

1.15 Incidental Mortality of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries

RECALLING Recommendations 19.61, 19.62 and 17.38 of the 19th and 17th Sessions of the IUCN General Assembly;

ALSO RECALLING the provisions of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), in Article 61, paragraph 4, relating to the obligations of States to consider the effects of fishing operations on “species associated with or dependent upon harvested species with a view to maintaining or restoring populations of such associated or dependent species above levels at which their reproduction may become seriously threatened;”

ALSO RECALLING that the UN Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 Relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (1995), in Article 5, requires coastal States and States fishing on the high seas to “minimize pollution, waste, discards, catch by lost or abandoned gear, catch of non-target species, both fish and non-fish species, and impacts on associated or dependent species, in particular endangered species, through measures including, to the extent practicable, the development and use of selective, environmentally safe and cost-effective fishing gear and techniques”;

AWARE that at least 13 species of seabirds, including albatrosses (family Diomedidae), petrels and shearwaters (family Procellariidae), are suffering significant incidental mortality by being hooked and drowned within longline fisheries;

CONCERNED that the seabird mortality caused by longlining is producing a significant decline in populations of several seabird species;

FURTHER CONCERNED that such declines may be of particular significance for certain species that have evolved a life strategy involving delayed maturity, high natural survival rates, and low reproductive rates, due to the long recovery periods required to make up the loss of a large number of individuals;

FURTHER CONCERNED that several seabird species affected by longlining are considered to be globally threatened with extinction, including the short-tailed albatross (*Diomedea albatrus*), the wandering albatross (*D. exulans*), and the Amsterdam albatross (*D. amsterdamensis*);

CONSCIOUS that the overall use of longlines is increasing significantly worldwide;

COMMENDING the efforts now underway by some longline fishers to reduce incidental mortality of seabirds, and encouraging fishers’ increased involvement in developing and implementing effective measures for reducing incidental mortality of seabirds;

COMMENDING the Commission on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) for adopting conservation measures that call for minimizing the incidental mortality of seabirds on longlines in Antarctic waters at its 14th Meeting, 24 October – 3 November 1995;

NOTING AND COMMENDING the Australian Government’s listing of longline incidental mortality as a Key Threatening Process and the Government’s intention to prepare a subsequent Threat Abatement Plan under the Commonwealth Endangered Species Act of 1992;

CONCERNED that current regulatory measures and voluntary practices are insufficient to reduce substantially the significant mortality of seabirds caused by longline fisheries;

NOTING that this is a problem of international scope, involving countries from every continent, and therefore demanding international attention and cooperation;

RECOGNIZING the urgent need to implement conservation measures that do not shift the incidental mortality problem to, or increase the incidental mortality of, other marine species;

RECOGNIZING FURTHER that an array of practical measures, such as the use of weighted lines, streamer lines, night setting and underwater setting, have been developed to reduce seabird mortality in longline fisheries without compromising fishing efficiency and without increasing the incidental mortality of other species;

NOTING that when strictly implemented these mitigation measures have helped reduce seabird mortality;

RECOGNIZING that fish stocks will contribute in important ways to the nutritional needs of future generations, and further recognizing that incidental mortality of seabirds diminishes the efficiency of longline fisheries;

AWARE that adequate conservation measures have not yet been widely implemented by longline fisheries;

EMPHASIZING that if conservation measures are not widely implemented, longline fisheries will continue to cause significant seabird mortality;

AWARE that delayed action could lead to the extinction of certain seabird populations or species;

The World Conservation Congress at its 1st Session in Montreal, Canada, 14–23 October 1996:

1. CALLS UPON IUCN, its members, all States and regional fisheries institutions to reduce incidental seabird mortality within longline fisheries to insignificant levels for affected species;
2. URGES IUCN, its members, all States and regional fisheries institutions to encourage longline fishing nations and fishery management institutions:
 - a) to continue and expand the use of measures to reduce incidental mortality of seabirds within longline fisheries as a matter of urgency;
 - b) to collaborate with one another in the development of other modified fishing techniques aimed at substantially reducing seabird mortality, in addition to those recommended by the CCAMLR Convention;
 - c) to expand observer programmes within longline fisheries to aid in the documentation of seabird mortality, as well as the education of fisheries personnel, and the development and implementation of conservation measures;
 - d) to educate longline fisheries personnel on currently available measures that reduce seabird mortality;
3. REQUESTS the IUCN Species Survival Commission and BirdLife International through their Seabird Specialist Group to collaborate with other qualified scientists, managers and industry to study the problem of incidental seabird mortality by longline fishing operations and to assist such groups in developing recommendations;
4. URGES IUCN, its members, all States and regional fisheries institutions to support education and conservation programmes to assist in the implementation of this Resolution;
5. REQUESTS that IUCN members report to the Director General prior to or at the next meeting of the World Conservation Congress on progress made within their Exclusive Economic Zones toward reducing incidental seabird mortality;
6. CALLS UPON the Director General to report on the progress made toward implementing this Resolution at the next World Conservation Congress and make further recommendations as appropriate and necessary to implement fully this Resolution.

Note. This Resolution was adopted by a show of hands. The delegation of the State member Japan made a statement against the Resolution, that it was inappropriate to attribute seabird depletion primarily to longline fishing, reported in more detail in the Proceedings volume.