



Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia

Session Title

WIO Marine Turtle Network (Open Session) & 10th Meeting of the WIO Marine Turtle Task Force

Background

The WIO region hosts five species of marine turtles: Green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), Hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), Leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*), Loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*) and Olive Ridley (*Lepidochelys olivacea*), and multiple life stages (reproductive (mature adults and eggs), hatchlings, juveniles, sub-adults and adults). Marine turtles are highly migratory and move across multiple national jurisdictions during their different life history stages. They also have high cultural and socio-economic significance for many communities in the region.

Marine turtles in the WIO region face a multitude of threats including unsustainable exploitation for meat and eggs, destruction of nesting beaches and feeding habitats, incidental mortality in fishing operations ('bycatch'), climate change, marine pollution (especially plastic); abandoned fishing nets ('ghost nets') including gill nets and FADs, unregulated coastal development, inappropriate beach management strategies, and natural predation.

To address these threats, strong cooperation among States in the WIO region is crucial for effective conservation, and most Western Indian Ocean countries (except Somalia) have initiated significant efforts to conserve and protect marine turtles and their biodiversity-rich habitats by formally adopting and implementing the Indian Ocean South-East Asia Marine Turtle Memorandum of Understanding (IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU) and its integral Conservation and Management Plan (CMP).

Session Objectives and Expected Outputs

The special session will consist of both morning and afternoon sessions. The morning session is open to all participants attending the 12th WIOMSA Symposium who have an interest in marine turtles and their associated habitats.

Specific objectives of the morning open session:

1. Share updates about current marine turtle research and monitoring programmes, conservation and management initiatives and key emerging threats identified in the region.
2. Identify opportunities for future collaboration incorporating multi-disciplinary approaches.
3. Identify effective tools to communicate information about marine turtles and emerging issues and threats they face in the WIO region.

The afternoon session will be a closed meeting of the WIO Marine Turtle Task Force (WIO-MTTF). The WIO-MTTF was established as a scientific and technical advisory group to governments in the WIO region under two international instruments (the IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU and the Nairobi Convention). The WIO-MTTF thus provides technical support to governments in a regional context, through the collection and review of scientific information on marine turtles and their habitats. Since its creation in 2008, the WIO-MTTF has held nine meetings and workshops, leading to significant progress in the region.



A required output for both sessions will be a report detailing the main conclusions and discussion points together with an action plan of agreed priorities with associated timelines. The report of the open session will be used as a communication document and as a guideline to prioritize future marine turtle conservation and management actions in the WIO region. The report of the closed WIO-MTTF meeting will serve as a formal document to present the priorities and proposed actions of the WIO region to the MOU Advisory Committee and the next meeting of Signatory States to the IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU.

Targeted Audience

The target audience for the morning open session includes scientists, academics, students, coastal practitioners and decision makers. Importantly, the audience will include representatives of both the WIO-MTTF and IUCN Marine Turtle Specialist Group who are considered to be regional technical experts. Their contributions will help to strengthen knowledge and capacity of participants that are new to marine turtle research, conservation and management in the region.

The target audience for the afternoon WIO-MTTF meeting will be members of the WIO-MTTF from all countries in the region. A representative of the IOSEA Secretariat will participate together with one or more members of the IOSEA Advisory Committee.

Both sessions will be held in hybrid format, allowing all WIO-MTTF members to be represented whether they are attending the WIOMSA meeting in person or virtually.

Programme

Morning open session:

1. Presentations on marine turtle monitoring, research and conservation of the coastal and island countries that are part of the Western Indian Ocean (Chagos Archipelago, Comoros, Reunion, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mayotte, Mozambique, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania)
2. Plenary discussion:
 - a. Regional coherence in conservation and management actions, methods, protocols and data storage methods
 - b. Emerging threats to marine turtles in the WIO and potential solutions
 - c. Common issues and opportunities for collaboration
 - d. Communication tools for information sharing on marine turtle issues in the WIO region
 - e. Funding opportunities for monitoring and research

Afternoon 10th WIO-MTTF Meeting:

The agenda of the 10th WIO-MTTF Meeting to be held in the afternoon will be discussed and agreed upon with the WIO-MTTF Members. More information on the Task Force, its membership, and the agendas of the previous meetings is available here: <https://www.cms.int/iosea-turtles/en/activities/wio-mttf>.

The Organizers

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