

COMISION INTERAMERICANA DEL ATUN TROPICAL INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

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WORKING GROUP ON BYCATCH MINUTES OF THE 5th MEETING

**Busan, Korea
24 June 2006**

AGENDA

- | | Documents |
|---|------------------|
| 1. Opening of the meeting | |
| 2. Election of Chairman | |
| 3. Adoption of the agenda | |
| 4. Sea turtles: | BYC-5-04 |
| a. Reports from CPCs and staff on investigations and mitigation developments | |
| b. Additional mitigation measures | |
| 5. Seabirds: | |
| a. Information on interactions with seabirds, including incidental catches in all fisheries under the purview of the IATTC: | |
| i. Report from staff | BYC-5-05.a.i |
| ii. Reports from CPCs | |
| b. Mitigation measures | |
| 6. Other business | |
| 7. Recommendations to the Commission | |
| 8. Adjournment | |

APPENDIX

1. List of attendees

The 5th Meeting of the IATTC Working Group on Bycatch was held in Busan, Korea on 24 June 2006. The attendees are listed in Appendix 1.

1. Opening of the meeting

The Director of the Commission, Dr. Robin Allen, opened the meeting.

2. Election of Chairman

Ing. Luis Torres of Ecuador was elected to chair the meeting.

3. Adoption of the agenda

The provisional agenda was adopted with the inclusion under *Other business* of a request by Venezuela to address the issue of catches of juvenile tunas.

4. Sea turtles

Spain made a presentation on a pilot study evaluating circle hooks and baits carried out in the Indian Ocean by two Spanish longline vessels during one year, with a rate of 0.047 turtles caught per 1,000

hooks, and 0.046 turtles per set. During the study, 1,162 tons of fish were caught, but only 25 sea turtles, 19 of which were entangled in the gear, and the others hooked, mainly by J hooks. Spain concluded that because of the very small number of turtles taken, not enough information was obtained with this pilot study to assess the effectiveness of circle hooks or particular baits for reducing sea turtle mortality in the longline fishery. Spain noted that it has another pilot study for the same purpose planned for the Indo-Pacific area.

Japan reported on its mitigation measures (Document BYC-5-INF B), including modification of gear and bait, fishing practice modification, and handling and rescue of sea turtles. Japan is taking a holistic approach to sea turtle conservation, including the conservation of breeding habitat and the education of fishers in Japan and coastal countries.

Dr. Allen introduced Document BYC-5-04, describing a cooperative sea turtle mitigation program for coastal longline fleets which has been organized by IATTC staff. This program is supported by the Turtle Voluntary Fund established by the Commission, with contributions from the Japan Overseas Fisheries Cooperative Foundation, the United States National Marine Fisheries Service, the U.S. Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Management Council, the World Wildlife Fund and the Ocean Conservancy. The preliminary results show that the use of circle hooks is effective in reducing turtle mortality in coastal longline fisheries.

Mexico proposed that the staff present the information on the IATTC mitigation program at the next meeting of the Inter-American Convention on the Conservation on Sea Turtles, and noted that Mexico carries out experiments in various fisheries, including that for swordfish.

Korea said it had carried out a pilot program using circle hooks on longline vessels fishing in the eastern Pacific this year, and would carry out another, and would provide the Commission with a report on the results of these programs next year.

The Working Group recalled the information on the status and distribution of sea turtles presented at the 4th meeting of the Working Group in January 2004. The importance of improving information from distant-water longline fisheries was noted. Estimates of longline mortality provided by Japan at the 4th meeting were based on fishermen's reports and involved some extrapolation. One observer report from a Chinese longline vessel was noted. Given the difficulty of using observers on distant-water longline trips, Japan is developing an automated observer system. Spain noted that the mortality of sea turtles in its swordfish fishery in the southeast Pacific was low, and said that it would provide data shortly.

The United States and Japan proposed preparing a draft resolution containing a number of specific measures designed to mitigate sea turtle bycatch and mortality in both purse-seine and longline fisheries. However, the draft was not completed, and the United States offered to present it directly to the IATTC meeting.

5. Seabirds

The United States presented Document BYC-5-INF A, which summarized the interactions of its longline fisheries with seabirds. Research on mitigation techniques has led to mandatory mitigation measures, and others are the subject of research projects.

Japan presented a report on seabirds (Document BYC-5-INF B), which focused on mitigation measures.

Dr. Allen presented Document BYC-5-05.a.i, which provided an assessment of the impact on seabirds of fisheries under the purview of the IATTC, and identified geographic areas where there could be interactions between longline fisheries and seabirds.

Spain noted that there was an observer program in its swordfish fishery in the southeast Pacific, and that the fishery had a relatively low seabird bycatch rate. He undertook to provide mortality data.

6. Other business

Venezuela expressed its concern over the high level of discards, particularly of juvenile tunas, associated with the fisheries for FADs, and noted that the Parties had previously recommended that this Working Group look into the issue, but that little had been done. Mexico stated that it shared Venezuela's concern over this matter. The United States noted that there was a workshop on bycatch planned for September/October of 2006, where this question would be addressed. Spain mentioned research from the Indian Ocean, including a FAD designed to eliminate the entanglement of turtles, and the use of sonar and echosounders to identify the species and size composition of fish schools before setting purse-seine nets.

Several delegations suggested that it might be useful to hold a meeting of the Working Group early in 2007 to share research information on this subject and consider what steps could be taken to mitigate juvenile tuna bycatch in the purse-seine fisheries.

Ecuador referred to earlier work done with a sorting grid, and proposed that one vessel should be allowed to experiment with this device during the purse-seine closure, to help assess its effectiveness in reducing catches of juvenile tunas. The Working Group agreed that this would be a useful approach.

7. Recommendations to the Commission

The Working Group recommended that:

1. The IATTC staff present a report on the coastal longline mitigation program at the next meeting of the Inter-American Convention on the Conservation on Sea Turtles.
2. A purse-seine vessel be allowed to carry out research trials, during the period of the purse-seine closure, of a sorting grid designed to allow small tunas to escape from a purse-seine net.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned on June 24, 2006.

Appendix 1.

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