

17.47 SEA TURTLES

RECALLING that Kemp's Ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*) Sea Turtle was included in IUCN's Species Survival Commission's list of twelve most endangered species in 1986, and that their continued decline is largely due to the numbers drowned in shrimp trawl nets;

FURTHER RECALLING the effectiveness of the turtle excluder device (TED) in the prevention of sea turtle incidental catch by shrimp trawlers;

CONSIDERING that legal action has been taken to invalidate the United States Government's promulgation of the TED Regulations;

RECOGNIZING the importance of the IUCN General Assembly providing support to the United States Government for this valuable effort in what is a world-wide problem in sea turtle conservation;

CONCERNED that many sea turtle populations continue to decline as a direct result of human exploitation;

FURTHER CONCERNED that the level of international trade in sea turtle products, particularly of the shell and skin, remains very high, and that in many countries the level of national trade, particularly in meat and eggs, continues unabated;

RECOGNIZING that there are many other contributing factors to population declines, such as disturbance and destruction of the nesting and foraging habitats, ingestion of ocean debris and toxic pollutants, and incidental catch in different types of fishing gear;

CONSIDERING that scientists are currently unable to predict sustainable levels of exploitation due to insufficient knowledge of vital parameters of sea turtle biology;

NOTING that the immature stages of the life cycle are the most susceptible to natural predation, and that it is the breeding adults, rather than the young, that are most important for the survival of the population, and therefore most damaging to exploit;

RECALLING that most examples of sea turtle management have followed traditional fishery patterns and established minimum size limits to protect the juvenile age classes;

The General Assembly of IUCN, at its 17th Session in San Jose, Costa Rica, 1-10 February 1988:

1. URGES the United States Senate to oppose any delay in implementation of federal regulations requiring the use of TEDs needed to prevent the capture and drowning of the critically endangered Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle or any other species of sea turtle.
2. URGES member governments to enact and enforce national legislation to increase the conservation of sea turtles:
 - a. Institute maximum size limits to ensure that no turtles of breeding age are killed, and study the possibility of establishing quotas for the capture of juveniles where it is culturally appropriate to provide full protection for all age classes of sea turtles;
 - b. Restrict egg collection to minimize the negative impact on the population where it is culturally inappropriate to prevent the collection of sea turtle eggs altogether;
 - c. Protect the nesting beaches and foraging habitats to minimize disturbance, damage and other activities disruptive to sea turtle reproduction;
 - d. Where sea turtles are present, require use of TEDs by shrimp trawlers, and control all other fishing methods as needed to minimize incidental catch, particularly off the nesting beaches during the breeding season.
3. RECOMMENDS that IUCN members initiate research programmes in consultation with the Species Survival Commission to determine the long-term trends in the sea turtle populations wherever exploitation occurs, in particular, the impact of exploitation on the different age classes.
4. FURTHER RECOMMENDS that IUCN members initiate education programmes in sea turtle conservation to ensure the understanding and participation of the local people in the implementation of the above.

5. CALLS UPON member governments in accordance with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) to cease all commercial international trade in sea turtles, their parts and derivatives, especially tortoiseshell derived from the Hawksbill Sea Turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*).

