



Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Dugongs and their Habitats throughout their Range

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PROGRESSING DUGONG CONSERVATION: DUGONG, SEAGRASS AND COASTAL COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

Prepared by the Dugong MOU Secretariat

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to describe the scope of the *Dugong, Seagrass and Coastal Communities Initiative* (DSCC Initiative) that has been developed to provide the basis on which the Dugong MOU Secretariat has focused implementation activities since The First Official Signatory State Meeting (SS1) of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Dugong and their Habitats throughout their Range (Dugong MOU) held in Abu Dhabi in October 2010, and for implementation of current activities over the next 3-5 years.

Background

1. At the First Official Signatory State Meeting (SS1), the Secretariat reported on the use of funding available during the interim period prior to 2009-10. The funding had been directed to support regional and international activities that addressed the need for enhanced data on dugong status and threats, and to identify potential solutions for conservation of dugongs and their habitats. At SS1, the Secretariat also identified a range of key activities to progress dugong conservation, including “extending the use of the Standardised Dugong Catch/Incidental Catch Survey Tool to other range states in each sub-region”, “supporting signatory states” and “building up a strategy for fundraising and networking” (see: http://www.cms.int/species/dugong/meeting_of_sigs_1/doc11_progressing_conservation.pdf)
2. The *Dugong, Seagrasses and Coastal Communities Initiative: Opportunities for Biodiversity Conservation, Livelihood Improvement, and Sustainable Fisheries Management* was subsequently developed in 2011 with the assistance of the Technical Advisors. This initiative sets out the underlying rationale for the range of activities currently being initiated, supported and progressed by the Secretariat. The Initiative is a program to improve livelihoods and create economic opportunities in exchange for the conservation of dugongs and their habitats. The DSCC was launched under the *S.O.S Event: Save our Sirenians – Dugongs and West African Manatees* on the 27 February 2012 in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (see: Agenda item 10.4)
3. The component activities identified under the DSCC Initiative will be implemented over the next five years (i.e. 2013-2018) and beyond, subject to securing additional funding. The challenges during this period will be extensive; however pilot projects with appropriate incentive tools are planned to commence within the next four years. Appropriate management and governance systems will be implemented simultaneously at the chosen localities. The Standardised Dugong Catch/Incidental Catch Surveys will continue and be expanded into new areas, while international, regional and national linkages will be fostered and expanded as detailed in the Agenda Item 12, and the Gulf Bycatch Project (see details included Agenda Item 10.4), for example. The Secretariat will also endeavour to develop trans-border projects amongst range States to address the mobility of both dugongs and the fishing boats which impact them.

4. The development of the DSCC Initiative was in response to the alarming decline in dugong numbers and destruction of habitat over Range States, as detailed in the report of SS1. The DSCC Initiative brochure¹ sets some key directions for guidance of the Secretariat and Range States in the initial activities to implement the MOU, namely:
 - Seek investors in local partnerships for sustainable development of programmes
 - Focus on rural coastal communities in low income nations
 - Use innovative incentive based tools (financial and advisory) to improve livelihoods and create economic opportunities in exchange for environmental stewardship of dugongs and their habitats
 - Provide affordable finance and knowledge to assist access to markets, and secure continued return on investments
 - Provide cultural, economic and environmental benefits
 - Emphasise initial “slow and stop the slide from [Dugong] abundance to extinction”
5. The Performance Based Incentive Tool Kit includes tools for managing human activities that impact dugongs and seagrasses, including performance-based financial incentives, alternate income-generation opportunities, gear modification programmes, education and communications strategies, cultural tools, permitting systems and fines.
6. The DSCC Initiative also enhances the conservation of dugongs and seagrasses indirectly by:
 - Building and enhancing regional cooperation amongst range states of the Dugong MoU to address threats to dugongs, through a series of regional meetings
 - Addressing shared conservation synergies, including incidental catch in fisheries gear, with other marine megafauna including turtles, inshore cetaceans (see: Agenda Item 10.4) and manatees (e.g. exploring synergies between the GEF Dugong and Seagrass Conservation Project, the Abu Dhabi Blue Carbon Project and the GEF Blue Forests Project (see: Agenda Item 11.2)).
 - Widening the spatial and temporal scale of the application of the Standardised Dugong Catch/Incidental Catch Survey Tool to refine our understanding of the global status of dugong populations, dugong habitats and overlaps with key threats. This data will report the challenges and opportunities for progressing dugong conservation and management, and will be used in regional/global spatial risk assessment (see: Agenda Item 11.1)
7. The range of activities currently being initiated, supported and progressed by the Secretariat under this Initiative now includes:
 - Standardised Dugong Catch/Incidental Catch Surveys (see: Agenda Item 11.1)
 - The GEF Dugong and Seagrass Conservation Project (see: Agenda Item 11.2)
 - Global Dugong Genetics Project (see: Agenda Item 11.3)
 - Pilot Projects to trial Performance Based Incentive Tool-kit
 - Development of a dedicated webpage for the Initiative linked to the GEF Dugong and Seagrass Conservation Project portal
8. The DSCC Initiative provides the framework to develop and implement pilot projects with innovative solutions to specific issues, tailored to suit local needs, using a suite of innovative approaches to conservation. Pilot projects have been progressed in Papua New Guinea (see: Agenda Item 10, point

¹ http://www.cms.int/species/dugong/pdf/dugong_initiative_brochure.pdf

13.f for the Moro Momoro (My Dugong) Pilot Project) and Mozambique (see Agenda Item 10, point 13.g for the Bazaruto Archipelago Pilot Project).

9. The DSCC Initiative aims to develop collaborative, strategic and supporting partnerships to assist in securing the resources necessary to implement the Initiative across the Dugong MOU.
10. All current available funds are committed to the above mentioned range of activities; further fund raising is necessary to expand the scope and depth of the dugong conservation strategies. Doc. 14 expands on the context, scope and other essential activities that will be needed to supplement those commenced under the Initiative over the short to medium term, and to put in place a more comprehensive and effective dugong and seagrass conservation programme.

Action Requested:

The Meeting is requested to:

- a) Note the development of the DSCC Initiative as a rationale and framework for activities currently being undertaken by the Secretariat with Range States.
- b) Endorse the implementation of this Initiative over the coming 3-5 years, and beyond, subject to securing funding.