

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



Nineteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Panama City (Panama), 14 – 25 November 2022

Species specific matters

Marine turtles (Cheloniidae spp. and Dermochelyidae spp.)

REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE AND OF THE SECRETARIAT

1. This document has been prepared by the Standing Committee and the Secretariat.

Background

2. At its 18th meeting (CoP18, Geneva, 2019), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 18.210 to 18.217 on *Marine turtles (Cheloniidae spp. and Dermochelyidae spp.)* as follows:

Directed to the Secretariat

18.210 *The Secretariat shall, subject to available resources:*

- a) *convey to Parties the findings of the study presented in information document CoP18 Inf. 18 on the legal and illegal international trade in marine turtles with a view to inform targeted conservation and management efforts;*
- b) *refer the study contained in information document CoP18 Inf. 18 to the Standing Committee at its 73rd meeting and the Animals Committee at its 31st meeting for consideration;*
- c) *support Parties, upon request, with the CITES-relevant aspects of the development, implementation and/or update of management and action plans for the conservation of marine turtles;*
- d) *assist Parties, upon request, with the identification of inconsistencies, overlaps and gaps in national legislation and regulations relating to the implementation of CITES for marine turtles; and*
- e) *convey to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) the findings of the study presented in information document CoP18 Inf. 18 to inform efforts, including by Regional Fisheries Bodies, addressing marine turtle bycatch and illegal take, and promote collaboration, as appropriate.*
- f) *issue a Notification requesting that Parties provide information on implementation of Decisions 18.210 to 18.214 for consideration by the Standing Committee at its 73rd meeting; and*
- g) *report on the implementation of Decisions 18.210 to 18.215, and on any technical and financial mechanisms and opportunities that can be provided through CITES to assist Parties in marine turtle conservation, to the 31st meeting of the Animals Committee and the 73rd meeting of the Standing Committees as appropriate, and to the Conference of the Parties at its 19th meeting.*

Directed to Parties

18.211 Parties are urged to:

- a) *review the findings of the study presented in information document CoP18 Inf. 18 and use these to inform targeted conservation and management efforts;*
- b) *fully implement the provisions of CITES that are relevant to the seven species of marine turtles listed on Appendix I;*
- c) *develop and/or update management and action plans for the conservation of marine turtles inclusive of the recommendations in information document CoP18 Inf. 18;*
- d) *use CITES fora, including the Animals Committee and Standing Committee, to raise and discuss challenges relating to illegal trade in marine turtles;*
- e) *collect in a standardized manner, including at different governance levels, illegal wildlife trade data, that can be used for monitoring trade in CITES-listed marine turtles; and submit comprehensive and accurate information on illegal trade in marine turtles in their annual illegal trade reports to the Secretariat;*
- f) *improve monitoring, detection and law enforcement activities related to marine turtles in coastal areas and at transaction points (e.g. in the marketplace, online, maritime areas, and at air- and seaports);*
- g) *collect samples of marine turtles for DNA analysis, including from seized specimens, to determine species involved and populations of origin and provide these to forensic and other research institutions capable of reliably determining the origin or age of the samples in support of, for example, research, investigations and prosecutions;*
- h) *improve intra- and interregional cooperation, collaboration and exchange of actionable intelligence regarding illegal take of and trade in marine turtles;*
- i) *ascertain key trade routes, methods, volumes, and trade 'hot-spots' using available technologies, and enforce national and international regulations or other mechanisms that apply to marine turtles take and trade;*
- j) *improve accountability for the practices undertaken by all vessels and improve the monitoring and control related to CITES-listed marine turtles at landing sites;*
- k) *support fisheries management authorities in implementing turtle mitigation and safe handling practices;*
- l) *coordinate efforts at the regional level, involving Parties and bodies with relevant mandates, to identify and address trade, use and other threats, such as fisheries' interactions with marine turtles (particularly bycatch), with a view to supporting multilateral environmental agreements; and*
- m) *respond to the Notification issued by the Secretariat per Decision 18.210, paragraph f) on the implementation of Decisions 18.210 to 18.214.*

Directed to Parties that are marine turtle range States

18.212 Parties that are marine turtle range States are urged to:

- a) *develop, and where such legislation already exists, conduct a thorough review of legislation that protects marine turtles, taking account of its effectiveness in enforcement and management including direct and incidental harvest, and standardization or alignment with other national and sub-national legislation, neighbouring states, as well as international regulations and commitments;*
- b) *where domestic harvest of specimens of marine turtles, including eggs, is legal, ensure any domestic harvest quotas are established based on robust science-based methods and the*

principles of sustainability, including accounting for existing quota or no-take quotas in other States' that share marine turtle stock(s), taking into account national enforcement capacity;

- c) *respond to the Notification issued by the Secretariat pursuant to Decision 18.210 paragraph f) on the implementation of Decisions 18.210 to 18.215.*

Directed to Parties, governmental, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations and other entities

18.213 *Parties, governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and other entities are invited to provide financial or technical assistance for, inter alia:*

- a) *training and capacity building of relevant authorities at the national and regional level, including on the implementation and enforcement of national and international regulations that apply to marine turtles, and on identification, monitoring, reporting and wildlife enforcement capability;*
- b) *build community and political awareness on the conservation status of marine turtles and on the importance of promoting the conservation of the species through compliance with CITES at the national level;*
- c) *research into the socioeconomics associated with the legal and illegal harvest and use of specimens of marine turtles, including eggs, including assessments of the sustainability of alternative livelihood options for communities depending on marine turtles and the motivations for their use;*
- d) *research that establishes a baseline for the status and distribution of marine turtles in the different countries/regions; and*
- e) *research into the scale and impact that national (and its international) artisanal, semi-industrial and industrial fisheries, including illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, have on marine turtle populations and their linkage to illegal trade.*

Directed to the Secretariat, Parties and other organizations

18.214 *Parties, the Secretariat and relevant multilateral agreements such as the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), its Indian Ocean and South-East Asia Marine Turtle Memorandum of Understanding (IOSEA), the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC), and the Ramsar Convention and the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) are encouraged to communicate and collaborate with each other on the management and sustainable use of marine turtles to ensure the compatibility of activities, optimize resources, promote research, and enhance synergies concerning the conservation of marine turtles.*

Directed to the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC)

18.215 *The International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC) is encouraged to, as appropriate, use data on illegal trade in marine turtles submitted under Decision 18.211, paragraph e) to the Secretariat in Parties' annual illegal trade reports in its activities.*

Directed to the Animals Committee

18.216 *The Animals Committee is asked to:*

- a) *review, at its 31st meeting, the study contained in information document CoP18 Inf. 18 and any additional information received by the Secretariat in response to the Notification issued under Decision 18.210, paragraph f); and*
- b) *submit recommendations, as appropriate, for consideration by the Standing Committee.*

Directed to the Standing Committee

18.217 *The Standing Committee is asked to:*

- a) *review, at its 73rd meeting, the study contained in information document CoP18 Inf. 18 and any additional information received by the Secretariat in response to the Notification issued under Decision 18.210, paragraph f), and the recommendations of the Animals Committee; and*
 - b) *submit its recommendations to the 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, as appropriate.*
3. The present document responds to the reporting obligations of the Secretariat in Decision 18.210, paragraph g), which are found in paragraphs 4 to 17 and the Standing Committee in Decision 18.217, paragraph b), which are found in paragraphs 18 to 19. The Secretariat provides an update to the Conference of the Parties on the implementation of Decisions 18.210 to 18.216.

Implementation of Decision 18.210

Paragraphs a) and b)

4. In accordance with Decision 18.210, paragraph a), the Secretariat issued Notification to the Parties [No. 2020/035](#) on 23 April 2020 to convey to Parties the findings of the study *Status, scope and trends of the legal and illegal international trade in marine turtles, its conservation impacts, management options and mitigation priorities*. In fulfilment of paragraph b) of the same Decision, the study (see information document [CoP18 Inf. 18](#)) along with its four sub-studies covering Madagascar ([Annex 1](#) to the study), Mozambique ([Annex 2](#)), Colombia, Panama and Nicaragua ([Annex 3](#)), and Indonesia, Malaysia and Viet Nam ([Annex 4](#)) were made available to the 31st meeting of the Animals Committee (AC31, online, June 2021) and the 74th meeting of the Standing Committee. The Executive Summary, Discussion and overarching conclusions, and Recommendations of the study were also made available in the three working languages of the Convention (see Annex 3 to document AC31 Doc. 24).

Paragraphs c) and d)

5. To date, the Secretariat has not received requests from Parties for assistance with the CITES-relevant aspects of the development, implementation and/or update of management and action plans for the conservation of marine turtles; or for assistance with the identification of inconsistencies, overlaps and gaps in national legislation and regulations relating to the implementation of CITES for marine turtles.

Paragraph e)

6. Thanks to the generous funding of the United States of America, the Secretariat commissioned a study examining marine turtle bycatch and its relationship to trade at the global level, which follows up from the study mentioned in paragraph 4. This included examining existing literature, collecting and analysing available data, and conducting targeted interviews to assess the scale and importance of marine turtle bycatch in trade. The study was made available as information document [SC74 Inf. 27](#) and provides recommendations that can inform efforts to address marine turtle bycatch and illegal take and promote collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and Regional Fishery Bodies to contribute to the implementation of Decision 18.210, paragraph e), by the Secretariat and Decision 18.211, paragraph l), by the Parties.

Paragraph f)

7. Pursuant to paragraph f) of Decision 18.210, in Notification to the Parties No. 2020/035, the Secretariat also requested that Parties submit information on the status of implementation of Decisions 18.210 to 18.214, including any planned activities. Thirteen Parties (Australia, Cambodia, Canada, China, Jamaica, Japan, Mexico, Monaco, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Peru, Thailand, and the United States of America) submitted responses to the Notification.
8. Due to the changes in meeting timelines, the Secretariat issued a follow-up Notification to the Parties [No. 2021/065](#) on 2 November 2021 to request updates or information on the status of implementation of the same Decisions. Responses were provided by ten Parties: Australia, Cambodia, Japan, Mexico, Peru, Thailand and the United States of America provided updates since the Notification issued in 2020, and Barbados, Indonesia and the Republic of Korea provided information on their implementation.

9. The responses to the two Notifications were presented to SC74 (see document [SC74 Doc. 66.1](#) and its Annex 2) in the language and format in which they were received. If the response to Notification No. 2021/065 provided an updated document, only the updated document was included to avoid duplication, and if the response to the Notification No. 2021/065 provided a new document, both responses were included.

Paragraph g)

10. Pursuant to paragraph g) of Decision 18.210, the Secretariat reported to AC31 (see document [AC31 Doc. 24](#) and its [addendum](#)), on the basis of which the Animals Committee adopted recommendations for consideration by the Standing Committee including draft decisions (see document [SC74 Doc. 66.2](#)).
11. As the 73rd meeting of the Standing Committee (SC73, online, May 2021) had a limited agenda, which did not include marine turtles, the Secretariat provided its report under paragraph g) of Decision 18.210 at the 74th meeting of the Standing Committee.

Implementation of Decision 18.211

12. Australia, Barbados, Cambodia, Canada, China, Indonesia, Jamaica, Japan, Mexico, Monaco, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Peru, Republic of Korea, Thailand and the United States of America provided responses to the two Notifications requesting information on the implementation of Decisions 18.210 to 18.214, which included information on management and actions plans, illegal wildlife trade data, marine turtle DNA analysis, intra- and interregional cooperation, details on trade and support to fisheries management authorities.

Implementation of Decision 18.212

13. All 16 Parties that responded to the Notifications to Parties referred to in paragraph 12 were range States of at least one species of marine turtles. Further details are available in the responses to the Notifications as found in Annex 2 to document SC74 Doc. 66.1.

Implementation of Decision 18.213

14. With regard to financial and technical assistance provided by Parties for training and capacity-building; building community and political awareness; research into socioeconomics associated with legal and illegal harvest; studies on baseline for the status and distribution of marine turtles; and research into scale and impact of different fisheries, Parties have included information, where available, in the responses to the above-mentioned two Notifications.

Implementation of Decision 18.214

15. The Secretariat shared the results of the study on the relationship between bycatch and trade with the Secretariat of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA). The Secretariat has also liaised with the CMS Secretariat and its Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia (IOSEA) on the hawksbill turtle work programme including contributing input into the Single Species Action Plan for the Hawksbill Turtle in South-East Asia and the Western Pacific Ocean Region and attending the plenary meeting for the adoption of the Single Species Action Plan.

Implementation of Decision 18.215

16. In February 2020, the Secretariat liaised with its partners in the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC) to bring to their attention the Decisions on *Marine turtles (Cheloniidae spp. and Dermochelyidae spp.)*. In particular, the Secretariat highlighted Decision 18.215 and shared with partners a summary of seizures based on illegal trade data available at the time. The Secretariat also shared the report on [Status, scope and trends of the legal and illegal international trade in marine turtles, its conservation impacts, management options and mitigation priorities](#) and its [Annexes](#), referred to in paragraph 4, and requested ICWC partners to explore, where possible, opportunities to address the matter of illegal trade in marine turtles as part of ongoing or planned activities.

17. The Secretariat secured funding from the contribution of the European Union towards the ICCWC Strategic Programme to support the convening by INTERPOL of a Regional Investigative and Analytical Case Management (RIACM) meeting which will include a focus on illegal trade in marine turtles. The RIACM is tentatively planned to take place before September 2022 and this work will be conducted in parallel with a RIACM in support of Decision 18.289 on *Tortoises and freshwater turtles (Testudines spp.)*.

Implementation of Decision 18.217

18. At its 74th meeting, the Standing Committee considered document SC74 Doc. 66.1, which presented information by the Secretariat on the implementation of Decisions 18.210 to 18.215 on *Marine turtles (Cheloniidae spp. and Dermochelyidae spp.)*, including follow-up to the global study on legal and illegal international trade (available as information document CoP18 Inf. 18); the drafting of a study examining marine turtle bycatch and its relationship to trade at the global level; and the gathering of information on the status of implementation of Decisions 18.210 to 18.214. The Standing Committee also considered document SC74 Doc. 66.2, which presented information and draft decisions by the Animals Committee.
19. The Standing Committee agreed to propose draft decisions for consideration by the 19th meeting of the Conference of Parties and reminded Parties to include marine turtle confiscation and seizure date in their annual illegal trade report. The Standing Committee also agreed to propose the renewal of Decision 18.217 as the Committee did not have time to review the study contained in information document CoP18 Inf. 18 and the information in the responses to the Notifications as called for in the Decision. The draft decisions and amendments to Decision 18.217 are presented in Annex 1 to the present document.

Recommendations

20. The Conference of the Parties is invited to adopt the draft decisions 19.AA to 19.DD and 18.217 (Rev. CoP19) on *Marine turtles (Cheloniidae spp. and Dermochelyidae spp.)* presented in Annex 1 to the present document.

COMMENTS OF THE SECRETARIAT

- A. The Secretariat notes the overlapping nature of the matters addressed in the present document and in document CoP19 Doc. 64.2. Noting that most of the activities described within the draft decisions in Annex 1 to the present document are of a long-term nature and therefore more appropriate for a Resolution than Decisions, the Secretariat recommends that elements of the proposed draft decisions be incorporated into the draft resolution proposed in document CoP19 Doc. 64.2. In particular, paragraph e) of draft decision 19.AA is included in paragraph 10 of the draft resolution and paragraph b) of Decision 19.BB is included in paragraph 11 of the draft resolution. Paragraph b) of draft decision 19.AA addresses similar concerns as paragraph 9 of the draft resolution and is suggested to be merged. The activities proposed in draft decision 19.AA paragraph a), c), d) and f) are of long-term nature and is suggested to be incorporated into the proposed resolution. The Secretariat also notes that paragraph a) of draft decision 19.BB is already included in paragraph 16 of Resolution Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP18) on *Compliance and enforcement*. Cross-references to the draft decisions are shown in bracketed text in the draft resolution in document CoP19 Doc. 64.2.
- B. The Secretariat is generally supportive of the draft resolution with the edits proposed in its comments on document CoP19 Doc. 64.2.
- C. One exception to this general recommendation concerns Decision 18.217, which has yet to be completed and which the Secretariat recommends be adopted in the revised form detailed in Annex 1 to the present document.
- D. In summary, the Secretariat recommends that the revised version of Decision 18.217 in Annex 1 to the present document be adopted, but that the other proposed new decisions not be adopted. The Secretariat also notes that Decisions 18.210 to 18.216 have been implemented and therefore recommends their deletion.

DRAFT DECISIONS ON *MARINE TURTLES*
(*CHELONIIDAE SPP. AND DERMOCHELYIDAE SPP.*)

New draft decisions

Directed to the Parties

19.AA Parties are encouraged to:

- a) develop robust frameworks for the sustainable use of marine turtles that are based on the best scientific advice available and may include, but are not limited to, a determination of suitable offtake levels, take into account the needs of traditional subsistence users, account for existing use in other States sharing the marine turtle(s) stocks, and account for national enforcement capacity taking into consideration the advice, resolutions, conservation and management measures of relevant bodies including competent fisheries authorities and experts, as appropriate;
- b) work with their fisheries communities to ensure that there is effective documentation at the national level of marine turtle fisheries by-catch and mortality that can inform conservation and management measures taking into consideration the advice, resolutions, conservation and management measures of relevant bodies including competent fisheries authorities and experts, as appropriate;
- c) where marine turtles hatchery establishments exist, develop science-based operational protocols for marine turtle hatchery establishments to ensure that they provide conservation value to marine turtle populations;
- d) share holistic regional marine turtle survival probability models and their output and other information to assess sustainability of current harvest and by-catch levels while taking into account other threats to the population across their range (number of turtles of different age classes taken from populations), limitations of source rookeries (number of turtles recruited per year), natural survival probabilities, and marine turtle biology taking into consideration the advice, resolutions, conservation and management measures of relevant bodies including competent fisheries authorities and experts, as appropriate;
- e) share knowledge of bycatch mitigation strategies, including exclusion devices and safe handling practices, that have proven to be effective at reducing bycatch and/or bycatch mortality;
- f) undertake as appropriate research that can support the development of protection and conservation measures for marine turtle foraging, nesting and migratory areas; and
- g) report on the implementation of paragraphs a) to e) to the Secretariat, for subsequent reporting to the Animals and Standing Committees, as appropriate.

Directed to the Secretariat

19.BB The Secretariat shall:

- a) based on analysis of the annual illegal trade reports, bring to the attention of the Animals and Standing Committees, as appropriate, any significant changes in the illegal trade of marine turtles;
- b) liaise with the Secretariat of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), its Indian Ocean and South-East Asia Marine Turtle Memorandum of Understanding (IOSEA) on the conservation and management of marine turtles, as outlined in the CMS-CITES Joint Work Programme 2021-2025; and
- c) report on the implementation of paragraphs a) to f) of Decision 19.AA to the Animals and Standing Committees, as appropriate.

Directed to the Animals Committee

19.CC The Animals Committee shall consider any reports from Decision 19.AA and 19.BB paragraph a) brought to its attention by the Secretariat, and make recommendations, as appropriate, including on the possible need for incorporation of the substantive content of Decision 19.AA and 19.BB and any other relevant measures into a new resolution on marine turtles which should also incorporate any relevant provisions of Resolution Conf 9.20 (Rev.) on *Guidelines for evaluating marine turtle ranching proposals submitted pursuant to Resolution Conf. 11.16 (Rev. CoP15)*.

Directed to the Standing Committee

19.DD The Standing Committee shall consider any reports from Decision 19.AA and 19.BB paragraph a) brought to its attention by the Secretariat and any recommendations from the Animals Committee, and make recommendations, as appropriate.

Revised Decision: Added text shown underlined and deleted text shown in ~~strike through~~.

18.217 (Rev. CoP19) The Standing Committee is asked to:

- a) review, ~~at its 73rd meeting,~~ the study contained in information document CoP18 Inf. 18 and any additional information received by the Secretariat in response to ~~the~~ Notifications No. 2020/035 and No. 2021/065 ~~issued under Decision 18.210, paragraph f),~~ and the recommendations of the Animals Committee in document SC74 Doc. 66.2; and
- b) submit its recommendations to the 20th~~19th~~ meeting of the Conference of the Parties, as appropriate.

TENTATIVE BUDGET AND SOURCE OF FUNDING
FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DRAFT RESOLUTIONS OR DECISIONS

According to Resolution Conf. 4.6 (Rev. CoP18) on *Submission of draft resolutions, draft decisions and other documents for meetings of the Conference of the Parties*, the Conference of the Parties decided that any draft resolutions or decisions submitted for consideration at a meeting of the Conference of the Parties that have budgetary and workload implications for the Secretariat or permanent committees must contain or be accompanied by a budget for the work involved and an indication of the source of funding. The Secretariat proposes the following tentative budget and source of funding.

If the Conference of the Parties is minded to adopt the draft decisions in the present document, then in the view of the Secretariat, execution of Decisions 19.BB, 19.CC, 19.DD and 18.217 (Rev. CoP19) can be accomplished within the regular workloads of the Standing Committee, Animals Committee and Secretariat.