



**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
ON THE CONSERVATION AND
MANAGEMENT OF MARINE TURTLES
AND THEIR HABITATS OF THE INDIAN
OCEAN AND SOUTH-EAST ASIA**

CMS/IOSEA/MOS9/Inf.9.3
19 June 2024

9TH MEETING OF THE SIGNATORY STATES
Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania, 24-27 June 2024
Agenda Item 9.3

**CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA (CITES)**

(Prepared by the Secretariat)

1. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) remains an important partner for CMS and all its instruments, including the IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU.

2019 Study on Legal and Illegal International Trade in Marine Turtles

2. CMS/IOSEA/MOS8/Doc.10.1 [Illegal Take and Trade of Marine Turtles](#) already reported on the publication of the CITES report CoP18 Inf.18 on [Status, scope and trends of the legal and illegal international trade in marine turtles, its conservation impacts, management options and mitigation priorities](#), which contains in situ assessments in eight countries from three geographical sub-regions: East African subregion (Madagascar and Mozambique), Inter-American subregion (Colombia, Nicaragua, and Panama), and South-east Asia/Coral Triangle subregion (Indonesia, Malaysia and Viet Nam).
3. In all countries assessed, illegal trade for domestic consumption was found to exceed the magnitude of international trade. Strong evidence for active international trade was found mainly in the South-east Asia region.
4. In April 2020, the CITES Secretariat issued [Notification No. 2020/035](#) conveying the findings of the CoP18/Inf.18 report to Parties and calling for submission of information on the status of implementation of [Decisions 18.211 to 18.214](#), including any planned implementation activities. The call was repeated in November 2021 in [Notification No. 2021/065](#).
5. For scientific matters on marine turtles, the CITES Secretariat reported to the 31st Meeting of the Animals Committee ([AC31 Doc. 24](#), [AC31 Doc. 24 Add.](#)), which included a preliminary review of the report by members of the Animals Committee who were co-leads of the agenda item. At AC31, an online working group was formed, which made recommendations and formulated drafted Decisions for CoP19 [[AC31 Com. 3 \(Rev. by Sec.\)](#)].
6. Overall implementation of the CoP18 Decisions on marine turtles was next reported to the 74th Meeting of the Standing Committee ([SC74 Doc. 66.1](#)) in 2022.

7. The Animals Committee also reported to SC74 in document [SC74 Doc. 66.2](#) and noted that CITES CoP18/Inf.18 identified key issues where CITES and other actors can help with the conservation of marine turtles. Accordingly, the Animals Committee proposed draft Decisions for CITES CoP19 as contained in the document.
8. At CITES CoP19 in November 2022, two documents on marine turtles were considered:
 - a) The Standing Committee's report and draft Decisions as contained in [Doc. 64.1 \(Rev. 1\)](#)
 - b) A document submitted by several Parties to CITES ([CoP19 Doc. 64.2](#)) also proposed amendments to the resolution on marine turtles.
9. As a result, [Resolution Conf. 19.5](#) on *Conservation of and trade in marine turtles* was adopted, as well as [Decision 18.217 \(Rev. CoP19\)](#) on *Marine turtles*.
10. Decision 18.217 renews the request to the Standing Committee to review the study contained in information document CoP18 Inf.18 and any additional information received by the Secretariat in response to Notifications No. 2020/035 and No. 2021/065 and the recommendations of the Animals Committee in document SC74 Doc. 66.2, since it was unable to complete this task before CoP19. In accordance with the Decision, an intersessional working group was formed to review the report and propose amendments to Res Conf. 19.5. (<https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/com/sc/76/E-2023-2025-SC-IWGs-R6.pdf>), which will report to the 78th Meeting of the Standing Committee (SC78).

2022 Study on Marine Turtle Bycatch Relating to Trade

11. The CITES Secretariat further commissioned a study on marine turtle bycatch, available as SC74 Inf. 27 [The Scale and Importance of Marine Turtle Bycatch Relating to Trade](#). The Executive Summary of this report has been reproduced here:

The Scale and Importance of Marine Turtle Bycatch Relating to Trade

Executive Summary

Sea turtles are globally threatened because of a number of natural and human threats and because of their life history characteristics. Turtle body parts, meat and eggs are of commercial value and illegal national and international trade has further increased exploitation levels. One of the major threats to sea turtles globally is that of interaction with fishing gears across all types and scales of fishery within their ranges, resulting in unintentional bycatch and associated mortality.

This study examined bycatch impacts on turtles globally, with a view to providing opportunities for practical and effective collaboration between CITES, FAO and RFBs on links between bycatch of sea turtles and their international trade.

Small scale fisheries have increasingly been noted as a major cause of turtle bycatch mortality, since these fisheries are generally difficult to regulate and remotely located. However, although turtle bycatch in these turtle fisheries is often retained or indeed actively targeted, it is mainly for subsistence or local use. There is likely a small level of national trade in a number of countries, however international trade is unlikely. It should be noted that there are already established trade routes between remote coastal villages and global markets, for example, shark fins and so these markets could potentially be

utilized for sea turtle products if demand increases and customs controls are not sufficient.

The main likely source of turtle products for international trade are Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fisheries. Since these fisheries are unregulated, the scale of trade of sea turtles in IUU fisheries is unknown. However, bycatch of sea turtles is likely high since there is no requirement for these fisheries to employ mitigation measures. IUU fisheries use transshipment to enable them to move illegal products through international boundaries.

It was found that RFBs on the whole have supported effective bycatch mitigation procedures such as gear modification and fisher awareness-building. As a result, RFBs reported low levels of bycatch mortality in their fisheries and it is unlikely that turtle products are entering international trade from this source. However, there are still gaps in observer coverage and compliance with bycatch measures that should be addressed in order to minimize bycatch mortality.

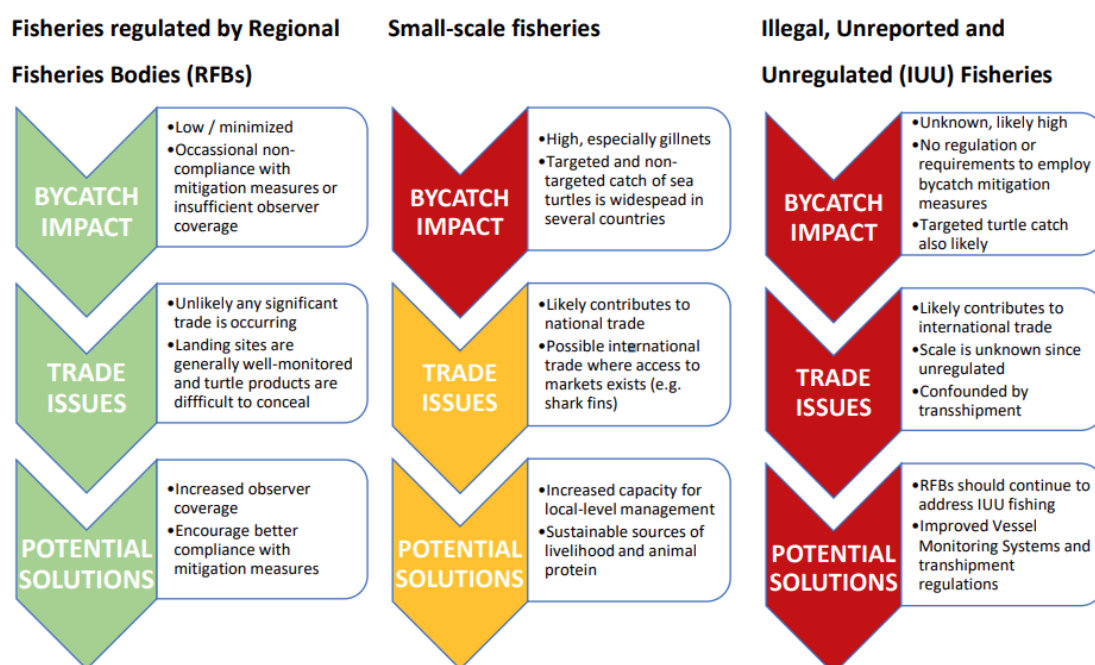


FIGURE 0-1 SUMMARY OF LIKELY BYCATCH IMPACTS, TRADE ISSUES AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS. TRAFFIC LIGHT THEME INDICATES CONSERVATION IMPORTANCE AND LEVEL OF INTEREST TO CITES

12. CITES CoP19 Doc.64.1 (Rev.1) by the Standing Committee and CITES Secretariat notes that the recommendations in this study can inform efforts to address marine turtle bycatch and illegal take and promote collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and Regional Fishery Bodies to contribute to the implementation of Decision 18.210, paragraph e), by the Secretariat and Decision 18.211, paragraph l), by the Parties.
13. No follow-up to this study is foreseen in the CoP19 Decisions.