



Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels

Second Meeting of Advisory Committee

Brasilia, Brazil, 5 – 8 June 2006

**Report on the 6th meeting of the CCSBT ERS Working
Group Meeting**

Kao-hsiung ,Taiwan 20—23 February 2006

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The 6th meeting of the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) Ecologically Related Species Working Group (ERSWG) was held in Kao-hsiung ,Taiwan 20—23 February 2006.

The meeting was attended by all parties (Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Korea & the Fishing Entity of Taiwan (Taiwan)). The Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) was represented by Mr Warren Papworth from the Agreement Secretariat, who attended in an observer capacity. Cooperating non-members, the Philippines and Indonesia, did not attend. Dr Shui Kai (Eric) Cheng from Taiwan's Fisheries Agency was elected by the parties to chair the meeting.

The ERSWG was established by the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) to provide information and advice on research which:

- determines the nature and extent of ecologically related species (ERS) interactions in SBT fisheries;
- determines the effects of southern bluefin tuna (SBT) and other fisheries on ERS;
- assesses current or potential measures to reduce ERS captures; and
- assesses predator and prey species which may affect the condition of the SBT stock.

The working group has failed however, to put forward recommendations that would make progress in reducing the high levels of seabird bycatch in the fishing fleets of some members. Given that no recommendations had been put forward by the group since it was formed over a decade ago, the 12th Annual meeting of the Commission, held in October 2005, discussed the need for the ERSWG to continue. The Commission noted the ERSWG terms of reference specifically required the group to provide management related advice on ERS matters. The Commission also noted the increasing awareness of the need for data on bycatch species to understand important issues related to their effects on SBT management, but that there has been no progress on agreeing to the provision of bycatch data as part of the regular data submission requirements. The Commission noted that if advice was not forthcoming from the ERSWG, then consideration would be given to disbanding the working group.

Given the clear advice from the Commission that the group needed to perform, the Chair attempted to focus the group on providing appropriate advice on ERS matters. There were 19 working papers, nine of which related to impact of the SBT fishery on seabirds; 12 information papers, seven of which were related to seabird issues; and five national reports submitted for consideration at ERSWG 6. Rather than formally present each paper, the Chair requested delegations to focus on the provision of advice and draw on papers only to facilitate this.

The key issues discussed at the meeting were: reducing the incidental bycatch of seabirds; the conservation and sustainable utilization of sharks; data collection and

provision for ERS; and the ERSWG Operational Framework, specifically the submission dates for reports and draft resolutions/recommendations.

Three draft recommendations were put forward jointly by Australia and New Zealand concerning seabird bycatch, conservation of sharks and data collection. None of the recommendations were adopted by the working group. A key sticking point in relation to the seabird recommendation was the proposal to set a target of reducing seabird bycatch mortality to less than 0.05 birds/1000 hooks in all fishing areas within five years, with Australia and New Zealand insisting that it was necessary to establish a bycatch reduction target which could be used to measure progress. Japan was unable to accept inclusion of a target at this stage, maintaining it was necessary to seek policy clearance on this matter. Korea and Taiwan supported the Japanese position.

There was perhaps more agreement on data collection and provision for ERS than on the other two recommendations, with discussion advancing the draft paper through to a stage where it could be discussed by members at a national level.

The Working Group agreed to reconvene in a year's time in order to finalise the recommendations. It appears unlikely that this will be achieved unless there is a substantial change of policy by some Parties. An issue that will also need to be resolved is whether the CCSBT can adopt binding resolutions on ecologically related species. At the meeting Japan stated that they did not believe that this was the case, and the matter will need to be resolved by the extended Commission when it next meets.