



**Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea
Turtles**
7th Conference of the Parties
June 24-26, 2015 – Mexico City

CIT-COP7-2015-R1

**Resolution on the Exceptions under Article IV (3a and 3b) for subsistence harvesting of
Lepidochelys olivacea eggs in Costa Rica**

RECALLING that Article IV of the Convention, paragraph 2a states that the Parties have prohibited the intentional capture, retention or killing of, and domestic trade in, sea turtles, their eggs, parts or products;

FURTHER RECALLING that Article IV, paragraph 3a states that each Party may allow exceptions to satisfy economic subsistence needs of traditional communities, taking into account the recommendations of the Consultative Committee of Experts established pursuant to Article VII, provided that such exceptions do not undermine efforts to achieve the objective of this Convention;

NOTING that at the 5th Conference of the Parties, procedures for cases where exceptions exist were adopted (CIT-COP5-2011-R2);

ACKNOWLEDGING that all species of sea turtles classified as “endangered, vulnerable and critically endangered” must be protected from any negative impacts resulting from an exception;

CONSIDERING that the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has recently classified *Lepidochelys olivacea* as vulnerable;

RECOGNIZING that *L. olivacea* on the beaches of the Eastern Pacific Ocean (Mexico to Panama) is the only turtle species that can tolerate a controlled amount of egg harvesting, and only when the population to be harvested shows a status of “*recovery or verifiable stability*;”

CONSIDERING that this exception existed prior to Costa Rica becoming a Party of the IAC, and today remains under the control of the different relevant governmental organizations;

CONSIDERING that the technical information presented by Costa Rica in its 2014 Annual Report was reviewed by the IAC Scientific Committee in their 11th meeting and the IAC Consultative Committee of Experts in their seventh and eight meetings, determined that Costa Rica has well organized information in their five-year plan to manage this exception.



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**THE 7TH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES OF THE INTER-AMERICAN
CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF SEA TURTLES
RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING MEASURES TO COSTA RICA TO MEET THE
REQUIREMENTS OF ARTICLE IV (3) REGARDING EXCEPTIONS:**

- 1) The COP recommends that one standardized sampling method to quantify the nesting population at Ostional Beach be selected. Since there is not currently one method it is recommended that a study be conducted to assess the accuracy and precision of the two methods currently used (Chávez-Morera *unpublished*; Valverde & Gates, 2000) and to choose the most statistically robust method. Costa Rica should provide a report of this study to the IAC Scientific Committee and Consultative Committee by the end of 2017.
- 2) In the interim, Costa Rica should continue to manage its exception as described in its five-year plan.
- 3) To prevent illegal trade of eggs from other *L. olivacea* populations and from other sea turtle species, Costa Rica should develop and implement a system for traceability from the beach to the final distributor.
- 4) In order to determine the status of the nesting population of Ostional *L. olivacea* and the impact of the egg harvest on it, Costa Rica should monitor for additional indicators including: number of neonates (a recruitment index), and number/percentage of viable and non-viable clutches. Costa Rica should implement the monitoring of these indicators no later than the end of 2017. After this monitoring, there should be an evaluation to make adjustments to ensure the egg harvest is sustainable.