

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



Fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
The Hague (Netherlands), 3-15 June 2007

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Species trade and conservation issues

HAWKSBILL TURTLE

1. This document has been submitted by the Secretariat.
2. Decision 13.38, adopted at the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP13, Bangkok, 2004), which followed an almost identical request to States and territories in the wider Caribbean region made in Decision 12.44, requests these States and territories to:
 - a) *develop further a collaborative regional conservation strategy, based on the outline of a strategic plan provided in the Annex to document CoP12 Doc. 20.2 Annex 4, to enhance the conservation status of the hawksbill turtle and, where appropriate, other marine turtles within the wider Caribbean;*
 - b) *implement the strategy in collaboration with multilateral environmental agreements and intergovernmental organizations active in the region or on the conservation and sustainable use of the species and through the development and implementation of national management plans;*
 - c) *adopt and implement standard protocols for the monitoring, at recommended and agreed index sites, of populations of nesting and foraging hawksbill turtles and make efforts to monitor legal harvests, by-catch in other fisheries and illegal take;*
 - d) *implement measures to reduce illegal catch and illegal trade in hawksbill turtles and parts and derivatives thereof, including measures to improve the control of stocks of hawksbill turtle parts and derivatives by identifying, marking, registering and securing all such stockpiles; and*
 - e) *report to the Secretariat on progress with the implementation of the regional conservation strategy and national management plans at least six months before the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*
3. Decision 13.41 directs the Secretariat to:

collate reports received from States and territories in the wider Caribbean region on progress with the implementation of the regional conservation strategy and national management plans and present a written summary at the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.
4. By the time of the deadline for submission, the only report that had been received was from Saint Lucia. Subsequently, and in time to be incorporated in this document prior to the deadline for submission of documents for the present meeting, reports were received from the Bahamas, Cuba, Nicaragua and Saint Kitts and Nevis. The Secretariat thanks these Parties for their submissions, the

full text of which, in the language in which they were submitted, can be found in document CoP14 Inf. 4. Reports received from the other 27 States and territories in the wider Caribbean region after the deadline will be included in document CoP14 Inf. 4.

5. The Secretariat presents a written summary of the reports received in time for consideration, in the Annex to this document. In line with Decision 13.38, the summary largely reflects the processes underway in the wider Caribbean region to manage hawksbill turtles. Parties are referred to document CoP14 Inf. 4 for fuller details and a presentation of the results of the activities described.
6. The Conference of the Parties, in Decision 13.40, directed the Secretariat, subject to funding and before the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to:

arrange at least one meeting of the wider Caribbean region on the hawksbill turtle in order to facilitate regional collaboration, planning and information exchange, as well as collaboration with other bodies and multilateral agreements with a mandate concerning the conservation and management of this species in the wider Caribbean region.

7. At the time of writing (January 2007) the Secretariat was still searching for the full funds necessary to hold the envisaged meeting. An oral report on further developments will be presented at CoP14.

Conclusion

8. Without prejudice to the outcome of any wider Caribbean regional meeting on hawksbill turtles, should one be held, the Secretariat makes the following observations:

- a) From the submissions received in response to Decision 13.38, it does not appear that States and territories have been able to realize the regional conservation strategy for hawksbill turtles in the wider Caribbean region first envisaged in document CoP12 Doc 20.2. Consequently, these States and territories are unable to report on progress with its implementation and other measures foreseen in the Decision, such as the national management plans designed to implement the strategy.
- b) Parties that responded in line with paragraph e) of Decision 13.38 did not indicate why the envisaged strategy could not be developed, but the Secretariat presumes that a lack of resources is likely to be one of the main reasons.
- c) Whilst no overall strategy appears to exist, there are nevertheless a number of national and bilateral programmes focused on different aspects of the conservation and sustainable use of hawksbill turtles. Amongst the coordinating bodies mentioned by responding Parties are:
 - Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM)
 - Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean's Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW)
 - Grupo Tortuguero de Baja California
 - International Sea Turtle Society (ISTP)
 - Reunión de Especialistas sobre Tortugas Marinas en Latinoamérica
 - State of the World's Sea Turtles (SWoT) project, (organized by Conservation International, Duke University, the International Sea Turtle Society and the IUCN/SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group)
 - Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network (WIDECAST)
 - United Nations Environment Programme/Caribbean Environment Programme (UNEP/CEP)
 - University of the West Indies (UWI)

The Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC) was not mentioned, presumably because none of the States that replied are Party to it.

- d) Although Objective 1.8 of the CITES Strategic Vision encourages Parties to "develop and implement effective management programmes for the conservation and recovery of species, so that the species will no longer satisfy the criteria for inclusion in the Appendices" the approach taken in this instance does not seem to have borne fruit.

9. The hawksbill turtle remains in Appendix I and no recent interest has been expressed in amending the Appendices to change this listing. In view of this and the limited response to Decision 13.38, the Secretariat does not recommend further action on this matter at present.

SUMMARY OF REPORTS ON HAWKSBILL TURTLE (*ERETMOCHELYS IMBRICATA*)
RECEIVED FROM STATES AND TERRITORIES OF THE WIDER CARIBBEAN REGION

Development of a regional conservation strategy, based on the outline of a strategic plan provided in the Annex to document CoP12 Doc. 20.2 Annex 4, to enhance the conservation status of the hawksbill turtle and, where appropriate, other marine turtles within the wider Caribbean

No States or territories that replied mentioned the existence of a regional strategy as described in Decision 13.38. However a number of collaborative activities are described, some bilaterally between States and territories of the wider Caribbean, others under the auspices of intergovernmental or non-governmental organizations.

The Bahamas has participated in a number of workshops sponsored by Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network (WIDECAST) and other organizations that conduct turtle research. Also, through the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), talks were held with those countries whose nationals fish illegally within Bahamian waters, to address the impacts of such activities on the sustainability of local marine resources, including turtles.

Cuba and Saint Lucia reported on their contribution to the State of the World's Sea Turtles project (SWoT). The vision of SWoT is "A permanent global network of specialists working to accelerate the conservation of sea turtles and their habitats-pooling and synthesizing data, and regularly sharing the information with audiences who can make a difference". Both Cuba and Saint Lucia also mentioned the work of WIDECAST including its Annual General Meetings, its Wider Caribbean Region Sea Turtle Database Project, exchange of turtle tagging records and sea turtle educational material for children. Cuba and Saint Lucia also participated in the Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation [convened the International Sea Turtle Society (ISTP)]. Saint Lucia advised that an assessment study on the national implementation of the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean's Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW), with a focus on sea turtles in the Wider Caribbean Region, was being conducted by a Masters Student of Duke University, working in collaboration with WIDECAST and the United Nations Environment Programme/Caribbean Environment Programme (UNEP/CEP). Saint Lucia's contribution to the revision of the 2001-2005 CRFM Fisheries Management Plan will include a management objective for sea turtles involving collaborative work with range States to facilitate the rebuilding of stocks and ensure sustainable use of the resource.

Nicaragua has established a national Management Strategy for the Conservation of Marine Turtles of the Caribbean coast. The Strategy was elaborated with a broad participation of the indigenous sector, regional and national administrations, and intends to provide scientifically detailed information which can be used to ensure conservation of the species.

Cuba does not mention a regional conservation strategy but has aligned its national strategy with Annex 4 to document CoP12 Doc. 20.2. Cuban researchers have participated in international fora on marine turtles such as the Latin-American Experts Meeting (RETOMALA-2006) and Sea Turtle Conservation Network of the Californias (Grupo Tortuguero de las Californias).

Implementation of the strategy in collaboration with multilateral environmental agreements and intergovernmental organizations active in the region or on the conservation and sustainable use of the species and through the development and implementation of national management plans

As it appears that no regional conservation strategy as such exists, Parties could not be expected to report on its implementation.

Adoption and implementation of standard protocols for the monitoring, at recommended and agreed index sites, of populations of nesting and foraging hawksbill turtles and make efforts to monitor legal harvests, by-catch in other fisheries and illegal take

Monitoring of populations of nesting and foraging hawksbill turtles

From responses received, it does not seem that there are any standard protocols adopted at regional level for monitoring, at recommended and agreed index sites, of populations of nesting and foraging hawksbill turtles. However, States and territories have undertaken unilateral measures to monitor hawksbill turtle populations and legal harvest, by-catch and illegal take.

Saint Lucia undertakes monitoring of hawksbill turtle nesting at Grande Anse Beach, although leatherback turtles are the primary visitors there. A funding proposal entitled "Information Based Management of Sea Turtle Resources" has been submitted to several donor agencies for consideration, this would result in more systematic monitoring of hawksbill turtle populations. Saint Lucia and Saint Kitts and Nevis also take part in a tagging programme led by the Caribbean Regional Tagging Centre at the University of the West Indies in Barbados. Saint Kitts and Nevis has been regularly monitoring sea turtle nesting.

Cuba reported on its population monitoring at various index nesting beaches and at feeding sites, including the use of information derived from traditional harvesting of this species which is authorized in two areas. A capture and marking programme allows information about the biology and movements of specimens to be obtained.

Monitoring of legal harvests, by-catch in other fisheries and illegal take

No States or territories provided information on, or statistics resulting from, the monitoring of legal harvests, by-catch or illegal trade.

Saint Lucia has a subsistence fishery for traditional use. In 2006, the fishery was reduced from a five-month open period to a three-month open period, with specific conditions, in keeping with the country's policy for sustainable use. From 2004 to 2006, Fishery Officers were involved in monitoring activities at various landing sites. In addition, data forms were distributed to Fishery Data Collectors at landing sites for the recording of specifics on incoming landings. Data are entered into a database at the Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries for analysis and report preparation. This assists in informed decision-making, and helps instruct public awareness, enforcement and management efforts.

Cuba explained that harvesting of this species is banned throughout its territory except at two sites where a directed harvest takes place (Nuevitas and Isla de la Juventud). In these two areas, the traditional harvest of marine turtles produces meat and shells. The harvesting is monitored at these sites and the results are used for research on the biology and status of the species. By-catch is also monitored at these sites and has decreased there in recent years, but quantifying by-catch in other areas proves difficult. Several measures have been undertaken to reduce by-catch in other fisheries.

Implementation of measures to reduce illegal catch and illegal trade in hawksbill turtles and parts and derivatives thereof, including measures to improve the control of stocks of hawksbill turtle parts and derivatives by identifying, marking, registering and securing all such stockpiles

The Bahamas reported that the hawksbill turtle is offered full protection against harvesting and possession under Bahamian law with penalties of a USD 3,000.00 fine, one year of imprisonment or both upon conviction. Saint Kitts and Nevis also have measures in place at air and seaports to prevent the export of hawksbill turtle products and beach patrols are undertaken to prevent poaching of nesting turtles.

The Bahamas reported that, in January, 2006 a marine sea turtle strategy workshop was held with participants from a number of governmental and non-governmental agencies to discuss the identification of threats to the survival of marine turtles including *inter alia* illegal and legal harvesting of the varied species of marine turtles and the conservation of marine turtles.

Saint Lucia undertakes: monitoring in landing sites by Fishery Officers; confiscation of sea turtles and products in contravention of legislation and conventions; provision of sea turtle information and guidance to police in enforcement duties; release of live confiscated sea turtles by Fishery Officers in various communities and issuance of fines for contraventions of sea turtle legislation. Revision of legislation affecting turtle conservation and sustainable use is in preparation.

Nicaragua reported on enforcement activities undertaken. In 2006, 616 hawksbill products were seized by the Dirección General de Comercio y Medio Ambiente (MARENA). Nicaragua also produced a handbook on control of illegal trade in wildlife, explaining CITES and other administrative procedures and providing identification guidance. This manual is aimed at officials responsible for controlling the borders with Costa Rica and Honduras. Other training materials and courses have also been produced or are in preparation.

Cuba reported that changes in its legislation have resulted in the designation of new inspectors and increased powers for them to combat illicit harvesting of and illegal trade in turtles. The Cuban National Bureau of Fishery Inspection (ONIP) has undertaken regular surveillance activities over the last three years to fight against the illegal turtle harvesting. In 2004, 71,775 metres of illegal nets for the capture of marine turtles were seized as well as 4,715.30 kg of meat of different species of turtles. In 2005, a total of 63,294 metres of nets and 6,344.81 kg of meat were confiscated and, by 30 June 2006, 24,011.50 metres of nets and 3,391.96 kg of meat had been seized by ONIP inspectors. Customs authorities have not reported significant cases of exports or imports although some tourists souvenirs made from shell or other turtle parts have been confiscated.

Cuba has continued its activities of management, control and processing of the shells originating from its commercial harvest. During 2004 and 2005, many shells at Isla de la Juventud were lost during a hurricane and could not be recovered. The stockpile of shell material was moved to the Institute of Marine Research (CIP) in order to improve conditions for handling and packaging the shells. Currently there are 7.5 tonnes of shells and, part of those harvested in 2006 is waiting to be moved and processed. Cuba also mentioned a further 1 tonne that has been stored since 1987. This latter stock will be inspected and processed in the next few months under the same procedure that is used for shells resulting from commercial fishing.