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**INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION AND  
CONSERVATION OF SEA TURTLES**

Second Meeting of the Scientific Committee  
*Tres Ríos, Costa Rica – June 28-30, 2005*

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**MINUTES OF THE SECOND MEETING OF THE SCIENTIFIC  
COMMITTEE**

**1. OPENING AND WELCOME**

At 08:50 hours on June 28, 2005 in Tres Ríos, Costa Rica, the Chairman of the Committee, Dr. J. Frazier, welcomed the participants and explained that this second meeting of the Scientific Committee of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles is providing a follow up to the outcome of the Second Conference of the Parties (COP2), held from November 16 to 18, 2004, in Isla Margarita, Venezuela. The meeting was attended by unilateral representatives from 10 countries, 2 advisors and 8 observers, in addition to several officers from the Ministry of the Environment and Energy of the Costa Rican Government, two special guests and four Secretariat staff members (**Annex 1: List of Participants**).

**2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

The provisional agenda was reviewed and approved without further comments (**Annex 2**), and the provisional work program was also approved in the same way (**Annex 3**).

**3. REPORT ON THE ADVANCEMENTS OF THE COP 2**

The Pro-Tempore Secretary, Lic. Marco Solano, presented a summary of the progress of the COP2, held from November 16 to 18, 2004, in Isla Margarita, Venezuela. He also mentioned the report on the First Meeting of the Scientific Committee submitted by the Chairman of the Committee during the COP2, the interest shown on behalf of the Parties for standardizing methods and several fishing aspects as well; he also explained that the Mexican Delegation explicitly requested that the Committee evaluate the situation of the hawksbill turtle, *Eretmochelys imbricata*. It was also stated that the document Terms of Reference for the Scientific Committee (COP2CIT-002) was approved, except for the Scientific Committee Structure section, and that eight delegations committed themselves to creating an inter-session work group in order to advance with the proposal concerning this section. A point was made concerning the fact that the COP2 adopted the resolution Conservation of the Leatherback Sea Turtle *Dermochelys coriacea* (COP2CIT-001).

The observation made during COP2 (“The Parties acknowledge that the Annual Report review is a function of the Consultative Committee, and that the Scientific Committee is requested to submit its comments from its own point of view, without prejudice to Article VII of the Convention”) was mentioned, and it was explained that such observation only clarifies that the Parties hope the Expert Consultative Committee would review the Annual Reports. It was emphasized that, within the Functions of Scientific Committee included in the sections of the Terms of Reference for the Scientific Committee approved by the Parties, there is the following: “5. To analyze Annual Reports from the Parties. . .”; therefore, such task represents a high priority in this second meeting of the Scientific Committee. For such reason, there was a proposal made for creating a corresponding work group in order to fulfill such task.

The Pro-Tempore Secretary explained that the COP3 will be held in Mexico, most probably in Oaxaca, in August of 2006. There are plans for holding the meeting of the Expert Consultative Committee immediately before said COP.

#### **4. DRAFT FOR THE 2007-2012 STRATEGIC PLAN OF THE CONVENTION**

The Pro-Tempore Secretary explained that, as requested by the Parties, there is a draft for a strategic plan which will be submitted for approval at the COP3. The Pro-Tempore Secretary presented a summary of the Strategic Plan with an emphasis on the Scientific Committee section. The Plan includes sections on mission and vision, and it is comprised of five programs. He explained that the consultant in charge of elaborating the Plan will be making a presentation in the afternoon.

Mr. Rafael Vargas, a consultant who has been working in the Draft of the Strategic Plan, presented it in the afternoon of the 28th. In his exposition, he explained the philosophical framework, the values, the mission, the vision, strategic objectives and five programs for strategic action: international cooperation, support and follow up for the actions and commitments of the Parties, procurement of financial resources, knowledge and information management and reinforcement. There are no specifications concerning concrete tasks or actions for the Scientific Committee, but rather objectives and actions are integrated into a general plan for the Convention.

#### **5. DISCUSSION ON THE CORRESPONDING TASKS FROM THE COP2 OUTCOMES**

##### **a. Promoting synergy and accomplishment of key activities:**

The President of the Committee clarified that this is not a research committee. Its function is to advise the Parties about activities necessary for implementing the Convention. The Committee has few resources, and there will only be a meeting a year. Therefore, it is crucial that we profit from our knowledge and contacts in order to promote synergy with other organizations and specialists with the purpose of facilitating key activities. In view of the preceding, he invited the participants to draw up a list of contacts and suggestions for promoting synergy and key activities for implementing the Convention.

##### **b. Annual Report reviews:**

It was made clear that the current format is intended for the First Annual Report, and therefore it will be necessary to elaborate a new format for the subsequent annual reports. The making of the new format should take into account the information from this first exercise by employing it as a first inventory of the activities of each one of the Parties. It was also made clear that the making of the format for the first report left several aspects untouched, reason for which these topics should be reevaluated.

The Pro-Tempore Secretary explained that there are some inconveniences concerning the reports, since some delegations have personally requested him to handle annual reports confidentially.

##### **c. Standardization for data collection and information:**

It was made clear that, in addition to standardizing data on nesting and feeding sea turtles, it is necessary to uniform data collection and handling on other topics, particularly for fishing activities. The advantages of benefiting from the report and the document provided by Laura Sarti, M. Sc., during the First Meeting of the Scientific Committee, was discussed, as well as the information proposed in several manuals.

There were talks about the importance of promoting proper practices by considering scientific as well as ethical aspects. Problems in achieving uniformity of methods and terminology were fully explained, given the resistance to change on behalf of researchers with well established programs and methods. It was suggested that at least a list of terms and main concepts would have to be created in order to standardize them. . There were also discussions on the problem of the ample variation found in common names for the different species of sea turtles among the countries, and sometimes even within the countries themselves. It was observed that in Annex I of the Convention some common names are present, except for the name “Baula” (leatherback), which was employed in the COP2CIT-001 resolution. The conclusion was that it is essential for the work of this Convention to utilize scientific names supported by the common names present in Annex I, and, if possible, to use a common name of ample geographical distribution. It is also recommended as well that the issue of common names be included in the standardization work.

**d. Relationship with fisheries:**

The importance of taking into consideration all fisheries having some kind of relationship with sea turtles, including small-scale, coastal fisheries commonly known as “artisanal”, was fully explained. Also explained was the fact that several fishery-related terms generate some confusion, given the fact that these terms are employed differently, especially between the countries; for example, the concept of “artisanal fishing” varies from one country to another, and in some cases it represents a legal term.

**e. Status of the *Eretmochelys imbricata*:**

Biologist Vicente Guzmán gave a presentation about the status of the hawksbill turtle in the Yucatan Peninsula, during which he pointed out that there was an increase in nesting activities between 1996 and 1999, immediately followed by a dramatic drop. At the same time, he explained that the shrimp fleet in the Mexican Gulf and Caribbean region has dropped from approximately 600 trawlers in the 1970s to some 25 nowadays. In a recent workshop held in Telchak, Yucatan, a list of 21 possible causes for the drop in nesting activities was developed, seven of which were identified as the most significant ones. Among these, an increase in both by-catch and direct take were mentioned. There has also been a rapid increase in oil exploration at Bahia of Campeche, through the use of high-intensity, low-frequency sound-pulsing equipment.

Biologist Isaías Majil provided a summary of the status of the hawksbill turtle in Belize, in which he explained that annual nesting numbers have also dropped in that area. In Gales Point, during the 90s, there were between 150 and 200 nests per year, but in the past few years the number has dropped down to as low as 49 nests in 2004. The effect of hurricanes on nesting beach erosion was mentioned among the possible causes.

Dr. Julia Horrocks provided a summary on the status of the hawksbill turtle in the West Caribbean with an emphasis on Barbados. She made clear that after several years of protection there has already been an increase in nesting activities: from 12 females in 1992 to 120 in 2004 on an “index beach”. The possible causes may be a combination of national and regional conservation practices, including the reduction of turtle fishing in Cuba. She also stated that other beaches where effective protection against exploitation exists have also shown an increase in population. On the contrary, where protection for adults is absent, such increases have not been seen. She emphasized that dispersions and migrations of hawksbill turtles in the Caribbean Sea are extensive.

Dr. René Márquez offered an overview about knowledge and conservation of the hawksbill turtle in Cuba, where legal capture has existed for many years. He explained

that the nesting area –in the island’s southern keys- is quite broad and difficult to reach, with hardly any incidence of egg poaching. This distance makes it hard to perform estimates of nesting activities, which are based on studies done on index beaches, and evaluation results are reached through extrapolations. The most important nesting zone is the Doce Leguas keys. In addition to the nesting beaches, the keys have large feeding areas in the southern coast (San Benito and Jardines de la Reyna keys, at the Cayería de las Doce Leguas. There are also feeding zones along the northern coast. Legal capture used to exist in that area, but Dr. Márquez does not know if this is still going on and the quantities involved.

Oceanographer María Ángela Marcovaldi presented a summary on the status of the hawksbill turtle in Brazil. The species only nests in significant numbers in the state of Bahia, where the amount of nests has increased from 180 in 1990 to approximately 1,000 in the past few years. One of the most serious risks is the accelerated rate of coastal development, particularly in resorts that are currently disturbing large coastal areas.

**f. Compiling and synthesizing information:**

This topic was not addressed separately, but it was rather integrated into all the exercises, since the Committee’s agenda was very tight and most of the work done consisted in compiling and synthesizing information.

**g. Socio-economic information:**

The Chairman emphasized the importance of actively integrating socio-economic aspects to the Committee’s work and to the Convention itself. It was pointed out that, to this date, the most popular topics, as well as the disciplines represented by the Convention’s two subsidiary organs, display a strong bias towards natural sciences and a basic lack of social sciences.

In order to reinforce this aspect, the Committee invited geographer Marvin Fonseca Barrás, from the Cooperativa SoliDar R.L., to give a presentation on the work done with coastal communities, groups of fishermen and on the importance of social participation in the development of conservation programs for sea turtles and for other renewable resources as well. It was noticed that the integration of different disciplines to the work of SoliDar, along with an active collaboration with the resource users, allowed for advancements such as the adoption of a responsible fishing code on behalf of the fishermen from a small village.

**h. Follow up of the Resolution on the Conservation of *Dermochelys coriacea***

It was made clear that the resolution on the conservation of *Dermochelys coriacea*, adopted by consensus during the COP2, implies several measures and that it is therefore necessary to provide the corresponding follow up to what has been agreed upon by the Parties.

**6. WORK GROUPS ON THE TASKS CORRESPONDING TO THE OUTCOME OF COP 2**

The Chair of the Committee organized the group works, which were voluntarily formed, in such a way that the participants were able to contribute with their expertise in one or more areas in an efficient way. First of all, there were three groups that addressed the following topics, which did not show any overlapping among the interested persons: the resolution on *Dermochelys coriacea*; the status of *Eretmochelys imbricata*, and fisheries. Later on, on the afternoon of June 29 and the morning and afternoon of June

30, two other groups joined in to analyze the annual reports and standardization topics. The groups were integrated by members of the Committee, advisors, observers and even Secretariat staff members.

During the presentations and discussions about the recommendations of the different work groups, the Chair of the Committee, who collaborated with each one of them, emphasized several times the Committee's duty to submit concrete recommendations, based on current available information; in case any works, meetings and other types of activities should be proposed for the future, it would be necessary to include actions concerning what is currently deemed as necessary.

**a. Status of *Eretmochelys imbricata*, hawksbill turtle**

The work group proposed to create a regional technical meeting with the purpose of evaluating the possible causes for the drop observed in the Yucatan Peninsula, and issue the corresponding recommendations. In the meantime, and taking the outcomes of the Mexican meetings into account, it was requested that the Parties adopt precautionary measures for reducing and mitigating the risks to the hawksbill turtles of the region (**Annex 4**).

**b. Follow up to the resolution on the conservation of *Dermochelys coriacea***

A point was made concerning the fact that this resolution implies a series of follow up measures. With the purpose of facilitating the implementation of such resolution, the work group recommended an emergency status to be declared for the Eastern Pacific region, that the topic of *Dermochelys coriacea* be included in the agenda of the Expert Consultative Committee, that a sub-committee on such topic be created in the Scientific Committee, and that an operative plan be created as well. Within such context, a series of tasks for the sub-committee were presented with a proposal to create several products to be divulged in the region no later that May 2006 (**Annex 5**).

**c. Interaction with Fisheries**

It was mentioned that there are several international agreements with concrete measures for eliminating, reducing or mitigating the adverse effects some fishing practices have on sea turtles. Since most of the Parties of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles are also Contracting Parties of some of those other instruments, it is fundamental that these previously agreed measures be implemented as soon as possible, and that a summary of the most significant actions to be performed immediately concerning fishing activities be submitted.

There were also other different actions identified that need to be developed in the future, with the purpose of eliminating, reducing and mitigating the adverse effects of the fisheries on sea turtles. Such actions include the characterization of the fisheries, the development of on-board observer programs, research, information collection in Party and Non-party countries, standardization of fishery data, mitigation measures and their application, and training. A fundamental task that remains pending is the definition of the concept of "subsistence", since Article IV, 3 (a) of the Convention indicates the following "*Each of the Parties may allow for exceptions to paragraph 2(a) in order to satisfy economic subsistence needs of traditional communities, bearing in mind the recommendations made by the Consultative Committee established pursuant to Article VII, provided such exceptions do not undermine the efforts made for achieving the objective of the present Convention.*"

Finally, a resolution on the "Reduction of adverse impacts of the fisheries on sea turtles" was proposed, to be considered by the Conference of the Parties. The text and

concepts of this proposal are based on other resolutions of other already approved instruments.

#### **d. Standardization**

It was explained that standardization must be integrated to the assessment of the annual reports in order to understand which information was not standardized, and which information will be requested in the next reports that needs to be standardized. It was also observed that, despite the lack of manuals, lack of standardization is often due to lack of training and updating among program managers and technicians within the projects, as well as to a resistance to change. It was recommended that a database containing *minimum information necessary* be created for accomplishing the Convention's objectives. With this specific purpose in mind, a proposal requesting the Parties to send in their field work protocols in order to compile and do a comparison of the methodologies. Likewise, there is also a proposal for creating three subgroups on fundamental topics: nesting beaches, feeding areas and fisheries. These groups would develop formats that will be considered by the Parties in the COP 3 (**Annex 6**).

#### **e. Evaluation of Annual Reports**

Notice was taken that the information submitted in the Annual Reports is useful for creating regional maps (nesting beaches, for example), directories and data bases. However, several points where the information submitted in the reports was not clear, uniform, complete or updated were identified. In view of this, several concrete recommendations to the Expert Consultative Committee are being made with the purpose of improving the form and hence reinforcing the implementation of the Convention and the achievement of objectives. The inclusion of a data handling specialist was recommended, as well as the integration of the work about annual reports to the standardization work. (**Annex 7**).

It should be pointed out that the Memorandum of Understanding on Conservation and Management of Sea Turtles and their Habitats in Indian Ocean – South East Asia (IOSEA) in the Asia has advanced with a digital format for the annual reports which can be accessed at its web site <<http://www.ioseaturtles.org>>.

Since doubts and confusion concerning the annual reports and the responsibility of the Scientific Committee concerning such reports still arise, the pertinent sections of the Convention's text and of the Terms of Reference for the Scientific Committee should be clarified:

**INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF SEA TURTLES**

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**ARTICLE XI  
ANNUAL REPORTS**

1. Each Party shall prepare an annual report, in accordance with Annex IV, on the programs it has adopted to protect and conserve sea turtles and their habitats, as well as any programs it may have adopted relating to the utilization of these species in accordance with Article IV (3).

2. Each Party shall provide, either directly or through the Secretariat, if established, its annual report to the other Parties and to the Consultative and Scientific Committees,

at least 30 days prior to the next ordinary meeting of the Parties and shall also make such reports available to other States or interested entities that so request.

...

***TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE OF THE INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF SEA TURTLES***

...

***FUNCTIONS OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE***

...

5. Analyze the Annual Reports of the Parties, as well as the scientific investigations (including sociological and economic research), projects and initiatives conducted by Parties or other relevant organizations or entities.

...

## **7. OTHER ISSUES**

Once more, the importance of the social aspects and the need to actively integrate the pertinent disciplines were pointed out.

## **8. CLOSING**

Upon conclusion of the event at 17:00 hours, Dr. Jack Frazier, Chairman, thanked the participants for their attendance and active participation. Likewise, and on behalf of all the participants, he thanked the Secretariat's team for their concern and hospitality.

## **9. LIST OF PERTINENT DOCUMENTS**

**Annex 1:** List of Participants

**Annex 2:** Agenda

**Annex 3:** Work Program proposal

**Annex 4:** INF-24-05 - Proposal by the working group on the Status of the Hawksbill Turtle of the Scientific Committee.

**Annex 5:** INF-29-05 - Proposal of the working group on follow-up to Resolution COP2CIT-001 on the leatherback turtle, *Dermochelys coriacea* of the Scientific Committee.

**Annex 6:** INF-25-05 - Proposal of the working group on standardization of the Scientific Committee.

**Annex 7:** INF-23-05 - Report of the Scientific Committee Working Group on Annual Reports, 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Sc.C.

## Annex 1: List of Participants

**Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles**  
 SECOND MEETING OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE, held the 28<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> of June, 2005 in Tres Ríos, Costa Rica  
**Convención Interamericana para la Protección y Conservación de las Tortugas Marinas**  
 SEGUNDA REUNIÓN DEL COMITÉ CIENTÍFICO celebrada del 28 al 30 de junio del 2005 en Tres Ríos, Costa Rica

### Participant List/Lista de Participantes

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## Annex 2

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### INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF SEA TURTLES

Second Meeting of the Scientific Committee

*Tres Ríos, Costa Rica – 28-30 June, 2005*

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#### Agenda

- 1) Welcome
- 2) Adoption of the agenda and work program
- 3) Information on advances from COP 2, November 2004, Venezuela
- 4) Draft Strategic Plan of the Convention
- 5) Tasks resulting from COP 2:
  - a. Promote synergies and the carrying out of key activities;
  - b. Revision of Annual Reports;
  - c. Standardization in data collection and the management of information, training workshops for standardization (including onboard observers and mitigation of fisheries impacts and other activities related with fisheries);
  - d. Interactions with fisheries:
    - i. Development of onboard observer activities;
    - ii. Impulse cooperation and collaboration between regional organizations;
    - iii. Obtain information on captures of sea turtles by countries not Party to the Convention;
  - e. The situation of the hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) in the western hemisphere: the case of the Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico;
  - f. Compile and synthesize information related with meeting the objective of the Convention, particularly the conservation of marine turtles and their habitats;
  - g. Socio-economic information.
- 6) Follow up to the Resolution on the Conservation of the Leatherback Turtle (COP2 CIT-001 [CIT 006]).
- 7) Any other business
- 8) Closure of the meeting

## Annex 3

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### INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF SEA TURTLES

#### Second Meeting of the Scientific Committee

*Tres Ríos, Costa Rica – 28-30 June, 2005*

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### Work Program proposal

		<i>Comments</i>
<b>Monday, 27 June 2005</b>		
	Arrival of participants in Costa Rica, transport to Escuela Social Juan 23, Tres Ríos, San José	
<b>Tuesday, 28 June 2005</b>		
<b>Morning</b>		
7:00-8:00	Breakfast	
8:30-12:30	Agenda Item 1: Welcoming remarks Agenda Item 2: Adoption of Agenda and Work Plan Agenda Item 3: Information on advances from COP 2 Agenda Item 4: Draft Strategic Plan of the Convention (summary of the component relevant to the Scientific Committee) Agenda Item 5a: Promote synergies and the carrying out of key activities Agenda Item 5b: Revision Annual Reports – formation of working groups	
12:30-13:30	Lunch	
<b>Afternoon</b>		
14:00-16:30 17:00-18:00	Agenda Item 5b: Revision Annual Reports – formation of working groups Agenda Item 4: Presentation of Draft Strategic Plan of the Convention	<b><i>Presentation</i></b>
18:30-19:30	Dinner	
<b>Evening</b>		
<b>Wednesday, 29 June 2005</b>		
<b>Morning</b>		
7:00-8:00	Breakfast	
8:30-12:30	Agenda Item 5b: Revision of Annual Reports– review in plenary Agenda Item 5c: Standardization – formation of working groups	
12:30-13:30	Lunch	
<b>Afternoon</b>		
14:00-18:00	Agenda Item 5d: Interactions with fisheries Agenda Item 5e: The situation of the hawksbill turtle	<b><i>Presentation</i></b>
18:30-19:30	Dinner	
<b>Evening</b>		
<b>Thursday, 30 June 2005</b>		
<b>Morning</b>		
7:00-8:00	Breakfast	
8:30-12:30	Agenda Items 5 b-f: various Agenda Item 5g: Socio-Economic information	<b><i>Presentation</i></b>

12:30-13:30	Lunch	
<b>Afternoon</b>		
14.00-18.00	Agenda Item 5f: Compile and Synthesize Information Agenda Item 6: Follow-up to Resolution on the Conservation of <i>Dermochelys coriacea</i> Agenda Item 5a: Promote synergies and carrying out of key activities Agenda Item 7: Other business Agenda Item 8: Closure of meeting	
<b>Evening</b>		

<b>Friday, 1 July 2005</b>		
<b>Morning</b>		
7:00-8:00	Breakfast	
Departure of the majority of participants		

<i>Note:</i> <i>Timing of meals:</i> <i>Breakfast: 07:00-08:00</i> <i>Coffee: 10:10 – 10:30 (approximately)</i> <i>Lunch: 12.30 - 14.00</i> <i>Dinner: 18:00-19:00</i> <i>Coffee: 16:00 - 16.30 (approximately)</i>	
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## Annex 4

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INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION  
AND CONSERVATION OF SEA TURTLES

Second Meeting of the Scientific Committee

*Tres Ríos, Costa Rica – 28-30 June, 2005*

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**INF-24-05**

### **Proposal by the Working Group on the Status of the Hawksbill Turtle of the Scientific Committee, 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Sc.C.**

#### **Working Group on the Hawksbill Turtle *Eretmochelys imbricata*:**

Members: Isaías Majil (coordinator), Carlos Drews (rapporteur), Vicente Guzmán, Julia Horrocks, Mario Jolón, Neca Marcovaldi, René Márquez.

#### **I) Background:**

The Mexican specialists (Guzmán and Márquez) explained the process that led to efforts to identify the decline in the number of annual nesters in the Yucatan, the largest nesting population in the Caribbean, and the results of the meetings held in Ciudad del Carmen and Telchak on this matter, including lines of action to tackle these problems, and the respective coordinators. Given that hawksbill captures in other countries may be involved in this decline, the Mexican delegation is asking the Parties to the Convention to help uncover the regional causes of this decline. At the national level, Mexico will carry out independent actions to address the following possible causes detected:

1. incidental fishing/by-catch and directed fishing,
2. loss of nesting beaches due to coastal development and pollution
3. degradation of feeding sites
4. seismic exploration that could cause adult mortality and inhibit reproduction
5. possible capture of turtles that nest in Mexico in other countries poaching of nests and females
6. inappropriate nest management practices, leading to reduced survival among hatchlings

#### **II) Immediate request:**

The Scientific Committee, through the Secretariat, has issued the following precautionary recommendations to the Parties while experts analyze the population decline in Mexico and assess the current status of the hawksbill turtle in the context of the Convention, bearing in mind the recommendations that emerged from the meeting held in Telchak, Mexico (see “Table II”). The Scientific Committee, through the appropriate channels, called upon the Parties to:

1. Reduce incidental mortality of hawksbills in their fisheries, paying special attention to the modification or search for alternatives to mesh nets.
2. Prevent degradation and mitigate existing impacts on nesting beaches.
3. Conserve reef zones and other priority feeding sites of hawksbills.
4. Apply the precautionary principle and halt seismic exploration in priority hawksbill range areas until its impact on the species is known.
5. Provide information on recaptures and genetic research on hawksbills originating in Mexico, to the Secretariat of the Convention.

6. Strengthen the implementation of laws aimed at eliminating directed fishing, the poaching of hawksbill nests and captures on their nesting beaches.
7. Eliminate inappropriate nest management practices that result in decreased production of hawksbill hatchlings.
8. Eliminate the illegal domestic and international trade in hawksbill products.

### **III) Work plan for this group:**

1. Define a mechanism and steps to follow to analyze the causes of population decline in the Gulf of Mexico and the status of the hawksbill in the context of the Convention:
  - a. synergies with other efforts, including CITES;
  - b. link the IAC initiative to other efforts toward a regional management and conservation plan for the hawksbill, including an analysis of the population status and threats to this species.
2. Use the Yucatan report as a case study to issue more general recommendations on hawksbill conservation to the Parties, for example, by filling information gaps on feeding sites. What does the region need?
3. Urge the Parties to apply precautionary measures until the analysis of the causes of the decline in Mexico is concluded and the current status of the hawksbill is known, in the context of the Convention – bear in mind the recommendations that emerge from the Telchak meeting.

“The Scientific Committee of the Convention will promote, through the appropriate channels, the organization of a technical meeting to analyze the factors that may be contributing to the decline of hawksbills in the Yucatan peninsula in Mexico, and, given their migratory nature, a review of their population status in the Wider Caribbean and the Western Atlantic.”

### **IV) Expected outcomes:**

With reference to the exercise undertaken at the Telchak meeting on the possible causes of the population decline in Yucatan, the following suggestions are made for the technical meeting of the Caribbean and Western Atlantic:

1. Identify the main gaps in terms of information, capacity and resources that hinder efforts to address the main threats to the hawksbill;
2. Identify the main mitigation measures to be promoted and/or strengthened in the area;
3. Identify and recommend precautionary actions and measures to be adopted by hawksbill range states, in light of the decline in Yucatan, leading to the recovery of reduced populations and to the conservation of stable populations;
4. Organize a follow-up process to monitor the implementation of mitigation actions and other recommendations;
5. Design a regional early warning system to detect changes in the population status of the hawksbill turtle.

### **V) Use of the output:**

1. The document will provide input for the next meeting of the Convention’s Scientific Committee and will serve as a basis for preparing a draft resolution on hawksbills to be submitted for the consideration of the Parties during the COP3.
2. The document may provide input for the third meeting for dialogue regarding hawksbills under CITES, and for other forums that consider it pertinent.

## **VI) Steps to follow:**

1. Contact the relevant regional, global and national forums, as well as NGOs, to facilitate an analysis of hawksbill status in the Wider Caribbean, with reference to the recent decline documented in Mexico, including:
  - a. CARICOM;
  - b. Cartagena Convention (SPAW Protocol) – the SPAW Secretariat offered to support this initiative during the COP2;
  - c. CITES – interest already expressed at the COP13 (pending: review the decision from COP13) to resume the hawksbill dialogue among the Range States, with a view toward agreeing upon a conservation and management plan for the hawksbill in the Caribbean. This interest was reiterated by the Fauna Committee at its Twenty-First Meeting, held May 20-25, 2005, in Geneva;
  - d. OLDEPESCA;
  - e. OSPESCA;
  - f. Western Pacific Fisheries Council / NOAA;
  - g. CMS;
  - h. CCAD;
  - i. NGOs: IFAW, WWF, TNC, WIDECAS, CCC, CI, IUCN-MTSG, CCA, Ocean Conservancy, among others.

## **VII) Inputs for the technical meeting:**

1. Report on the Telchak workshop: “Towards COP3: assessment of the status of the hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) in the Yucatan peninsula and determination of strategic actions”, SEMARNAT, March 2005;
2. Monograph “Caribbean Hawksbills” by WWF/Didier Chacon;
3. Documents from the CITES dialogues and follow-up meetings on hawksbills;
4. Experiences of studies in Brazil and other countries applicable to problems facing the hawksbill;
5. Add other relevant documents.

## **VIII) Scope of the meeting:**

1. Participant profile: hawksbill specialists from the region with broad geographic and thematic representation, as well as experts in relevant areas (fisheries, coral reefs, climate change, among others);
2. Number of participants: maximum 30 people;
3. Duration of the meeting: 3-4 working days;
4. Tentative site of the meeting, to be decided; Mexico is recommended given its experience in the Yucatan;
5. Tentative date for the technical meeting: last week of October 2005.

## **IX) Other considerations:**

1. The technical meeting should not be hosted solely by the IAC, but by an alliance of international forums that include the IAC, and should encompass all countries of importance to the hawksbill in the Wider Caribbean<sup>1</sup>[1] and Western Atlantic;

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<sup>1</sup>[1] There is a list resulting from the 2nd dialogue on the hawksbill turtle that may serve as a reference for this purpose.



2. The procedure within the IAC:
  - a. The Scientific Committee makes the proposal to the Secretariat to facilitate the technical meeting, indicating its urgent nature and supported by the Secretariat's mandate to establish ties with other relevant treaties and forums;
  - b. The Committee asks the Secretariat to notify the Parties (according to rule 5.5 of the Rules of Procedure) regarding the actions for immediate implementation recommended by the Scientific Committee, in matters concerning the hawksbill;
  - c. The Presidency of the Convention will request the Parties' approval and logistical support for this meeting
3. The formation of a subgroup is proposed to follow up on the points here agreed.

**Table II:** Prioritization of the problems

**Results of the prioritization exercise.** The five most urgent problems were identified. (Table 2), to which a sixth was also added, in hierarchical order, since it includes an international component and the workshop wishes to focus its results toward Mexico's participation in the COP3 of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles. It should be noted that directed and incidental fishing are included among the most urgent problems to be resolved, while diseases and inappropriate management practices on nesting beaches have been relegated to the last places. With regard to long-term problems, the order is different, and the most important problems identified were those affecting the quality of the species' reproductive and feeding habitats, and inappropriate management practices.

PROBLEMS	urgent						important					
	M1	M2	M3	M4	Median	order	M1	M2	M3	M4	Median	order
Directed take or poaching	5	5	5	5	5.0	1	5	5	0	5	3.8	4
Incidental capture	2	4	4	5	3.8	2	4	5	0	5	3.5	6
Destruction, degradation or blockage of the nesting habitat	5	5	0	4	3.5	3	5	5	4	4	4.5	1
Impacts on feeding habitats resulting in changes in reproductive capacity	3	5	0	4	3.0	4	4	5	3	4	4	3
Seismic exploration causing mortality or inhibiting reproduction	2	2	3	5	3.0	4	5	2	0	5	3	8
Capture of Mexican populations in other countries	3	4	0	4	2.8	5	5	3	2	4	3.5	6
Plundering of nests and females	3	3	2	3	2.5	6	5	5	0	5	3.8	4
Inappropriate management practices on nesting beaches	4	3	0	2	2.5	8	5	5	3	4	4.3	2
Diseases	1	2	0	2	1.3	9	4	2	1	4	2.8	3

## Annex 5

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INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION  
AND CONSERVATION OF SEA TURTLES

Second Meeting of the Scientific Committee

*Tres Ríos, Costa Rica – 28-30 June, 2005*

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INF-29-05

**Proposal of the working group on follow-up to Resolution  
COP2CIT-001 on the leatherback turtle, *Dermochelys coriacea*, 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Meeting of the Sc.C.**

**Working group on the Resolution COP2CIT-001 on the leatherback turtle  
*Dermochelys coriacea***

**Participants:** Didiher Chacon (coordinator), Randall Arauz, Anny Chaves, Laura Sarti, Marco Solano.

**I) General Comments from the Group:**

1. The Secretary made clear that the Secretariat has sent out close to 100 notifications to certain key actors (for example, other treaties), with the purpose of circulating the resolution.
2. They commented that from the information available in the 8 annual reports received by the Secretariat, it does not appear that the Contracting Parties have given proper continuation to the recommendations emanating from the Resolution, however, they recognize that the amount of time between creating the Resolution and turning in the first report, as well as the difficulties in making the transition from the COP a national reality, are limitations to the application of the recommendations of the Resolution.  
Nevertheless, it was noticed that certain Parties continue to develop activities related to this topic since they were being carried out prior to the resolution, such as:
  - Evaluation of the use of circular hooks;
  - National Strategy of Nicaragua;
  - Leatherback Project in Mexico.
3. They question the impact on the Parties, their societies, economies, cultures and ecological systems, as well as to the Convention, if this species disappears in the American Pacific.

**II) The Scientific Committee recommends that:**

1. The situation in the Eastern Pacific be declared an emergency, therefore, the Contracting Parties must comply with the recommendations agreed upon in Resolution COP2CIT-001 as soon as possible;
2. A policy be implemented to not carry out experiments and manipulation of this species that causes mortality at any stage, unless it is first extensively justified to improve conservation practices;
3. Propose to the Parties the *Dermochelys* turtle as a point of agenda for the Consultative Committee;
4. A Sub-committee is formed within the Scientific Committee:
  - a. that provides all of the technical advise for materials made to be handed into the Consultative Committee and Parties;

- b. that creates a proposal of a plan to make Resolution COP2CIT-001 operative, using as a starting point the following actions implemented by the Parties.

### **III) Duties of the Sub-committee in the creation of an Operative Plan:**

1. Compile up to date information on the location and identification of critical areas and periods for *Dermochelys coriacea* survival.
2. Consider, among other sources, the FAO action plan to reduce interactions with sea turtles in danger of extinction, by the State and Regional Fisheries Management Organizations, 2005, in agreement with the established guidelines.
3. Develop guidelines necessary to create a Regional Action Plan that takes into consideration the points recommended in the Resolution;
4. Develop tools (i.e. brochures, pamphlets, etc.) that serve to regionally divulge information regarding the status of this species;
5. Collaborate with the Secretariat in educational and informative activities for key regional sectors (i.e. UNIPESCA, OSPESCA, OLDEPESCA, CCAD, etc.) to promote lobbying the topic.

### **IV) Characteristics of the Sub-committee:**

The following characteristics are recommended to make up this sub-committee:

1. A maximum of 4 people that bring qualities such as knowledge of the topic and challenges;
2. Specialists that fulfill the basic requisites, including:
  - a. Good communication skills;
  - b. Regional representation;
  - c. Ability to raise funds;
  - d. Ability to work via e-mail;
  - e. Availability of time; and
  - f. Charisma.
3. Based on this information, it was proposed to invite the following personas as possible candidates for the formation of this sub-committee: Didiher Chacón, Juan Carlos Cantú, Alejandro Fallabrino, Hedelvy Guada, Laura Sarti and others to be included.

### **V) Other considerations:**

1. To develop this Operative Plan, the Secretariat will provide support in raising funds. It is recommended for this task to request funds from organizations such as; MTCA, NFWF, GEF and international NGO's;
2. It is recommended that an expert meeting is held on the challenges of the Eastern Pacific *Dermochelys*, with the purpose of establishing priorities;
3. It is suggested that before September 30<sup>th</sup> of 2005, the sub-committee has produced the products outlined here, and that no later than May of 2006 these materials are distributed throughout the region.

## Annex 6

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INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION  
AND CONSERVATION OF SEA TURTLES

Second Meeting of the Scientific Committee

*Tres Ríos, Costa Rica – 28-30 June, 2005*

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**INF-25-05**

### **Proposal of the working group on standardization of the Scientific Committee, 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Sc.C.**

#### **Working group on the Importance of Standardization of methods, terms and data**

Members: Laura Sarti (coordinator), Anny Chaves, Vicente Guzmán, Martin Hall, Julia Horrocks, Neca Marcovaldi, Sebastian Tröeng.

#### **I) Standardization – Topics for discussion:**

Discussion based on Laura Sarti's presentation to the first meeting of the Scientific Committee on the problems and possible recommendations for the adoption of methodologies for the Parties (guide/guidelines based on literature /manuals, glossary, practices). Suggestions for training activities/ recommendations for implementation and adoption. Difficulties in implementing the changes suggested by the Scientific Committee. Priority terms for conservation that should be standardized – with essential (general) useful information for the Parties. Use of common names.

#### **II) General comments within the working group (justification)**

1. As a result of the COP2, the Parties recognize the importance of standardization and issue a mandate to this Committee to draft a proposal to resolve standardization problems.
2. The results of the evaluation of the annual reports must be made known to understand:
  - a. which information was not standardized;
  - b. which information will be requested in the next reports and should be standardized.
3. Despite the availability of manuals and protocols, it is recognized that the causes of this lack of standardization are the lack of training and updating of program managers and project technicians on the one hand, and resistance to change on the other, although there are sometimes valid statistical reasons for not changing methodology.
4. Lack of specific standards for research and management procedures.
5. One goal could be to establish a common database among the Parties to enable countries to compare information, perhaps similar in form to the WIDECAS (tagging database). This database should contain the *minimum information necessary* of importance in the context of the Convention to achieve its objectives and also regulations on its use, for example:
  - a. For each beach, the total nestings per species, per season, or at least the total nestings during peak nesting periods (It would be necessary to define "season" and "peak nesting period" in terms of periods of time and specifying the effort).
6. Information should be based on governmental and associated (cooperation) programs/projects.

**III) For the above reasons, it is proposed that:**

1. The presentation given by Laura Sarti during the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Scientific Committee be made available to the Working Group, in text format
2. Based on an analysis of the First Annual Report,
  - a. Expand and specify the instruction manual adapting it to the format of the second report;
  - b. “Windows” with pre-established options are suggested to avoid variations in the answers
3. Ask the Parties to submit their fieldwork protocols in order to compile and compare methodologies.
4. We suggest that three leaders be appointed in the following topics, each with its own sub-group: nesting beaches, feeding areas and fisheries.
5. Each leader may form a working group including people with broad experience in the topics mentioned, in order to:
  - a. Establish the minimum essential information of importance in the context of the Convention;
  - b. Define the most accepted methods for compiling and presenting said information;
  - c. Recommend that the Parties make use of published Manuals (particularly the one by the IUCN/MTSG group of experts) or else review this manual and others, as well as the protocols of the Parties in order to prepare a simpler protocol based on all the material reviewed;
  - d. Prepare a proposal for a standardized format to present the information to the Secretariat;
  - e. Prepare a glossary;
  - f. Propose training activities.
6. The Scientific Committee will submit these formats to the consideration of the Parties at the next COP3.

**IV) Proposal on the composition of the sub-groups:**

We propose the following individuals as leaders (L) and members of the sub-groups, plus suggestions for a support team:

1. Nesting beaches: Laura Sarti (L), Neca Marcovaldi, Julia Horrocks, Anny Chaves.
2. Feeding areas: Carlos Díez (L), Vicente Guzman, Jay Nicholls, Jeff Seminoff, Robert Van Dam.
3. Fisheries: Jorge Zuzunaga (L), Eastern Pacific Regional Program, Gilberto Sales, Chris Boggs.

**V) Common names of sea turtle species in the area of the Convention (provisional list):**

*Dermochelys coriacea:*

Baula, laúd, canal, de canal, siete quillas, siete filos, baule, tinglada/or, tinglar, cardón, de altura, gigante, garapacho, machincuepo, de cuero, tora, cabeza de toro, chalupa, burrón, leatherback, leatherly, aitikanti, sixtikanti, de couro, driekiel, drikil,

*Eretmochelys imbricata*

Carey, pico de halcón, de pente, hawksbill, de concha, Karet,

*Lepidochelys olivacea*

Golfina, lora, amarilla, carpintera, tortuga, parlama, paslama, caguama, oliva, ridley, olive ridley, boba,

*Lepidochelys kemp*

Golfina, lora, bastarda, perica, cotorra, kemp, kemp's ridley, mule turtle,

*Chelonia mydas* (Eastern Pacific)

Negra, prieta, zacacillo, amarilla, black turtle, tora, parlama,

*Chelonia mydas*

Verde, blanca, green, green-back, blanku, jacona,

*Caretta caretta*

Cabezona, cabeçuda, mestiça, caguama, amarilla, jabalina, perica, loggerhead, kawama, kawana, karet, colorada,

## Annex 7

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INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF  
SEA TURTLES

Second Meeting of the Scientific Committee  
*Tres Ríos, Costa Rica – 28-30 June, 2005*

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INF-23-05

### Report of the Scientific Committee Working Group on Annual Reports, 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Sc.C.

#### Working Group on Annual Reports

Participants: Didiher Chacón, Mario Jolón, Isaías Majil, René Márquez, Jorge Zuzunaga, Belinda Dick

#### I) Reviewed documents:

The Working Group of the Scientific Committee reviewed the eight annual reports presented at the meeting: Belize, Brazil, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Netherlands Antilles, Peru and Venezuela.

#### II) General Observations:

1. The annual reports generally contain important information for:
  - a. Creation of maps, detailing nesting sites for example;
  - b. Creation of a regional directory;
  - c. For a database of existing documents.
2. On the other hand, the following details were observed:
  - a. A very diverse range of acronyms referring to protected area status or species were presented, which must be standardized (e.g. NP, NWR, Ei, Dc, Cm, etc.);
  - b. The forms used to georeference do not allow for comparison, hence they also need to be standardized;
  - c. Several tables are left incomplete (e.g. directories, matrices).
  - d. A standard type of citation or biographical reference is not used;
  - e. It is not relevant to cite information that is overly old or repealed legislation;
  - f. Several tables were presented with altered numbering, making comparisons difficult in some cases. The original headings of the report must be maintained;
  - g. It would be useful to include a table similar to that of page 16 of the Guatemala report.

#### III) Recommendations:

The Scientific Committee recommends to the Consultative Committee:

1. Resolve the omissions, gaps and changes mentioned above by introducing changes to the report format and its accompanying instruction manual.
2. Create a template or electronic formula for presentation of the report that includes possible answers to closed questions as well as spaces for open questions. This can aid in standardizing abbreviations for species, LAT-LON-(UTM), headers, etc.

3. Include an automatic function in the format that will request the minimum relevant information for some subsections, under pre-determined standards.
4. For reports of the following years the electronic template can highlight or color new information, thus allowing comparison both to previous country reports and with other countries.
5. Include a wide list of threats with the corresponding description in the manual (subsection 3) in order to avoid differing interpretations of the same concept.
6. The concept of migratory corridor is not defined. Is the presence of turtles in the water considered a migratory corridor? Maybe the term “occurrence” in the water should be used. What happens in the case of territorial and international waters? This must be resolved by seeking the right definition.
7. Verified migratory routes must be integrated into a separate table with the corresponding information including start/end point (LAT/LON), marking and recuperation. Include in annex any existing maps and their route in LAT/LON for the IAC GIS database.
8. In section 1.1, for the concept of phase the corresponding definitions of foraging, reproduction and migration must be further developed, including an ND option and eliminating unknown phase.
9. Maintain simple and general criteria for the listing and classification of nesting areas. Possible categories can be defined by number, e.g. under 10, 11-50, 51-100, 101-500, over 501, etc. or ideally the exact number.
10. Point 1.2.d on the instruction manual must be modified with respect to Protection Category and changed to area management category. Also, categories used must be described or explained in case of use of local nomenclature. It is recommended that the extension of the area associated to use by sea turtles be specified.
11. From the second report onwards a subsection describing advances regarding approved resolutions must be included.
12. The terms of reference for point 6.1 must be further clarified, trying to look for standard information and not for open description, for comparison purposes. For example is recommended to state questions such as: A plan of action, strategy or national program for the conservation of marine turtles exists? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_, followed by terms of reference, objectives, activities, results obtained, etc.
13. Section 7 must include other cooperation relations, additional to those described. The description must also be refined.
14. As a general suggestion, use of the instruction manual as the guide for completion of the report must be emphasized.
15. It is recommended that it be standard practice for the focal point to, to the extent possible, consult with the different sectors of civil society in order to enrich the information to be included in the report.
16. An expert on database management must be integrated.

### **III) Follow-up in the Scientific Committee:**

1. The Working Group (Didiher Chacón, René Márquez, Jorge Zuzunaga, Belinda Dick, Isaías Majil), will continue the evaluation of annual reports in the next Committee meeting.
  2. An expert on database management must be integrated.
- This Working Group will coordinate with the Working Group on Standardization.