

environmentalists, and government officials, as well as non-Indian experts for mechanized trawlers in Orissa to use TEDs;

It is hereby resolved that:

The members of the 20th Annual Sea Turtle Symposium, Orlando, Florida

Entreat the Forest Department, Fisheries Department and Coast Guard to work together in Orissa to strictly enforce the ban on mechanised fishing within the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary and the 5 km nearshore fishing ban, both of which would drastically reduce sea turtle mortalities with immediate effect; and

Request the Fisheries Department of Orissa to evolve a plan to ensure the use of TEDs by

mechanised trawlers in Orissa coastal waters by no later than 2002; and

Request the Fisheries Department of Orissa to safeguard the livelihood of the traditional country fishermen by enforcing the provisions of the Orissa Marine Fisheries Regulation Act, 1982 and rules framed thereunder which bans off shore mechanized fishing for a distance of 5 kms from the coast.

Strongly recommend that effective long term conservation strategies should involve all stakeholders including the Forest and Fisheries Department of the Government of Orissa, Non Governmental Organizations, Research Institutions and most importantly, the traditional coastal fishing communities, whose support and involvement would be crucial to the survival of the olive ridley and its marine habitat in Orissa.

Resolution on the urgent need to review coastal development plans in order to conserve olive ridley sea turtles as well as critical nesting habitat for the turtles and other endangered species on the Orissa coast, India– March 2000

**20th Annual Sea Turtle Symposium
March 1-4, 2000, Orlando, Florida, USA**

**Symposium Resolution 2000-5
Passed by the Membership on March 3, 2000**

Considering that the proposed construction of a large all weather, deep water, modern bulk terminal port at Dhamra threatens the Gahirmatha olive ridley sea turtle rookery, the largest in the world, with over 200,000 turtles nesting in 1999; and

Considering that the port will have a 550 m berth length and will occupy a total of 900 acres, and is merely 10 km north of the nesting beach at Gahirmatha; and

Considering that the 62.5 km rail corridor to Bhadrak - 200 metres wide, and including a railway, a highway and land development - will

occupy 3000 acres, and is adjacent to the Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary; and

Considering that this port will cater to bulk cargo such as coking coal and iron ore and the ultimate capacity will be 25,000 tonnes per annum; and

Considering that the project proposal has only been cleared by the Ministry of Surface Transport and NOT by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, due to a loophole in the Coastal Regulation Zone rules; and

Considering that the proposed off-shore crude oil terminal at Kantiagoda threatens the mass nesting

ground at Rushikulya, which is the second largest in Orissa with 60,000 turtles nesting in 1996; and

Considering that the terminal has a capacity of 18 million metric ton per annum for giant oil tankers from the Gulf and other oil producing countries; and

Considering that the pipelines will be connected to Kantiagoda village, which is virtually on top of the Rushikulya turtle mass nesting site; and

Considering that the Environmental Impact Assessment Report [interim], which was prepared by the National Institute of Oceanography of Goa, has not adequately addressed the presence of turtles in the area and has also ignored the fact that the seacoast off Rushikulya is a proposed marine sanctuary which is awaiting government notification; and

Considering that the report actually states that "sensitive and fragile ecosystems...are absent in the project area", and briefly mentions the potential for crude oil spills: "in very rare events of tanker accidents or subsea pipeline rupture, large spill may occur"; and

Considering that the oil spill from a similar Single Buoy Mooring in Gujarat in 1999 has

resulted in substantial damage to marine life and to marine ecosystems in the area: and

Considering that the mass nesting beaches at Rushikulya, where more than 60,000 turtles nested in 1996, enjoys no legal protection so far;

It is hereby resolved that:

The Members of the 20th Annual Sea Turtle, Orlando, Florida

Request the Government of India to review the Dhamra port project, subject the proposal to objective Environmental Impact Assessment and have the proposal passed through the proper channels of the Ministry of Environment and Forests; and

Request that since other sites for the construction of the port have been identified, these sites are objectively considered and evaluated as alternatives; and

Request the Government of India to reassess the Crude Oil Terminal at Rushikulya which threatens one of the most important nesting beaches of olive ridleys in Orissa.

Offshore studies on olive ridley sea turtles in Gahirmatha, Orissa.

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Introduction

The largest known population of the Olive ridley sea turtles (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) occurs along the Orissa coast (Bustard, 1976, Limpus, 1995). Enormous arribadas have been observed over the past decades and as many as 600,000 turtles have

nested in the course of two weeks (Dash and Kar, 1990). The *L. olivacea* population that occurs along the Bay of Bengal has suffered severely over the past decades. Apart from the threats faced while nesting, marine turtles are particularly vulnerable when they aggregate offshore (Richard & Hughes, 1972; Pers. Obs.).