

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

Committee I

Marine turtles (Cheloniidae spp. and Dermochelyidae spp.)

DRAFT DECISIONS AND RESOLUTION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

This document has been prepared by the working group on Marine turtles (Cheloniidae spp. and Dermochelyidae spp.) on the basis of document CoP19 Doc. 64.1 and 64.2 after discussion in the second session of Committee I (see document CoP18 Com. I Rec. 2).

Draft decisions on *Marine turtles (Cheloniidae spp. and Dermochelyidae spp.)*

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

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

Draft resolution on *Conservation of and trade in marine turtles*

(New text is underlined, deleted text is ~~struck through~~)

DRAFT RESOLUTION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

Resolution Conf. XX.X

Conservation of and trade in marine turtles

RECOGNIZING that marine turtles face significant threats, including bycatch in commercial and recreational fisheries; loss and degradation of nesting and foraging habitats; climate change; entanglement in marine debris; vessel strikes; and illegal take and trade for their meat, shells, and eggs;

RECOGNIZING that the conservation and recovery of marine turtles require international cooperation to ensure the survival of these highly migratory species;

RECALLING that all species of marine turtles are included in CITES Appendix I, and as such, international trade for commercial purposes is strictly prohibited for these species;

RECALLING that these species are included in Appendices I and II of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) (except for *Natator depressus*, which is only in Appendix II), which requires CMS Parties to strictly protect these species by prohibiting take and controlling other factors that endanger them, and enhance their conservation status;

RECALLING that the Inter-American Convention (IAC) for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles promotes the protection, conservation, and recovery of populations of six marine turtle species (all except *N. depressus*) in the Western Hemisphere;

RECALLING the Indian Ocean–South-East Asian (IOSEA) Marine Turtle Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is a non-binding intergovernmental agreement that aims to protect, conserve, and recover sea turtles and their habitats in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia;

RECALLING also that Resolution Conf. 17.4 on *Demand reduction strategies to combat illegal trade in CITES-listed species* urges Parties where there is a significant market for illegally traded wildlife products to develop strategies to reduce the demand for illegal products of wild animals and plants through demand reduction campaigns and to enhance, as appropriate, policy, legislation and law enforcement in this regard, and EMPHASIZING the importance for Parties to develop such plans for illegally taken marine turtles parts, ~~and~~ products and derivatives;

CONCERNED that the illegal take and trade of marine turtles is contributing to their decline and poses a significant threat to their survival;

WELCOMING studies commissioned by CITES, IAC, and IOSEA Marine Turtle MoU to help determine the extent of illegal take and trade in marine turtles and provide recommendations on needed actions;

WELCOMING the Single Species Action Plan for the Hawksbill Turtle in South-East Asia and the Western Pacific Ocean Region, developed under the auspices of CMS and IOSEA Marine Turtle MoU;

WELCOMING projects aimed at uncovering illegal trade routes from source through to end user, and factors driving marine turtle use, supply, and demand, which can be used to inform policies aimed at marine turtle conservation;

FURTHER WELCOMING initiatives to help combat the illegal trade in marine turtles by transferring genetic techniques, technologies, and building greater capacity for marine turtle genetic studies;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION

1. RECOMMENDS Parties collaborate and assist in building financial and technical capacity in developing countries to implement and enforce CITES and other related national regulations and international obligations that apply to protect marine turtles, including protection from unsustainable use and illegal trade;
2. RECOMMENDS Parties affected by illegal trade in marine turtles provide capacity-building interventions, scale up efforts to address illegal harvest and other illegal activities at key locations in domestic markets associated with illegal trade; and take action to decrease consumer demand for illegal marine turtle parts, products and other derivatives;
3. RECOMMENDS Parties improve monitoring, detection, and law enforcement activities at all transaction points (e.g., markets, online, ports) to help combat the illegal take and trade of marine turtles and enhance cooperation and collaboration in the control of trade in marine turtles amongst wildlife-law enforcement agencies at national and international levels, including in the exchange of actionable intelligence regarding the illegal take and trade of marine turtles;
4. URGES Parties whose national legislation is not sufficient to control the unsustainable harvest of and trade in marine turtles, to enact legislation to protect and manage these species appropriately;
5. RECOMMENDS Parties collect samples from seized marine turtles for ~~scientific~~ forensic analysis to determine species involved and populations of origin, and as appropriate provide these to forensic and research institutions capable of reliably determining the species and geographic origin of the samples in support of research, investigations, and prosecutions;
6. RECOMMENDS Parties coordinate efforts at the regional level, including with Regional Fisheries Bodies (RFBs), multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and other relevant regional bodies to identify and address illegal trade, use, and other threats, including fisheries bycatch ~~and habitat loss and degradation;~~
7. RECOMMENDS Parties address the illegal trade in marine turtles by working with fisheries communities and fisheries bodies to ensure effective fisheries management measures are in place, and capture in fisheries is not undermining efforts to tackle the illegal trade, including by: implementing best practice measures to reduce and document sea turtles catches whether targeted or bycatch; assessing catch rates and bycatch in fisheries by fully implementing measures to reduce sea turtle bycatch and bycatch mortality based on the best scientific data available; continuing improving the observer programme through the Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs)/RFB's framework in fisheries where bycatch of marine turtles is not adequately addressed, documenting the level of marine turtle bycatch and bycatch mortality at the national level; increasing observer coverage in fisheries where bycatch of marine turtles is an issue; and effectively addressing Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing that is a threat to marine turtles;
8. ENCOURAGES Parties to share bycatch mitigation strategies, such as exclusion devices and safe handling practices, that have proven effective at reducing bycatch or bycatch mortality;
9. ENCOURAGES Parties to undertake, as appropriate, research that can support the development of protection and conservation measures for marine turtle foraging, nesting and migratory areas;
10. ENCOURAGES Parties, 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;
11. RECOMMENDS that:
 - a) any Party seeking to allow international trade in products of sea turtle ranches satisfy all the requirements of the Convention and Resolution Conf. 11.16 (Rev. CoP15);

- b) any Party seeking to transfer a marine turtle population from Appendix I to Appendix II pursuant to Resolution Conf. 11.16 (Rev. CoP15) provide information in accordance with the guidelines contained in Annex to the present Resolution; and
 - c) any Party whose population of marine turtle is transferred to Appendix II pursuant to the present Resolution and Resolution Conf. 11.16 (Rev. CoP15) ensure that procedures for regular adequate reporting to the Secretariat exist and are implemented. Failure to satisfy this requirement and to demonstrate conservation benefit to the population or compliance with other requirements of Resolution Conf. 11.16 (Rev. CoP15) may result in the application of paragraph 5 d) of that Resolution;
12. ENCOURAGE Parties to 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 populations across their range (number of turtles of different age classes taken from populations), reproductive success (number of turtles recruited per year), natural survival probabilities, and marine turtle biology; and for any Party that intends to engage in sustainable use of marine turtles, develop robust frameworks for the sustainable use of marine turtles that are based on the best scientific advice available taking into consideration the advice, resolutions, conservation and management measures of relevant bodies including competent fisheries authorities and experts, as appropriate;
 13. DIRECTS the Secretariat to maintain close collaboration with RFBs, CMS, its IOSEA Marine Turtle MoU and IAC,~~and the IOSEA Marine Turtle MoU~~ on the management and conservation of marine turtles to ensure the compatibility of activities, optimization of resources, promotion of research to address information gaps, and enhancement of synergies;
 14. DIRECTS the Secretariat to support Parties, especially developing countries and small island developing states, upon request, with the CITES-relevant aspects of the development and/or implementation of the Convention for marine turtles including building financial and technical capacity for the conservation of marine turtles;
 - ~~15~~44. DIRECTS the Animals Committee to make recommendations, if necessary, to ensure the conservation of marine turtles;
 - ~~16~~45. DIRECTS the Standing Committee to provide guidance on compliance with, and enforcement of the marine turtle listings in Appendix I, including but not limited to, use of forensic sampling of seized specimens and exchange of information on the illegal trade in marine turtles;
 - ~~17~~46. DIRECTS the Animals Committee and Standing Committees to report progress on the conservation of marine turtles at meetings of the Conference of the Parties, as appropriate; and
 - ~~18~~47. REPEALS Resolution Conf. 9.20 (Rev.) on *Guidelines for evaluating marine turtle ranching proposals submitted pursuant to Resolution conf. 11.16 (Rev. CoP15).*

Annex

Guidelines for evaluating marine turtle ranching proposals submitted pursuant to Resolution Conf. 11.16 (Rev. CoP15)

1. *Resource management*

A. Biological information

The proposal should provide information on the biology, management and geographic extent of each population that will be affected throughout its range. Geographic extent should be described using sound scientific techniques. Range is defined as all the range States and waters in which the population occurs.

The following characteristics of the population of marine turtles that is the subject of the ranching proposal should be detailed:

- a) Population distribution. Describe the current (and, if possible, the historical) nesting grounds, feeding areas and migratory range of the population. Nesting areas from which eggs and/or hatchlings are to be taken should be described in detail.
- b) Population status and trend. Describe the population and its trend using indices of abundance for the different life stages with particular attention to the age/size structure of the population.
- c) Reproduction. Provide an estimate or calculation of the annual reproductive rate or size of the annual production (e.g., numbers of eggs and/or hatchlings).
- d) Population mortality. Provide an estimate of hatching success and estimates of human-induced mortalities of the population.

B. National management

A prerequisite for approval of a ranching proposal will be the effective implementation of a national management plan for marine turtles. The plan should include:

- a) Monitoring. A description of the annual programme to monitor population trends and mortality rates.
- b) Habitat protection. All important nesting beaches, feeding grounds and other significant habitats should be protected from disruption including development, urbanization and pollution.
- c) Harvest regulation. Harvesting for ranches should normally be restricted to eggs and/or hatchlings. The annual numbers (and percentage) of eggs and/or hatchlings proposed for removal to the ranch must be specified. The proposed harvest rate should also be presented as a proportion of the natural production of the population being harvested for ranches.
- d) Protection of the population. Human-induced mortality of marine turtles, such as uncontrolled harvests, incidental catch in fisheries and pollution of habitat should be identified and mechanisms be in place to control such mortalities.
- e) Rules for stopping harvests. Predetermined threshold values of population trends and changes in status, mortality or habitat should be proposed, the passing of which would automatically trigger the suspension of harvests, and the initiation of additional conservation measures.

C. Regional management

Because of the migratory behaviour of marine turtles, that segment of the population occurring within the jurisdiction of any one State can not be considered in isolation. Any management of the population should involve the range States sharing the majority of the population.

A Party submitting a ranching proposal shall take the lead in the development and effective implementation of a regional management protocol designed to enhance the conservation of the population.

- a) Activities undertaken by the proponent to develop cooperative regional management among the range States sharing the majority of the population should be described. Regional management should entail cooperative mechanisms for:
 - i) assessment of the conservation status of the population throughout its range and identification of key recruitment areas (e.g. breeding and nesting sites);
 - ii) regular monitoring of population trends, with an assessment of sources of annual mortality, including the impact of the ranching operation;

- iii) effective protection of important nesting beaches and other essential habitats (e.g. feeding areas);
 - iv) regulating, where necessary, harvests and domestic sale of marine turtle specimens; and
 - v) effective controls, sufficient to prevent the stimulation of illegal trade in products from wild populations.
- b) The regional management protocol designed to enhance conservation of the marine turtles in the wild should also document existing conservation legislation and trade controls by range States and provide a forum through which more effective or complementary trade controls, enforcement activities and other conservation measures may be developed.

2. Trade controls

Proponents must take every reasonable measure to ensure that the trade in products from approved ranches does not stimulate an increase in trade from other sources in a manner detrimental to the survival of the population, other populations or other species of marine turtle, or serve as a cause for such trade. Therefore, before international trade is authorized, the proponent Party should ensure that both it and any country to which the products of the ranching operation are destined have adequate legal frameworks and administrative measures for monitoring and reporting, and adequate local and national enforcement capabilities. In particular each proponent Party must:

- a) Agree that exports of marine turtle products derived from the population covered by its proposal will be restricted to those from the ranching operation, in specified amounts (i.e. a quota may be set) that can be met by proposed ranch production. Importing States shall undertake to provide documentation of their domestic laws to regulate the import, re-export, possession, sale, purchase and transport of marine turtles and their parts and derivatives, and the measures taken to control existing stockpiles of such specimens.
- b) Document its domestic laws and enforcement mechanisms (including those in any territories and overseas political units) that regulate the taking of marine turtles from the wild and the possession, sale, purchase, transport, import and export of marine turtles, and their parts and derivatives.
- c) Undertake registration of any existing stockpiles of marine turtle parts and derivatives held within its territorial jurisdiction, and instigate marking and control systems to ensure that such items are readily distinguishable from similar items deriving from approved ranches.
- d) Describe marking and tracking procedures for all parts and derivatives from approved ranches that will allow the unambiguous identification of ranch products, including methods for marking products and packages, packaging types, transport methods, shipping routes, product documentation, secure storage of products, inventory control up to the point of export and specification of the maximum quantities of products (quotas) to be exported annually.

3. The ranching operation

To satisfy recommendation in paragraph 2 d) ii) of Resolution Conf. 11.16 (Rev. CoP15), the proponent should provide information on:

- a) Financial operation. Identity of the owners and a business and financial plan taking account of market demand and production goals and objectives.
- b) Physical plant. In accordance with technical and professional standards, descriptions of:
 - i) site, including geographical location, lay-out, size and technical specifications;
 - ii) facilities for maintaining stock, food storage, quarantine, slaughter and processing, refrigeration and freezing;

- iii) sea-water source, including circulation, filtration, waste disposal and quality control systems; and
 - iv) staff, including numbers and qualifications of technical and management personnel and numbers of support staff.
- c) Operating procedures, taking account of:
- i) stock collection, including location of source sites, methods used in collection and removal of specimens, age- and size-classes of specimens (e.g. eggs, hatchlings), collecting seasons, number of specimens to be collected each year and the proportion of natural annual production that the harvest represents, methods of handling and transport to the ranching operation, and injury levels and mortality during collection and transport;
 - ii) stocking rates, including the number or weight of turtles per 1,000 litres of sea-water and square metres of surface area;
 - iii) production schedules, including production profiles by age- and size-class, growth rates, methods used to identify ranch stocks, culling procedures exclusive of harvesting, reports of non-harvest mortality, methods of disposal of carcasses from non-harvest mortality and number of specimens by age- and size-class that will be harvested each year;
 - iv) feeding, including sources of feed, general nutritional composition, evaluation of additives and contaminants, and feeding regimen (amount, frequency and method of distribution);
 - v) health care, including monitoring methods, veterinary care and treatment procedures; and
 - vi) slaughter procedures, including specimen selection, methods used to collect and transport specimens to the processing site, humane slaughter technique, processing techniques and waste disposal.
- d) Record keeping, indicating procedures followed in inspecting and monitoring records maintained by the ranching operation.
- e) Benefits, indicating how local people would benefit from the operation.

4. Summary statement describing benefit to the population

Proponents should summarize the legal and enforcement mechanisms that will prevent detrimental impact of the renewal of legal trade and summarize the benefits resulting or expected to result from the management actions implemented for the population to be harvested for ranches, including regional management protocols.

5. Reporting

Proponents that achieve a transfer of their national population of marine turtles from Appendix I to Appendix II subject to this Resolution should report to the Secretariat updated information on:

- a) population status and trends;
- b) any change in the area of beaches that provide suitable nesting habitat;
- c) any change in enforcement effort; and
- d) amendments to cooperative agreements to preserve and manage the marine turtle resource.

Reports should also detail the nature of and progress in developing and implementing effective regional management protocols.