



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

April 23rd-24th San Jose, Costa Rica-

CIT-COP4-2009-R5

Adaptation of sea turtle habitats to climate change

AWARE that the decisions made by the IAC are based on the best scientific information available;

AWARE of the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in their 2007 Fourth Assessment Report, particularly regarding current and future impacts on marine and coastal ecosystems and their vulnerability to climate change;

RECOGNIZING that sea turtles have a complex life cycle that requires protecting terrestrial, coastal and marine habitats; and they may be affected by the adverse impacts of climate change;

RECOGNIZING that the adverse effects of climate change impact sea turtle nesting and feeding habitats by altering precipitation patterns, increasing the frequency and intensity of storms, causing a rise in sea level, increasing ambient and water temperatures, promoting factors that in turn affect the salinity and acidity of the water, impacting the direction and velocity of marine currents, promoting coastal erosion, affecting incubation temperature, and increasing the incidence of pathogens, as well as altering the distribution and abundance of food, among others;

CONSIDERING that because sea turtles are reptiles, their sex determination, incubation period, survival, development and physiology are intrinsically linked to ambient and water temperature, which places them at risk to impacts brought about by climate change;

RECOGNIZING that sea turtles and their habitats are currently valued for cultural, social-economic, ecological and scientific reasons; and that the marine and coastal ecosystems on which sea turtles depend are widely distributed, covering the entire range of application of the Convention;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT that although some sea turtle populations in the Wider Caribbean, Western Atlantic and Eastern Pacific exhibit an incipient recovery after many decades of protection measures, the global status of sea turtle species included in the range of the Convention are considered to be vulnerable, endangered and critically endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN);

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT that the capacity of sea turtle populations to tolerate and recover from climate change impacts is compromised by non-climatic threats such as egg, meat and carapace exploitation, introduced harmful predators, incidental capture, as well as the damage of nesting, feeding and migratory habitats from coastal development, erosion,



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contamination, seismic exploration, diseases in sponges, coral bleaching and eutrophication, among others;

RECOGNIZING that adaptation measures to climate change should consider the needs of the coastal communities surrounding the habitats on which sea turtles depend and include them in their implementation;

CONCERNED because the intense and successful sea turtle conservation and management efforts that during the past decades have resulted in local trends of population recovery in different locations within the range of the Convention, may be reversed by the adverse effects of climate change;

CONSIDERING that climate change would affect not only sea turtles and their habitat, but also other marine populations, many of which form part of the food chain for sea turtles and fisheries, which may directly affect resources and their food availability;

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

URGE the Contracting Parties to include marine and coastal habitats on which sea turtles depend in plans and programs for adaptation to climate change;

EXHORT the Contracting Parties to strengthen the design, and to identify and implement corrective measures relating to adaptation to climate change within management plans, regulatory plans, and protection and conservation programs for sea turtles and their habitat;

REQUEST that the Pro Tempore Secretariat promote synergies between the Scientific Committee and other relevant expert groups to identify how the IAC Parties can work to adapt to the impacts of climate change on sea turtles and their habitats;

EXHORT the Parties to promote, support and strengthen necessary research and monitoring on sea turtles and their habitat, including adjusting or updating protocols to improve the scientific bases used to implement adaptation measures to climate change;

PROMOTE the exchange of technology and technical capacity in addition to collaboration in adaptation of marine and coastal habitats to climate change between the Parties, as well as with non-Party States, other conventions and organizations involved in this topic in the area of the Convention, and;



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INVITE the Parties to identify, interpret, create and execute additional mitigation measures for non-climatic threats as a way to improve the conservation status of sea turtle populations and their habitats in order to improve their condition to respond to the impacts of climate change.