

Fishermen trained to use Turtle Exclusion Device

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The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Pakistan, under its Balochistan Partnership for Sustainable Development Programme organised one-day training course for fishermen for using the Turtle Exclusion Device (TED).

The training was conducted by Dr Nicloas Pilcher at the Marine Fisheries Department, Government of Pakistan, where around 40 fishermen, including representatives of the other organisations participated in the training.

Dr Pilcher said that this device was invented by a fisherman around 30 years ago, but still its usage had not become commonplace. The primary purpose of TED is to reduce the mortality of sea turtles in fishing nets, while safeguarding the livelihood of the local fishermen.

The fishermen would benefit from installation of a TED in the trawl net due to higher catch values and reduction of large by-catch which damages the shrimp, shortens sorting times, lowers fuel costs due to reduced net drag as the cord end would fill more slowly, and yield higher catches of

shrimps, stated Dr Pilcher.

He said that setting up of hatcheries for turtles was a positive step, but not the best solution. He suggested that the natural conservation of the turtles' eggs was the best option, which could be implemented with awareness of the masses.

Dr Moazzam, Director-General, Marine Fisheries Department, Government of Pakistan, mentioned that the United States used to be our largest buyer for shrimps, but now China and UAE had overtaken it. Our main commodity, small shrimp, was still being exported to the United States. He mentioned that due to restrictions by the US legislation the implementation of Pakistan's TED Programme is monitored regularly. There are 18 countries in the world that use TED. In the past any fishing boats with 5 persons onboard did not require TED, but now it is mandatory for all the fishing boats. He further stated that Government of Pakistan has taken decision to emphatically implement the TED.

The TED is mandatory in the World Trade Organisation's environmental clauses. Pakistan is also a signatory to the FAO's Code of Conduct for responsible fishing. The fed-

eral and provincial governments have assigned the task to the Maritime Security Agency for ensuring compliance with the TED on all the fishing boats in the sea.

He said that despite our conservation efforts in Pakistan one of the sea turtle species i.e. Olive Ridley, had completely disappeared from the shores of Karachi, which was a great natural tragedy. He said that monitoring could not be enforced with laws alone. He was of the view that all the fishermen community needed to show responsible attitude towards conservation of the marine life.

Mr. Zabardast Khan Bangash, Manager, IUCN, Balochistan Programme Office, said that the IUCN's Balochistan Partnerships for Sustainable Development Programme was striving to extend the circle of partners for conservation of marine biodiversity.

Certificates awarding ceremony marked the end of the four days turtle conservation-related activities, including a two-day Consultative Workshop, Training of Fishermen about TED, and Trials of TED by local fishermen. As a gesture of goodwill Dr Pilcher donated the TED devise to a local fishermen's representative.