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Report of the Xth Meeting of Latin American Sea Turtle Specialists (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, March 16-17, 2003)

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During March 16th and 17th the X Reunión de Especialistas Latinoamericanos en Tortugas Marinas (RETOMALA) took place in the Legend Hotel, in the beautiful city of Kuala Lumpur as part of the 23rd Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation. It was the first time that the RETOMALA was held outside of the Americas, and despite the substantial effort needed for all the participants to travel to Asia, there was significant participation, with 40 delegates taking part.

With the Inter American Convention for the Conservation and Protection of Sea Turtles (IAC) being such an important instrument for the future of research and conservation of sea turtles in Latin-American countries, the X RETOMALA had as its main objective to debate and reinforce its value and strategise its implementation. On day one, Samantha Namnum was in charge of the opening comments, during which she gave a presentation about the current status of the IAC. After that, Clara Padilla talked about the IAC Secretary and the results of the first conference of the parties. The morning was closed with Melania Yañez and her experiences regarding the successful process of IAC ratification in Ecuador. In the afternoon, the members of the Organization Committee discussed the text of the IAC (Annexes) and the mechanisms of participation. The day reached its end with a speech of Neca Marcovaldi about the “Brazilian Plan for Reduction of Incidental Sea Turtle Capture in Fisheries”.

During the second day, two working groups were created, one consisting of participants from countries that have not yet signed or ratified the IAC, and the other with the countries that are IAC members. The first group (Argentina, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic and Uruguay) analyzed the current situation of each country and established a strategy to ensure signing and/or ratification of the IAC. The second group (Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, México, Puerto Rico and Venezuela) established the next steps to follow in order to help the countries of the first group. We would like to highlight the participation of Jack Frazier and his invaluable contributions towards the IAC throughout the meeting. The meeting finalized with a presentation by Rod Mast about the funding opportunities for sea turtle projects in Latin America, and another from Perran Ross about the IUCN Marine Turtle Specialist Group. The final report of the X RETOMALA will be available at the RETOMALA's website <<http://members.seaturtle.org/retomala/>> along with other pertinent information.

Costa Rica's CIT-006 “Resolución sobre la conservación de la tortuga baula (*Dermochelys coriacea*)

en el Pacífico Oriental” was supported by the group, and it was also decided that the next RETOMALA will be held together with the 24th Annual Sea Turtle Symposium in Costa Rica 2004. It will be organized by Rolando Castro (Costa Rica), Laura Sarti (México), Félix Moncada (Cuba), Carlos M. Orrego (Colombia) and Claudia Ceballos (Colombia).

Acknowledgements: We would like to give very special thanks to the President of the 23rd Symposium, Nicolas J. Pilcher for all the help he provided during the organization of the X RETOMALA, and to Carmen Leong Pilcher for the design of the Meeting’s logo. Also to the coordinators of the travel grants, Ana R. Barragan and Jeff Seminoff, for all their good will and dedication that have given to ensure wide participation. We are also grateful to Michael Coyne of seaturtle.org for his help in establishing the RETOMALA website.