



**Take-Home Points from the Suva Workshop 19-21 July 2018:**

*"Conservation of Sea Turtles within the Cultural Context of Oceania - Possibilities Beyond Protection"*  
As discerned by Co-Conveners George Balazs and Thierry Work MTSG Oceania Region Co-Chairs

- 1) An extended cessation of traditional hunting and use of turtles by indigenous people of Oceania may bring about the loss of those traditions within the cultures;
- 2) There are strong Biblical Church-Based Convictions to be good custodians of the marine resources God has given;
- 3) People want a better life for their families;
- 4) People and their families are more valued than turtles;
- 5) Culture and tradition bond people together;
- 6) The conservation of turtles cannot be separated from their cultural context;
- 7) There is the strong desire for traditional use,- indeed all use,- to be sustainable;
- 8) If communities can't manage their resources then nobody can because 'we are here and they are there';
- 9) Sustainable use is a part of conservation;
- 10) For some governments, provisions are in place for issuance of permits for case-by-case traditional harvest;
- 11) Conservation that relies solely on government enforcement capacity is unrealistic and can alienate communities hence lessen conservation;
- 12) The problem has not been traditional harvest but 'commercial greed';
- 13) Increased decision-making authority granted by government to the traditional village chiefs may serve to enhance conservation;
- 14) Turtle ecotourism and turtle cultural traditions can have conflicting goals;
- 15) Data deficiencies for the conservation status of turtles are widespread; there is little if any evidence of declines or increases;
- 16) Developing creative ways to encourage local communities to collect trend data in collaboration with government is a worthy goal;
- 17) There is merit in spending more time visiting and listening to local communities;
- 18) There are many turtle biologists but very few social scientists quantifying the indigenous community consumption of turtles;
- 19) The Government of Fiji deserves congratulations for instituting 23 years of moratoriums on the harvest of turtles which surely had a positive impact on their conservation status;
- 20) The Suva workshop achieved a long-standing need for focused participant discussions, listening, and talking about turtle consumptive use, cultural traditions, sustainability, conservation beyond protection, and the realities of village life. The door has been opened for additional workshops in Oceania;
- 21) Without remembering the past, we can lose our way.