

### **Report of VI Meeting of the Scientific Committee**

**1) Presentation of participants and adoption of agenda**

Twenty-five participants representing 11 Parties, 2 IGOs and 3 NGOs, as well as the Chair of the COP and the newly appointed interim Secretariat were present (Annex I and II).

**2) Election of Chair and Vice-chair**

J. Frazier was elected Chairman and R. Márquez, Vice-Chairman; the Secretariat agreed to assume the work of Rapporteur.

**3) Definition of Priorities for the Scientific Committee**

The Chair of the COP gave a presentation and explained that the Scientific Committee: (a) needs to produce concrete recommendations; (b) should focus on fisheries issues in this meeting because of their importance; and (c) should also work inter-sessionally.

**Note:** it was emphasized that the meeting's focus on a topic in no way means that other topics – such as nesting beaches – are less important; it is a matter of providing concrete recommendations with the limited time and resources available to the Committee.

**4) General comments from the meeting**

Several points that have been made in previous meetings were emphasized:

- A) communications between national Focal Points and members of the Scientific Committee could be improved;
- B) there is a pressing need for establishing, strengthening, and/or sustaining a national committee (independent of what it is actually called) in each country; it should integrate diverse sectors, and would have the structure and leadership determined by the country;
- C) in many cases NGOs provide unique and essential support for complying with the measures of the treaty;
- D) representation of the IAC at relevant meetings (including those organized by Parties) continues to be overlooked;
- E) Committee members should inform the Secretariat about activities that are related to the Convention, especially participation in them;
- F) changes in the individuals who attend meetings of the Scientific Committee, and the COP, presents problems in lack of continuity;
- G) there is a pressing need for Parties to value the instrument.

**5) Past and pending work from previous meetings (and related accords taken at this meeting)**

A) Annual Reports

Annual reports continue to be a problem, with very low level of compliance (3 of the 13 Parties - Brazil, Guatemala and Mexico, submitted their reports in

2009), indicating a lack of value for Parties in addition to the problems identified by the V meeting of the Committee. While there continues to be a lack of compliance by the majority of Parties, there has never been any specific feedback from any of the Focal Points on the annual reports – just silence. An annual report working group was set up (*Accord # 11*, Annex III).

**B) Previous work of Fisheries Working Group**

A detailed list of general measures for mitigating fisheries interactions was developed during the IV and V meetings, but few very specialized actions were identified. It would be useful to focus more detailed work on just one of the many topics involved. Countries will be asked to provide basic information on their mesh net fisheries; a fisheries working group was established to develop survey forms; and past advances will be given careful consideration in future work (*Accords # 4, 5, & 6*, Annex III).

**C) Regional Workshop for the Hawksbill Turtle in the Wider Caribbean and Western Atlantic**

The general activities of the meeting held in September 2009 were summarized; the results and recommendations are not yet available.

**6) Presentations**

**A) National summaries on turtle-fisheries interactions**

Brief national summaries on gear types, efforts carried out, gaps and needs in relation to turtle-fisheries interactions.

**B) Regional initiatives: summaries on several fisheries activities were presented:**

- i) Regional program (Mexico to Peru) on circle hooks ongoing since 2004; results are in preparation
- ii) The *Technical Workshop on Mitigating Sea Turtle Bycatch in Coastal Net Fisheries*. Honolulu, Hawaii, USA, 20-22 January, 2009, organized by the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (CIT-CC6-2009-Inf. 4; CIT-CC6-2009-Inf. 5);
- iii) Gillnet Bycatch and Entanglement in Lost Gear working group draft from Regional Workshop for the Hawksbill Turtle in the Wider Caribbean and Western Atlantic (CIT-CC6-2009-Inf. 6 – limited distribution)
- iv) *Informe Preliminar of the Taller de Trabajo de Pesquerías*, IV Jornadas de Conservación e Investigación de Tortugas Marinas del Atlántico Sur Occidental (ASO), 2 October 2009, Mar del Plata, Argentina (CIT-CC6-2009-Inf. 7).
- v) The masters thesis work by Cecilia Lezama: “Impacto de la pesquería artesanal sobre La tortuga verde (*Chelonia mydas*) en las costas del Río de la Plata exterior.” The work showed, among other things, the importance of developing a strong working relationship with fishermen, who can then serve as reliable onboard observers (CIT-CC6-2009-Inf.13).

**7) Profile of situation in each country: advances and needs**

Participants provided summary profiles on the national situation regarding fisheries-turtle interactions, identifying important advances as well as gaps and needs (detailed responses are summarized in Annex IV); this information is condensed in the table below to highlight regional communalities. The responses

*Report of VI Meeting of the Scientific Committee - CIT-CC6-2009-Doc.3*

show that there have been some advances in some countries, but there is a widespread need for more information and characterization of fisheries issues, especially from onboard observer programs. Although in many cases there have been important advances, there is also an expressed need in nearly half of the responding countries for greater integration and collaboration between different sectors of society, particularly through the strengthening of a national committee. Issues of legislation, enforcement, and control were mentioned, both in terms of advances and needs. The need for resources was specifically mentioned by 3 countries. Training and capacity building was mentioned only once, both in terms of advances and needs.

Table 1. Summary of comments by country representatives to the Scientific Committee on advancements (A) and needs (N) regarding fisheries-turtle interactions.

	BE	BR	CR	EC	GT	HO	MX	NA	PA	PE	UR	US	VE	□ A	□ N
Integration, cooperation, National Committee	N	A*			A N				A	A N	A N		N	5	5
Characterization, information, research	N	A**	N				A			N	A N	A N	N	4	6
Onboard observers		A			N	N	A		N	N	A N	N		3	6
Legislation, fiscalization, control		N***	N		A N				A N			A	N	3	5
Training		A****			A					N				2	1
Resources		A			N						N	N		1*****	3

Comments from Brazil: \*We participate in all fishing management forums, especially those that interact with sea turtles, \*\*We have characterized all the main fisheries that interact with sea turtles some years ago and update them annually, \*\*\* These are two points. Although the legislation is good, compliance and supervision are insufficient, \*\*\*\* We have held and participated in different training courses for onboard observers and trainees, \*\*\*\*\* We invested at least US\$ 200,000 in these efforts some years ago/ to date only in longline monitoring and testing mitigation measures.

It is important to note that training scored low in this exercise, but at later in the meeting there was great general interest in training opportunities; hence, the priorities listed in the above table could be modified after more careful attention were paid to the exercise of setting priorities. Nonetheless, several important regional communalities are evident.

**8) Plenary session on regional needs regarding mesh net fisheries**

The detailed comments are compiled in CIT-CC6-2009-Doc.8, and some of the more critical needs can be summarized as follows:

- A) Characterization and basic information on fishery;
- B) Observer programs, especially given challenges of small boats;

**Report of VI Meeting of the Scientific Committee - CIT-CC6-2009-Doc.3**

- (i) need to train fishermen to serve as observers;
- C) Adequate observer coverage at disembarking and embarking sites;
- D) Functioning mitigation measures;
- E) Effective legislation;
- F) Interagency collaboration.

**9) Proposed follow-up activities after the meeting and related accords**

- A) Members of the Scientific Committee should inform the Secretariat of events related to the Convention's objectives (**Accord # 2**, Annex III);
- B) The Secretariat will communicate with Focal Points requesting help in completing the information in table summarizing the status of knowledge of mesh nets and their interactions with sea turtles (CIT-CC6-2009-Doc.5; **Accord # 4**, Annex III);
- C) Form a working group for gathering basic information from surveys on mesh net fisheries in the region – and take advantage of a survey that OSPESCA plans to finalize in Central America at the end of the year (**Accord # 5**, Annex III);
- D) Make use of existing information available from other sources, especially previous work done by the fisheries working group (e.g., Annex I to Resolution CIT-COP3-2006-R2; **Accord # 6**, Annex III) and other reports such as the gillnet workshop in Hawaii (CIT-CC6-2009-Inf. 4 & CIT-CC6-2009-Inf. 5), the hawksbill workshop in Puerto Morelos (CIT-CC6-2009-Inf. 6), and the ASO fisheries workshop in Mar del Plata (CIT-CC6-2009-Inf. 7);
- E) The issue of fisheries certifications is important, but as it is complex it needs to be dealt with in a dedicated, well-prepared session;
- F) Development of a proposal for training on issues related to release and rehabilitation of incidentally captured marine turtles, with correspondence and interactions between experienced actors in the region (**Accord # 8**, Annex III);
- G) Strengthen a digital library at the IAC website, by supplying digital files and links for where information is accessible (**Accord # 9**, Annex III);
- H) Form a Annual Report working group, that will pay special attention to past work by the Scientific Committee, particularly the results of the Fifth meeting (CIT-CC6-2009-Inf.2 – with ALL 8 annexes; **Accord # 11**, Annex III);
- I) Request the support of the Secretariat and Chair of the COP to highlight the ongoing and intense problem of incidental capture of *Caretta caretta* in Baja California (**Accord # 10**, Annex III);
- J) The Chair of the COP was asked to communicate with Focal Points to emphasize the urgent need to facilitate the importation of specialized equipment and materials into parties for promoting the conservation of sea turtles and their habitats (**Accord # 3**, Annex III);
- K) The Secretariat, with the help of the Chair of the COP and copied to the Chair of the Scientific Committee, will communicate with each Focal Point to:
  - i) Reiterate the importance of active participation by designated representatives to the Committee, including intersessional work;
  - ii) Emphasize the need for increased communication and information flow between each Focal Point and the designated representative;

*Report of VI Meeting of the Scientific Committee - CIT-CC6-2009-Doc.3*

- iii) Strengthen the working of a national committee (whether it is called a council, network or something else), to integrate diverse stakeholders and agencies;
- L) Encourage countries that have not hosted a meeting of the Scientific Committee to explore the possibilities (the Secretariat will make available budgets of past meetings); there was tentative interest in organizing the next meeting in Panama.

27 Jan 2010/ J. Frazier

**Annex I**

**CIT-CC6-2009-Doc.1**

**Agenda**

**VI Meeting of the Scientific Committee**

*Objectives:*

- *To review the Scientific Committee's work on fisheries bycatch to date, as well as to review on-going bycatch activities in the IAC region.*
- *To identify priority gear types for the IAC Scientific Committee to further analyze and provide recommendations to the Parties.*
- *To determine the process that the IAC Scientific Committee will undertake to develop a report/synthesis of fisheries interactions to IAC COP5.*

21st Wednesday
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8:30 Welcome remarks

*Speaker: Veronica Caceres, IAC Pro Tempore Secretary*

8:50 Adoption of the agenda

9:00 Election of the Chair, Vice-Chair, and Rapporteur of the Scientific Committee.

9:15 Update on the IAC, summary of COP 4, and view towards the future and goals for Scientific Committee to present to COP5

*Speaker: Alexis Gutierrez, Chair of the COP*

9:45 Review of the work to date by the Scientific Committee

*Speaker: Jack Frazier, IAC Scientific Committee.*

a. Review of past work of the Fisheries Working Group

*Speaker: Member of the Fisheries Work Group*

b. Update on the results of the IAC Hawksbill workshop

*Speaker: Rene Marquez, IAC Scientific Committee.*

c. Update on fishing gear and turtle interactions workshops

*Speaker: Joca Thome, IAC Scientific Committee*

**SESSION 1**

*Presentations to describe the state of the art in the knowledge of the sea turtle bycatch in the IAC countries and its impact on incidental capture of sea turtles in coastal fisheries.*

*Report of VI Meeting of the Scientific Committee - CIT-CC6-2009-Doc.3*

11:30 Country Presentations (10mins each)

- a.) What is known about sea turtle bycatch in each country? (observer data, anecdotally)
- b.) What gear types (e.g., longlines, gillnets, trawls, traps/pots) have the highest rate of interactions?
- c.) Are there current regulations and/or mitigation measures in place?
- d.) What are the gaps in addressing these issues (regulatory, gear research, observers, characterization of fisheries, etc.)

12:00 Lunch break

1: 00 Continue with country presentations

4:00 Coffee break

4:20 Presentation on Regional research/conservation activities

5:00 Overview of different gear and mitigation possibilities of sea turtles bycatch

*Speakers: Dan Foster and Yonat Swimmer (NOAA)*

5:30 Presentation on Coastal net fisheries and their impact on sea turtles.

*Speaker: Cecilia Lezama (Karumbé)*

6:00 End of session

22nd Thursday
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*SESSION 2*

*Develop Proposals to overcome the gaps identified (working groups & plenary sessions)*

8:00 Review of key elements from the country presentations and existing IAC Documents

8:30 Working groups

a.) Priority gear types for the region

- a. What are the greatest gaps regarding the highest priority gear types identified with respect to sea turtle bycatch? (*review of previous fisheries information document to start the discussion*)
- b. What work is ongoing with respect to those gear types (i.e. characterizations, mitigation work, fisheries closures, etc?)
- c. What additional work needs to be conducted?
- d. What can the IAC countries do together to address bycatch in these high priority gear types?

10:00 Coffee break

*Report of VI Meeting of the Scientific Committee - CIT-CC6-2009-Doc.3*

- 10:40 Working groups continue
- 12:00 Lunch Break
- 1:00 Continue with work groups.
- 3:40 Coffee break
- 4:00 Groups work on their presentations and their activities and/or plans
- 5:00 End of session

23rd Friday
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*SESSION 3*

*Presentation of specific actions to plenary for discussion.*

- 8:00 Work groups finish their presentations and recommendations
- 10:00 Coffee break
- 10: 20 Make recommendations to the Parties: What additional information needs to be gathered on sea turtle bycatch in IAC countries?
  - a. How will that be done?
  - b. Over what time frame?
  - c. Outline of the report to the IAC countries
- 12:00 Lunch
- 1:00 Plenary Presentation of work groups
- 3:40 Date and place of next meeting
- 4:00 Other business
- 5:00 Closing remarks
- 7:00 Closing dinner



Annex II

CIT-CC6-2009-Inf.11

Lista de Participantes/Participant List

No	País	Nombre y Apellidos	Institución	Correo electrónico
<b>Delegados/Delegates</b>				
1	Belice	Isaias Majil	Fisheries Department	isaias.majil@gmail.com
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3	Costa Rica	Didiher Chacón	WIDECASST America Latina	<a href="mailto:dchacon@widecast.org">dchacon@widecast.org</a>
4	Ecuador	Javier Llorca	Tercer Secretario Embajada del Ecuador	eecuostarica@mmrree.gov.ec
5	Guatemala	José Martínez	CONAP	josemartinezmencos@yahoo.com
6	Guatemala	Roberto Gutiérrez	UNIPESCA	robgtuti650@hotmail.com
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11	Perú	Jorge Zuzunaga		jzuzunaga@produce.gob.pe
12	Venezuela	Begoña Mora	Ministerio del Poder Popular para el Ambiente, Oficina Nacional de Diversidad Biológica	bmora@minamb.gob.ve
<b>Otros participantes/Other participants</b>				
13	USA	Alexis Gutiérrez	NOAA	<a href="mailto:Alexis.Gutierrez@noaa.gov">Alexis.Gutierrez@noaa.gov</a>
14	USA	Daniel Foster	NOAA Fisheries	Daniel.G.Foster@noaa.gov
15	USA	Yonat Swimmer	NOAA	
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23		Bessy Aspra	WWF	
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**Annex III**

**CIT-CC6-2009-Doc.4**

**Agreements of the VI Meeting of the Scientific Committee**

- 1) It was agreed that, as has been agreed to in previous Scientific Committee meetings:
  - a. The *Pro Tempore* Secretariat, with the help of the Chair of the COP, will send a message to each Focal Point (with copy to the Chair of the COP, the Chair of the Scientific Committee and the Party's designated representative to that Committee) before November 15th, 2009, reiterating the importance of active participation by designated representatives in Scientific Committee meetings and intersessional work groups.
  - b. In the same message, the *Pro Tempore* Secretariat will communicate the essential need for increased communication, dialogue and flow of information between the Focal Point and the designated representative on the Scientific Committee.
  - c. In order to strengthen this communication, the Committee recommends that national mechanisms be strengthened, whether it is a council, committee, network, e-group or other arrangement that facilitates the integration of key stakeholders and the flow and exchange of information at a national level.
  
- 2) It was agreed that when members of the Scientific Committee have knowledge of or participate in international meetings or other events that are directly related to the Convention's objectives, that they send the Secretariat a brief summary of their participation (for example, the name of the event, date, place, objective, relationship to the Convention) so that this information may be shared with the Focal Points, giving the Convention added value, while increasing collaboration, communication and its image.
  
- 3) It was agreed that the Chair of the COP would be asked to communicate with the Focal Points before the second week of November regarding the urgent need – again, identified previously by the Scientific Committee- to explore and develop national and international mechanisms to facilitate the timely arrival of equipment, research outputs, and instructional literature necessary to improve the selectivity of fisheries activities, and thereby promoting the conservation of sea turtles and their habitats. These materials (such as circle hooks, sea turtle excluder devices, instructions, pamphlets and posters) might be either donated or purchased, and either permanently or temporarily enter the country of destination.
  
- 4) It was agreed that the *Pro Tempore* Secretariat would communicate with the Focal Points before the second week of November indicating that the Scientific Committee concluded the need to summarize the *Status of Knowledge of Gillnets and their Interactions with Sea Turtles*, which requires that each Party provides a

*Report of VI Meeting of the Scientific Committee - CIT-CC6-2009-Doc.3*

summary of available information in the table provided (CIT-CC6-2009-Doc.5) and that it be sent via electronic mail to the Secretariat no later than March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

- 5) It was agreed that a useful standard form would be created and used within the range of the Convention in order to characterize coastal gillnet and trammel net fisheries, through the following steps:
  - a. Create an intersessional working group made up of representatives from OSPESCA (El Salvador), TAMAR (Brazil) and NOAA (USA);
  - b. Each member of the Scientific Committee will send their comments on the form “Gillnet and Trammel Net Gear Description Form GTNGDF 02/2009” (CIT-CC6-2009-Inf.8) to the working group via the Secretariat- no later than November 30th, 2009 – especially regarding:
    - i. concepts/fields that may be eliminated (in order to simplify the form);
    - ii. concepts/fields that should be included;
    - iii. how to divide the original form into sections for information on:
      1. fishing gear and “stable information” (i.e., characteristics of the fleet, motor, nets, etc.)
      2. fishing operations and “dynamic information” (i.e., date, time, fishing site, etc.),
      3. socio-economic aspects (i.e., profitability of fishing trip, market structure, social organization)
  - c. The working group will create a list of the basic information needed to be included in the form, grouping each item in their respective category, and structuring the form according to “stable information” and “dynamic information”. This proposal will be sent to the members of the Scientific Committee via the Secretariat on December 30th, 2009.
  - d. The members of the Scientific Committee will have until February 28th, 2010 to send their final observations on the form to the working group via the Secretariat.
  - e. The working group will send the forms in the format of fields to the Secretariat no later than March 20th, 2010; to be distributed among the Focal Points, Committee members and other interested stakeholders so that they may be tested in the field.
  - f. Once the forms are validated and approved, it is suggested that they be used as soon as possible in the characterization of coastal gillnet fisheries.
  
- 6) It was agreed to that it is very important to reiterate the recommendation established in “Recommendations for implementing Resolution CIT-COP3-2006-R2: Reduction of the adverse impacts of fisheries on sea turtles” (Annex I of Resolution CIT-COP3-2006-R2) to promote national research programs through: information exchange and training, technology transfer (for more details see Annex xx of this report).

*Report of VI Meeting of the Scientific Committee - CIT-CC6-2009-Doc.3*

- 7) It was agreed to that a preamble would be written for the final report of this meeting clearly stating that the Scientific Committee chose to work on the topic of “Bycatch in Coastal gillnets” solely for the purpose of focusing their work given a limited time frame, but this does not imply in any way that other aspects, such as the protection of nesting beaches, working with coastal communities, education, or other fishing types, etc. are any less important to fulfill the objectives of the Convention.
- 8) It was agreed to that a project proposal would be written by the Secretariat, with the assistance of Didiher Chacon, member of the Scientific Committee, on veterinary aspects of sea turtles (i.e., rehabilitation techniques, necropsies, care in captivity, liberation, etc.), in order to provide training and for exchange of information and technical experiences between Party countries, securing financing if necessary
- 9) It was agreed to that the electronic library on the Convention’s website (<http://www.iacseaturtle.org/>) would be improved by sending the Secretariat any electronic documents, links and other electronic resources that the Scientific Committee felt are important to include on the website (while taking into consideration necessary steps comply with rights of publication).
- 10) It was agreed to send to the Chair of the COP a recommendation addressed to Mexico on the problem of incidental capture of *Caretta caretta* in southern waters of Baja California and the urgency of implementing conservation measures (CIT-CC6-2009-Doc.9).
- 11) It was agreed to that in regards to the Annual Report Format (CIT-017-04), an intersessional working group will be formed to review and organize, in a concise manner, the work of the V meeting of the Scientific Committee which provided suggestions related to the format and instructions on how to complete the Annual Report forms. This product will be sent to the Chair of the COP for consultation and approval by the Parties. Further, this working group will synthesize the information contained in the Annual Reports that have been handed in to the *Pro Tempore* Secretariat thus far, so that the Parties can see the value of submitting them, and the analyses that the Scientific Committee has been able to undertake. To do this, the working group, which is made up of representatives from Belize, Brazil, Peru and Venezuela, will continue to work with the Secretariat and the Chair of the Scientific Committee on updating the Convention’s Data Base.

Annex IV

CIT-CC6-2009-Doc.10

Profile of situation in each country, summarizing important advances as well as gaps and needs regarding turtle-fisheries interactions.

Country	Advances				Gaps / work needed			
Belize					Strengthen cooperation with national network	Gill net unknown impact; lack of information	Identify areas where gill nets are used, especially in relation to critical foraging areas	
Brazil	Seasonal /area closures for shrimp trawlers	Ban on lobster pots	Progress with onboard observer programs in several fisheries	Drift nets in process of being banned	Evaluate impact of mitigation measures for gill nets			
Costa Rica					Structural changes to national fisheries body (INCOPECA)	Attract interest of public & private sectors on incidental catch	Enforcement of current legislation	Monitoring & research program on incidental capture
Ecuador								
Guatemala	Regular training in inspection & TEDs	Coordination between institutions	Adequate legislation		Onboard observer program	National committee	Resources for research, inspections etc.	
Honduras					Observer programs: onboard and landing	Coastal development & nesting beach destruction		

Report of VI Meeting of the Scientific Committee - CIT-CC6-2009-Doc.3

Mexico	Circle to J hook exchange program for shark fishery	Coastal fishing gear catalogued	Onboard observer program	National statistics on fishermen, vessels & gear; interviews on bycatch in Campeche				
Netherlands Antilles								
Panama	TED regulations & use	Active national inter-institutional committee			Too many points of embarkation – impossible to monitor	Onboard observer program	Legislation specific to protection of marine turtles, nesting beaches and marine areas	
Peru					Strategies for overlapping use of areas for turtles & fishing; Focus on northern part of country	Involve more institutions and fishing communities in developing an action plan	Survey artisanal fleet; Observer program; Analyze problem, what is root cause of capture & what are sources of mitigation ?	Training program : need to protect turtles, best fishing strategies, gear modification/exchange, rehabilitation; get feedback
Uruguay	Characterization of	Basic information on	Onboard observer program	Progress with national	Onboard observer programs	Finalize and officialize	Funding and support	

*Report of VI Meeting of the Scientific Committee - CIT-CC6-2009-Doc.3*

	fisheries	affected turtles and areas	for pelagic longline; Experiments on circle hooks and handling	action plan	for coastal fisheries, sustainable over long term	national action plan		
USA	Gear modification (e.g., TEDs & circle hooks)	Regulations to mitigate bycatch	Reduced take in state waters	Raised awareness of need for turtle conservation	Onboard observer programs	Characterize gill nets	Gear research	National consistency; Human & financial resource
Venezuela					Characterization of fisheries	Research on turtles, postgraduate level	Integration of different sectors	Control mechanisms