

INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF SEA TURTLES (IAC)

NEWS BULLETIN

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Photo: Abner abiu Castillo Diaz on [Unsplash](#)



Second Meeting for the Implementation of the IAC Communication Strategy

On August 07th, 2020, the IAC Secretariat *PT*, and the delegate from Costa Rica, Mr. Christian Díaz, met to assess and adjust the IAC Communication Strategy.

There was a highlight on Argentina, Brazil, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and Uruguay contributions with outreach material to implement the strategy and for the development of a video on the IAC countries activities, that will be presented at the COP10. Also, Mr. Díaz presented an analysis of the mitigation activities addressed by each of the IAC Resolutions.

It was agreed that the strategy emphasizes on how the Parties have implemented activities that promote sea turtles conservation, such as efforts to improve practices to release sea turtles from fishing nets, and behavioral changes in which consumption has been replaced by ecotourism and sea turtle watching.

To facilitate the Parties' contributions regarding their projects related to the IAC threat mitigation of the month, a template will be developed as a guideline. This information will be used as input to develop illustrations and infographics showing the activities and efforts of the IAC countries to mitigate the various threats that sea turtles face in the region.

Coastal development and habitat destruction



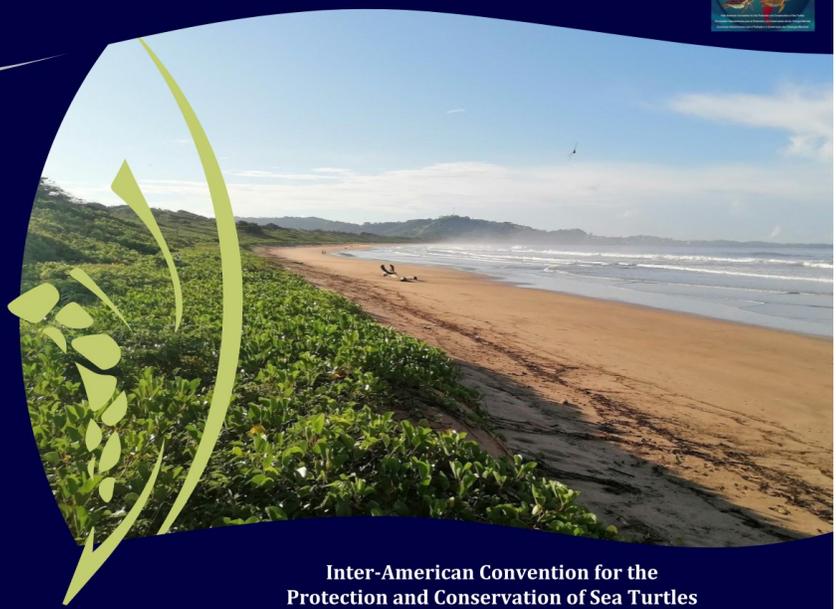
Do you know that...

Real estate development, pollution and coastal deforestation are threats that affect sea turtle nesting.

Conservation efforts, beach protection, research and habitat restoration have been some of the actions carried out in the continent to improve its population status.

Sea turtles **NUTRATE THE SEA** and the ecosystem and, what do you do for sea turtles?

Photo: Playa Grande, Parque Nacional Marino Las Baulas de Guanacaste, Costa Rica.
Diagramming: Pamela Avila | Ilustración: (IG) @ale.carvajal
In compliance with the Art. IV of the Text of the Convention and the resolutions CIT-COP2 2004-R1, COP3/2006/R-1 y CIT-COP9-2019-R2



Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles

Meeting of the Team for the Implementation of the Pilot Project on Collection of Environmental Data IAC Index Beaches to Measure Impacts of Climate Change

Within the framework of Resolution CIT-COP4-2009-R5: Adaptation of sea turtle habitats to climate change, the Scientific Committee Working Group of the is implementing the Pilot Project for the collection of environmental data on IAC index beaches.

On August 12, 2020, the Working Group, formed by the United States and the Caribbean Netherlands, met with the delegates from the participating countries (Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, the United States, Mexico, and Panama) to follow up on the implementation of the pilot project and establish next steps. Each country informed on its implementation progress. Costa Rica and the United States informed they have selected the index beaches areas where sampling would begin in September 2020. The delegates from Ecuador, Mexico, and Panama informed that, despite the delays caused by the pandemic, they are assessing the availability of equipment, technical staff, and permits required to start sampling in 2021.

The work team agreed on reviewing references with similar methods to those that the countries will adopt, to obtain guiding information for the implementation. It was clarified that a standardized methodology is not required between countries, as the objective is to obtain information showing changes for each beach independently.

In November, the participating countries will send the IAC Secretary *PT* and the Climate Change WG a concise report with questions/doubts and recommendations they may have on standardization, data collection, type of equipment to collect temperature, sample size, statistical analysis, among others. These items will be discussed at the next group meeting, planned for the first week of December 2020. Each country will invite their field technicians to this meeting, so they can provide their input based on their experience, ensuring a successful implementation right from the beginning of the project, in the first quarter of 2021.



Guatemala's Report on the Implementation of the Exceptions Resolution

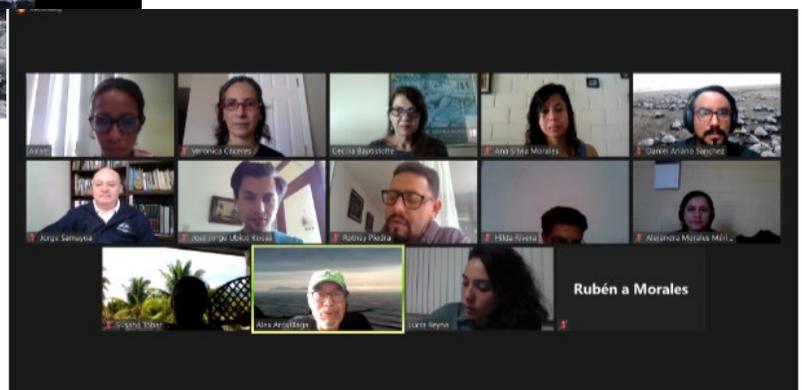
On August 20, 2020, Guatemala, presented the five-year progress report and the management plan for the implementation of the Exceptions Resolution to the Scientific Committee (SC), in preparation for their 17th SC Meeting. The presentation was led by Guatemala's delegate Ms. Airam Lopez, and Mr. Daniel Ariano, an expert on endangered species and a consultant for USAID Guatemala.

Mr. Ariano presented the process to assess the degree of compliance with Resolution CIT-COP6-2013-R1: Exceptions for Subsistence Harvesting of *L. olivacea* Eggs in Guatemala and Panama. It was concluded that the conservation quota -consisting of 20% of the eggs extracted by the *parlameros* which must be delivered to authorized hatcheries according to Guatemala's regulations is sustainable since the indicators showed an increasing number of nesting females instead of a reduction. It was also determined that hatcheries have been effective in increasing the number of olive ridleys nesting in the country, as well as the strategy of buying eggs or granting in-kind incentives to the *parlameros* (eggs extractors).

In addition to the presentation, Guatemala submitted their written report and three products part of the Management Plan on the exception for the subsistence harvesting of *Lepidochelys olivacea* eggs: 1) the Olive Ridley (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) Monitoring Program in the Pacific coast of Guatemala; 2) Proposal of economic alternatives to meet the needs for eggs as a mean of subsistence, to reduce olive ridley eggs harvest to a sustainable level; and 3) the Assessment of statements proposed in resolution CIT-COP6-2013R1. The Scientific Committee will present comments and recommendations to Guatemala's report during their 17th Meeting in October 2020.



Presentation USAID-CONAP Guatemala



Participants in Guatemala's Exception progress presentation

Workshops on the use of the IAC Online Report

As a next step after the presentation of the Online Reporting System by the provider WCMC, the IAC Secretariat has organized three training workshops for delegates.

The first workshop conducted by Mr. Roger Ingle from WCMC was held on May 28, 2020, with the participation of Brazil, Costa Rica, and the United States. On August 11, the IAC assistant, Ms. Luz Helena Rodríguez, facilitated a second workshop for Peru and Ecuador. The third workshop with Chile, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic is scheduled for October 07.

After the presentation, the countries received their user information to access the platform, as well as an instruction manual. So far, Brazil and the United States have made use of the platform by submitting their IAC Annual Report 2020.

Also, the process has been used to detect and improve flaws in the system and the questionnaire through the delegates' support and feedback. The delegates have shown a positive response towards the usefulness and advantages in terms of efficiency when entering the information in the system. It is expected that, with this momentum, the number of countries that will submit their Annual Report 2021 will increase, which is critical for the Convention Committees' work of assessing the information therein and issue recommendations for the Parties.



ORS Training Workshop for Brazil and the United States



Training workshop for Ecuador and Peru

Inter-sessions Meetings of the Fisheries Working Group in preparation for the 17th IAC Scientific Committee Meeting



Meeting of the IAC Scientific Committee Fisheries WG - May 26

The Fisheries Working Group, formed by the delegates from Chile, Ms. Leslie Bustos, Ecuador, Mr. Eduardo Espinoza, Peru, Dr. Javier Quiñones, and Mexico, Dr. Heriberto Santana, held four inter-sessions meetings in preparation for the 17th Meeting of the IAC Scientific Committee.

At the **first meeting**, held on May 26, 2020, the delegates reviewed their work plan and agreed on addressing the issues regarding industrial longline fisheries methods for data analysis (by Mexico) and gillnets fisheries (by Ecuador), the IAC stranding form and the pilot program to quantify interactions with leatherback turtles in Lambayeque (by Peru), which would be used as a reference to implement similar programs in other countries. At the **second meeting**, held on June 26, 2020, the delegates presented their preliminary results and received feedback from the working group.

The **third meeting** of the fisheries working group held on July 30, 2020, focused on the final presentation of results and involved the participation of Mr. Santos Hernandez, Mexico's delegate to the CCE, who provided advice on how to present these results, and on mechanisms to request information from the Parties. Dr. Heriberto Santana, Mexico's delegate to the SC, presented a database and the hypothetical results from the analysis of information on industrial longline fisheries in the IAC region. The delegate from Ecuador, Mr. Eduardo Espinoza, presented a preliminary form, and his proposal of a database and method to analyze information on gillnet fisheries. As a result, the working group agreed on submitting the final products using the IAC template for reports and a pre-recorded presentation, on August 20, 2020.

These sessions helped with the coordination of activities and subsequent compliance with the commitments of the fisheries working group, established in the IAC Scientific Committee work plan, as a tool for the efficient implementation of the Convention Resolutions aiming to sea turtles conservation and protection in the IAC region.

COP10 Planning Meetings

To date, there have been four meetings of the COP10-2021 Planning Working Group, led by the COP Chair and delegate from Costa Rica, Mr. Rotney Piedra. The group is formed by Panama’s delegation, host of the event, and the Scientific and Consultative Committees Chairs, with the support of the IAC Secretariat *PT*.

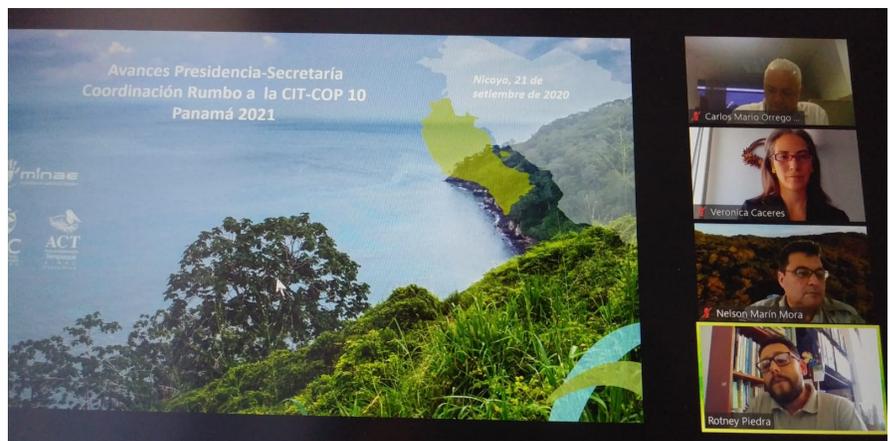
The first coordination meeting took place on December 6, 2019, intending to establish preliminary items for the COP10 agenda, including strengthening alliances with other treaties and organizations to ensure effective compliance with IAC resolutions.

In response, at the **second meeting** of the WG, held on February 14, 2020, the COP10 chair presented a proposal to develop a communication strategy focused on increasing membership, reporting on resolutions, and disseminating the IAC Parties conservation actions. At this meeting, it was agreed to request the support from the CCE sectorial representatives to establish links with other organizations, and from each CCE delegate to facilitate conversations. Also, it was agreed to promote diplomatic conversations between IAC countries consular representatives and missions from countries that are not members of the Convention, under the leadership of Costa Rica as the COP10 Chair.

The **third meeting** took place on June 2, 2020. During this meeting, it was agreed to carry out a coordination meeting with the IAC Committees Chairs, to establish topics that the Committees need to include in the COP10 agenda. On the other hand, Costa Rica and Panama Chancelleries committed to developing a preliminary text to support the Secretariat's approach for helping the Parties to catch up with their contributions, after conversations with Focal Points to update them on the Convention’s financial situation and establishing payment agreements. Regarding the communication strategy, it was agreed to produce the countries activities calendars, as well as for the threats to be addressed monthly.

As agreed in the previous meeting, **at the fourth COP10 preparation meeting**, held on June 24, the Committees chairs met to establish the priority issues to present to the Conference of the Parties in 2021. These will include progress in the implementation of: the exceptions in Panama, Guatemala, and Costa Rica, the Pilot Project on Climate Change, and the five-year strategic actions included in the EP Leatherback Resolution; the preliminary results of the analysis on the impacts of industrial longline fisheries in IAC countries; the methods to analyze impacts of small-scale fisheries, and the formalization of relationships between the IAC and the University of Stetson, and between the IAC and the IUCN Marine Turtle Specialist Group (MTSG). As recurrent topics, the agenda will include the discussion on the Convention hosting, the Secretariat's contract, and the election of sectorial members.

On September 21, the COP chair presented these preparatory meetings results to Costa Rica’s SINAC Executive Directorate the Costa Rican Coasts and Seas advisor, with the participation of the IAC Secretary *PT*, Ms. Veronica Caceres. It must be highlighted that Costa Rica and Panama delegations support, as well as the participation of the Committees chairs, has been of great importance in moving forward towards the COP10-2021.



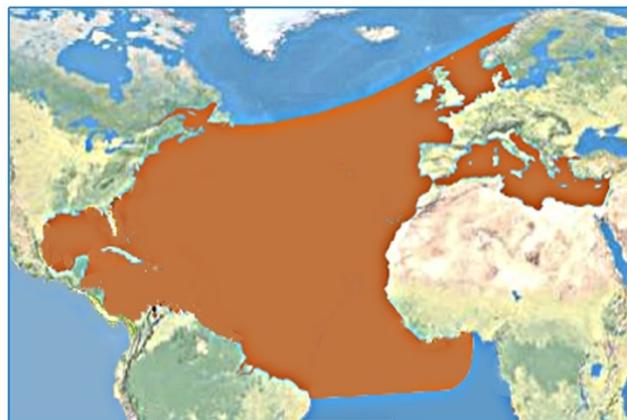
Follow-up meeting on reaching out to countries within the range of the Northwest Atlantic Leatherback Turtle that are not members of the IAC

On September 29, 2020, was held the fourth meeting to follow up on the strategy to reach out to the governments of Canada, Suriname, Guyana, French Guiana, and Trinidad & Tobago, with the support of representatives from WIDECAST, Dr. Karen Eckert, SeaLife Law Center in Canada, MS. Olga Koubrak and WWF, Mr. Michael Hiwat in Suriname, Ms. Sopheia Edgill in Guyana, and Ms. Brianne Kelly and Ms. Chelsea Boaler in Canada.

During the meeting, the informative technical document “**Northwest Atlantic Leatherback Turtles (*Dermochelys coriacea*): A Summary of Current Conservation Status, Challenges, and Opportunities**” prepared by Olga Koubrak and Chelsea Boaler was presented, and the other members of the group were requested to include information relevant to their countries. This document will be presented to the IAC Scientific Committee as a tool to approach countries within the range of the Northwest Atlantic Leatherback Turtle that are not members of the IAC.

Country representatives reported on their strategies to identify key contacts that could provide this type of information and shared some people's names. These people will be invited as observers of the next IAC Scientific Committee meeting 2020. It was also suggested that, as part of the strategy, the IAC share with relevant technical and administrative staff, information on cases of success that were achieved by the Parties with the support of the Convention, and that IAC documents and other material sent out to the no member countries would place the IAC as a technical reference point.

This process has allowed having a perspective on each of these no member countries' current situation, as well as on the probabilities of joining the IAC Convention. It is expected that the efforts will result in an increased number of countries that are part of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC).



Distribution of the Northwest Atlantic Leatherback. Source: Wallace et al. 2010.

OUTREACH ACTIVITIES IN IAC COUNTRIES REPORTED IN THE IAC ANNUAL REPORT

GUATEMALA—Hawksbill Turtle inspired Mother's Day Celebration

Author and Photo Credits: Tannia Paola Sandoval Galeano, Professional Wildlife Assistant - CONAP NorOriente

On May 9, 2019, the National Council of Protected Areas CONAP - Guatemala carried out an activity with kids from *San Francisco del Mar* Mixed Rural Official School, Puerto Barrios, Izabal in the Caribbean Region of Guatemala. Children manually crafted a gift for their mothers on their day. The gift involved using an image of hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) hatchlings to create public awareness. As a result, the children took home a message on the conservation of sea turtles occurring in the Protected Area of Punta de Manabique Wildlife Refuge. Kids used cardboard, metal mesh, and material collected at the beach such as snails, shells, and pieces of wood washed by the sea, to complete their work. They decorated the image of the Hawksbill turtle and the Happy Mother's Day message with these materials. Forty-three (43) students participated in this activity, showing their enthusiasm for bringing a souvenir for their mother, and sharing what they learned from the talk by the Northeast Regional Directorate National Council of Protected Areas Wildlife Unit.



Evelio Romilo Reytez Pérez, Salvador Trochez Salguero, and Noé Ortega Pérez, also participated in the activity. They are CONAP Resource Rangers assigned to San Francisco del Mar and El Quetzalito communities, who are essential staff patrolling the Protected Area beaches searching for nesting turtles, to then transfer the clutches to the Hatchery Vivero Guatemala conservation unit for the conservation of sea turtles visiting this area.



Puerto Barrios' kids receiving information about sea turtles and making their hawksbill turtle mother's days card.

OUTREACH ACTIVITIES IN IAC COUNTRIES REPORTED IN THE IAC ANNUAL REPORT

PANAMA—Panama’s Sea Turtles

The Ministry of Environment of Panama, with the support of several organizations, developed a series of informative posters regarding each of the five species of sea turtles found in this country, as part of the outreach activities to promote awareness on sea turtles.



PUBLICATIONS

Ramírez-Gallego, Cristian and Karla Georgina Barrientos-Muñoz. 2020. Illegal hawksbill trafficking: five years of records of the handicrafts and meat trades of the hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia. Access at <https://doi.org/10.15406/jamb.2020.09.00284>

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