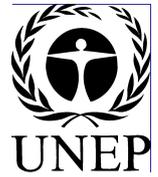




Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

Secretariat provided by the United Nations Environment Programme



SECOND MEETING OF THE SIGNATORIES TO THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING CONCERNING CONSERVATION MEASURES FOR MARINE TURTLES OF THE ATLANTIC COAST OF AFRICA

5-7 March 2008, Senegal, Dakar

UNEP/CMS/MT-AFR2/7
Agenda Item 11.0

ESTABLISHMENT OF A SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR URTOMA

*For reasons of economy, documents are printed in a limited number, and will not be distributed at the meeting.
Delegates are kindly requested to bring their copy to the meeting and not to request additional copies.*

Scientific and Technical Committee for URTOMA

Experts: Jacques FRETTEY et Manjula TIWARI

Proposal for

Terms of Reference

In May 1999, at the initiative of the CMS, IUCN-France, and France, an international meeting was organized in Abidjan (Ivory Coast) to develop a conservation strategy for marine turtles along the Atlantic coast of Africa, including Macaronesia. A memorandum of understanding was discussed and prepared for signatures from the States. This memorandum is called the Memorandum of Understanding of Abidjan (or MoU of Abidjan).

In May 2002, the first conference of the signatory States to the MoU of Abidjan was held at UNEP's headquarters in Nairobi (Kenya). The main objective of this conference was to lay the groundwork for a regional conservation Plan, which could be then be adopted/modified by each signatory State. The entire network and all the projects implementing the MoU of Abidjan were called Program Kudu. Program Kudu was created soon after the first meeting in Abidjan to support the Secretariat of the MoU of Abidjan, to coordinate the projects, and to compile the results. A regional office was established in Central Africa until 2006 in Libreville (Gabon) with support and funding from the European Union (program ECOFAC), and the French ministry for Foreign Affairs.

More recently, a partnership was created among the CMS, UNEP, and the Ministry of the Environment and the Protection of Nature in Senegal, and the "Regional coordination unit for the marine turtles of the Atlantic coast of Africa" (URTOMA) was created in Senegal to coordinate the implementation of the MoU of Abidjan. In October 2005, an agreement was signed among these entities to define the functions of this regional coordination unit. This regional unit was placed under the supervision of the Interim Secretariat of NEPAD (SINEPAD / Env.). The institutional framework was then discussed with the signatory States during a workshop in Dakar in January 2007.

The regional coordination unit called URTOMA (temporary name) continues with what Program Kudu started.

Despite the significant increase in research and conservation in many of the signatory States, a lot remains to be done. Our knowledge of the distribution of marine turtles, of their terrestrial and marine habitats, and of the status of the different species is still incomplete. Efforts to establish standardized methodologies in the entire region are still insufficient. Little funding is available to conduct the necessary scientific research to address data gaps and the recommendations in the regional conservation Plan, which was annexed to the MoU of Abidjan in 2002. Because of the lack of national expertise, many States face enormous difficulties to initiate research.

From 8-10 January 2007, 80 participants, consisting of the national focal points of the signatory States to the MoU of Abidjan, the Deputy Executive Secretary of the CMS, the

executive Secretary of SINEPAD, NGOs and experts, convened for a workshop at the Hotel Savana in Dakar (Senegal) to officially launch URTOMA and establish guidelines for it. In accordance with the recommendations of this workshop, URTOMA must set up a Scientific Division and a Scientific and Technical Committee.

Here are the Terms of References for the creation of a Scientific Committee and for its procedures.

I. Statute

This Committee will consist of international experts, African and non-African, recognized for their expertise on marine turtle research and conservation and more broadly the marine environment and the coast of Africa.

II. Composition

The Committee will consist of 9 members recognized for their competence and their expertise on marine and coastal management, with a priority given to marine turtle experts. The nationality of these members is not significant, but to the extent possible at least 2/3 of the Committee will have to be composed of native African experts and at least 2/3 will belong to the IUCN-Marine Turtle Specialist Group for the southeastern Atlantic. The President of this group and his deputy (or alternate) are members of the Committee.

The Committee will select a President and a Secretary, from among its members, who will organize the work and the meetings and serve as the spokesperson for the Committee.

III. Nomination of members

A list of fifteen experts who could serve on the Committee has been prepared by the CMS, based on recommendations by the Vice-President of IUCN/SSC MTSG's southeastern Atlantic region and the signatory States. Each signatory State can submit a nomination for a scientific person of their choice directly to the CMS.

The 9 members of the Committee will be elected by a vote and consensus during the Plenary meeting of the signatory States to the MoU of Abidjan in Dakar (Senegal) in March 2008, as recommended by the CMS Secretariat.

In the event of a resignation, dismissal or death of a member, the position will be filled only at the next meeting of the MoU of Abidjan.

The President of the Committee will be elected by his peers from among the committee members, at the Committee's first meeting. It will be a 2-year term and will be renewable.

IV. Membership renewal

The composition of the Committee will be renewed every 3 years. A member can serve unlimited terms on the Committee. Renewal will be by general agreement, except in the cases of resignation, death, or dismissal due to a serious mistake by or inefficacy of one of the members, and after the IUCN/SSC MTSG for the southeastern Atlantic has contacted the CMS and the regional coordination unit for the MoU of Abidjan in Dakar.

V. Committee headquarters

The Committee's headquarters will be decided later.

VI. Function of the Committee

The members of the Committee do not represent any State within this committee. Having been chosen for their individual expertise they work only in the interest of the conservation of marine turtles. The Committee is first and foremost the scientific body of the MoU of Abidjan for the CMS and URTOMA. It is a scientific and technical advisory body, but has five distinct roles:

a). Provide technical support to the regional coordination unit for the MoU of Abidjan based in Dakar (URTOMA) and its Scientific Division in Gorée

When necessary, the Secretariat of URTOMA and its scientific Division, based in Senegal, will call upon the resources of the Committee and ask for technical advice. This Committee will also freely advise URTOMA and its scientific Division on all matters concerning the objectives of the regional coordination unit. Each expert on the Committee will be responsible for one or several themes and/or will supervise a certain number of projects in the signatory States. When necessary, the two regional entities, will contact the expert responsible for the theme, the signatory State, or the project.

b). Identify the major guidelines for the conservation of the 6 species of marine turtles

The Committee will define the important measures to ensure the continuity/preservation of all populations of the 6 species of marine turtles and their terrestrial and marine habitats in the region covered by the MoU of Abidjan: *Caretta caretta*, *Chelonia mydas*, *Lepidochelys kempii*, *Lepidochelys olivacea*, *Eretmochelys imbricata*, *Dermochelys coriacea*.

These guidelines will be based on recommendations by the Marine Turtle Specialist Group (IUCN/SSC MTSG) at the international level, and on priority actions defined in the regional Plan of the MoU of Abidjan.

Thematic working groups (= "task forces") will be created by the Committee, if necessary, to bring the expertise and dynamism needed to address a topic (for example: task forces for each species, community aid, education and awareness, bycatch, etc). The President of the Committee, in consultation with the Committee, will have the freedom to create a task force with anyone of African or non-African origin whose expertise and experience will improve the effectiveness of this group.

c). Provide technical support to the signatory States and field projects

The Committee will provide support and scientific advice to the relevant ministries (Environment - Fauna - Protected Areas, Fisheries, Education, Regional Planning, Tourism...)

and to the field projects of NGOs and the universities in the signatory States to the MoU of Abidjan.

d). Monitor and analyze the results compiled by the regional database

The Committee will ensure the accuracy of the data, as much as possible, stored in the regional database at the scientific Division of Gorée, and the implementation of the code of ethics for the use of this database. It will ensure regular monitoring and control, which will be later described in the rules of procedure.

Each task force will analyze biannually the standardized data compiled by the database in Gorée and prepare a report to better understand all the populations and species of marine turtles along the Atlantic coast of Africa and to improve conservation efforts.

e). The Committee will help prepare the reports

The Committee will advise signatory States and help them prepare reports for the CMS and URTOMA. The Committee will help URTOMA with all technical reports as well as local NGOs, universities, national agencies, etc. with their scientific reports.

The Committee will also help the Secretariat of the regional unit as well as the signatory States prepare project reports/papers and search for funding.

VII. Network

Given the size of the region, URTOMA will take a sub-regional network approach: MACARONESIA (the Azores, Madeira, and the Canaries), TOMAO (from Morocco to Sierra Leone), GOSTCON (from Liberia to Nigeria), PROTOMAC (from Cameroun to Angola) and (Namibia, South Africa, Sainte-Hélène, Ascension).

Every individual responsible for a sub-regional network will be an observer during the meetings of the Scientific Committee. The observer can provide input to the Committee on any topic discussed. This person will be appointed by a vote among the relevant States in the sub-region and from among the scientific focal points proposed by these States and NGOs working on the field.

VIII. Rules of procedure

a). Timetable of activities

Towards the end of each year, the Committee and its task forces will draft a timetable of activities and an estimated operational budget for the upcoming fiscal year for the CMS and the regional unit for the MoU of Abidjan based in Dakar. This calendar and its budget will be adopted by the CMS sufficiently early so that no planned activity is delayed. This timetable may be slightly modified during the course of the year if the need arises.

b). Meetings

In order to decrease operating expenses, the 9 members of the Committee will meet during the African Meeting preceding the Annual Symposium on the Biology and Conservation of Sea Turtles and after the meeting of the signatory States to the MoU of Abidjan.

The CMS and the regional unit of the MoU of Abidjan based in Dakar may also call an impromptu meeting of the Committee if the need arises.

Each expert will work continually with his task force by email or telephone. Each group will benefit from a plenary meeting of the Committee to get together. But the provisional or modified timetable may also include special meetings if necessary.

The President of the Committee will take part in the meetings of the signatory States where he will provide the technical support concerning the species, their status, and their habitats. He will also be able to participate in the meetings of other agreements and of related organizations and partners useful to the proper functioning of the MoU of Abidjan.

c). Working with the regional Senegalese structure

The two regional entities based in Senegal will interpellate the experts of the Committee on any technical information that needs to be verified, analyzed, used, and disseminated. These two entities will not take any important scientific initiatives without consulting the Committee. No scientific information will be disseminated to officials or the media without a consultation with the Committee.

An expert on the Committee will be responsible for the proper functioning of the scientific Division in Gorée, and another expert of the regional database.

In the event of a dispute, the Committee will appeal to the CMS to arbitrate.

d). Support to the signatory States

Any technical advice sought from the Committee from relevant ministries of the signatory States to the MoU of Abidjan will go through either one of the two regional entities based in Senegal. Field projects will turn to the regional unit of the MoU of Abidjan based in Dakar and its Division in Gorée, and/or to the expert of the Committee supervising the project. URTOMA will be informed by the scientific Committee of the expertise being provided to a State.

e). Reports of the Committee's activities

The Committee will provide a detailed report of its activities to the signatory States during each conference of the MoU of Abidjan. If requested by these signatory States, it will provide regular reports on specific themes.

The status of each species and their habitats, based on information stored in the database in Gorée, will be presented at the IUCN/SSC MTSG annual meeting during the Annual Symposium on the Biology and the Conservation of Sea Turtles.

IX. Remuneration for the members

The Committee will have its own budget which will allow it to undertake its tasks and to meet at least once a year in Dakar or in any other signatory State to the MoU of Abidjan if the need arises. This budget is managed by... (CMS? URTOMA? UNEP?).

Members of the Committee are volunteers. However, experts of the Committee may receive an allowance and travel expenses, from the operational budget or any other additional funding, for a clearly identified assignment.

IX. Ethics

The goal of the scientific Committee is the conservation of marine turtles along the Atlantic coast of Africa. Therefore, it needs to effectively help the signatory States to the MoU of Abidjan where marine turtles are seriously threatened in territorial waters and on the beaches.

All the activities undertaken or encouraged by the Committee must exclude the unnecessary manipulation of turtles that may result in injury or death. The Committee will play the role of the ethics committee for all the scientific studies undertaken in the signatory States and will denounce any failure to respect the turtles.

The Committee must work to discourage the exploitation of turtle products (meat, fat, bone, blood, skin, carapaces, scutes...). It will, however, respect the traditional methods of local experts and craftsmen and work with them to find substitutes. It will encourage the improvement of the quality of life in fishermen's villages and promote alternative livelihoods.

X. Resignation, dismissal

Any member of the Committee can freely resign at any time by informing, in writing, the President of the Committee and the secretariat of URTOMA.

Non-participation and non-attendance by a member on the Committee will result in the President, URTOMA, and the CMS requesting a replacement from the States.

A member can also be dismissed from his task in the event of serious act that contradicts the spirit and the ethics of this Committee.