

RECOMMENDATION 05/08 ON SEA TURTLES

The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC),

NOTING the need to improve the collection of scientific data regarding all sources of mortality for sea turtle populations, including but not limited to, data from fisheries within the IOTC Area to enhance the proper conservation of sea turtles;

RECOGNISING that at the 26th FAO-COFI Session in March 2005, the Guidelines to Reduce Sea Turtle Mortality in Fishing Operation (hereinafter referred to as “the Guidelines”) was adopted,

ACKNOWLEDGING the activities undertaken to conserve marine turtles and the habitats on which they depend, within the framework of the Indian Ocean – South-East Asian Marine Turtle Memorandum of Understanding (IOSEA MoU); noting the decision of the 22 IOSEA Signatory States to establish a voluntary reporting mechanism to monitor implementation of the Guidelines; and noting further IOSEA MoU Resolution 3.1 regarding collaboration with IOTC on marine turtle by-catch issues;

RECOMMENDS, in accordance with paragraph 8 of Article IX of the IOTC Agreement, that:

1. The Commission encourages Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties (hereinafter referred to as “CPCs”) to implement the Guidelines, *inter alia*, the necessary measures for vessels fishing for tuna and tuna-like species in the IOTC Area to mitigate the impact of fishing operations on sea turtles:
 - A. General**
 - i) Requirements for appropriate handling, including resuscitation or prompt release of all bycaught or incidentally caught (hooked or entangled) sea turtles.
 - ii) Retention and use of necessary equipment for appropriate release of bycaught or incidentally caught sea turtles.
 - B. Purse seine**
 - i) Avoid encirclement of sea turtles to the extent practical.
 - ii) Develop and implement appropriate gear specifications to minimize bycatch of sea turtles.
 - iii) If encircled or entangled, take all possible measures to safely release sea turtles.
 - iv) For fish aggregating devices (FADs) that may entangle sea turtles, take necessary measures to monitor FADs and release entangled sea turtles, and recover these FADs when not in use.
 - C. Longline**
 - i) Development and implementation of appropriate combinations of hook design, type of bait, depth, gear specifications and fishing practices in order to minimize bycatch or incidental catch and mortality of sea turtles.
 - ii) Retention and use of necessary equipment for appropriate release of bycaught and incidentally caught sea turtles, including de-hooking, line cutting tools and scoop nets.
2. The Commission encourages CPCs to collect and voluntarily provide the Scientific Committee with all available information on interactions with sea turtles in fisheries targeting the species covered by the IOTC Agreement, including successful mitigation measures, incidental catches and other impacts on sea turtles in the IOTC Area, such as the deterioration of nesting sites and swallowing of marine debris.
3. Encourages CPCs to coordinate their respective IOTC and IOSEA implementation measures, where applicable; and urges the respective secretariats to intensify their collaboration and exchange of information in this area.
4. CPCs are encouraged to support developing countries in their implementing the Guidelines.