



Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

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INFORMAL MEETING OF SIGNATORY STATES TO THE CMS MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ON THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF DUGONGS AND THEIR HABITATS THROUGHOUT THEIR RANGE

19 August 2008, Bali, Indonesia

REPORT OF THE INFORMAL MEETING OF SIGNATORY STATES TO THE CMS DUGONG MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Introduction

1. The informal meeting of Signatory States to the CMS Dugong MoU was attended by over 30 participants from 18 countries, including eight Signatory States and 10 non-Signatory States, as well as various intergovernmental and non-governmental observers. The full list of participants appears at Annex 1.

Agenda item 1: Welcoming remarks

2. The Executive Secretary of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), Mr. Robert Hepworth, expressed thanks to the Government of Indonesia for having offered to host both the Dugong and related IOSEA Marine Turtle MoU meetings. He mentioned several other CMS species agreements that had been developed around the world in recent years. The meeting would provide an opportunity to explore possibilities of leveraging funds for short-term conservation activities and to discuss arrangements for secretariat services to the MoU.

Agenda item 2: Signature of the Memorandum of Understanding by additional States

3. Representatives of Comoros, Kenya, and the Philippines were invited to sign the Memorandum of Understanding, which took immediate effect for those countries, bringing the total number of Signatory States to eleven.

Agenda item 3: Election of Officers

4. The meeting elected Mr. Winfried Haule, United Republic of Tanzania, as Chair.

Agenda item 4: Adoption of agenda and schedule

5. The agenda for the meeting was adopted without amendment (Annex 2).

Agenda item 4: In-country updates and reports

6. The countries in attendance reported on the status of their dugong populations as well as recent conservation activities. Australia, Egypt, Eritrea, Philippines, Thailand and United Arab Emirates were among the Range States reporting significant numbers of dugong in their waters, which were the object of active conservation efforts. In most other countries, comprehensive surveys had not been undertaken for several years, and the little information available on remnant dugong populations was based largely on anecdotal accounts. Two Range States – Australia and Thailand – delivered informative PowerPoint presentations which are reproduced in Annexes 3a and 3b.

Agenda item 5: Summary of priorities and information needs

7. All countries present were invited to indicate their highest priorities for dugong conservation, with particular regard to active management, research and legislation. These have been summarised in tabular form in Annex 4. Generally, there was a common need across the Range States for better information on the distribution and number of dugong, as well as more public awareness initiatives in order to enhance feedback from people who may encounter dugongs.

8. Some countries identified specific areas for intervention and/or cooperation, for example:

- Australia: work with Papua New Guinea to conserve the Torres Strait dugong population; addressing sustainable harvest by indigenous communities and impacts from other sources (such as mineral exploitation); investigation of impacts of climate change on seagrass beds;
- Comoros: sharing information in a common database;
- Eritrea: data collection on dugong populations of Dahlak archipelago;
- Myanmar: transboundary surveys (with Thailand) in the east Andaman Sea (e.g. in Tananthanyi) and seagrass mapping and population assessments in Rahkine State;
- Philippines: survey work in Aurora and Isabella provinces, southeast Mindanao;
- Thailand: mapping and monitoring surveys of seagrass; and aerial surveys on border with Viet Nam;
- United Republic of Tanzania: collaborative research with Kenya and Mozambique;
- United Arab Emirates: cooperation and coordination with Qatar and Bahrain, in view of an influx of dugong from these countries; further satellite studies (in collaboration with Australia), and integration of conservation activities in broader coastal zone management processes.

9. The Senior CMS Advisor, Mr. Douglas Hykle, suggested that avenues be explored for conducting more activities – such as survey work and public awareness programmes - in partnership, where joint activities might be more economical and avoid duplication of effort. Also, there may be opportunities for greater synergy with activities already being undertaken for marine turtle conservation.

Agenda item 6: Priorities for funding

10. The Executive Secretary explained that approximately USD 37,500 was available in the short-term to finance small-scale project activities thanks to a voluntary contribution received from Australia for this purpose. He also called attention to ongoing dugong conservation work in Indonesia to which CMS had already contributed. He noted that CMS was developing and expanding a unit that deals with fundraising with a view to increasing support where possible from the governmental and the private sectors

11. He explained that a small grants programme had been operating in CMS for many years, which made use of expertise within the CMS Scientific Council to identify priority issues and vet project proposals. Terms of reference for submitting project proposals focused specifically on dugong conservation were circulated to the meeting.

12. In the discussion that followed, it was suggested that in view of the limited funds available, preference ought to be given to projects that fostered cooperation (eg transboundary projects among countries that were associated geographically). It was suggested that collaborative “low-cost, low-tech” projects might yield information on key areas to pursue. The meeting agreed that project proposals should be submitted to the CMS Secretariat in Bonn, by mid-October 2008, with a view to having the Scientific Council consider them when it next meets at the end of November. An application form would be posted on the CMS website in September. Thereafter, the Scientific Council’s recommendations could be tabled at the CMS Conference of the Parties in early December.

13. Responding to a question about publicising the availability of limited funding, the Executive Secretary offered the CMS website as a vehicle for conveying details of the programme, including the terms of reference, but noted that Range States had a role to play as well. Moreover, he pointed out that while proposals could be submitted from non-governmental organisations, care would be needed to ensure that they were submitted with the knowledge and support of the authorities in each country.

Agenda item 7: Discussion of offer of secretariat support

14. The representative of the United Arab Emirates gave a presentation describing the formal offer of the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD) to host a secretariat unit for the CMS Dugong MoU. The presentation was accompanied by a paper circulated to the meeting outlining the details of the offer. This could also include arrangements to facilitate sub-regional coordination of the IOSEA Marine Turtle MoU and eventually provide secretariat services for another CMS Agreement concerning raptors. The offer, amounting to some USD 3.4 million dollars over the first three years, from 2009 through 2011, would provide for all staff and office-related costs, meeting support, as well as project funding. The secretariat unit would be staffed by a chief officer/executive co-ordinator, with programme officers for each of the thematic areas, as well as support staff – administered by UNEP, EAD or some combination. The representative confirmed that additional voluntary contributions from other Signatory States would be welcomed, particularly those targeted towards conservation activities.

15. Delegates expressed appreciation for the offer, and the Chairman concluded the discussion by noting that the Meeting had welcomed the generous offer, and looked forward to completion of the necessary arrangements.

Agenda item 8: Consideration of arrangements for future meetings of Signatory States

16. Introducing the agenda item, the Senior CMS Advisor recalled the arrangements that had been made for IOSEA Marine Turtle MoU Signatory States to meet annually in order to maintain momentum during the first few years of the MoU's existence. He noted there may be opportunities for synergy between the two instruments in the future, by organising meetings back-to-back, if the meeting schedules could be coordinated. However, it was pointed out that for some countries the delegates would not necessarily be the same.

17. The meeting concluded that there was ample reason for the Dugong MoU Signatory States to meet separately in a year's time (i.e. around the third quarter of 2009), and that a joint IOSEA-Dugong meeting two years hence might be contemplated.

18. Responding to a suggestion from Seychelles that more non-governmental organisations be invited to the meeting, it was confirmed that NGOs participated actively as observers to the sister IOSEA Marine Turtle MoU, and that invitations had been extended to NGOs to attend the present dugong meeting. Invitation lists could be reviewed in future with the assistance of the member States. The CMS Executive Secretary commented that it might be desirable to examine the need for rules of procedure in this regard for the next meeting. While there had not been a need to formally introduce specific rules of procedure in the IOSEA framework for any agreement under the Convention on Migratory Species, the CMS rules of procedure would be applicable in the absence of specific rules for the agreement concerned.

Agenda item 9: Any other business

19. No other items of business were raised.

Agenda item 10: Closure of the meeting

20. Following the customary exchange of courtesies, and thanks to the Government of Indonesia for its hospitality, the Chairman closed the meeting.