

Reducing marine turtle bycatch: the important role of regulatory mechanisms in the global roll-out of Turtle Excluder Devices

CONCERNED that six of the seven marine turtle species are categorised as Vulnerable, Endangered, or Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (the remaining species is data deficient), and that fisheries bycatch is recognised as a major threat to all seven species;

ACKNOWLEDGING that a proven tool exists for reducing marine turtle bycatch in shrimp trawls, namely the Turtle Excluder Device (TED), which reduces mortality of turtles and other marine megafauna by 97% (Eayrs, 2007), whilst increasing productivity of trawling operations by reducing damage to nets, reducing the crushing of the catch, and reducing fuel costs (Gillet, 2008);

RECOGNISING that the United States of America passed legislation in 1989 prohibiting the importation of shrimp harvested in a manner that may adversely affect sea turtles but offering an exception to the ban for the use of TEDs;

CONSIDERING that the Interamerican Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles includes a provision for each member Country to take measures to reduce marine turtle bycatch, including the use of TEDs and corresponding training,

RECALLING previous IUCN Congress and General Assembly Resolutions and Recommendations, such as: Recommendation 5.140 *Reversing the crisis of the decline in turtle survival* (Jeju, 2012); Recommendation 17.47 *Sea Turtles* (San José, 1988), which recognised the importance of supporting the United States' promulgation of TED regulations; Recommendation 19.61 *By-Catch of Non-Target Species* (Buenos Aires, 1994), requiring bycatch monitoring and mitigation; and Resolution 1.16 *Fisheries Bycatch* (Montreal, 1996) which expressed alarm at the slow progress in effectively tackling fisheries bycatch;

NOTING that of the countries that export wild-caught tropical shrimp to the European Union (EU), at least six countries have been identified as not using TEDs in their trawls, which is leading to the bycatch of tens of thousands of turtles a year (CRPMEM, 2017); and

WELCOMING the European institutions' approval in 2019 of an amendment in the Fisheries Technical Measures that requires the mandatory use of TEDs for tropical shrimp trawlers fishing in European waters in the Western Atlantic and the Indian Ocean (European Parliament Committee on Fisheries Provisional Agreement PE636.188);

The IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020, at its session in Marseille, France:

1. REQUESTS the Director General to raise awareness of the importance of adoption and implementation of TEDs in tropical shrimp fisheries in all relevant national, regional and international fora, and with national governments, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and regional fisheries management bodies;
2. ENCOURAGES the European Commission and EU Member States that import tropical trawl-caught shrimp, to work with exporting countries to support the implementation of effective turtle bycatch mitigation measures, such as the use of TEDs, including the provision of technical capacity and/or financial support;
3. CALLS ON the EU to adopt import regulations requiring the introduction and adoption of TEDs by all countries exporting wild-caught tropical shrimp to the European market;
4. URGES the EU to ban imports of tropical trawl-caught shrimp from countries that are not adhering to their own national regulations currently requiring the mandatory use of TEDs on shrimp-trawl vessels, thus engaging in dialogue with third parties to ensure alignment with the EU Regulation 1005/2008 to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU Regulation); and
5. CALLS ON corporations which purchase tropical trawl-caught shrimp to consider voluntary measures to ensure they are not contributing to marine turtle bycatch, for example by purchasing only those shrimp products that are certified for export to the USA, until other exporting countries have fully rolled out TEDs on all their tropical shrimp trawls.