



# CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES

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THIRD MEETING OF THE SIGNATORIES TO THE  
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR THE  
CONSERVATION OF CETACEANS AND THEIR  
HABITATS IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION  
Noumea, New Caledonia, 8 September 2012  
Agenda Item 6.2

## THE ROLE OF ECOLOGICAL NETWORKS FOR CONSERVING CETACEAN HABITAT IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION

*(prepared by the Secretariat)*

1. One of the key discussions held during the 10<sup>th</sup> CMS Conference of the Parties was the importance of ecological networks in the conservation of migratory species. CMS Parties recognized that habitat destruction and fragmentation are among the primary threats to migratory species, and that the identification and conservation of habitats of appropriate quality, extent, distribution and connectivity are thus of paramount importance for the conservation of these species in both the terrestrial and marine environments.
2. [CMS Resolution 10.3](#): *The Role of Ecological Networks in the Conservation of Migratory Species* also noted that the designation of protected areas across very large areas is not always possible and that additional wider landscape measures usually need to be applied in order to address and mitigate anthropogenic changes at the wider landscape scale. CMS Parties and other States as well as relevant international fora, are being urged to explore the applicability of ecological networks to marine migratory species, especially those that are under pressure from human activities such as over exploitation, oil and gas exploration/exploitation, fisheries and coastal development.
3. The Pacific Islands Region is well established as a global leader in the establishment of large scale marine protected areas, including the ‘Micronesia Challenge’ undertaken by Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to protect 30 per cent of near-shore marine resources and 20 per cent of terrestrial resources on their islands by 2020 and the ‘sister site’ relationship between the Papahânaumokuâkea Marine National Monument, located in the north-western Hawaiian Islands; the Phoenix Islands Protected Area near the equator in the Republic of Kiribati, the world’s largest marine protected area and first in the region to include deep water habitats, most of which are unexplored and provide sanctuary to undiscovered and migratory species; Fiji’s commitment to having at least 30 per cent of its inshore and offshore areas come under some form of management by 2020, as well as many other significant national efforts for habitat protection across the Pacific Islands region.
4. Target 11 of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets 2020 adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 2010, states “By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and

inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes”, is especially relevant for the conservation of terrestrial and marine migratory species. Processes, workshops and tools are under way within CBD that can assist in identifying habitats important for the lifecycles of migratory marine species listed under CMS Appendices.

5. CMS Parties recognized that it is important for the conservation of migratory species that approaches to ecological networks are integrated in national environmental planning, including plans currently being developed under the auspices of other Multilateral Environmental Agreements, such as National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (under CBD) and National Adaptation Plans (under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), they have encouraged Parties and relevant organizations when implementing systems of protected areas, and other relevant site- and area-based conservation measures, to:

- i) select areas in such a way as to address the needs of migratory species as far as possible throughout their life cycles and migratory ranges;
- ii) set network-scale objectives for the conservation of these species within such systems, including by restoration of fragmented and degraded habitats and removal of barriers to migration; and
- iii) cooperate internationally for the achievement of such objectives;

6. The CMS Scientific Council, in conjunction with the Secretariat and in consultation with relevant organizations and key stakeholders, has been tasked to conduct a strategic review to:

- (i) assess the extent to which and the manner in which existing major protected area systems and initiatives aimed at promoting ecological networks address the needs of migratory species throughout their life cycles and migratory ranges, including the issue of resilience to climate change and taking into account the significant difference in ecology and behaviour between terrestrial and aquatic species;
- (ii) identify among CMS Agreements and other CMS instruments the current use and potential future use of ecological network concepts and approaches;
- (iii) identify opportunities for enhancing the effectiveness of and synergies between relevant initiatives and programmes on protected areas and ecological networks in respect of the conservation needs of migratory species; and
- (iv) report the results, including recommendations, to the Conference of the Parties at its eleventh Meeting;

7. The CMS Secretariat has also been given the task of working with Parties and the Scientific Council and other international and regional organizations, including CBD, in organizing regional and sub-regional workshops to promote the conservation and management of critical sites and ecological networks among Parties.

8. Building on the significant leadership already demonstrated in the Pacific Islands Region and highlighting the contributions of this region through the mechanism of the Pacific Cetaceans MoU could provide value input to other regions and other species initiatives.

There is an additional synergy and benefit for the Pacific Island States and Territories to integrate ecological networks into national environmental planning, including plans currently being developed under CBD National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and UNFCCC National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), and the opportunity to showcase specific benefits for species during the 9<sup>th</sup> Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas.

**Action requested:**

The Signatories are requested to *inter alia*:

- Take note of the Secretariat's report.
- Discuss the applicability of ecological networks to cetaceans in the Pacific Islands Region.
- Consider coordinating between CBD, UNFCCC and CMS National Focal Points to integrate ecological networks into national environmental planning, including plans currently being developed under the CBD NBSAPs and UNFCCC NAPs, and to report on experiences and progress to MoS4.
- Request the Technical Advisory Group to collate Pacific Signatory technical input and to provide that input to the CMS strategic review on ecological networks, reporting back to Signatories at MoS4.
- Invite the Technical Advisory Group to consider presenting this work to the 9<sup>th</sup> Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas as a contribution on behalf of the Signatories.