

**Statement of The Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles to  
The 26<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas  
Palma de Mallorca, Spain 18-25 November 2019**

The Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC) would like to convey to the distinguished delegations at the 26th Regular Meeting, our interest to continue the dialogue with the ICCAT Commission to strengthen our technical collaboration.

The objective of the IAC is the protection, conservation, and recovery of the populations of sea turtles and those habitats on which they depend, taking into consideration the environmental, socioeconomic and cultural characteristics of the 16 member countries in the Convention. The IAC relies upon the best available scientific information to provide advice to its member countries, and relevant partners, to further international collaboration that will result in effective sea turtle conservation measures in the Western Hemisphere.

The environmental impact of activities such as fishing and exploitation of marine resources and marine turtles in the region is a priority in the agenda of the IAC Scientific Committee. The critically endangered East Pacific Leatherback turtle, the North West Atlantic Leatherback turtle and the threatened Loggerhead turtle have prompted the IAC to create permanent working groups to address threats to their populations and to provide scientific basis for their effective recoveries.

The IAC recognizes that ICCAT is an important partner in improving sea turtle conservation in the Atlantic. Furthermore, the IAC welcomes the 2012, 2013 recommendation by the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) that ICCAT collaborate with the IAC in the areas of sea turtle by-catch assessment and mitigation by means of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). IAC acknowledges the progress made by SCRS at the July 2017 meeting of its Sub-committee on Ecosystems with regards to addressing sea turtle conservation in ICCAT fisheries, as well as their 2018 meeting in the evaluation of the progress of the scientific collaboration among ICCAT CPCs scientists in regards to the assessment of sea turtle bycatch in pelagic longline operating in the Atlantic Ocean.

Additionally, the IAC 9<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties in 2019 adopted Resolution CIT-COP9-2019-R2 on the Conservation of Northwest Atlantic Leatherbacks, that instructs the IAC Secretariat *Pro Tempore* to work with its Parties towards the establishment of an MoU with ICCAT to further the collaboration between both organizations, which as highlighted above will facilitate the collaboration of the IAC Scientific Committee to support the important work that is being carried out by the ICCAT SCRS.

With that goal in mind the IAC Parties would like to submit preliminary text for an MoU to ICCAT Secretariat and Parties during the intersessional period, to be considered at the next Commission meeting in 2020. The MoU will outline our interest in supporting the scientific work of the SCRS and the Commission to mitigate sea turtle by-catch consistent with ICCAT Recommendation 10-09.

IAC scientists have over 30 years of experience working with sea turtle matters, such as fisheries interactions impacts and by-catch mitigation, genetic studies, and population assessment. The IAC Parties would like to reiterate its offer to collaborate with ICCAT regarding its information and knowledge on sea turtles in general and in particular in the Atlantic Ocean area.