



## CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES

UNEP/CMS/Resolution 15.4

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### IMPORTANT MARINE TURTLE AREAS

Adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting (Campo Grande, March 2026)

*Recalling* Resolutions 12.13 *Important Marine Mammal Areas* and 14.7 *Important Shark and Ray Areas*, which recognize the utility of expert-driven spatial classification tools to identify critical habitats essential to the conservation of migratory marine species,

*Recognizing* that all seven globally recognized species of marine turtles are included on CMS Appendices I and II and CITES Appendix I, and that five of these are globally listed as Vulnerable, Endangered or Critically Endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species, with the remaining two categorized as Least Concern and Data Deficient,

*Further recognizing* the existence of regional subpopulations, some of which are genetically distinct or highly localized, thereby necessitating spatially sensitive conservation planning that can be effectively supported by the designation of Important Marine Turtle Areas (IMTAs), also taking into account IUCN Red List assessments at population or sub-population scale,

*Alarmed* by the persistent, widespread and cumulative threats to marine turtles throughout their range, including habitat degradation, fisheries bycatch, vessel strikes, unsustainable use, illegal take and trade, pollution, and the effects of climate change, which are compounded by insufficient protection of key habitats, and conscious that these threats affect critical habitats for nesting, foraging, development and migratory corridors across ocean basins,

*Concerned* about the limited availability of standardized, spatially explicit data on key habitats in many parts of the world, especially in developing countries and areas beyond national jurisdiction,

*Recalling* CITES Resolution Conf.19.5 *Conservation of and Trade in Marine Turtles*, which encourages Parties to undertake, as appropriate, research that can support the development of protection and conservation measures for marine turtle foraging, nesting and migratory areas,

*Also recalling* Ramsar Resolution XIII.24 *The enhanced conservation of coastal marine turtle habitats and the designation of key areas as Ramsar sites*,

*Recalling* Annex II *Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtle Habitats* of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC), which calls on Parties to consider and adopt, as necessary and appropriate, measures to protect and conserve sea turtle habitats, and *aware* that areas important for Northwest Atlantic Leatherback Turtles have already been identified within the framework of the IAC,

*Noting* the guidance developed under the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia (IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU) to support the identification of critical habitat across all life stages of marine turtles, and which defines such habitats as recognizable areas essential for the maintenance and recovery of marine turtle populations, as well as the relevance of the Network of Sites of Importance for Marine Turtles in the Indian Ocean–South-East Asia Region,

*Welcoming* the development of criteria for the identification of IMTAs by the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) Marine Turtle Specialist Group (MTSG), as a means to highlight areas of particular biological or cultural significance for marine turtles globally and within defined Regional Management Units,

*Affirming* that IMTAs are an advisory, expert-based classification that can provide important inputs to marine spatial planning, conservation and management, applicable globally, to coastal waters and shorelines, within and beyond areas under national jurisdiction, and consisting of discrete portions of habitat important to marine turtle species that have the potential to be delineated and managed for conservation and protection, including of connectivity,

*Further recognizing* the support of civil society and others in the implementation of COP mandates related to marine turtles, and *welcoming* in this case specifically the *Blue Corridors for Turtles* partnership, which aims to facilitate designation of IMTAs across all ocean regions,

*Further recognizing* the potential of IMTAs to support the implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements and of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, in particular Targets 1, 2 and 3, and their relevance to area-based management of fisheries and other activities within and beyond national jurisdiction, marine connectivity and ecological networks,

*Noting* that IMTAs are intended to complement and contribute to existing spatial conservation approaches such as the Network of Sites of Importance for Marine Turtles in the Indian Ocean–South-East Asia Region established under the IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU, Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs), Important Shark and Ray Areas (ISRAs), Wetlands of International Importance listed by the Ramsar Convention, World Heritage Sites, Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs), Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs), and Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas (PSSAs),

*Welcoming* the adoption of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement), which provides a framework for the designation and management of high seas marine protected areas and other area-based management tools,

*Further recognizing* the potential of IMTAs to support the implementation of part IV of the BBNJ Agreement, with the objective to ensure that relevant activities in areas beyond national jurisdiction are assessed and conducted to prevent, mitigate and manage significant adverse impacts for the purpose of protecting and preserving the marine environment,

*Further recognizing* the potential of IMTAs to inform nature-based solutions and/or ecosystem-based approaches in the context of the global effort to address the effect of climate change through mitigation and adaptation actions,

*The Conference of the Parties to the  
Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals*

1. *Acknowledges* the criteria and identification process for Important Marine Turtle Areas (IMTAs) developed by the IUCN SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group, and welcomes the availability of the IMTA Guidance Document on the MTSG website;
2. *Requests* Parties and *invites* Range States, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and relevant partners to share data and support the identification and validation of IMTAs, especially in areas hosting nesting, foraging, migratory or culturally important habitats for marine turtles, ensuring equitable data sharing and capacity-building among developed and developing countries;
3. *Recommends* that such identification processes engage competent national authorities, research institutions, indigenous peoples and local communities, relevant regional and international organizations, and other relevant stakeholders in a transparent and inclusive manner from an early stage, making use of participatory approaches;
4. *Encourages* Parties to make use of identified IMTAs in national biodiversity planning and marine spatial planning processes, to inform fisheries management and when considering the designation of marine protected areas or other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs);
5. *Further encourages* Parties, Range States and relevant international organizations to make use of identified IMTAs as a scientific basis for informing marine spatial planning, as well as the designation or establishment of marine protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, both in coastal and marine national areas and in areas beyond national jurisdiction, in support of ongoing global efforts, including in the development of area based management tool proposals under the BBNJ Agreement; and
6. *Invites* the Convention on Biological Diversity, the International Maritime Organization, Regional Fisheries Bodies and Management Organizations, Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature to consider IMTAs as useful contributions for the determination of EBSAs, PSSAs and KBAs.