and related accords taken at this meeting)
   A) Annual Reports
      Annual reports continue to be a problem, with very low level of compliance (3 of the 13 Parties - Brazil, Guatemala and Mexico, submitted their reports in
2009), indicating a lack of value for Parties in addition to the problems identified by the V meeting of the Committee. While there continues to be a lack of compliance by the majority of Parties, there has never been any specific feedback from any of the Focal Points on the annual reports – just silence. An annual report working group was set up (Accord #11, Annex III).

B) Previous work of Fisheries Working Group
A detailed list of general measures for mitigating fisheries interactions was developed during the IV and V meetings, but few very specialized actions were identified. It would be useful to focus more detailed work on just one of the many topics involved. Countries will be asked to provide basic information on their mesh net fisheries; a fisheries working group was established to develop survey forms; and past advances will be given careful consideration in future work (Accords #4, 5, & 6, Annex III).

C) Regional Workshop for the Hawksbill Turtle in the Wider Caribbean and Western Atlantic
The general activities of the meeting held in September 2009 were summarized; the results and recommendations are not yet available.

6) Presentations
A) National summaries on turtle-fisheries interactions
Brief national summaries on gear types, efforts carried out, gaps and needs in relation to turtle-fisheries interactions.

B) Regional initiatives: summaries on several fisheries activities were presented:
   i) Regional program (Mexico to Peru) on circle hooks ongoing since 2004; results are in preparation
   ii) The Technical Workshop on Mitigating Sea Turtle Bycatch in Coastal Net Fisheries. Honolulu, Hawaii, USA, 20-22 January, 2009, organized by the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (CIT-CC6-2009-Inf.4; CIT-CC6-2009-Inf.5);
   iii) Gillnet Bycatch and Entanglement in Lost Gear working group draft from Regional Workshop for the Hawksbill Turtle in the Wider Caribbean and Western Atlantic (CIT-CC6-2009-Inf.6 – limited distribution)
   iv) Informe Preliminar of the Taller de Trabajo de Pesquerías, IV Jornadas de Conservación e Investigación de Tortugas Marinas del Atlántico Sur Occidental (ASO), 2 October 2009, Mar del Plata, Argentina (CIT-CC6-2009-Inf.7).
   v) The masters thesis work by Cecilia Lezama: “Impacto de la pesquería artesanal sobre La tortuga verde (Chelonia mydas) en las costas del Río de la Plata exterior.” The work showed, among other things, the importance of developing a strong working relationship with fishermen, who can then serve as reliable onboard observers (CIT-CC6-2009-Inf.13).

7) Profile of situation in each country: advances and needs
Participants provided summary profiles on the national situation regarding fisheries-turtle interactions, identifying important advances as well as gaps and needs (detailed responses are summarized in Annex IV); this information is condensed in the table below to highlight regional communalities. The responses
show that there have been some advances in some countries, but there is a widespread need for more information and characterization of fisheries issues, especially from onboard observer programs. Although in many cases there have been important advances, there is also an expressed need in nearly half of the responding countries for greater integration and collaboration between different sectors of society, particularly through the strengthening of a national committee. Issues of legislation, enforcement, and control were mentioned, both in terms of advances and needs. The need for resources was specifically mentioned by 3 countries. Training and capacity building was mentioned only once, both in terms of advances and needs.

Table 1. Summary of comments by country representatives to the Scientific Committee on advancements (A) and needs (N) regarding fisheries-turtle interactions.

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<td>Integration, cooperation, National Committee</td>
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<td>Legislation, fiscalization, control</td>
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Comments from Brazil: *We participate in all fishing management forums, especially those that interact with sea turtles, **We have characterized all the main fisheries that interact with sea turtles some years ago and update them annually, *** These are two points. Although the legislation is good, compliance and supervision are insufficient, **** We have held and participated in different training courses for onboard observers and trainees, ***** We invested at least US$ 200,000 in these efforts some years ago/ to date only in longline monitoring and testing mitigation measures.

It is important to note that training scored low in this exercise, but at later in the meeting there was great general interest in training opportunities; hence, the priorities listed in the above table could be modified after more careful attention were paid to the exercise of setting priorities. Nonetheless, several important regional communalities are evident.

8) **Plenary session on regional needs regarding mesh net fisheries**
The detailed comments are compiled in CIT-CC6-2009-Doc.8, and some of the more critical needs can be summarized as follows:
A) Characterization and basic information on fishery;
B) Observer programs, especially given challenges of small boats;
(i) need to train fishermen to serve as observers;
C) Adequate observer coverage at disembarking and embarking sites;
D) Functioning mitigation measures;
E) Effective legislation;
F) Interagency collaboration.

9) **Proposed follow-up activities after the meeting and related accords**
   A) Members of the Scientific Committee should inform the Secretariat of events related to the Convention’s objectives (*Accord # 2*, Annex III);
   B) The Secretariat will communicate with Focal Points requesting help in completing the information in table summarizing the status of knowledge of mesh nets and their interactions with sea turtles (*CIT-CC6-2009-Doc.5; Accord # 4*, Annex III);
   C) Form a working group for gathering basic information from surveys on mesh net fisheries in the region – and take advantage of a survey that OSPESCA plans to finalize in Central America at the end of the year (*Accord # 5*, Annex III);
   D) Make use of existing information available from other sources, especially previous work done by the fisheries working group (e.g., Annex I to Resolution CIT-COP3-2006-R2; *Accord # 6*, Annex III) and other reports such as the gillnet workshop in Hawaii (*CIT-CC6-2009-Inf. 4 & CIT-CC6-2009-Inf. 5*), the hawksbill workshop in Puerto Morelos (*CIT-CC6-2009-Inf. 6*), and the ASO fisheries workshop in Mar del Plata (*CIT-CC6-2009-Inf. 7*);
   E) The issue of fisheries certifications is important, but as it is complex it needs to be dealt with in a dedicated, well-prepared session;
   F) Development of a proposal for training on issues related to release and rehabilitation of incidentally captured marine turtles, with correspondence and interactions between experienced actors in the region (*Accord # 8*, Annex III);
   G) Strengthen a digital library at the IAC website, by supplying digital files and links for where information is accessible (*Accord # 9*, Annex III);
   H) Form a Annual Report working group, that will pay special attention to past work by the Scientific Committee, particularly the results of the Fifth meeting (*CIT-CC6-2009-Inf.2 – with ALL 8 annexes; Accord # 11*, Annex III);
   I) Request the support of the Secretariat and Chair of the COP to highlight the ongoing and intense problem of incidental capture of *Caretta caretta* in Baja California (*Accord # 10*, Annex III);
   J) The Chair of the COP was asked to communicate with Focal Points to emphasize the urgent need to facilitate the importation of specialized equipment and materials into parties for promoting the conservation of sea turtles and their habitats (*Accord # 3*, Annex III);
   K) The Secretariat, with the help of the Chair of the COP and copied to the Chair of the Scientific Committee, will communicate with each Focal Point to:
      i) Reiterate the importance of active participation by designated representatives to the Committee, including intersessional work;
      ii) Emphasize the need for increased communication and information flow between each Focal Point and the designated representative;
iii) Strengthen the working of a national committee (whether it is called a council, network or something else), to integrate diverse stakeholders and agencies;

L) Encourage countries that have not hosted a meeting of the Scientific Committee to explore the possibilities (the Secretariat will make available budgets of past meetings); there was tentative interest in organizing the next meeting in Panama.

27 Jan 2010/ J. Frazier
Annex I

Agenda

VI Meeting of the Scientific Committee

Objectives:

• To review the Scientific Committee’s work on fisheries bycatch to date, as well as to review on-going bycatch activities in the IAC region.
• To identify priority gear types for the IAC Scientific Committee to further analyze and provide recommendations to the Parties.
• To determine the process that the IAC Scientific Committee will undertake to develop a report/synthesis of fisheries interactions to IAC COP5.

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21st Wednesday

8:30 Welcome remarks
   Speaker: Veronica Caceres, IAC Pro Tempore Secretary

8:50 Adoption of the agenda

9:00 Election of the Chair, Vice-Chair, and Rapporteur of the Scientific Committee.

9:15 Update on the IAC, summary of COP 4, and view towards the future and goals for Scientific Committee to present to COP5
   Speaker: Alexis Gutierrez, Chair of the COP

9:45 Review of the work to date by the Scientific Committee
   Speaker: Jack Frazier, IAC Scientific Committee.
   a. Review of past work of the Fisheries Working Group
      Speaker: Member of the Fisheries Work Group
   b. Update on the results of the IAC Hawksbill workshop
      Speaker: Rene Marquez, IAC Scientific Committee.
   c. Update on fishing gear and turtle interactions workshops
      Speaker: Joca Thome, IAC Scientific Committee

SESSION 1

Presentations to describe the state of the art in the knowledge of the sea turtle bycatch in the IAC countries and its impact on incidental capture of sea turtles in coastal fisheries.
11:30 Country Presentations (10mins each)
   a.) What is known about sea turtle bycatch in each country? (observer data, anecdotally)
   b.) What gear types (e.g., longlines, gillnets, trawls, traps/pots) have the highest rate of interactions?
   c.) Are there current regulations and/or mitigation measures in place?
   d.) What are the gaps in addressing these issues (regulatory, gear research, observers, characterization of fisheries, etc.)

12:00 Lunch break

1:00 Continue with country presentations

4:00 Coffee break

4:20 Presentation on Regional research/conservation activities

5:00 Overview of different gear and mitigation possibilities of sea turtles bycatch
   *Speakers: Dan Foster and Yonat Swimmer (NOAA)*

5:30 Presentation on Coastal net fisheries and their impact on sea turtles.
   *Speaker: Cecilia Lezama (Karumbé)*

6:00 End of session

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**22nd Thursday**

**SESSION 2**

*Develop Proposals to overcome the gaps identified (working groups & plenary sessions)*

8:00 Review of key elements from the country presentations and existing IAC Documents

8:30 Working groups
   a.) Priority gear types for the region
      a. What are the greatest gaps regarding the highest priority gear types identified with respect to sea turtle bycatch? (*review of previous fisheries information document to start the discussion*)
      b. What work is ongoing with respect to those gear types (i.e. characterizations, mitigation work, fisheries closures, etc?)
      c. What additional work needs to be conducted?
      d. What can the IAC countries do together to address bycatch in these high priority gear types?

10:00 Coffee break
Report of VI Meeting of the Scientific Committee - CIT-CC6-2009-Doc.3

10:40 Working groups continue
12:00 Lunch Break
1:00 Continue with work groups.
3:40 Coffee break
4:00 Groups work on their presentations and their activities and/or plans
5:00 End of session

23rd Friday

SESSION 3

Presentation of specific actions to plenary for discussion.
8:00 Work groups finish their presentations and recommendations
10:00 Coffee break
10:20 Make recommendations to the Parties: What additional information needs to be gathered on sea turtle bycatch in IAC countries?
   a. How will that be done?
   b. Over what time frame?
   c. Outline of the report to the IAC countries
12:00 Lunch
1:00 Plenary Presentation of work groups
3:40 Date and place of next meeting
4:00 Other business
5:00 Closing remarks
7:00 Closing dinner
## Annex II

### Lista de Participantes/Participant List

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Annex III

Agreements of the VI Meeting of the Scientific Committee

1) It was agreed that, as has been agreed to in previous Scientific Committee meetings:

a. The Pro Tempore Secretariat, with the help of the Chair of the COP, will send a message to each Focal Point (with copy to the Chair of the COP, the Chair of the Scientific Committee and the Party’s designated representative to that Committee) before November 15th, 2009, reiterating the importance of active participation by designated representatives in Scientific Committee meetings and intersessional work groups.

b. In the same message, the Pro Tempore Secretariat will communicate the essential need for increased communication, dialogue and flow of information between the Focal Point and the designated representative on the Scientific Committee.

c. In order to strengthen this communication, the Committee recommends that national mechanisms be strengthened, whether it is a council, committee, network, e-group or other arrangement that facilitates the integration of key stakeholders and the flow and exchange of information at a national level.

2) It was agreed that when members of the Scientific Committee have knowledge of or participate in international meetings or other events that are directly related to the Convention’s objectives, that they send the Secretariat a brief summary of their participation (for example, the name of the event, date, place, objective, relationship to the Convention) so that this information may be shared with the Focal Points, giving the Convention added value, while increasing collaboration, communication and its image.

3) It was agreed that the Chair of the COP would be asked to communicate with the Focal Points before the second week of November regarding the urgent need – again, identified previously by the Scientific Committee- to explore and develop national and international mechanisms to facilitate the timely arrival of equipment, research outputs, and instructional literature necessary to improve the selectivity of fisheries activities, and thereby promoting the conservation of sea turtles and their habitats. These materials (such as circle hooks, sea turtle excluder devices, instructions, pamphlets and posters) might be either donated or purchased, and either permanently or temporarily enter the country of destination.

4) It was agreed that the Pro Tempore Secretariat would communicate with the Focal Points before the second week of November indicating that the Scientific Committee concluded the need to summarize the Status of Knowledge of Gillnets and their Interactions with Sea Turtles, which requires that each Party provides a
summary of available information in the table provided (CIT-CC6-2009-Doc.5) and that it be sent via electronic mail to the Secretariat no later than March 30th, 2010.

5) It was agreed that a useful standard form would be created and used within the range of the Convention in order to characterize coastal gillnet and trammel net fisheries, through the following steps:
   a. Create an intersessional working group made up of representatives from OSPESCA (El Salvador), TAMAR (Brazil) and NOAA (USA);
   b. Each member of the Scientific Committee will send their comments on the form “Gillnet and Trammel Net Gear Description Form GTNGDF 02/2009” (CIT-CC6-2009-Inf.8) to the working group via the Secretariat- no later than November 30th, 2009 – especially regarding:
      i. concepts/fields that may be eliminated (in order to simplify the form);
      ii. concepts/fields that should be included;
      iii. how to divide the original form into sections for information on:
          1. fishing gear and “stable information” (i.e., characteristics of the fleet, motor, nets, etc.)
          2. fishing operations and “dynamic information” (i.e., date, time, fishing site, etc.),
          3. socio-economic aspects (i.e., profitability of fishing trip, market structure, social organization)
   c. The working group will create a list of the basic information needed to be included in the form, grouping each item in their respective category, and structuring the form according to “stable information” and “dynamic information”. This proposal will be sent to the members of the Scientific Committee via the Secretariat on December 30th, 2009.
   d. The members of the Scientific Committee will have until February 28th, 2010 to send their final observations on the form to the working group via the Secretariat.
   e. The working group will send the forms in the format of fields to the Secretariat no later than March 20th, 2010; to be distributed among the Focal Points, Committee members and other interested stakeholders so that they may be tested in the field.
   f. Once the forms are validated and approved, it is suggested that they be used as soon as possible in the characterization of coastal gillnet fisheries.

6) It was agreed to that it is very important to reiterate the recommendation established in “Recommendations for implementing Resolution CIT-COP3-2006-R2: Reduction of the adverse impacts of fisheries on sea turtles” (Annex I of Resolution CIT-COP3-2006-R2) to promote national research programs through: information exchange and training, technology transfer (for more details see Annex xx of this report).
7) It was agreed to that a preamble would be written for the final report of this meeting clearly stating that the Scientific Committee chose to work on the topic of “Bycatch in Coastal gillnets” solely for the purpose of focusing their work given a limited time frame, but this does not imply in any way that other aspects, such as the protection of nesting beaches, working with coastal communities, education, or other fishing types, etc. are any less important to fulfill the objectives of the Convention.

8) It was agreed to that a project proposal would be written by the Secretariat, with the assistance of Didiher Chacon, member of the Scientific Committee, on veterinary aspects of sea turtles (i.e., rehabilitation techniques, necropsies, care in captivity, liberation, etc.), in order to provide training and for exchange of information and technical experiences between Party countries, securing financing if necessary.

9) It was agreed to that the electronic library on the Convention’s website (http://www.iacsseaturtle.org/) would be improved by sending the Secretariat any electronic documents, links and other electronic resources that the Scientific Committee felt are important to include on the website (while taking into consideration necessary steps comply with rights of publication).

10) It was agreed to send to the Chair of the COP a recommendation addressed to Mexico on the problem of incidental capture of Caretta caretta in southern waters of Baja California and the urgency of implementing conservation measures (CIT-CC6-2009-Doc.9).

11) It was agreed to that in regards to the Annual Report Format (CIT-017-04), an intersessional working group will be formed to review and organize, in a concise manner, the work of the V meeting of the Scientific Committee which provided suggestions related to the format and instructions on how to complete the Annual Report forms. This product will be sent to the Chair of the COP for consultation and approval by the Parties. Further, this working group will synthesize the information contained in the Annual Reports that have been handed in to the Pro Tempore Secretariat thus far, so that the Parties can see the value of submitting them, and the analyses that the Scientific Committee has been able to undertake. To do this, the working group, which is made up of representatives from Belize, Brazil, Peru and Venezuela, will continue to work with the Secretariat and the Chair of the Scientific Committee on updating the Convention’s Data Base.
Annex IV  
Report of VI Meeting of the Scientific Committee - CIT-CC6-2009-Doc.3 

Profile of situation in each country, summarizing important advances as well as gaps and needs regarding turtle-fisheries interactions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Advances</th>
<th>Gaps / work needed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belize</td>
<td>Strengthen cooperation with national network; Gill net unknown impact; lack of information; Identify areas where gill nets are used, especially in relation to critical foraging areas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Seasonal /area closures for shrimp trawlers; Ban on lobster pots; Progress with onboard observer programs in several fisheries; Drift nets in process of being banned</td>
<td>Evaluate impact of mitigation measures for gill nets; EOF data missing from Lely, especially in relation to critical foraging areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>Structural changes to national fisheries body (INCOPES CA); Attract interest of public &amp; private sectors on incidental catch; Enforcement of current legislation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td></td>
<td>Monitoring &amp; research program on incidental capture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>Regular training in inspection &amp; TEDs; Coordination between institutions; Adequate legislation; Onboard observer program; National committee; Resources for research, inspection &amp; TEDs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>Observer programs: onboard and landing; Coastal development &amp; nesting beach destruction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Circle to J hook exchange program for shark fishery</td>
<td>Coastal fishing gear catalogued, Onboard observer program, National statistics on fishermen, vessels &amp; gear interviews on bycatch in Campecche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands Antilles</td>
<td>TED regulations &amp; use &amp; Active national inter-institutional committ</td>
<td>Too many points of emb/disembarkation – impossible to monitor, Onboard observer program, Legislation specific to protection of marine turtles, nesting beaches and marine areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panama</td>
<td>TED regulations &amp; use &amp; Active national inter-institutional committ</td>
<td>Too many points of emb/disembarkation – impossible to monitor, Onboard observer program, Legislation specific to protection of marine turtles, nesting beaches and marine areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>Characterization of Basic information on Onboard observer program</td>
<td>Strategies for overlapping use of areas for turtles &amp; fishing; Focus on northern part of country, Involve more institutions and fishing communities in developing an action plan, Survey artisanal fleet, Observer program, Analyze problem, what is root cause of capture &amp; what are sources of mitigation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uruguay</td>
<td>Characterization of Basic information on Onboard observer program</td>
<td>Progress with national Onboard observer programs, Finalize and officialize funding and support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Gear modification (e.g., TEDs &amp; circle hooks)</td>
<td>Regulations to mitigate bycatch</td>
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<td>Venezue la</td>
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