

International Sea Turtle Society Resolution on the Conservation of Leatherback Sea Turtles (*Dermochelys coriacea*) in the Eastern Tropical Pacific

CONSIDERING that the member countries of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC), and the United Nations General Assembly have agreed by consensus to implement the measures recommended in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations “Guidelines to Reduce Sea Turtle Mortality in Fishing Operations,” in the *Report of the Technical Consultation on Sea Turtles Conservation and Fisheries* (“The FAO Guidelines”), which include the use of spatial and temporal closures of selected fisheries, in order to prevent the decline of sea turtle populations through the reduction of by-catch;

CONCERNED that over ten years have passed since a study in *Nature* (2000) reported that East Pacific leatherback turtle populations have experienced declines of over 90% during the past two decades, due in large part to fisheries interactions, and following warnings by prominent scientists that this population is facing imminent risk of extinction, annual nesting numbers in the East Pacific have continued to decline in spite of more than a decade of protection and monitoring at key nesting sites where egg exploitation and poaching have been effectively eliminated;

RECALLING that over 1,000 scientists from 97 countries, as well as representatives from 281 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from 62 countries, have expressed a level of concern to the point appealing to the United Nations to call for a moratorium on pelagic long-line fishing in the Pacific;

RECOGNIZING that leatherback sea turtles migrate over vast distances through the world’s oceans, making international cooperation essential to conserve and protect them successfully;

NOTING that new information from satellite tracking shows that after nesting in Las Baulas National Park, Costa Rica, female leatherback sea turtles routinely and predictably migrate south in a directed fashion to waters surrounding Cocos Island (Costa Rica) and then the Galapagos Islands (Ecuador), during their post nesting movements;

ALSO NOTING that Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Panama are working under a non-binding agreement (Corredor Marino del Pacífico Este Tropical or CMAR) for the consolidation of the Eastern Tropical Pacific Marine Corridor, which includes Marine Protected Areas, migration corridors and other critical habitats within and beyond these countries’ Exclusive Economic Zones; and

FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGING that the World Conservation Congress at its 4th Session in Barcelona, 5 to 14 October, 2008, adopted the resolution CGR4.MOT028 Conservation of Leatherback Turtles and Hammerhead Sharks in the Eastern Tropical Pacific Marine Corridor;

Therefore, let it be resolved that the International Sea Turtle Society at its 31st meeting on 15 April, 2011, in San Diego, California, U.S.A.;

1. URGES member countries of the IATTC and IAC with fishing operations in the Pacific that interact with leatherback sea turtles in the region to implement and strengthen domestic laws and regulations in order to effectively carry out their obligations under these Conventions to implement The FAO Guidelines for reducing sea turtle bycatch and mortality by avoiding capture, promptly releasing turtles unharmed, and implementing spatial and temporal closures to reduce fishing efforts in locations and during periods of high concentration of leatherback sea turtles in the Eastern Tropical Pacific; and
2. REQUESTS that member countries of the IATTC and IAC fulfill the reporting requirements on implementation of The FAO Guidelines in a thorough and transparent

- manner, facilitate public access to this information, and provide updates to the International Sea Turtle Symposium which meets annually; and
3. CALLS ON any member countries of the IATTC with fishing operations in the Pacific that interact with leatherback sea turtles that are eligible to join the IAC but are not yet Parties to the IAC to join this Convention (specifically El Salvador, Colombia and Nicaragua); and
 4. URGES member countries of the IAC and IATTC to collaborate in order to fulfill the obligations in The FAO Guidelines for standardizing data collection and research and conducting joint research, including Memoranda of Understanding between the two Conventions; and
 5. CALLS ON member countries of the IAC and IATTC to explore effective mechanisms for addressing non-compliance, including resolutions to adopt trade measures to promote compliance; and
 6. URGES the governments of Costa Rica and Ecuador to establish a Cocos-Galapagos Marine Corridor, where fisheries policies are adopted that protect leatherback sea turtles from harmful fisheries activities during times of high concentrations of sea turtles.