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FIRST MEETING OF THE SIGNATORIES TO THE
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR THE
CONSERVATION OF CETACEANS AND THEIR
HABITATS IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION
Apia, Samoa, 6 March 2007
Agenda Item 8.3

REPORTING AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

(Prepared by the Secretariat)

Report format to monitor implementation of the MoU and Action Plan

1.   MoU Paragraph 8 requests Signatories to provide a regular report to the CMS Secretariat on their implementation of the MoU and Action Plan, the periodicity of which will be determined by the Signatories at their first meeting.

2.   The CMS Secretariat has developed comprehensive report formats for all other MoUs negotiated under CMS auspices.

3.   It is foreseen that a report format would provide a basis to make reports from the Signatories more consistent and information-rich, while making the information provided amenable to synthesis and analysis for the Secretariat's Overview Report.

4.   The report format would be developed primarily to measure implementation of the Action Plan. The questions presented go beyond the scope of information already requested from CMS Contracting Parties for national reports to the CMS Conference of the Parties (COP).

5.   The meeting may wish to request the Secretariat to develop a draft reporting format for consideration and endorsement of the Signatories at their next meeting.

6.   A key overriding issue is avoiding duplication of reporting effort between CMS, the MoU process and the SPREP WDAP process. The CMS and SPREP Secretariats will discuss this as part of the follow-up to the MoU meeting.

7.   The possibility may exist for MoU reporting to be undertaken on-line, and on a rolling basis. The report format would be the foundation of this. CMS has developed a project proposal for its Agreements, including MoUs, to migrate to on-line reporting, modelled on the system already in place for CMS's Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia Marine Turtles MoU (IOSEA):

< http://www.ioseaturtles.org/report.php >.

The project, which has yet to be completely funded, would include the Pacific Islands Cetaceans MoU.

8.   In anticipation of this forthcoming work, it would be useful for the Secretariat to learn more about the in-country process to develop reports either for SPREP purposes or other multilateral environmental agreements, including the sources of information used and any problems typically encountered in the process. The meeting may wish to discuss how the reporting process can be facilitated to make it less burdensome for Signatories and others.

9.   The meeting may wish to discuss how to ensure high quality information is provided in the reports.

Project reporting template

10.   There is a great amount of interest surrounding cetaceans in the Pacific Islands Region. Many governmental and non-governmental organizations are involved with various conservation and research projects that pre-date the MoU, but already contribute to its implementation.

11.   The CMS Secretariat has developed project reporting templates for other MoUs negotiated under CMS auspices to capture this information. They are distributed to governmental and non-governmental organizations and individual experts to gain a better understanding of past, existing and planned projects for the target taxonomic group. Actual individual responses received are then compiled and presented as a tabular summary for the benefit of the Range States and the particular research and conservation community involved with the target species. Individual responses are presented as a compendium for information purposes.

12.   It is hoped that a tabular summary of project activities will provide the basis for the MoU Signatories and the Pacific cetaceans research and conservation community to better coordinate their activities and to develop a sense of partnership working together to contribute to the implementation of the MoU and Action Plan.

13.   If a coordinator is identified and funded for the MoU (see agenda item 8.1) the tabular summary could be maintained on a regular basis and made available to the Signatories and the research and conservation community, with the intention that it migrate to an on-line environment which would allow project leaders to directly supply and update information on a rolling basis (see the information management section below).

14.   The meeting may wish to provide comments on this project-reporting concept and recommend that the Secretariat develop a project-reporting template for consideration and endorsement by the Signatories at their next meeting.

Information management

15.   A key step foreseen by the CMS Strategic Plan and CMS COP Resolution 8.5 (Existing and Future Agreements) is to make the information generated from CMS's specialised Agreement-related fora, including MoUs, available to the larger CMS process achievement particularly to measure implementation of the CMS Strategic Plan as well as gauge CMS's contribution to the achievement of the 2010 biodiversity target. The CMS Information Management System (IMS) will be a key tool in compiling and disseminating this information.

16.   The information from the CMS COP national reports provided by each CMS Contracting Party on cetaceans is already input into the IMS by the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring

Centre (UNEP-WCMC). But the CMS reporting format is necessarily less detailed than that developed for the more specialised purposes of the MoU. In addition, reporting responses for the Conference of the Parties may not be high enough to ensure an accurate picture as to what is happening on behalf of the species, especially since only five of the MoU signatories are located in Range States that are a Contracting Party to CMS. Therefore the MoU reporting process is central to developing a solid knowledge base on cetaceans in the Pacific Islands Region.

17.   Furthermore, the MoU provides the potential to draw together more detailed information from the Range States about cetaceans beyond that available in the reports. The meeting may wish to consider, for example, the desirability of creating a register or projects database of all planned, on-going and completed projects and their outcomes. This could be a web-based system adapted from IOSEA and directly updated on a rolling basis by the various project leaders:

< http://www.ioseaturtles.org/projectdb.php >.

The concept for a project reporting template discussed above was derived from the IOSEA on-line template.

18.   The IOSEA MoU also maintains an electronic library for reference materials, papers, PowerPoint presentations, educational materials and dates of interest:

< http://www.ioseaturtles.org/electronic_lib.php >.

19.   The meeting may wish to consider whether something similar to this would be useful and should be developed for the Pacific Islands Cetaceans MoU. Further consideration could be given to which key resource materials would be most useful to the signatories as well as the cetaceans research and conservation community.

Action requested:

The Signatories, and where appropriate other meeting participants, are invited to:

- Request the Secretariat to develop a draft report format for consideration and endorsement by the next meeting of Signatories.

- Consider the usefulness of keeping a summary of cetaceans-related projects within the agreement area and request the Secretariat to draft a project-reporting template for consultation and endorsement at the next meeting of Signatories.

- Identify and consider other reporting issues, as well as general information management issues, potentially relevant for the MoU and the ways and means to address them.