



Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals



RECOMMENDATION 7.6

IMPROVING THE CONSERVATION STATUS OF THE LEATHERBACK TURTLE (*Dermochelys coriacea*)

Adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its Seventh Meeting (Bonn, 18-24 September 2002)

Recognising that the Leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) is listed in Appendix I and Appendix II of CMS and is also categorised as endangered in the IUCN Red List (2001);

Concerned that recent surveys of *Dermochelys coriacea* in the Pacific Ocean indicate that breeding populations have declined by more than 90% over the last two decades and that these population declines are continuing;

Noting that fisheries by-catch, including that from distant water fishing fleets, has been identified as one of the most significant impacts contributing to the *Dermochelys coriacea* population declines in the Pacific Ocean;

Recognising the intent of Resolution 6.2 (Cape Town, 1999) to reduce fisheries by-catch on migratory species of concern to the Parties to the Convention;

Noting that the distribution and current status of *Dermochelys coriacea* in the eastern Atlantic, Indian and Western Pacific Ocean regions have not been comprehensively monitored;

Concerned that the harvest of *Dermochelys coriacea*, whether it be turtles or their eggs, by coastal communities is widespread and unsustainable in many countries, including some Range States within the western Pacific, Indian and eastern Atlantic Oceans; and

Acknowledging that the Leatherback turtle is culturally significant to some communities and that some harvesting may be permitted within the context of traditional harvest in accordance with Article III, paragraph 5, of the Convention;

*The Conference of the Parties to the
Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals*

1. *Urges* the Range States of the Pacific Ocean, Indian Ocean and eastern Atlantic Ocean regions:
 - (a) to implement Resolution 6.2 and Recommendation 7.2;
 - (b) to identify the breeding sites for *Dermochelys coriacea* and to quantify the size of these breeding populations;

- (c) to identify a suitable index site within each recognized management unit and establish a monitoring program at such index sites to determine population trends and responses to management actions;
- (d) to monitor the traditional harvest and prevent commercial harvest of *Dermochelys coriacea* turtles and/or eggs, within national waters and on nesting beaches;
- (e) to promote activities to enhance the maintenance of secure and safe nesting habitat and to increase the nesting success for *Dermochelys coriacea*;
- (f) to promote activities that will increase the production of healthy, correctly imprinted *Dermochelys coriacea* hatchlings of both sexes into the sea; and
- (g) to engage in cooperative activities with neighbouring countries to promote sustainable management of this shared resource, including conducting training workshops to enhance the conservation and management of *Dermochelys coriacea* nesting beaches;

2. *Invites* the CMS Scientific Council to develop guidelines for managing sustainable and humane harvests of *Dermochelys coriacea* turtles and/or their eggs by traditional communities;

3. *Urges* the Signatory States to the Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation Measures for Marine Turtles of the Atlantic Coast of Africa and the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia to give a high priority within the respective Conservation Plans to the implementation of projects to enhance the conservation status of *Dermochelys coriacea*; and

4. *Further urges* non-governmental organizations and international organizations that have the conservation of biodiversity within their mandate to provide appropriate technical, logistical and financial assistance for the conservation and management of *Dermochelys coriacea*.

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