

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

37. The Commission, in considering this item, had reports from Australia, Japan and the United Kingdom describing steps that had been taken in response to paragraphs 20–23 of the Report of the Fourth Meeting of the Commission. The Commission also had a paper describing research being conducted by the United States to assess and determine how best to address problems being caused by persistent debris in the marine environment, and a paper from the United States proposing additional steps to be taken by the Commission to try to ensure that accidental and incidental mortality of marine living resources do not become a problem in the Convention Area.

38. During consideration of this item, a number of Members in addition to those noted in the previous paragraph reported on steps that have been taken in response to paragraphs 20–23 of the Fourth Meeting report.

39. Although information provided by Members indicates that incidental and accidental mortality of living marine resources do not appear to be an immediate problem in the Convention Area, the Commission recognised that both incidental catch during fishing operations and accidental entanglement in or ingestion of marine debris by fish, birds, marine mammals and other living resources could interfere with efforts to achieve the objectives of the Convention.

### Marine Debris

40. To ensure, in so far as possible, that at-sea discarding or loss of nets, net fragments, strapping bands, and other potentially hazardous debris does not contravene efforts to achieve the objectives set forth in Article II of the Convention, it was agreed that:

- (a) Members would consider and take such steps as may be appropriate and possible to ratify and implement Optional Annex V of the 1978 Protocol to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, and the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter, if they have not already done so with respect to either or both; and
- (b) the Executive Secretary would prepare and, in advance of the 1987 meeting of the Commission, circulate for consideration at that meeting:

- (i) a draft of an information bulletin or brochure that could be used to advise fishermen, researchers, and others working in the Convention Area of the sources, fates and effects of potentially hazardous marine debris; and
  - (ii) a draft of a placard, that could be displayed in appropriate places aboard ships operating in the Convention Area, describing 'do's and don'ts' with respect to handling, storing and discarding different types of refuse;
- (c) if they have not already done so, Members also would consider and take such steps as may be necessary and possible to ensure that:
- (i) the International Radio Call Sign (IRCS) or other appropriate identification sign is prominently displayed on a weather deck and on both the port and starboard side of all their flag vessels engaged in fishing or related activities in the Convention Area so that the identification signs can be easily read from the air and from other vessels;
  - (ii) all their flag vessels engaged in fishing and associated activities in the Convention Area maintain a record of and report the dates, places, types, and quantities of any fishing gear lost in the Area;
  - (iii) when feasible, samples of any lost or discarded nets, net fragments, strapping bands, or other potentially hazardous marine debris found incidentally by their nationals in the Convention Area be collected and provided to the Secretariat for archiving along with information on when, where, how and how much debris was found, the condition of the debris when found, the species, number and condition of any fish, birds, marine mammals, or other organisms entangled in the debris when found, and what was done with any parts of the debris not sent to the Secretariat for archiving; and
  - (iv) when feasible, potentially hazardous debris found by their nationals in the Convention Area be recovered and returned to port or otherwise disposed of in a manner that will ensure it poses no further risk to ships or living marine resources.

41. It also was agreed that Members would continue to study and, as may be necessary and appropriate, initiate or continue steps to:

- (a) request that their nationals working at Antarctic coastal stations or on research or supply vessels operating in the Convention Area report any observations of lost or discarded fishing gear, binding materials or other man-made debris, with information on the species and numbers of animals found entangled therein, and any incidents of man-made debris fouling propellers, rudders, or water in-take valves of vessels operating in the Convention Area;
- (b) periodically survey beaches, and seal and penguin colonies in the vicinity of their coastal stations and other areas as may be feasible, to determine the types, quantities, and, as possible, sources of any fishing gear or other debris accumulating there; and
- (c) determine practical and effective means for marking fishing nets or parts thereof and the possible costs and benefits of requiring that nets or net materials be marked and 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.

#### Incidental Catch

42. To assess and monitor incidental mortality of birds and marine mammals in fishing operations, it was agreed that Members would take such steps as necessary to ensure that operators of vessels engaged in fishing and related operations in the Convention Area maintain a record and report the number, species, and where appropriate the age or size, sex and reproductive status, of any birds and marine mammals taken incidentally during fishing operations. It was further agreed that Members would archive these data and that summaries of the data, by statistical areas, would be reported to the Executive Secretary each year for distribution to the Members.

43. In this regard, uncertainties were recognised concerning the possibility that sea birds and marine mammals may be more vulnerable to incidental capture in gill nets than in other types of fishing gear. It also was noted that gill nets are not being used in the Convention Area at the present time. It was agreed that in any gillnet operations that may be initiated, advantage should be taken of the opportunity to collect information which would be required by the Scientific Committee to assess possible impacts on non-target species such as marine mammals and seabirds, as well as target species.

## Future Work

44. It was agreed that this item should be included on the agenda of the next annual meeting of the Commission and that, prior to that meeting, Members would advise the Executive Secretary of steps that have been or are being taken to implement the measures agreed in paragraphs 40–43.