
TO MITIGATE THE IMPACTS OF FISHING ON SEA TURTLES

SUBMITTED BY FRANCE

Background:

Tuna fisheries in the IOTC Area are responsible for the incidental capture of many sea turtles every year.

Of the seven species of sea turtles, three are on the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) Red List of Threatened Species as “endangered”, and three others as “critically endangered”. The seven species are on the list of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Content:

The Resolution proposal calls for the mandatory use of circular hooks or fish-based bait by longliners, in order to reduce the mortality of sea turtles.

Each vessel shall also monitor its interactions with sea turtles, and shall keep on board all necessary equipment for appropriate release of incidentally caught sea turtles.

The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC),

RECALLING the FAO Guidelines to reduce negative impacts of fisheries on sea turtles, adopted during the 26th session of COFI.

RECALLING Recommendation 05/08 on sea turtles, encouraging *inter alia*, the conception and use of specifically shaped hooks aiming at mitigating bycatch or incidental catches of sea turtles.

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the Lists established by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

NOTING that these modifications of fishing techniques and the development of tools to remove hooks and lines from captured turtles greatly reduce the hooking-induced mortality of captured turtles, with no detrimental effect on the catch rates of the main target species.

ADOPTS, in accordance with paragraph 1 of Article IX of the IOTC Agreement, that:

1. Contracting and Cooperating non contracting Parties (CPCs) shall take all necessary measures to ensure that all vessels fishing with longlines implement at least one of the two following methods aiming at mitigating interaction with sea turtles:

- using only circle hooks on the longlines;
- using only fish with fins as bait (mackerels or other small pelagic fish).

2. Contracting and Cooperating non contracting Parties (CPCs) shall ensure that all vessels fishing for species under IOTC mandate keep on board all necessary equipment for appropriate release of incidentally caught sea turtles, as well as de-hooking and/or line cutting tools.

3. Contracting and Cooperating non contracting Parties (CPCs) shall make sure that the Captains of vessels fishing for species under IOTC mandate write in the fishing logbooks, or in their appendices, the following information related to interactions with sea turtles:

- Species
- Location of capture
- Condition (unharmmed, wounded, dead)
- Actions taken on board (treatments...)
- Location of release.