

## ASSESSMENT AND AVOIDANCE OF INCIDENTAL MORTALITY OF ANTARCTIC MARINE LIVING RESOURCES

17. The Commission, in considering this item, had reports from Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the United States, describing steps that had been taken in response to the agreements set forth in paragraphs 22–25 of the Report of the Third Meeting of the Commission. The Commission also had available the preliminary report of the Proceedings of the Workshop on the Fate and Impact of Marine Debris, held in Honolulu, Hawaii on 27–29 November 1984.

18. During consideration of this item, a number of members in addition to those noted in the previous paragraph reported on steps that they have taken to respond to paragraphs 22–25 in the third meeting report.

19. Information provided by members indicates that there is no evidence that significant quantities of fishing gear, binding material, or other potentially hazardous debris have been or are being lost or discarded in the Convention Area. There is evidence, however, that significant quantities of potentially hazardous debris are present in the North Pacific and in other marine areas including areas adjacent to the Convention Area. There is also evidence that such debris can pose a hazard to navigation and that in some areas significant numbers of fish, mammals, turtles and other marine organisms are being killed or injured due to ingestion of or entanglement in marine debris as well as being caught and killed incidentally during certain fishing operations.

### Marine Debris

20. To ensure in so far as possible that man-made debris does not become a hazard to navigation or interfere with the conservation of marine living resources in the Convention Area, it was agreed that members would continue to study and, as may be necessary and appropriate, initiate or continue steps to:

- (a) survey their nationals working at Antarctic coastal stations and on vessels operating in the Convention Area to determine the nature and location of any observations of or encounters with lost or discarded fishing gear, binding materials, or other potentially hazardous man-made debris;

- (b) periodically survey beaches, and seal and penguin rookeries in the vicinity of their coastal stations and such other areas as may be feasible to determine whether any potentially hazardous debris is present or accumulating there and, if so, the types, quantities, and as possible, sources of the debris;
- (c) report any incidents of man-made debris fouling ship propellers, rudders or water intake valves and any sightings of potentially hazardous man-made debris including the species and numbers of any animals found entangled therein; and
- (d) investigate the possible utility and feasibility of marking nets, floats and other potentially hazardous items deployed in the Convention Area and of requiring that vessels engaged in fishing and related activities in the Convention Area maintain an inventory of the types and quantities of netting brought into the Convention Area and a record of the date, place, types and quantities of any gear lost there.

#### Incidental Catch

21. To assure in so far as possible that the incidental catch of birds, mammals and other non-target species during fishing operations does not interfere with the conservation of Antarctic marine living resources, the members agreed that steps should be taken, as necessary and appropriate, to ensure that their vessels engaged in fishing operations record and report the species and numbers of birds, marine mammals and other non-target species caught during fishing operations.

22. Uncertainties were recognised concerning the possibility that birds, marine mammals, and some other non-target species might be more vulnerable to incidental capture in gill nets than in other types of fishing gear. There are no substantial gill net operations at present in the Convention Area, so that at this stage, prohibiting the use of gill nets as a preventative measure could unnecessarily interfere with the rational use of resources, one of the objectives of the Convention. It was agreed that this matter should be kept under continuing review and that in any gill net operations in the Convention Area advantage should be taken to collect data needed to assess the possible impacts on non-target as well as target species.

#### Information and Education

23. It was agreed that members would continue to take steps, as necessary and appropriate, to ensure that their nationals working in the Convention Area are aware of international and national

laws prohibiting or restricting the disposal of netting and other potentially hazardous materials at sea and that measures taken by members to assess, avoid and mitigate accidental and incidental mortality of Antarctic marine living resources will be reported to the Executive Secretary for distribution to the members.

#### Future Work

24. It was agreed that this item should be kept under continuing review and be included on the agenda for the next annual meeting of the Commission.