

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



Eighteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Colombo (Sri Lanka), 23 May – 3 June 2019

Species specific matters

HAWKSBILL TURTLE (*ERETMOCHELYS IMBRICATA*) AND OTHER
MARINE TURTLES (*CHELONIIDAE* AND *DERMOCHELYIDAE*)

1. This document has been submitted by the Secretariat.
2. At its 17th meeting (CoP17, Johannesburg, 2016), the Conference of the Parties adopted the following Decisions on *Hawksbill turtle* (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) and other marine turtles (*Cheloniidae* and *Dermochelyidae*):

17.222 Directed to the Secretariat

The Secretariat shall collaborate with the Secretariat of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC), the Secretariat of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), in particular its Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia and other relevant organizations and multilateral agreements with mandates relating to the regional and global conservation, management and sustainable use of marine turtles, to:

- a) *subject to external funding, undertake a study on the legal and illegal international trade in marine turtles, inter alia to research its status, scope and trends, conservation impacts and management options, and to identify areas where immediate mitigation efforts may be needed;*
- b) *encourage communication and coordination among CITES, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), the Ramsar Convention, Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC) and the Protocol for Specially Protected Areas and Wild Life (SPAW Protocol) and others agreements, as appropriate, to address relevant recommendations arising from the IAC study "Conservation Status of Hawksbill Turtles in the Wider Caribbean, Western Atlantic and Eastern Pacific Regions", published in 2014, and to ensure compatibility of activities, optimize resources and enhance synergies; and*
- c) *report on the implementation of the present decision to the Standing Committee, as appropriate, and to the Conference of the Parties at its the 18th meeting.*

17.223 Directed to the Standing Committee

The Standing Committee shall review the information and recommendations submitted by the Secretariat in compliance with Decision 17.222, and formulate its own recommendations as appropriate.

Implementation of Decision 17.222, paragraphs a) and c), and Decision 17.223

3. The Secretariat reported to the Standing Committee at its 69th and 70th meetings (SC69, Geneva, November 2017; SC70, Sochi, October 2018) that financial support for undertaking the study called for in Decision 17.222, paragraph a), had been secured from Australia (through the CMS Secretariat), the European Union [through the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States Secretariat (ACP)], and the United States of America¹. The Secretariat would hereby like to express its gratitude to these donors.
4. The study on the legal and illegal international trade in marine turtles has been developed in close collaboration with IAC, and with CMS 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 Marine Turtles MoU).
5. The study, entitled *Status, scope and trends of the legal and illegal international trade in marine turtles, its conservation impacts, management options and mitigation priorities*, focuses on *in situ* assessments in eight countries from three geographical sub-regions (the East African, Inter-American, and Southeast Asian/Coral Triangle). The countries were selected because they had emerged as potentially significant locations involved in trade in marine turtles, following a review of recent literature and consultations with experts [including the International Union for Conservation of Nature Species Survival Commission Marine Turtle Specialist Group (IUCN/SSC MTSG)].
6. To undertake these national *in situ* assessments, the Secretariat contracted the Marine Research Foundation, TRAFFIC and the World Wildlife Fund. In addition, the Secretariat conducted complementary in-house research on trade in marine turtles in other geographical areas.
7. At SC69, the Standing Committee established an intersessional working group on marine turtles with the following mandate:
 - a) *review the information and recommendations contained in the study undertaken by the Secretariat pursuant to Decision 17.222 a); and*
 - b) *formulate its own recommendations for consideration by the Standing Committee at its 70th meeting for its reporting to the Conference of the Parties, at its 18th meeting, as appropriate.*
8. The membership of the intersessional working group was agreed as follows: United States of America (Chair); Australia, China, Indonesia, and Japan; and the Food and Agricultural Organization, Humane Society International, International Union for Conservation of Nature, TRAFFIC, and the World Wildlife Fund.
9. At SC70, the Secretariat explained in document [SC70 Doc. 50](#) how unexpected administrative challenges, which had significantly delayed the commencement of the *in situ* assessments, meant that the Secretariat had not been able to provide the intersessional working group with the final version of the study. The Secretariat had however shared the preliminary results of the study, as presented in Annex 2 of document SC70 Doc. 50, with the intersessional working group in August 2018, shortly before the document deadline of SC70. The working group was not able to submit a document with its own recommendations for consideration by the Standing Committee at SC70, as per its mandate. The Chair of the intersessional working group noted, therefore, that it would be premature to review the study in its preliminary form at the meeting, and the Standing Committee agreed to propose to the Conference of the Parties, at its 18th meeting (CoP18), the extension of Decisions 17.222 and 17.223.
10. The Secretariat expects to finalise the study referred to in Decision 17.222, paragraph a) prior to CoP18. This will include revising its preliminary results to i) incorporate the final findings from the national *in-situ* assessments by the contracted agencies; ii) address external comments received; and iii) include any new literature findings. The Secretariat expects to make the finalised study available to CoP18 as an information document.
11. In addition to recommendations directed to the CITES community, the finalised study prepared by the Secretariat is likely to include recommendations that go beyond the scope of the Convention, and that aim to inform the work of the partner organizations mentioned in Decision 17.222.

¹ See documents [SC69 Doc. 53](#) and [SC70 Doc. 50](#).

Implementation of Decision 17.222, paragraph b)

12. The study mentioned above² contributes directly to the implementation of the recommendations contained in the IAC study, *Conservation Status of Hawksbill Turtles in the Wider Caribbean, Western Atlantic and Eastern Pacific Regions*³, referred to in Decision 17.222, paragraph b). Particularly, the IAC study had recommended the development of an assessment such as the one called for in Decision 17.222. In June 2018, the Secretariat reached out to CMS, IAC, the Ramsar Convention and the SPAW Protocol to learn about other progress that had been made in addressing recommendations arising from the IAC study. In document [SC70 Doc. 50](#), the Secretariat summarised the relevant progress reported by these organizations as follows (the information under *Ramsar Convention* has since been updated):

CMS:

- The 11th meeting of the CMS Conference of the Parties (Quito, 2014) adopted a Single Species Action Plan for the Loggerhead Turtle (*Caretta caretta*) in the South Pacific Ocean. Currently, projects are ongoing in Ecuador, Peru and Chile to mitigate by-catch of loggerheads and other turtles in artisanal fisheries along the Pacific Coast.
- The 12th meeting of the CMS Conference of the Parties (Manila, 2017) adopted CMS Decision 12.17 on Marine Turtles, which calls for a review of relevant scientific information on conservation and threats to marine turtles; and for the development of a draft Single Species Action Plan for the conservation of hawksbill turtle to address the trade, use and other threats to its conservation in South-East Asia and the adjacent western Pacific, taking into consideration the outcomes of CITES Decision 17.222.

IAC:

- The Convention has collaborated with the CITES Secretariat on the implementation of the study called for under CITES Decision 17.222.
- At its 8th Conference of the Parties (Buenos Aires, 2017), Resolution [CIT-COP8-2017-R2](#) on Conservation of the Hawksbill Turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) was amended to better address hawksbill trade, as well as the Convention's collaboration with CITES in this regard.
- Education and awareness activities have been carried out with the support of the IAC Scientific Committee to increase compliance with existing protection regulations. Particular attention has been given to training local enforcement agencies on the identification of hawksbill turtle products.
- The IAC Scientific Committee has also developed guidelines for Parties to collect environmental parameters for monitoring the effects of climate change on marine turtles, and several IAC Parties are currently applying these guidelines on their beach monitoring protocols.

Ramsar Convention [updated following the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention (Dubai, October 2018)]:

- A Resolution on [The enhanced conservation of coastal marine turtle habitats and the designation of key areas as Ramsar Sites](#) was adopted at the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention.

SPAW Protocol:

- The Regional Programme on Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife in the Wider Caribbean Region had identified the collaboration with the Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network (WIDECAST) on the conservation of sea turtles as an activity for its 2017-2018 biennium workplan. WIDECAST is currently undertaking the mapping of every known hawksbill turtle nesting beach in the Wider Caribbean Region (an update of Dow *et al.*, 2007) and the compilation of the most up-to-date information on legislation protecting hawksbills and their critical habitats in different countries. When finalised, the results of this work will be publicly available.

² "Status, scope and trends of the legal and illegal international trade in marine turtles, its conservation impacts, management options and mitigation priorities" (see document [SC70 Doc. 50](#), Annex 2).

³ See document [CoP17 Doc. 59](#), Annex 1.

Conclusions

13. The Secretariat expects to have completed the study (including its conclusions and recommendations) called for in Decision 17.222, paragraph a) by CoP18, and to make it available as an information document.
14. The Secretariat considers that Decision 17.222, paragraph b), which encouraged communication and coordination among CITES and other agreements to address relevant recommendations arising from the 2014 IAC study⁴, has been implemented.
15. Based on discussions at SC70, the Standing Committee agreed to propose to the Conference of the Parties at CoP18, the extension of Decisions 17.222 and 17.223 (see SC70 summary record). However, the Secretariat considers that there is no need to extend Decision 17.222 because it expects it to have been fully implemented by CoP18, as clarified in paragraph 10. Furthermore, the Secretariat is of the view that Decision 17.223 could be amended to better articulate the request for the Standing Committee to review the study. Given the scientific and technical nature of several elements of the study, the Secretariat further considers that the Animals Committee should be involved in this review. Draft decisions on marine turtles (Cheloniidae and Dermochelyidae) reflecting these considerations are included in Annex 1 to this document.
16. In case the Conference of the Parties adopts the draft decisions in Annex 1, the Standing Committee may wish to consider establishing an intersessional working group on marine turtles at its 72nd meeting (SC72), in view of the time-sensitivity of the study. The working group could have the following mandate:
 - a) review the study *Status, scope and trends of the legal and illegal international trade in marine turtles, its conservation impacts, management options and mitigation priorities* and the recommendations emanating from the review of this study by the Animals Committee; and
 - b) formulate recommendations for consideration by the Standing Committee at its 73rd meeting.

Recommendations

17. The Conference of the Parties is invited to:
 - a) adopt the draft decisions on marine turtles (Cheloniidae and Dermochelyidae) presented in Annex 1 to the present document;
 - b) support the recommendation to the Standing Committee in paragraph 16;
 - c) agree that Decisions 17.222 and 17.223 can be deleted; and
 - d) note the information contained in Annex 2 concerning budget and source of funding for the implementation of the draft decisions.

⁴ "Conservation Status of Hawksbill Turtles in the Wider Caribbean, Western Atlantic and Eastern Pacific Regions" (see document [CoP17 Doc. 59](#), Annex 1).

**Draft decisions on Marine turtles (Cheloniidae and Dermochelyidae) for consideration
at the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties**

Directed to the Secretariat

18.AA The Secretariat shall:

- a) make the study *Status, scope and trends of the legal and illegal international trade in marine turtles, its conservation impacts, management options and mitigation priorities* available to the Animals and Standing Committees for their consideration;
- b) make the study referenced in paragraph a), and any recommendations emanating from its review by the Animals and Standing Committees, available to relevant Parties, organizations and multilateral agreements, including the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC), the Secretariat of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), in particular its Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia (IOSEA Marine Turtles MoU), the Protocol for Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW Protocol), and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar Convention);
- c) follow up, as appropriate, with relevant Parties, organizations and multilateral agreements, particularly those referenced in paragraph b), on the implementation of recommendations falling within the mandate of the Convention arising from the study and its review by the Animals and Standing Committees; and
- d) report on the implementation of the present Decision to the Animals and Standing Committees, as appropriate, and on the implementation of Decisions 18.AA to 18.CC to the Conference of the Parties at its 19th meeting.

Directed to the Animals Committee

18.BB The Animals Committee shall review the study referred to in Decision 18.AA at its 31st meeting, and any additional information reported by the Secretariat, and formulate recommendations as appropriate for consideration by the Standing Committee.

Directed to the Standing Committee

18.CC The Standing Committee shall review the study referred to in Decision 18.AA, any additional information reported by the Secretariat, and any recommendations by the Animals Committee, and formulate its own recommendations, as appropriate.

Directed to Parties and others

18.DD Parties and relevant organizations and multilateral agreements with mandates relating to the regional and global conservation, management and sustainable use of marine turtles are encouraged to collaborate with the Secretariat in the implementation of Decision 18.AA.

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

According to Resolution Conf. 4.6 (Rev. CoP16) 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 proposed draft decisions are not expected to bear direct financial costs, but would have workload implications for the Animals Committee, Standing Committee and the Secretariat.