Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles

First Meeting of the Scientific Committee

Tres Ríos, Costa Rica; August 24th to 26th, 2004

MINUTES

1. OPENING AND WELCOME

As agreed by the First Conference of the Parties, the Scientific Committee held its first meeting in Tres Rios, Cartago, Costa Rica on August 24 – 26, 2004, prior to the COP2. The *Pro Tempore* Secretary of the Inter-American Convention, Marco Solano, welcomed the participants and gave a brief overview of the work plan, highlighting the importance of ensuring that the Scientific Committee meetings remain purely scientific/technical.

Attending the meeting were unilateral representatives from 10 of the 11 Parties (Netherlands Antilles, Belize, Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, United States, Honduras, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela), 2 advisors (Mexico and Brazil), and 8 observers (Annex I).

2. DESIGNATION OF CHAIR, VICE-CHAIR AND RAPPORTEUR

Prior to the election, the Secretariat explained the relevant steps of the Rules of Procedure approved under Resolution COP1CIT-004: All decisions at Convention meetings are made by consensus; the Chairperson will conduct meetings and discussions, will convene meetings, develop the agenda, and give follow-up to decisions; when the Chair is unable to act as such, the Vice-Chair will take over such position; the Rapporteur helps the Secretariat draft reports and minutes. The Secretary additionally clarified that the Secretariat supports the Chair in its functions.

The representative of Brazil nominated the delegate of the United States to preside the first meeting of the Scientific Committee, seconded by Costa Rica and Ecuador. Venezuela nominated Mexico for the Vice-Chair, and volunteered to act as Rapporteur. Therefore, Jack Frazier, René Márquez, and José Alió Mingo were unanimously appointed Chair, Vice-Chair and Rapporteur, respectively.

The Chair informed that the floor was open to unilateral representatives, advisors, observers and other participants in a spirit of collaboration and openness. Peru expressed that decisions should be made by consensus of the representatives, but the Chairman indicated that the Committee only forwards its opinions and Recommendations for the Conference of the Parties, where the political decisions concerning the responsibilities and duties of the Parties are made.

3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The provisional agenda was opened for discussion and amended based on priority matters: reviewing and listing Recommendations for the draft Terms of Reference for the Scientific Committee, to the format of the Annual Report to the Parties, and to the Resolution on *Dermochelys coriacea*, as well as developing the Work Plan for the Committee. With these changes, the agenda was adopted. The Chair mentioned the possibility of creating working groups as needed.

4. ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON DOCUMENT CIT-008 "DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE"

The Convention has two subsidiary bodies, namely the Scientific Committee and the Consultative Committee. Both collaborate evaluating the Annual Reports of the Parties and take

other actions as indicated by the COP. The COP approved the terms of reference for the Consultative Committee, but not so for the Scientific Committee. The draft indicates that the Scientific Committee will consist of one unilateral delegate from each Party, whom may be accompanied by no more than three advisors, and, if approved by the COP, other representatives appointed by consensus. The Secretary indicated that the participation of the unilateral delegates and the representatives appointed by consensus would be funded by the Convention.

On the other hand, the Consultative Committee consists of the delegates appointed by the respective countries, who may be accompanied by advisors. Additionally, nine members are elected by consensus by the COP, representing the scientific sector, the productive sector and NGOs. The Convention clearly provides that both the Conference of the Parties and the Consultative Committee are of a political nature, since they consist of representatives of each Party, and that the Scientific Committee is of a technical-scientific advisory nature.

When reviewing the terms of reference of the Scientific Committee, questions arose regarding the need for the Convention to have three political-nature bodies, and regarding the effects of such a structure on flexibility, disciplinary representativeness, authority and scientific independence. The high costs of a large committee must be considered. Although one proposal could be for Parties to appoint specialists in the matters pertaining to the Scientific Committee, provided that this is a unilateral selection in each Party, they have the sovereign right to appoint whomever they wish as Unilateral Delegate to the Committee. Based on the experiences of other international instruments, among them the IATTC, IOSEA and SPAW, the committee, with scientific and technical advisory responsibilities, must have scientific representatives, but not necessarily national representatives. To better guide the discussion, reflecting the recommendations the Committee should forward, the Chair provided a summary (Annex V) comparing certain features of this Convention with the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Sea Turtles and their Habitats in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia (IOSEA).

Recommendations for the Parties to the Convention:

- To guide the actions of the Scientific Committee within the context of the Convention structure and objective;
- To guarantee, through the Scientific Committee structure, compliance with the technical-scientific advisory responsibilities, in an effective, timely and impartial manner;
- To ensure that the Scientific Committee has adequate disciplinary diversity – not only sea turtle biology and conservation but also social and economic sciences and communications – to offer appropriate advice in different tasks and matters entrusted to it (that is, the Scientific Committee must be interdisciplinary);
- To ensure that the Scientific Committee acts as a leader capable of networking with diverse professionals and specialists with other disciplines, skills and expertise;
- To ensure that the Scientific Committee complies with its technical-scientific responsibilities;
- To foster and support streamlined communications and collaboration between the Scientific Committee and other bodies and entities of the Convention and of other instruments and organizations.

5. ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE DRAFT FORMAT OF THE "ANNUAL REPORT"

The base document prepared by the Secretariat (Ref. CIT-017-04) was analyzed. Discussions covered the complexity of the format and the information involved, the need to provide the most complete information possible, the possibility of simplifying the form for the first year, and the need to have clear and precise instructions, particularly for the period corresponding to the data collection presented, data collection methodologies, sources of information, and names of persons and institutions that helped prepare each report.

Laura Sarti gave a presentation on the difficulties in comparing field studies on turtle density on nesting beaches and hatching success rates, to count nesting females and analyze nesting sites. This information is fundamental for most sea turtle research worldwide to better understand trends in population and abundance. She highlighted the need to standardize data collection techniques at nesting beaches, and gave examples of several confusing elements, that range from the difference between a false nest and a nest full of eggs to the reluctance among those that already have well-established programs and protocols to change or adopt new methods. Other confusions concerning data collection are the difference between the direct count of nesting sites and indirect methods to monitor nesting activities by observing tracks on the beach, accurate counts of nests with eggs and estimates by counting and estimating shells and pieces of shells, the difference between the absence of a phenomenon (such as embryo development) and the absence of data, as well as differences among data collection observers – especially when some lack experience and training in methodologies. She explained the importance given to nesting beach data, since some indices and indicators frequently used to determine the status the sea turtle populations are based on estimates of the portion of a population which is most accessible: nesting females that can easily be observed, counted and studied as they come to shore to lay their eggs, while this is not the case with other sectors of the population.

Concern was expressed regarding the presentation and interpretation of data and conclusions on population trends. Several basic points arose: the importance of having clear objectives when developing the Annual Report form; the importance of clarifying the time-span covered by the information in the report; the importance of gathering raw data for the Committee to perform population assessments (management units); and the risk of generalizing conclusions to a whole species when in fact different populations of one same species could have contrasting trends.

Recommendations for the Parties to the Convention:

- To acknowledge the serious problem due to the lack of uniform methods and collecting data without standardized protocols, hindering the comparison of information from different projects, and even from different countries;
- To gather detailed information on different data collection methods;
- To carry our method comparison experiments to best utilize information in a comparative manner;
- To take advantage of the different guides, manuals, protocols, and other existing documents and papers related to standardized data collection and methodologies: eg., CITES, IOSEA and MTSG/IUCN;

- To compile bibliographical information on research and tracking methods used in the region;
- To promote – as a priority for the Convention – the standardization of methods and data collection regionally, recognizing this as a long-term process;
- To foster training workshops on priority issues;
- To improve data collection methods when necessary.

6. BYCATCH OF SEA TURTLES

Martin Hall spoke about the progress made at the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) introducing fishing gear that has a lesser impact on sea turtles and other species caught incidentally in the artisanal longline fisheries in Ecuador. This program recently expanded to Peru, and may possibly continue in Guatemala, Mexico and Panama. He explained that the successful experience of the IATTC preventing the bycatch of dolphins in the purse-seine tuna fisheries is evidence that technological solutions can help reduce fisheries-related environmental degradation.

The programs in Ecuador and Peru count on the valuable support of national and international organizations and institutions of the governmental, private and non-governmental sectors. Workshops have been organized with the fishing communities to inform them about the bycatch issue, to encourage them to take responsibility for mitigating the problem, and to foster the use of circle hooks instead of J-hooks.

Although the research has not been concluded, it is evident that bycatch of sharks, billfishes and sea turtles is less when using circle hooks, and that animals caught are hooked in more benign places (lower jaw). It is estimated that mortality has also decreased. The IATTC will have the results of the statistical analyses in 2005. The Chair indicated that the Parties must recognize the serious sea turtle bycatch problem and the urgent need to implement corrective measures. An innovative approach is needed, seeking partnerships among nations and among government and non-governmental institutions. The IATTC experience highlights the importance of developing collaboration mechanisms among institutions. The bycatch issue is full of uncertainties and, together with the current low productivity of some fisheries and the dynamics of the fishing effort – which could change completely in just a few years – it is even more difficult to mitigate its negative impacts. This leads to react to unexpected and superficial problems and not to effectively planned measures. There is scarce information on the impact of using different types of fishing gear, including deep-sea longlines and other types of nets. Additionally, the impacts of trawling have not been mitigated. Managing resources and solving high seas problems are very complex matters, but the Convention – pursuant to its mandate – must foster relevant measures adopted by other international instruments. In many cases it is too late to revert the decrease in sea turtle populations, and it may perhaps not stop. So it is URGENT in some cases to take action; we are working against the clock. Political decisions are needed at the regional level to solve the bycatch issue. The Scientific Committee cannot censor the sovereign States, but it can highlight their responsibilities under international instruments.

Recommendations for the Parties to the Convention:

- To promote on-board observer programs with duly trained observers;

- To detect information gaps and carry out the necessary research;
- To foster and formalize interaction and collaboration between this Convention and others that cover the Atlantic and/or Pacific Ocean basins, such as IATTC (where several resolutions have been adopted to mitigate sea turtle bycatch in the Pacific Ocean) and the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT);
- To strengthen links with other organizations, eg., the International Whaling Commission, that could have useful methods and experiences to identify and solve problems;
- To carry out studies and experiments with gillnets, apparently a significant cause of sea turtle mortality; there is little basic information on this type of gear;
- To foster large-scale experiments that in the short term could lead to major changes in the fishing sector;
- To urgently develop ecosystem approaches; an action could not only benefit sea turtles but other marine species also;
- To foster regional policies to solve the bycatch problem;
- To test circle hooks and encourage their use if they help mitigate bycatch;
- To test fixed or anchored fish aggregating devices (FADs), and foster artisanal fishing in specific areas, substituting the use of longlines in large areas;
- Considering the problems of over-fishing, overcapitalization and low levels of productivity, to be alert and detect sudden changes in fishing gear use as well as shifts in fishing effort, in order to respond in an adequate and timely manner;
- Considering the decreasing trends in several fisheries, to explore productive and sustainable alternatives for the fishing sector;
- Given the complexity of the matter, to promote greater participation and collaboration to mitigate the problems, either with organizations of Parties to the Convention or of non-Party countries;
- To encourage the participation of other States and organizations in this Convention.

7. STATUS OF *DERMOCHELYS CORIACEA* IN THE REGION

In compliance with the agreement reached by the COP 1, the first meeting of the Scientific Committee considered the Draft Resolution for the Conservation of Leatherback Turtles, in order to issue a recommendation to the COP2.

Didiher Chacón made a presentation of the status of *Dermochelys coriacea*, particularly in the Convention Area (Inf.16-04). He referred to the multitude of common names used for this turtle throughout the region, such as "baula" in Costa Rica. He described its biological characteristics and focused on the most relevant impacts, i.e. intense egg harvesting, killing of turtles (particularly nesting females), deterioration of nesting habitats as well as the aquatic environment where it lives, bycatch in various fisheries, and land and marine predators.

It is believed the Eastern Pacific population of *Dermochelys coriacea* is in critical danger of extinction; however, populations in several areas of the Atlantic Ocean exhibit clear signs of recovery (Trinidad & Tobago; Saint Croix, Virgin Islands; and Espiritu Santo, Brazil), but these are relatively small. The fact that females of this species use nesting sites up to 50 Km apart may lead to confusion in the count, as it may mean nesting in different countries.

Their migration routes cross the Pacific Ocean between California and Papua-New Guinea and Indonesia, and there is movement between Mesoamerica (Mexico and Costa Rica, with the largest nesting populations) and the Galapagos Islands (Ecuador) and southern South America.

In the Atlantic Ocean movements have been reported between Nova Scotia, Canada (a feeding area) and South America, even Eastern Atlantic waters. From Tortuguero in Costa Rica they move to the mid-Atlantic and on to Canada.

In conclusion, trends clearly differ between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans; there is a severe decline in the number of nesting females in the latter. Feeding and migration corridors clearly exist in both oceans, and females nest in different beaches.

The discussion noted there are severe difficulties in accessing and collecting information and in determining whether existing information is legitimate or not.

Upon conclusion, the Chair and the participants congratulated the speaker for the hard work in compiling the information included in the presentation, noting that the discussion pointed to some recommendations for the Committee:

- Studies should clearly indicate the sources of information used;
- Caution should be exercised when generalizing about marine turtle behavior given the significant variations and given that these organisms can change behavior patterns;
- There should be a mechanism for documents issued by the Committee to be reviewed by experts within and outside the Committee; it is fundamental to have the respect of the scientific community;
- In complex situations, responsible actions should be recommended while addressing what the available information indicates.

Sea turtles have complex and long life cycles with specific environmental requirements and therefore many conservation actions commonly used for short life-cycle organisms are not applicable.

Recommendations for the Parties to the Convention:

- To undertake concrete actions, as it is evident that some *Dermochelys* populations have declined and are critically endangered;
- To convene statistics and demographics experts with researchers responsible for monitoring and information programs, to obtain reliable sea turtle stock assessments and trends;
- To promote tagging programs in feeding areas.

8. WORK GROUP MEETINGS

Given the short amount of time available during the meeting, and in order to complete the agenda in an efficient manner, four working groups analyzed the main documents: Draft Resolution for the Conservation of Leatherback Turtles (*Dermochelys coriacea*) (Annex II), Draft Scientific Committee Work Plan (Annex III), Proposed Form for First Annual Report (Annex IV) and Analysis and Recommendations on the Proposed Terms of Reference for the Scientific Committee (Annexes V, VI and VII). The groups consisted of:

1. *Dermochelys*: R. Arauz, D. Chacón, C. Drews, L. Sarti and M. Solano (5).
2. Work Plan: J. Alió, J. Azueta, B. Donaire, M. Hall, J. Montes de Oca, J. Thomé and J. Zuzunaga (7).

3. Annual Report to the Parties: A. Chávez, B. Dick, C. Lageux, N. Marcovaldi, W. Tapia and G. van Buurt (6).
4. Terms of Reference: J. Frazier, R. Márquez and S. Tröeng (3).

After some discussion, the plenary agreed to the first three proposals and, except for two people, the rest of the participants also agreed with the proposed terms of reference recommended. This, added to the existing confusion regarding the structures, functions and competencies of the various bodies under the Convention, highlighted the need to improve the proposed document to make it more understandable. As no information was available either on the priority themes for the Scientific Committee (given that the work plan was not ready until the end of the meeting), it was necessary to summarize the discussions and the proposed Plan in another document. Due to time limitations, the Chair accepted the responsibility for both tasks and will prepare electronic versions for review by the participants.

9. INFORMATIVE TOPICS

9.1 Comparative Socio-Economic Studies on Sea Turtles

Carlos Drews introduced and Sebastian Tröeng presented the topic. He explained that several wild fauna species have been used for commercial purposes, and that economic factors determine exploitation pressures and possibilities for conservation. The most common extractive practices for these species include use of eggs, meat and oil as well as shells and skin. There are other non-extractive uses that would have long-term benefits for a larger number of people, including tourism at sea turtle nesting beaches. Since developing countries enjoy more diversity and abundance of sea turtles, they make greater use of this resource. Extractive uses negatively affect sea turtle populations; in addition the reduction in abundance of the resource impacts other communities or people who could benefit from these populations, as these species are a shared resource. The financial gains of non-extractive use are mainly targeted at the key actors involved; fishermen would only benefit if they participate in tourism themselves. Otherwise, this would eliminate their possibility for extraction and compensation.

Governments can create economic incentives, generate jobs dedicated to the conservation of sea turtles and their habitats, eliminate subsidies to fisheries adverse to the sustainability of the resource and promote non-extractive uses. However, tourism activities will not be viable everywhere, just as extraction is not viable everywhere.

9.2 The *Pro Tempore* Secretariat informed that it will e-mail information on the Eastern Tropical Pacific Marine Corridor Project to all delegates.

9.3 The *Pro Tempore* Secretariat informed that OLDEPESCA has been consulted regarding the possibility of acting as Secretariat to the Convention, but the decision is still pending.

10. OTHER BUSINESS

10.1 The *Pro Tempore* Secretariat informed that the Second Conference of the Parties (COP 2) will take place in November 2004. In June, the *Pro Tempore* Secretary, M. Solano, visited Venezuela and made arrangements for the meeting place and other needs. The meeting is tentatively scheduled for the first week of November 2004.

10.2 The Delegate of Ecuador informed that the new Focal Point for his country is the Director of the Galapagos National Park, Edwin Naula.

10.3 D. Chacón stated his commitment to update the report on the status of *Dermochelys coriacea*, and post it on the Convention web page. Any information that participants wish to have incorporated into this report should be submitted within 30 days, in order to have the updated version prior to the COP2.

10.4 M. Solano indicated that the *Pro Tempore* Secretariat will make available all relevant convention documents using a web page in the website of the Ministry of the Environment of Costa Rica. In addition, the Secretariat has some possibilities to provide e-mail accounts to delegates requiring one.

10.6 The *Pro Tempore* Secretary reminded the participants that in the COP2, the Parties will reach a decision on the establishment of a Permanent Secretariat for the Convention. A Permanent Secretariat requires resources and quotas will have to be established to cover expenses.

10.7 One of the members of the *Pro Tempore* Secretariat support staff, Julio Montes de Oca, made a presentation on the role of the Secretariat and described in detail the features of the web site. In addition, Belinda Dick, also member of the supporting staff, presented an evaluation of nesting beach capacity in Costa Rica based on a survey and the results were included in a Geographic Information System and will be posted in the Convention web site.

Recommendation to the Parties to the Convention:

- To foster communication and collaboration between the two subsidiary bodies of the Convention, the three representatives of the scientific sector that will be appointed by the Parties by consensus to form the Consultative Committee could be members of the Scientific Committee, once it has been created.

11. CLOSING

To close the meeting, Chairman J. Frazier and *Pro Tempore* Secretary M. Solano thanked everyone for attending and for their active participation, which favored concluding the work plan set out. Delegates and observers thanked the Secretariat and the delegation of Costa Rica for hosting the event and for the hospitality received.

LIST OF ANNEXES

I CIT-006 Rev.1 (26ago04): Proposed Resolution for the Conservation of Leatherback Turtles (*Dermochelys coriacea*);

II CIT-019-04: Work Plan Project for the Scientific Committee

III CIT-017-04 Rev.1 (26ago04): Annual Report Form

IV Observations on the Scientific Committee, its relation to the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles, and Recommendations for the Terms of Reference

V Priority thematic areas for the Scientific Committee

VI Comparison between the Scientific Committee of the Inter.-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC), and the "Advisory Committee" as per the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Sea Turtles and their Habitats in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia (IOSEA).

VII List of Participants;

ANNEX I
CIT-006 Rev. 1 (26ago04)

Proposed Resolution for the Conservation of Leatherback Turtles (*Dermochelys coriacea*)

WHEREAS leatherback sea turtles have existed on the face of this Earth since approximately ten million years ago;

WHEREAS leatherback sea turtles are an important component of marine ecosystems of the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans;

WHEREAS leatherback sea turtles are valued for cultural, socioeconomic, ecological and scientific reasons;

CONSIDERING that this species is listed on Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES), Appendix II of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife in the Wider Caribbean Region (SPAW) of the Cartagena Convention, Appendices I and II of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), furthermore, is considered among the conservation priorities of various intergovernmental organizations such as the FAO, as well as being listed as critically endangered by IUCN (The World Conservation Union);

CONSIDERING that the nesting data obtained along the coast of the Eastern Pacific has shown a decrease in the population of more than 90% from 1980 to 2004;

RECOGNIZING the existence of data that suggest a decrease in some nesting colonies in the Wider Caribbean;

CONSIDERING that the principal threats to the leatherback turtles have been identified as long-line and gillnet fisheries, unsustainable exploitation of eggs and turtles, as well as the destruction or alteration of nesting habitat;

RECOGNIZING that the international community has expressed concern over the use of flags of convenience, as well as illegal fishing, lacking control, and lacking regulation, including pirate fishing, which are just some of the problems faced by the marine ecosystems on which the leatherback sea turtle depends;

CONSIDERING that the implementation of responsible fishing measures to protect leatherback sea turtles at sea may also benefit a broad spectrum of marine species of economic value to the fishery, tourism and other sectors;

CONSIDERING the approval of resolutions C-04-05 and C-04-07 directly relating to sea turtle conservation, which were created during the 72nd Meeting of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission of (IATTC), carried out in Lima from June 14th to the 18th, 2004;

CONSIDERING that the decline in leatherback sea turtle populations is undermining the cultural and economic benefits to the coastal communities which have a religious nature or represent a tourist attraction; and

RECALLING that the first Conference of the Parties of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles, taking into consideration the critical state of the leatherback sea turtle, agreed to "request each one of the Parties to consider as a matter of high priority whining their territories, the immediate search for solutions that could revert this situation, following the mandates included in the text of the Convention".

THE SECOND CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES OF THE INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF SEA TURTLES RESOLVES TO:

REQUEST that as a priority, Parties elaborate and/or implement conservation plans and long- term programs that can reverse the critical situation of the leatherback sea turtle in the Eastern Pacific;

URGE that Parties with leatherback sea turtle nesting beaches in the Eastern Pacific acquire and evaluate pertinent conservation measures including: a significant reduction in the use and consumption of their products and derivatives, as well as the protection of the nesting sites and their associated habitats, in accordance with Article IV and Annex II of the Convention;

EXHORT the Parties to adopt fishing techniques that mitigate the incidental mortality of this species, in accordance with Article IV(h) of the Convention;

EXHORT the Parties to collect and facilitate information to the Convention, regarding the incidental capture of the leatherback sea turtle in long-lines, gillnets, and other fishing gear used by the artisanal as well as industrial fisheries, in order to evaluate and adopt fishing techniques that mitigate the incidental capture of the leatherback turtle;

REQUEST that the Parties establish agreements and/or understandings with countries fishing within international waters, so that they receive the initiative of this Convention to adopt fishing techniques that mitigate the incidental capture of leatherback sea turtles; and

EXHORT the Parties, in accordance with Articles XII and XX of the Convention and by means of the Secretariat, to establish and strengthen cooperative agreements and alliances with pertinent organizations that help in the conservation of the leatherback.

ANNEX II
CIT-019-04

Work Plan Project for the Scientific Committee

Work Plan Project[1]

General considerations

Under the framework of article 8, paragraph 2, of the Convention, the following work plan is proposed, oriented towards the implementation of the following fundamental objectives and "taking into account the environmental, socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the Parties":

1. Evaluate the state of the sea turtles in the region, making use of and analyzing existing advances in protection and conservation matters,
2. Attend the requests of the Parties,
3. Recommend management actions to the COP.

Priority topics for action

(Topics 1-6: high priority)

1. Analyze and make recommendations as follow-up to Resolution CIT-006 on the *Dermochelys coriacea*.

2. Promote the evaluation of the state of sea turtle populations in the area covered by the Convention through:
   - 2.1 Estimating the trends of sea turtle abundance by species,
   - 2.2 Workshops to calculate abundance indices by species,
   - 2.3 Recommendations for the use of standardized methodologies derived during these workshops and other sources, taking into consideration the development of technical guides,
   - 2.4 Providing the information on a website,
   - 2.5 Maintaining the information up to date.

3. Promote data collection on the beaches through:
   - 3.1 The comparison and harmonizing of data collection methodologies,
   - 3.2 Workshops to standardize data collection,
   - 3.3 The preparation of technical guides on the recommended methodologies.

4. Promote population identification and distribution studies in order to minimize the impact of fisheries, through:
   - 4.1 Studies on the genetic structure of populations,
   - 4.2 Studies that complete information on female migratory routes,

[1] The execution of the Work Plan requires the collaboration of the diverse institutions of the Contracting Parties, scientific community, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders involved and interested in the protection of sea turtles and their habitat, and will be subject to the availability of funds, facilities and capacity to carry out the proposed activities.

4.3 Studies on the movements of inter-nesting females,
4.4 The determination of areas/periods with a high density of individuals, feeding grounds and areas of seasonal use,
4.5 Studies on the depth distributions frequented by sea turtles.

5. Promote the estimation of mortality rates, through:
5.1 Studies identifying the causes of sea turtle mortality and estimating their respective rates, including necropsies on the beach,
5.2 On-board observer programs to monitor incidental capture,
5.3 Incidental capture studies on fisheries where little information exists (for example, bottom long lines, long lines, drift nets, and trawls),
5.4 Workshops to standardize the collection of incidental capture information.

6. Develop activities related to the socio-economic realm:
6.1 Promote socio-economic studies of the coastal communities and their activities that interact with sea turtles,
6.2 Encourage the development of economic alternatives that diminish unsustainable pressures on sea turtles,
6.3 Explore participative management options (for example, for ecotourism),
6.4 Suggest actions that facilitate the adoption of necessary technology and practices to mitigate the impacts on sea turtle populations by fishermen in the region,
6.5 Evaluate possible measures that may be implemented by the Parties to facilitate the adoption of these technologies and practices necessary to mitigate the impacts on sea turtle populations.

7. To seek and make available existing information related to the protection and conservation of sea turtles:
7.1 Request the necessary information from the Parties, individuals and institutions,
7.2 Create a bibliographic database,
7.3 Place the database at the disposal of the users.

8. Develop management tools through:
8.1 Technical guides on the development of management plans for the protection of nesting beaches and other critical habitat,
8.2 Recommendations for creating national or international marine protected areas.

9. Improve communication:
9.1 Foster studies applying communication strategies in coastal communities and at direct stakeholders interacting with sea turtles.

10. Promote the diffusion of information:
10.1 Support the Secretariat in the diffusion of scientific information in environmental education and sea turtle conservation programs.

11. Encourage the cooperation between the Convention and regional fisheries bodies as well as conservation organizations:

11.1 Promoting the coordination of actions with the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), Latin American Fisheries Development Organization (OLDEPESCA), the Central American Organization of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector (OSPESCA), Permanent Commission for the South Pacific (CPPS) and others, in order to:

- compile and provide information on incidental capture of sea turtles in tuna fisheries and other related species,
- coordinate strategies to mitigate incidental capture (including training activities)
- carry out experiments applying technologies and procedures in order to mitigate incidental capture,

11.2 Developing collaborative recommendations for the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles, taking advantage of invitations and opportunities to participate in the events of intergovernmental bodies,

11.3 Promoting regional working groups to encourage studies on shared sea turtle populations.

12. Obtain information on incidental capture from international floats that are not part of the regional bodies previously mentioned, in order to recommend reduction strategies.

ANNEX III
CIT-017 Rev.1/26-08-04

Annual Report Form

Note: Each Contracting Party shall prepare an annual report in accordance with Annex IV of the text of the Convention, as requested by the COP1CIT. The following format, which has been revised and approved by the Scientific Committee, is being presented to the Second Conference of the Contracting Parties for further revision and approval, to be implemented as of the year 2005. Once approved, this format may be revised in order to accommodate future needs as they arise.

Directory

Contracting Party	
Agency or institution responsible for preparing this report	
Name of the person responsible for this form	
Address	
P.O. Box	
Telephone(s)	
Fax	
E-mail	
Website	

Others who participated in the preparation of this form

Name	Affiliation	Contribution/ Topic	Telephone	E-mail

Focal Point

Institution: _____

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

1. Biological Information

1.1. Species present

Instructions: Please fill in the corresponding boxes according to the geographic location of each species, using the following codes to list the different stages present: R = area of reproduction; F = foraging ground; N = nesting beach; and M = migration route.

Species	Pacific Ocean Stage(s)	Atlantic Ocean Stage(s)
Lepidochelys olivacea		
Lepidochelys kempii		
Dermochelys coriacea		
Eretmochelys imbricata		
Chelonia mydas		
Caretta caretta		

1.2. Information about sea turtle priority sites

Instructions: Indicate the names of priority sites, the species and stage or stages present (using the same codes as referred to in 1.1), and provide a brief description/justification of why this area is considered a priority site. Please indicate the geographic location, and the category of protection and area, if applicable.

Name of Site	Species	Stage(s) Present	Justification of area as priority site	Geographic Location (Lat/Long)	Category of protection	Area (km or hectares, if applicable)

2. Information regarding the use derived from sea turtles

Instructions: Fill in the spaces with the best available information using the following codes for each of the species: Cc = *Caretta caretta*; Cm = *Chelonia mydas*; Dc = *Dermochelys coriacea*; Ei = *Eretmochelys imbricata*; Lk = *Lepidochelys kempii*; Lo = *Lepidochelys olivacea*. Types of use that may be considered are: domestic, cultural, commercial, medicinal, tourism, scientific, among others.

Species	Types of use (domestic, cultural, commercial, medicinal, tourism, scientific and others)	Parts (eggs, carapace, meat, oil, etc.)	Geographic area (Pacific or Atlantic)	Origin*		Estimated annual quantity	Information source
				L	**I**		

* L = legal, I = illegal

3. Threats

Instructions: Place an X in the space provided, indicating the presence or not of each of the given threats. Indicate the species affected and their corresponding geographic regions. Add separate sheets with additional comments if necessary.

Threats	Yes	No	No information is available	Species Affected	Geographic Region(s) Affected
1. Habitat					
1.1 Beach nourishment or beach armoring (please specify)					
1.2 Sand mining					
1.3 Beach erosion					
1.4 Construction and infrastructure on beach					
1.5 Inadequate management of tourism					
1.6 Other human activities					

1.7 Beach driving					
1.8 Noise pollution					
1.9 Artificial light					
1.10 Depredation of eggs and hatchlings by domestic and feral animals					
1.11 Industrial and agricultural wastes, urban runoff					
1.12 Oil pollution					
1.13 Obstacles on the beach (logs, plastic, etc.)					
1.14 Destruction of associated habitats (coral reefs, mangroves, etc.)					
1.15 Waste in the ocean (rope, fishing gear, bags, etc.)					
2. Illegal Harvesting					
2.1 Capture of sea turtles in the ocean					
2.2 Capture of sea turtles on the beach					
2.3 Egg collection					
3. Incidental Capture					
3.1 Purse seine fisheries					
3.2 Gill net fisheries					
3.3 Longline artisinal fisheries					
3.4 Longline commercial fisheries					
3.5 Bottom trawling					
3.6 Pelagic trawling					
4. Other Threats					
4.1 Disease					
4.2 Other natural phenomena (please specify)					
4.3 Others (please specify)					

4. Legal Framework

4.1. List international instruments related to sea turtles and their habitats that have been signed and/or ratified by the Party.

Treaty, Convention, Agreements, Memorandum of Understanding	Year signed and/or ratification

4.2. List national legislation currently in force related to the protection, conservation and use of sea turtles and the habitats on which they depend. Provide a brief description, including the sanctions faced when violated.

Type and name of legal instrument (No.)	Description (Range of application)	Sanction(s) Imposed

4.3. Indicate any legal instruments that are currently in the process of being approved.

4.4. Based on the national legal framework, list the public and private institutions whose responsibilities include the conservation and protection of sea turtles and their habitats. Provide a brief description of the responsibility of each one.

Type and name of legal instrument	Institution/ Entity	Responsibilities

5. Exceptions

According to **article IV, clause 3(a,b,d)** of the text of the Convention, each Party may be allowed exceptions, provided that such exceptions do not undermine efforts to achieve the objective of this Convention and are approved by consensus of the Parties. A management program that includes limits on levels of intentional taking should be established, including information concerning its management program. **Article IV, clause 3(c)** states that Parties may establish, by mutual agreement, bilateral, subregional or regional management plans. **Annex IV (e)** establishes that a detailed description of any exceptions allowed should be reported, including monitoring and mitigation measures related to these exceptions, and, in particular, any relevant information on the number of turtles, nests, and eggs, as well as sea turtle habitats, affected by the allowance of these exceptions.

6. Conservation Efforts

Instructions: List the most relevant state or private projects/activities for the conservation of sea turtles in the country. Please include the general objective or objectives, as well as the results obtained and the duration period for each one. Include projects/activities such as those working towards improving and developing new fishing gear to reduce incidental sea turtle capture and mortality, scientific research, environmental education, database creation, national and management plans or other types of plans for the conservation and protection of sea turtles. Add additional pages if necessary.

Project/Activities	General objective	Results obtained	Duration	
			From	Until

7. International Cooperation

Instructions: Please indicate below any programs or projects being carried out involving the cooperation of other states or international groups**.**

8. National Directory

Instructions: List the contacts (persons and/or state or private institutions) related to the objectives of this Convention (fisheries specialists, economists, statisticians, or others). Please include at least their name, specialty, telephone number, fax and e-mail.

Name	Institutional affiliation	Line of work/ Specialty	Telephone	Fax	E-mail	Website

9. Sources of Information

Include all references used in the completion of this form.

10. Annexes

Include the formats used for data collection (methodology) and any additional pertinent information (maps, figures, protocols, additional publications, reports, etc.).

ANNEX IV

OBSERVATIONS ON THE SCIENTIC COMMITTEE, ITS RELATION TO THE INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF SEA TURTLES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE TERMS OF REERENCE

1) BACKGROUND

As established by the Convention, its structure includes the following:

A) The Conference of the Parties – the main body which function and structure is political;

B) The Consultative Committee of Experts –the first of two subsidiary bodies established by the Convention:

a) The text of the Convention establishes its structure as per two components:

i) National representatives and their advisors: "Each Party may designate one representative, who may attend the meetings accompanied by his/her advisors.": (Article VII, 1, a);

ii) Nine persons, designated by consensus by the COP, bearing ".....acknowledged expertise in matters pertinent to the Convention from each of the following [3] sectors: i) Scientific community; ii) Private sector and productive sector, iii) Non-governmental organizations;

b) Due to the fact that each Party may unilaterally assign its representative (or delegate) before this Committee, the main structure is political;

c) The Terms of Reference of the Consultative Committee of Experts were approved during COP1 (Resolution COPCIT-005).

C) The Scientific Committee – the second of two subsidiary bodies established by the Convention:

a) Its functions are established by Article VIII, 2, of the Convention, where the following is indicated:

"2. The functions of the Scientific Committee are the following:

a. To examine reports referring to research on sea turtles, the object of this Convention, including research on their biology and population dynamics, and conduct these as pertinent;

b. To evaluate the environmental impact on sea turtles and their habitat of activities such as fisheries operations and the use of marine resources, coastal development, dredging, pollution, silting of estuaries and reef degradation, among other impacts, including the incidental impact resulting from such activities conducted as exceptions to the measures contemplated in this Convention;

c. To analyze relevant research reports conducted by the Parties;

d. To formulate recommendations on the protection and conservation of sea turtles and their habitats;

e. To follow-up the request of any of the Parties, to formulate scientific and technical recommendations on matters specifically related to the Convention;

f. To Fulfill all other functions of a scientific nature assigned by the Parties."

b. However, the Convention does **NOT** establish the structure of the Scientific Committee, and only indicates that *"During their first meeting the Parties shall establish a Scientific Committee, which shall be integrated by representatives designated by the Parties" (Article VIII, 1).*

c. The Parties have not yet approved the Terms of Reference of the Scientific Committee.

2) It is appropriate to emphasize that the present draft of the Terms of Reference for the Scientific Committee proposes the following:

A) Each Party unilaterally appoint one representative to the Committee;

B) Each one of the delegates may bring up to three advisors to each meeting;

C) In addition to the unilateral designations made by the Parties, they shall designate by consensus representatives of acknowledged scientific expertise in matters related to the Convention;

D) Additionally, the Rules of Procedure of the Convention indicate that interested States and international organizations may participate as observers (Rule 11.1), as well as other organizations and individuals following the indications of Rule 11.2.

II) REFLECTIONS

1) To bring the Scientific Committee within the structure of the Convention, the following must be considered:

A) The Convention has two political bodies (the Conference of the Parties and the Consultative Committee of Experts), and,

B) One of the functions of the Consultative Committee as established by the Convention in Article VII, 2, f, is *"To examine the reports of the Scientific Committee."*

2) It is fundamental to emphasize that:

A) The Scientific Committee does not decide issues mandatory for the Parties, and only provides, by means of the Consultative Committee and the Secretariat, recommendations and suggestions to the Parties who make the decisions.

B) The fundamental function of the Scientific Committee is to advise the Parties in technical and scientific matters including an ample range of disciplines and topics "based on the most reliable scientific data available".

3) As per the above, it is indispensable that for this Committee to acquire a purely technical-scientific character, it may be constituted by means of a process that reflects the common needs of the Parties of the Convention:

A) With a composition of qualified specialists in various themes to be addressed (including the biology of sea turtles [particularly *Dermochelys coriacea*], the conservation of sea turtles, the administration of protected areas, fisheries biology, fishing techniques,

community participation, cultural, economic and social aspects as related to people-turtle;

B) With agility to promptly respond to the needs of the Parties in an efficient manner, either during meetings of the Committee or inter-session periods;

C) With the least financial requirement.

III) RECCOMMENDATIONS

1) Because of these reasons, it is considered that the Scientific Committee would be more efficient if:

A) It were constituted by a maximum number of 12 members for it to be agile and accomplish its responsibilities, and,

B) Its members be assigned by the Conference of the Parties based on their individual curricula.

2) Because of the above, it is recommended that the Parties modify the draft of the Terms of Reference of the Scientific Committee as follows:

A) To uphold the text as is on "Objective" and "Functions of the Scientific Committee", including the title down to the subtitle "Structure of the Scientific Committee";

B) Modify the section on "Structure of the Scientific Committee", as follows:

a) Eliminate all regarding "Procedure for the representatives unilaterally designated by the Parties";

b) Substitute the subtitle "Procedure for the representatives designated by consensus", with the subtitle "Procedure for the appointment of the members";

c) Substitute the paragraph currently reading:

"4. Additionally to the unilateral designations made by the Parties, these shall designate by consensus representatives of acknowledged scientific expertise regarding matters related to the Convention. The representatives of the Scientific Committee appointed unilaterally by the Parties, shall recommend such additional designations with the objective to address the needs of the Committee and its Work Plan; these recommendations shall be based in the Directory (mentioned in paragraph 4 of the Functions of this Committee), and other appropriate sources."

to read:

"1. The Parties shall designate by consensus members of acknowledged scientific expertise in matters related to the Convention. These shall carry academic credentials and/or proven expertise in any of the pertinent theme areas including sea turtle biology, sea turtle conservation, administration of protected areas, fisheries biology, fishing techniques, community participation, social aspects, economic and cultural in the relation people-turtle. This Committee shall have a maximum of 12 members."

Renumber the following paragraphs, changing the current numbers from 5 to 2 and on.

ANNEX V

PRIORITY THEMATIC AREAS FOR THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

(based on the Work Plan 2005-2007 project)

1. **Biology and conservation of *Dermochelys coriacea*.**

2. **Biological research on nesting beaches:**
    a. Design and protocol standardization;
    b. Data collection, management and analysis;
    c. Organization of workshops and technical guides for training and standardization.

3. **Geographic distribution and identification of management units:**
    a. Genetic structure of populations;
    b. Migratory routes and inter-nesting movements of females;
    c. Determination of areas/periods with high density of individuals, feeding grounds and seasonal areas;
    d. Depth distribution frequented by turtles;
    e. Design of protocols, collecting and data analysis;
    f. Organization of workshops and technical guides for training and standardization.

4. **Estimate of mortality rates:**
    a. Causes of mortality and estimates of respective rates using specific activities such as necropsies of corpses found along the beach;
    b. Studies about incidental capture and on-board observer programs, particularly in:
        i. Fisheries for which little information is available (for example, bottom long lines, drift nets and fish trawlers;
        ii. International fleets impacting the Area of this Convention;
    c. Design of protocols, collecting and data analysis;
    d. Organization of workshops and technical guides for training and standardization..

5. **Design and analysis of demographic studies:**
    a. Estimates of trends of species abundance;
    b. Organization of workshops to estimate abundance indices by species;
    c. Recommendations for the utilization of standardized methodologies.

6. **Studies of the socioeconomic scope:**
    a. Socioeconomic studies of coastal communities and the various activities interacting with sea turtles therein;
    b. Development (participative) of alternative economic activities that reduce the unsustainable pressures on sea turtle populations and their habitats;
    c. Development of participative activities (e.g., ecotourism);

d. Development (participative) with the fisheries sector of actions that promote the adoption of technologies and practices that mitigate negative impacts on sea turtles;

7. Studies and consultancies within the scope of management and international policies:

a. Evaluations of measures that may be implemented by the Parties to facilitate the adoption of technologies and practices necessary to mitigate negative impacts on sea turtles;
b. Technical guides for the development of management plans for the protection of nesting beaches and other critical habitats;
c. Creation of national and international marine protected areas;
d. Coordination with regional and international conservation organizations (e.g., CITES, CMS, CPPS, IOSEA, SPAW), fisheries (e.g., IATTC, ICCAT, FAO, OLDEPESCA, OSPESCA) and others with emphasis in:
    i. Compiling and providing information on incidental capture of turtles in fisheries;
    ii. Developing research on technologies and procedures to mitigate incidental capture;
    iii. Coordinating strategies to mitigate incidental capture (including training activities);
e. Collaborative mechanisms for this Convention taking advantage of invitations and opportunities to participate in the events of intergovernmental bodies;
f. Promoting regional working groups to encourage studies on shared sea turtle populations.

8. Communications:

a. Studies on communication strategies with coastal communities and other interested direct stakeholders interacting with sea turtles and their habitats;
b. Create a bibliographic data base;
c. Mechanisms for the diffusion of scientific information in environmental education programs and conservation of sea turtles;
d. Mechanisms for information exchange between the Scientific Committee and other scientific bodies and like-minded organizations.

General observation:

It is recommended that the members of the Scientific Committee exhibit adequate mastery of both the Spanish and English languages, orally and in written form, as it is necessary to revise documents and participate in discussions in both languages, which are the working languages of the Convention.

ANNEX VI

Comparison between The Scientific Committee of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC), and The "Advisory Committee" as per the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Sea Turtles and their Habitats in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia (IOSEA)

The analysis of the two instruments (please refer to the attached chart), indicates as significant that whereas IOSEA entered into effect after the Inter-American Convention, it almost doubles its participating States and exhibits a simple structure having but one subsidiary body; it garners more financial supports from inter-governmental organizations as well as States supporting it recurrently. IOSEA has links with the United Nations Organization (UNO) and its UNDP Program, wherein the Secretariat is located, and whose Secretary boasts more than a decade of experience with the system of environmental treaties of the UN, as well as professional contacts in various organisms where cooperation and support links are developed to achieve the programs of this instrument. The agreement of the Indian Ocean basin is managed with one official language, the same as the working language, while the Inter.-American Convention has four official languages and two working languages.

Although both instruments include committees whose function is to provide technical-scientific advise to the States, substantial differences are present in the subsidiary bodies. In **IOSEA's** case, the Advisory Committee, as agreed by the States, **is constituted by decisions reached by consensus,** being **10 members the maximum number.** The members of the Committee were chosen to cover not only the **geographic diversity** of the region, but also disciplinary requirements in the Committee's business, with specialists including, in addition to the biology and conservation of sea turtles, community participation and social aspects of the coastal communities, agreements and international cooperation, management of data bases and use of wildlife. In March 2004 the second meeting was convened, and as a result of the discussions, the incorporation of two more specialists is expected: one in protected areas and another in marine fisheries, thus achieving a **real multidisciplinary composition**. This process of the constitution of the Advisory Committee, was designed to achieve not only **efficiency, adequate disciplinary and geographic representation,** and **low financial costs**, but also to foster scientific independence and effectiveness.

In comparison, the draft of the Terms of Reference of the Scientific Committee of the **Inter-American Convention** proposes to constitute the Committee with the delegates themselves, each one **unilaterally appointed** by each Party. In addition, it proposes that each delegate be accompanied by at least three advisors, which to date means it **would include up to 44 individuals**, and when that draft is approved, other members appointed by consensus would also be included. Evidently, the proposed process **does not guarantee an interdisciplinary composition** of the Committee, as each Party acts unilaterally for the appointment of its delegate and advisors. Even with so few Parties to the Convention, the number of possible participants (delegates and advisors) in a meeting of the Committee, is very high, which hinders agility in communication and shall raise the cost of the meetings. When the number of Parties to the Convention is increased –something

expected-such considerations will become significant risks for the good functioning of the Scientific Committee.

I conclusion, by adopting an appointment process by consensus of the States, with a limited number of members included in the Advisory Committee, the IOSEA has avoided these problems facilitating agility, ample disciplinary representation and transparency in the selection keeping financial requirements under strict control.

Comparative Table of Two Committees in charge of Providing Scientific and Technical Assistance in the Conservation of Sea Turtles and their Habitats:

CHARACTERISTIC	**INSTRUMENT**	
	INTERAMERICAN	**IOSEA**
ENTRY INTO FORCE	May 2001	September 2001
NUMBER OF PARTY COUNTRIES / SIGNATORY STATES	11 (+2)	20
HIGHER BODY	Conference of the Parties	Meeting of the Signatory States
SUBSIDIARY BODIES	Consultative Committee Scientific Committee	Advising Committee
INTER-STATE SOURCES OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT	0	CMS, UNDP
RECURRENT STATE SOURCES OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT	1	4
SECRETARIAT	Interim	Permanent, with headquarters in UN/UNDP and over a decade of experience at the UN
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES	4	1
WORK LANGUAGES	2	1
COMMITTEE DETAIL **	**Scientific Committee**	**Advising Committee**
Number of Committee meetings until May 2004	0	2
Appointing Process	Unilateral (may also be by consensus)	Only by consensus of the Signatory States
Representation	Nationals Delegates	Scientific Advisors
Selection depends on	National Political Process	Transparent Consultation among Signatory States
Number of members	11 (+ 11*3) + ¿? = high number	Maximum 10 (6 to 8 actually) = limited number
Geographic Representation	Each Party	Ample
Disciplines	Depends on the unilateral decision of each Party	Depends on the consultation among States: biology and communities, (looking for fisheries and protected areas)

ANNEX VII

Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles

FIRST MEETING OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE, held the 24th – 26th of August in Tres Ríos, Costa Rica

Convención Interamericana para la Protección y Conservación de las Tortugas Marinas

PRIMERA REUNIÓN DEL COMITÉ CIENTÍFICO celebrada del 24 al 26 de agosto del 2004 en Tres Ríos, Costa Rica

Participants List/Lista de Participantes

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