



40th International Sea Turtle Symposium

Workshop Proposal for ISTS40

Title of Proposed Workshop:

New partnerships towards an efficient conservation of sea turtles along the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts of Africa

Name of Main Organiser: Alexandre Girard

Email Address: agirard6@gmail.com

Suggested Duration of Workshop: Full Day (8 hours)

Description and Justification of the Workshop:

This workshop is organized by RASTOMA, the Network of Sea Turtle Conservation Actors in Central Africa in partnership with WATSCON, the West African Sea Turtle Conservation Network and NAST-Net, the North African Sea Turtle Network. The workshop's main objectives are to design a new action plan and create innovative and strategic new alliances to succeed in preserving endangered sea turtles and their natural habitats along the Atlantic coast of Africa (including Cape Verde islands) and North Africa (South Mediterranean)..

Current conservation approaches are showing their limits in these regions. Numerous environmental conventions and treaties have been signed by African states and new protected areas are flourishing on paper, but conservation and resource management are undermined by corruption, poor governance, and lack of law enforcement.

The Atlantic coast of Africa hosts five species of sea turtles and the Mediterranean hosts three species all of them being classified on the IUCN Red List (from Vulnerable to Critically Endangered). Nesting of sea turtles occurs in most sandy beaches along the coast, and rocky and coral reefs hold important adult and juvenile feeding areas.

At the end of the 1990's, under the auspices of the Convention of Migratory Species (CMS-Bonn), 24 countries of Africa signed in Abidjan the Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation Measures for Marine Turtles of the Atlantic Coast of Africa and promised commitment towards sea turtle conservation in their

national waters. But twenty years later, the situation is more alarming than ever for sea turtles in this region, where they are poorly conserved, are highly exposed to high rates of by-catch by coastal fisheries, and unregulated harvesting of both nesting female and eggs by communities. Sea turtle natural habitats are facing huge pressure from plastic and oil contamination and intense coastal development.

This session aims at discussing the achievements and short-comings of the MoU concerning Conservation Measures for Marine Turtles and ignite action for change through effective partnerships.

Civil society is the current key actor of the field of sea turtle conservation in Central, West and North Africa. During the last ten years, civil society organizations (CSOs) have organized themselves into networks to implement regional coherence to their local actions and strengthen their positive impact on these migratory species whose ranges go beyond human national borders. This session will be led by three networks that aim at improving the conservation of sea turtles along the Atlantic coast of Africa: RASTOMA, the Network of Sea Turtle Conservation Actors in Central Africa, and WASTCON, the West African Sea Turtle Conservation Network and NASTNet, the North African Sea Turtle Network.

During this session the CSOs will exchange experiences on successful conservation approaches, will share experiences about funding strategies and income generating activities to increase sustainability and community acceptance and commitment in sea turtle projects, and will open the debate with other stakeholders and the young generations to find out new strategies in tackling the tremendous challenges of coastal biodiversity and habitat preservation in Atlantic and north Africa.

Expected Outcomes of the Workshop:

RASTOMA-WASTCON-NAST-Net workshop will be open to community leaders, researchers, funders, private sectors and government representatives to build bridges and start delineating a regional conservation strategy for Atlantic Africa. This meeting will set the grounds for a new action plan for the Conservation of Marine Turtles of the Atlantic Coast and the north of Africa, that is more inclusive and aims at bringing coastal communities, CSOs and private sectors together with the states who signed the MoU, to gain an efficient and ambitious strategy for the long-term conservation of sea turtles and their coastal habitats along West and north Africa.

The session will involve roundtables and will result, as an expected outcome, in a draft of a new action plan to dynamize the existing Memorandum. This new action plan will benefit from the synergy between a large diversity of actors and innovative approaches. CSOs, private sectors, government and institutions will establish links and participate in exchanges. The sub regional networks will implement coherence in their strategy at the regional scale.

In addition, participants will share experiences and success stories about the way they secure funding and reach sustainability for their sea turtle projects income

generating activities and microcredit approaches how to involve private actors, fiduciary funds, etc.

Design and format of the workshop

Session will start with short 5–10-minute presentations:

- Success stories and innovative approaches of sea turtle actors in West and Central Africa
- Presentation of the three networks RASTOMA (Central Africa) , WATSCON (West Africa) and NASTNet (North Africa)
- Presentation of the MoU Concerning Conservation Measures for Marine Turtles of the Atlantic Coast of Africa
- Innovative approaches to increase project sustainability and community commitment in sea turtle projects: income generating activities, microcredit, fiduciary funds, partnership with private operators, etc.

Young professional talks:

Innovative approaches for sea turtle conservation in Africa

Gender talks:

Building resource management and conservation education of women networks in Africa

Roundtables:

- Debate with a large diversity of stakeholders and coastline users to draft an inclusive conservation strategy (How to build multisector partnerships (private sector, institutions and governments will be invited to take part) (some stakeholders such as community leaders, private operators will be invited to the debate)
- Roundtable to draft a new plan to put into action the MoU concerning Conservation Measures for Marine Turtles of the Atlantic and North Coasts of Africa. - Working group: implementing coherence and build synergies between RASTOMA and WATSCON and NASTNet networks.