



Memorandum of Understanding on the
Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and
their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia

Distr. GENERAL
MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Report

REPORT OF THE THIRD MEETING OF THE SIGNATORY STATES
Bangkok, 29-31 March 2005

Agenda Item 1: Welcoming Remarks

1. The IOSEA MoU Coordinator, Mr Douglas Hykle, welcomed the participants and noted the excellent attendance of about 65 delegates from 25 countries, including a strong non-governmental (NGO) presence. He expressed satisfaction that all but one of the 21 Signatory States would be represented at the meeting. The full list of participants appears at Annex 1.
2. The Coordinator expressed sorrow over the Indian Ocean tsunami, which had affected many colleagues and friends working around the region; and offered thanks for those who had been spared from this calamity and who were now focussing on rebuilding.
3. He then outlined the substantial agenda that the Meeting would aim to cover. In introducing the members of the Advisory Committee, he noted that the Committee had held a productive meeting the previous day and that it may be desirable, in future, to extend its length to two days. The Coordinator concluded his opening remarks by encouraging Signatory States to think beyond their national initiatives, and to give attention also to the collective and cooperative measures that the Conservation and Management Plan was meant to stimulate.

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

4. In keeping with past practice, the Signatory States welcomed the representative of Government of South Africa among their ranks, noting that the Memorandum would enter into force for that country on 1 May 2005.
5. The Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia, H.E. Mr. Ibrahim Yusuf, signed the Memorandum of Understanding on 31 March 2005, bringing to 22 the number of Signatory States with effect from 1 June 2005.

Agenda Item 3: Election of officers

6. The meeting elected Dr. Maitree Duangsawasdi (Thailand), as Chair and Mr. Ali Bin Amer Al-Kiyumi (Oman) as Vice-Chair. The latter assumed the chair for several important agenda points, including on the final day of the meeting. Delegates from Australia, South Africa and the United States volunteered to serve as rapporteurs.

Agenda Item 4: Adoption of the agenda and schedule

7. The agenda (reproduced at Annex 2) and provisional schedule were adopted without amendment.

Agenda Item 5: Opening Statements

8. The Chair invited non-Signatory States present to indicate their Governments' intentions regarding signature of the IOSEA MoU.

9. The observer from Indonesia stated that after cross-sectoral consultations led by the Directorate-General of Forest Protection and Nature Conservation, the Government of Indonesia had taken the decision to sign the Memorandum. It considered that joining the agreement would enhance the conservation and management of marine turtles in that country.

10. The observer from Malaysia advised that his Government was seriously considering signing the Memorandum of Understanding, and it was anticipated that Cabinet would approve this action during 2005.

11. The observer from Timor-Leste, represented at the Meeting for the first time, noted that his country was undertaking initial turtle conservation activities, and would be investigating the possibility of signing the MoU following the Meeting.

Agenda Item 6: Report of the Secretariat

12. The Co-ordinator introduced the Report of the Secretariat (document MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Doc.5). The Secretariat continued to benefit from its co-location arrangement with the UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (UNEP/ROAP). The office would be relocated to another floor in the coming weeks, and he hoped that this would be done with minimal disruption. He expressed gratitude to the IOSEA programme sponsors, namely the Governments of Australia, France, United Kingdom and United States, as well as the Convention on Migratory Species, the UNEP Division of Environmental Conventions, and the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council.

13. Special thanks were due to the Government of Australia for having provided, through its Agency for International Development, a Youth Ambassador who had worked in the Secretariat for 11 months. The Co-ordinator extended his appreciation to Ms. Louisa Perrin and highlighted her major contribution to the IOSEA website. He added that another Youth Ambassador, Ms. Sarah Yip, had just commenced a similar 12-month position in the Secretariat. It was hoped a further Youth Ambassador would be engaged from September 2005 to assist with activities for the 2006 Year of the Turtle campaign.

14. The Secretariat had also advertised for unremunerated internships, and several serious applications were under consideration for placement later in 2005. The Co-ordinator recognised the contribution of Ms. Stephanie Dunstan, who was presently undertaking such an internship for three months. Overall, the IOSEA programme had benefited considerably from financial and in-kind contributions, apart from those of the core donors.

15. The Co-ordinator outlined his contacts with numerous non-Signatory States to promote their participation in the MoU. He considered it helpful for existing Signatory States to approach their neighbours about joining the agreement, as broader membership would assist with implementation of the Conservation and Management Plan.

16. The Co-ordinator described improvements that had been made to the IOSEA website over the previous year. These had included the introduction of a 'What's New' email service, Profile of the Month features, and numerous additional news stories and useful reference material. The website's coverage of the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster had been particularly comprehensive. Three significant tools – the Online Reporting Facility, IOSEA Interactive Mapping System (IMapS) and the Online Projects Database – had now been

finalised and were fully operational. The Online Reporting Facility was an extremely powerful tool for information management, though the reliability of Internet connections remained an issue for some countries.

17. Delegates were encouraged to contribute further content to the website, as this would ensure it contained a breadth of resources and remained up to date. To this end, participants were invited to fill out a questionnaire contained in document MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Doc. 12. NGOs were also encouraged to contribute short summaries of their current turtle conservation projects.

18. The Co-ordinator concluded his report drawing attention to linkages with other organisations, work undertaken on behalf of the Convention on Migratory Species, and relevant meetings attended.

Agenda Item 7: Presentation and discussion of complementary initiatives

(a) Regional / sub-regional

19. Participants provided brief updates on various regional or sub-regional activities that complemented the IOSEA MoU:

- **IAC:** Dr. Jack Frazier, Advisory Committee member, introduced the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC). He reported that the IAC had established a special fund, an interim secretariat and scientific advisory group. At its second conference of Parties held in November 2004, the IAC resolved to develop a MoU with its IOSEA counterpart. The Meeting noted an information paper (MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Inf.13) submitted by the United States regarding the IAC website and a pertinent resolution concerning conservation of Leatherback turtles.
- **CMS African Marine Turtle MoU:** The Co-ordinator expressed hope that the Secretariat of the Convention on Migratory Species would take steps to re-invigorate this sister agreement, including arranging a meeting of the Signatory States.
- **FAO:** The Co-ordinator reported that the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation had held a technical consultation on turtle conservation and fisheries in November-December 2004. This had resulted in the development of guidelines to minimise harmful interactions between sea turtles and commercial fisheries. These draft guidelines – which complement the provisions of the IOSEA MoU – were formally adopted by the FAO Committee on Fisheries in March 2005.
- **IATTC:** The representative of the United States described the work of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission. Notably, the IATTC Bycatch Working Group had been reviewing interactions with purse seine fisheries and working to influence longline fisheries to conserve marine species. The effectiveness of this work would be reviewed at the next IATTC meeting in June 2005.
- **IOTC:** The Co-ordinator indicated that the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission had been invited to attend the present meeting, but had been unable to participate. He referred delegates to the background information on this organisation contained in Document MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Doc. 8.5 on fisheries-turtle interactions. It was observed that the IOTC did not have a mandate to record turtle by-catch.
- **SPREP:** The observer from the Pacific Regional Environment Programme noted that a Regional Marine Turtle Conservation Programme continued to be implemented under the SPREP Strategic Plan. Activities had included the management of a turtle database, distribution of flipper tags to all countries in the region and development of a flipper tag inventory. She advised that while progress had been made, this had been discontinuous due to staff turnover. SPREP was in the process of recruiting a Marine Species officer.

- **SACEP:** The observer from the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme announced that his organisation would hold its third intergovernmental meeting in July 2005. He noted that a number of projects and sites in the SACEP area had been affected by the tsunami.
- **PERSGA:** The representative of Jordan reported that the seven member countries of the Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden had approved a regional action plan, and were now developing more specific national plans and undertaking training programmes, which would include coverage of marine turtles. He added that PERSGA was seeking funding for the national implementation of these plans.
- **CIO:** The *Commission de l'Océan indien* was not represented at the meeting, however the representative of Seychelles advised that her country and the other member states of Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius and France (Réunion), had established a coral reef network and were undertaking activities and seeking funding within this framework.
- **WIO-IOSEA Marine Turtle MoU Task Force:** The Co-ordinator reported that a proposal for a Western Indian Ocean - IOSEA Task Force would be considered at the next meeting of Nairobi Convention Focal Points, in May 2005. The idea emerged from a September 2004 WIO Region Marine Turtle workshop, and could involve the development of an expert database to enhance regional marine turtle conservation. The representative of Kenya reported also on the related activities of KESCOM and the East African Marine Eco-region programme.

(b) *National - Governmental*

20. Australia outlined its Regional Natural Heritage Programme, a AUSS\$ 10 million initiative over three years designed to assist with the protection of biodiversity hotspots in the South-East Asia and Pacific region. Relevant turtle-related activities included: conservation and strengthening of policy at three priority sites in the Sulu Sulawesi Sea; conservation of coral reef hotspots in the Bismarck Sea, Papua New Guinea; and support for marine protected areas as part of a broader network in Wakatobi National Park, Sulawesi, Indonesia.

21. Signatory States were invited to indicate the national frameworks in place to implement the IOSEA Marine Turtle MoU, particularly with regard to any national action plans and coordinating committees that may have been established. The results of the survey were as follows:

Signatory State	National Action Plan	Institutional arrangements
Australia	National recovery plan in place since June 2003	National turtle recovery group
Bangladesh	No national action plan yet	National committee, chaired by Chief, Forest Department
Cambodia	No national action plan, but activities conducted under new legislation	
Comoros	Action Plan published in October 2000	
Islamic Republic of Iran	No national action plan yet	
Jordan	National action plans being developed under PERSGA, of which turtles are one component	
Kenya	Sea turtle recovery action plan, 1997	Inter-agency Kenya Sea Turtle

Signatory State	National Action Plan	Institutional arrangements
		Conservation Committee (KESCOM)
Mauritius	No national action plan	Ministry of Fisheries solely responsible
Myanmar	Long-term plan in place	Department of Fisheries
Oman		Environment Ministry responsible; working with Fisheries Dept.
Pakistan	National Conservation Strategy, but no specific management plan	National Conservation Council, including provincial departments
Philippines	No national action plan (local level plans are encouraged)	No national committee, but collaboration with fisheries bureau on specific issues
Seychelles	National strategy and action plan set up with broad stakeholder involvement	Coordination by Marine Conservation Society of Seychelles (MCSS)
South Africa	Draft Conservation/Management Plan	Committee structure being worked out
Sri Lanka	Revision of national plan expected to be finalised in 2005	
Thailand	No national action plan yet	No national committee yet
United Kingdom	National conservation/management plan drawn up in 2004	National plan provides for establishment of a scientific advisory committee
United Republic of Tanzania	National action plan in progress	National committee established in 2004
United States	No single action plan (rather, species- and region-specific recovery plans)	No single committee (emphasis given to stakeholder involvement in development of recovery plans)
Viet Nam	National action plan approved	National steering committee established

(c) Other intergovernmental / nongovernmental initiatives

22. The observer from the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) drew attention to current regional and global activities of interest to the IOSEA MoU. Work was continuing on pan-Pacific Leatherback conservation, through longline bycatch mitigation trials in the Pacific. Bycatch investigations were also taking place in Indonesia, Philippines, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. A second phase of the project would trial circle hook/bait change combinations with selected Indonesian and Philippines longline fleets. WWF intended to extend this work in the near future to include distant water fleets operating in the Western Pacific. Attention was drawn to Smart Gear, the global competition run through WWF, which sought designs for bycatch mitigation gear. Interest in the inaugural contest was high, with the winner of a US\$ 25,000 prize to be announced in April 2005. It was envisaged that this would become a regular, possibly annual, event. Finally, WWF was developing a Regional Fisheries Body “scorecard”, which would consider the implementation of bycatch mitigation measures.

23. Mr Bundit Chokesanguan, Advisory Committee member, speaking on behalf of his parent organisation, the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center, reported that SEAFDEC had organised an expert meeting in December 2004 to plan turtle activities, involving ASEAN countries and Japan. A regional consultative meeting was to be held in late April 2005 to consider the 2005-2008 Regional Plan. Initiatives would focus on genetic studies, turtle tagging and satellite tracking, head start programmes, and interactions between turtles and fisheries. The latter would include the efficiency of circle versus J-hooks, quantification of interactions, and an assessment regarding the introduction of TEDs.

24. The representative of Thailand reported that the South-East Asia Sea Turtle Associative Research (SEASTAR) programme had commenced a four-year satellite tracking study on marine turtle migration. This would enable the compilation of population profiles and determination of mating patterns in certain areas. SEASTAR had met annually in December since 2000 to enhance the collection of information on turtle activities and research.

25. Concluding the discussion, the Coordinator thanked participants for having shared useful information about sub-regional activities. He requested that Signatory States promote the IOSEA MoU in these fora, and aim to align those sub-regional instruments with the objectives of the MoU where possible.

Agenda Item 8: Review of implementation of the Conservation and Management Plan

(a) National reporting

26. The Coordinator introduced document MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Doc.7.1 concerning the preparation of national reports, and gave a short presentation on the main features of the IOSEA website's online national report viewer. He noted that while virtually every Signatory State had submitted a national report, either using the online system or in hard copy, there was considerable variation in the degree to which they were complete and up to date. A new draft reporting template was introduced. Following feedback received at the Second Meeting of the Signatory States and comments from national reports, the Secretariat had made significant modifications aimed at streamlining and removing duplication from the original version. He clarified that, as far as possible, information contained in questions deleted as part of the revision would be integrated in other sections.

27. The Meeting welcomed the amendments to the revised template, including the addition of instructional comments. Some participants requested that the template accommodate additional information, such relative importance of particular sites and details of turtle populations. The Co-ordinator explained that whereas the IOSEA website had a separate interactive mapping system (IMapS) that was designed to accommodate such data, the national reports were meant to focus more on activities to conserve turtles and mitigate threats. There were constraints as to what the system could do, but there were other options for focussing special attention on species at future meetings. The Secretariat would, in any case, explore the possibility of adding a feature to the online editor that would allow users to upload attachments such as maps, photos and related publications.

28. Clarification was sought as to the status of national reports from non-Signatory States. The Co-ordinator indicated that at this stage, only Signatory States' national reports could be displayed on the IOSEA MoU website. Nevertheless, it would be beneficial for any non-Signatories that had prepared reports to keep them current, as this would ease their reporting load after joining the MoU.

29. A working group comprising Australia, Jordan, Oman and South Africa was established to review and propose any final adjustments to the draft template. The Meeting agreed that the Secretariat should incorporate the Working Group's comments and suggestions (introduced in document MT-IOSEA/SS.3/CRP.1), and finalise the template after the meeting. As a general remark, Dr Frazier, Advisory Committee member, considered it imperative that questions in the template regarding turtle data separate this information by species, management units, and life stages. He also recommended that Signatory States support their submissions with relevant citations, and proposed that they provide more information on the impacts of tourism as well as fisheries. The Co-ordinator explained that some of these points could already be accommodated and that there was ample scope within the template for Signatories to provide additional information; however at present there were technical limitations that prevented a more sophisticated breakdown of species-related data.

(b) Review of implementation of progress

30. The Co-ordinator introduced documents MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Doc.7.2, MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Doc.7.2 Annex, and MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Doc.7.2 Addendum, which constituted the most comprehensive review of marine turtle conservation activities ever compiled for the region. He noted that while almost all of the Signatory States had supplied information for this analysis, the provision of further information on non-governmental activities would be required to adequately reflect their efforts. Some of these activities had been captured in the Projects Database (and presented in MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Doc.7.2 Addendum) however it would require a separate exercise to integrate this information with the national reports.

31. The Secretariat had distilled an enormous volume of information into a relatively concise 12-page synthesis and a 4-page executive summary, reproduced for ease of reference at Annex 3. The Co-ordinator highlighted a number of interesting findings from the report, noting for example that: relatively few Signatories have regulations on the use of artificial lighting or the transit of vehicles in nesting areas; most countries direct their attention towards mangrove reforestation rather than sea grass habitat recovery; and several countries had taken steps to secure data on incidental capture and/or to encourage Regional Fishery Bodies to adopt marine turtle conservation measures. While Signatory States provided information on their priority marine turtle populations in need of conservation, there appeared to have been limited progress towards the incorporation of the provisions of the IOSEA Conservation and Management Plan into more specific plans at the national level. The most common capacity-building need identified was for trained personnel, followed by equipment and infrastructure, and programmatic support. The Co-ordinator said it would be helpful if Signatories provided further details regarding the effectiveness of their educational programs and attempts to involve stakeholders and local communities in the planning and/or implementation of conservation and management measures.

32. Delegates thanked the Secretariat for having undertaken this very detailed review, which was extremely useful in identifying gaps in implementation. Responding to a query about the development of objective criteria to assess the progress of implementation, the Co-ordinator stated that he had not had sufficient time to draft these criteria prior to the present meeting. Given the usefulness of the matrix that had been devised prior to the Second Meeting, the Secretariat intended to develop the criteria based on the revised template. The Secretariat reflected on the possibility of using part of the report to produce a more attractive publication, possibly supplemented with more information on species trends which was largely absent from the analysis. The Chairman summarised the general consensus that the review of implementation progress was a useful way to communicate the progress of the IOSEA MoU, and also highlighted to Signatory States areas for additional attention.

(c) Status reports on CMS/IOSEA-funded projects

33. The Meeting noted an information paper (document MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Doc.7.3), which summarised progress to date by a conservation/research project being carried out in India by the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust, with funding from CMS/IOSEA.

(d) Identification of priorities for concerted intervention

34. Referring to page 7 of document MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Doc.7.2, the Co-ordinator outlined a number of local management issues for which Signatory States had considered international cooperation to be necessary. These included, for example: illegal fishing in territorial waters/international trade, incidental capture of turtles by foreign fleets, harvest of turtles by neighbouring countries, aspects of management and enforcement/patrolling of territorial waters and fishing gear technology.

35. The Co-ordinator noted that these represented a useful collection of ideas that could serve as a starting point for a more thorough discussion about priorities for international collaboration. In preparing for this agenda point, the Advisory Committee had proposed that the deliberations be organised according to sub-regions and focus on: defining the specific problems; detailing the co-operative international approaches used to resolve them; evaluating what had worked; and noting what further collaboration and commitments were required, and who the key actors were.

36. Three working groups were set up to further discuss priorities for concerted intervention, as follows: (1) South-East Asia, plus Australia and the United States; (2) Northern Indian Ocean and Northwest Indian Ocean (combined group); and (4) Western Indian Ocean. All of the working groups concluded that incidental catch in fisheries and effective use of Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) appeared to be the most pressing issues facing the IOSEA region, requiring international collaboration.

37. While its findings were not formally presented to the Meeting, the combined Northern/Northwest Indian Ocean group examined a number of issues of general relevance. It determined that TEDs were not being used in India or Bangladesh, but were in use in Pakistan and Iran. Pakistan attributed its success with TEDs to training programmes, on board training and inspections, and the use of legislation to mandate their use. However it was noted that this technology would not be appropriate for all fishing practices in all countries, since conservation measures needed to be socially, culturally and economically relevant. The working group identified that technology transfer from organisations such as SEAFDEC, and long-term government commitment to enforcement and monitoring was critical. Agencies also needed to address perceptions by fisherman that TEDs led to reduced catch and were external imposts. This perception might be alleviated by the funding of credible studies regarding actual economic and catch impacts and the sharing of information between fishers.

38. The working group also advised of concerns regarding the identification of management units for turtle population research, especially for foraging grounds and developmental habitats. From experience, it was evident that collaboration provided unique sources of fundamental information, particularly when technology was expensive. Developing a system for sample collection, distribution, and analysis could alleviate the current piecemeal approach to research. It was proposed that the Secretariat could contribute to this process by facilitating contact between interested parties and institutions within the IOSEA region.

Agenda Item 9: General considerations pertaining to the Memorandum of Understanding

(a) Network of sites of importance for marine turtles

39. The Co-ordinator introduced document MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Doc. 8.1, noting that the proposal to establish a network of sites of importance had been discussed and agreed in principle at the Second Meeting of the Signatory States. The Secretariat had consulted the draft proposal over the previous year and had made substantial revisions. The latest version is reproduced at Annex 4. He outlined the purpose of the proposed network of sites and referred participants to the need to develop criteria to facilitate identification of relevant sites. As mentioned in paragraph 17 of the proposal, these might include ecological attributes, management considerations, and other factors. Sites might be recognized for reasons other than absolute numbers of turtles or species frequenting them. For example, the criteria might examine the utility of a given site for education purposes, possible status as an index beach, or even relative ease of access for monitoring purposes.

40. The Co-ordinator was of the view that it was important to identify sites that may not have been previously recognised, for example, as World Heritage or Ramsar sites, but were still of high value for turtle conservation. Dr. Hughes, Advisory Committee member, commented that World Heritage sites could also provide a benchmark, and derive benefits from recognition under this scheme, as they may not have been

protected for their marine turtle components. He suggested that there might be varying levels of recognition accorded to sites. Other members of the Advisory Committee concurred that the network could provide an opportunity to strengthen other efforts on different levels, depending on national circumstances which varied from one country to another.

41. In terms of process, the Co-ordinator confirmed that the World Heritage approach for nominations, whereby Signatories submitted indicative lists in advance for scrutiny, could be a useful model to follow. Concern was expressed that there could be some envy among countries if their sites were selected or not selected. Dr. Hughes raised the point that site recognition could be considered separately from the need for financial assistance, perhaps in a policy paper.

42. Delegates thanked the Secretariat for having prepared this comprehensive proposal and indicated that they had many sites in mind for possible inclusion. It was suggested that sites should be included from all stages of the turtle life cycle. It was important to keep the proposal straightforward and, ideally, available resources should be channelled directly into conservation rather than administration. Responding to a question about the appropriateness of the term “network”, the Co-ordinator noted several features of the proposal where a partnership would bring benefits that would not otherwise occur working independently, such as exchange of information and experience, common training opportunities, and leveraging funds.

43. The Chairman concluded that there was broad support for the idea of a network of sites, as it could provide practical conservation outcomes under the IOSEA MoU. The Meeting agreed to seek further advice from the Advisory Committee regarding the development of criteria for the selection of sites, and to provide further comments on the paper to the Secretariat by mid-May 2005. The Secretariat would circulate the proposed criteria for comment once they were available in draft form. Thereafter, it would finalise the complete proposal and seek Ministerial endorsement of the concept, in order to enhance its potential to attract major funding. The proposal could be packaged in different ways to suit the interests of different donors, who may wish to support activities in individual countries that participated in the network. Signatory States were encouraged to seek additional funding for both the network and specific aspects or sites within their countries.

44. Concluding the agenda item, the Meeting heard a presentation from Mr. Earl Possardt on the United States’ *Marine Turtle Conservation Act, 2004*. He noted that this legislation provided for a grants fund to support conservation activities in foreign countries. While the first round of modest funding had been finalised, a further round was likely to be announced around August or September 2005. It was estimated that anywhere from USD 300,000 to 1.5 million would be available each year to fund projects around the globe. More information was available from the following website:
<http://international.fws.gov/animals/marineturtleprogram.htm>.

(b) Preparations for 2006 Year of the Turtle Campaign

45. The Secretariat introduced document MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Doc.8.2 regarding preparations for the Year of the Turtle (YoT). After discussing ideas in sub-regional working groups, the Meeting confirmed its intention to proceed with a coordinated, region-wide campaign in 2006. The campaign would promote broad turtle conservation themes, and was expected to include an interesting suite of local, national, and international activities.

46. It was agreed that the YoT would be formally launched to coincide with the holding of the Fourth Meeting of the Signatory States in early 2006. The venue and precise timing of that conference would be determined over the coming months. The Secretariat mentioned its intention to explore the possibility of linkages with the SEASTAR2000 scientific symposium, which is traditionally held in Bangkok, though normally a few months earlier than the IOSEA meeting. A number of regional bodies, such as the Southeast

Asian Fisheries Development Centre (SEAFDEC) and the IUCN Marine Turtle Specialist Group (MTSG), suggested arranging activities back-to-back with the conference to encourage cross-participation. In addition, it was proposed that national programmes be inaugurated at the same time.

47. The Chairman noted the keen interest to participate and offers of assistance from many of the non-governmental organisations present as observers, including the Environmental Protection of Asia Foundation, IUCN-MTSG, Scubazoo, Turtle Conservation Project (TCP) - Sri Lanka, and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). Additionally, TRAFFIC Southeast Asia, which was not present, had expressed interest in associating a number of new trade and enforcement-related issues with the YoT. The Meeting recognised the extremely valuable contribution that these and other organisations would bring to the campaign, and it also welcomed the involvement of non-Signatory States in order to promote an all-inclusive campaign.

48. The Meeting noted a number of issues that would need to be addressed, based on experience learned from similar events in the past. Among them:

- the necessity and/or desirability, or otherwise, of attracting major corporate sponsorship;
- in some cultures, focusing on one issue over a period of time might lead to “over-saturation” and could affect public support for future programmes; and
- it was noted that countries and organisations participating in the 1995 Year of the Turtle for the Pacific tended not to implement ongoing projects, leading to less optimal outcomes.

49. Participants supported the suggestion that, as far as possible, the 2006 YoT be used to launch long-term activities, rather than stand-alone events, which would continue beyond the conclusion of the campaign. These might include: the development of national action plans, increased protection of nesting and foraging areas, declaration of new protected areas, establishment of transboundary national parks, initiation or extension of long-term census work, release of satellite-tagged turtles as part of a long-term monitoring programme etc. The Secretariat attempted to capture, in a separate table, the specific ideas mentioned by participants (Annex 5). It was noted also that it might be desirable to associate existing, ongoing conservation activities with the YoT, perhaps by adding a slightly new dimension.

50. Support was expressed for the development of common YoT materials, including publications and videos or DVD resources. A number of observer organisations had extensive involvement in film production, and described how they might contribute (e.g. through provision of film footage etc.). It was noted that a professional video had been developed for the 1995 Pacific Year of the Turtle, which had been screened on television in three languages and had communicated a strong, consistent message about regional turtle priorities.

51. Attention was drawn to a preliminary communications strategy that had been prepared for WWF-Indonesia, which might serve as a useful template for more detailed YoT planning. In any case, a briefing package would be useful for all entities involved in promoting the campaign. Participants expressed a preference for positive mottos and themes, in order to encourage a sustained change in attitudes towards turtle conservation. A unifying logo, possibly based on the existing IOSEA logo, would need to be developed.

52. Promotional work and generation of additional support and awareness could be achieved through collaboration with embassies and regional organisations. Of the latter, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Regional Organisation for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME) were specifically mentioned as possible collaborators in the areas of education/awareness and fisheries. Australia indicated its intention to raise the YoT at an upcoming

international fisheries meeting (International Fishers Forum, taking place in Japan in July 2005) to solicit input there.

53. Solicitation of funds for YoT projects was also raised as an important issue; and in some cases co-operation between Signatory and non-Signatory States would be required to gain regional sponsorship. The representative of Australia announced that his Government had already allocated AUSS\$ 55,000 for Year of the Turtle activities, and would shortly be channelling these funds to the Secretariat. The representative of the United Kingdom indicated that an application for funding had been submitted, but the outcome was still pending. A number of non-governmental organisations had also identified funds for YoT activities.

54. In light of these comments, the Secretariat agreed to circulate an official letter outlining the decision of the Signatory States to proceed with the YoT, in order to facilitate sponsorship and planning, and to stimulate additional ideas for YoT activities. Noting that a number of organisations would be meeting by end of April 2005 to discuss 2006 plans and funding requirements, the Secretariat proposed to circulate the letter and summary table by mid-April, and requested that organisations with funding needs submit them also by that date.

55. The Meeting acknowledged a need to establish a Steering Committee to oversee the campaign. It was suggested that the membership be limited to fewer than 10 members, with adequate regional representation and participation from all groups concerned – Government, Advisory Committee, NGO and IGO. The responsibilities of the Committee would include: developing the overall campaign themes and motto; identifying priority regional turtle issues; co-ordinating the allocation of resources; and conveying YoT-related information to Signatory States, NGOs, IGOs and other interested partners.

56. Participants were asked to signal their interest in serving on the Committee, at least provisionally. It was agreed that the members would be drawn from five Signatory States (Australia, Bangladesh, Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan, and South Africa), one non-Signatory (Timor-Leste), one Advisory Committee member (Dr. Limpus), two NGOs (Scubazoo, WWF), and one IGO (SACEP). The membership could be revisited once the YoT planning was somewhat more advanced. The Secretariat undertook to examine the possibility of creating a list-serve to facilitate communications among the members of the Steering Committee.

(c) Traditional and cultural use of marine turtles

57. Dr. Frazier, Advisory Committee member, introduced the document he had authored concerning traditional and cultural use of marine turtles (MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Doc 8.3). He stressed the complexity of the topic and the importance of fully understanding current use in the context of traditional and historical use. Also it was recommended that Signatory States distinguish between data collected on consumptive and non-consumptive uses. A number of Signatories agreed that this would be a useful practice, and proceeded to provide examples of turtle use in their countries. These accounts highlighted the difficulty of preventing consumptive use through legal restrictions. The point was raised that traditional use of turtles may be under-reported due to a lack of information. Hence, traditional and cultural use should be considered as having a “high impact” until proven otherwise. There was also a perception by some communities that turtles were mainly being killed by the fishery industry, so it was advisable to undertake parallel campaigns in both sectors.

58. Dr. Frazier emphasised the need to specify turtle species and management units when assessing the impacts of use. The Chairman concluded the discussion by reiterating that this complex issue needed to be carefully considered by all Signatory States with respect to their national and local contexts.

(d) Policy paper on hatchery management

59. Dr. Limpus, Advisory Committee Chair, updated the Meeting on the progress of his paper regarding this issue (MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Doc. 8.4). As hatchery management was part of a much broader issue, he had expanded the scope of the document to consider the full range of activities involving hatchling production. The report was not ready for circulation at the present meeting, but would be made available in the next few months.

60. Dr. Limpus referred participants to an excellent SEAFDEC publication “A Guide to Set-up and Manage Sea Turtles Hatcheries in the South-East Asian Region” as a starting point for those using or contemplating the establishment of a hatchery. He recommended that hatcheries be considered a last resort, given the potential range of adverse impacts. Delegates from a variety of countries including Malaysia outlined examples of positive and negative impacts resulting from hatchery use. There was a general consensus that *in situ* protection was preferable where possible, when threats to eggs such as predation could be satisfactorily addressed in a natural setting.

(e) Proposal for review of information on fisheries-turtle interactions in the IOSEA region

61. The Co-ordinator introduced the topic of fisheries–turtle interactions in the IOSEA region and referred the Meeting to the three recommendations in paragraphs 18, 19, and 20 of the relevant paper (MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Doc. 8.5). Parties endorsed the recommendations proposing closer co-operation between the IOSEA MoU Secretariat and relevant fisheries commissions, and the development of a reporting framework within the IOSEA MoU for the FAO Guidelines to Reduce Sea Turtle Mortality in Fishing Operations. The third proposal, suggesting further studies and exchanging information about fisheries-turtle interactions in the IOSEA region, was subject to some discussion. The observer from WWF International indicated would be undertaking an assessment of regional fisheries bodies, though not as detailed as a recent BirdLife International analysis. It was concluded that the Secretariat and WWF should continue to exchange information on whatever approaches they were pursuing.

62. Dr. Mortimer, Advisory Committee member, introduced a draft resolution (MT-IOSEA/SS.3/CRP 2) on the topic of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission and the need for that body to expand its turtle bycatch data collection and conservation measures. After in-depth consideration and revision of the draft resolution, to mention the desirability of developing a memorandum of understanding between the IOTC and the IOSEA secretariats, the resolution (reproduced at Annex 6a) was adopted by consensus. It was further agreed that the IOSEA Secretariat would transmit the resolution to its IOTC counterpart. It was recommended that all Signatory States communicate with their respective fisheries departments about the need to encourage the IOTC to become more responsibly engaged in turtle bycatch data collection and turtle conservation in general.

63. Concluding the discussion, Dr. Limpus, Advisory Committee Chairman, added that while he did not wish to diminish the importance of longline fisheries’ impacts on turtles, he believed that the IOSEA MoU needed to direct attention to gill net bycatch. He noted that there appeared to be organised efforts in some countries for the directed take of turtles for the stuffed turtle trade.

(f) Exploratory paper on possible extension of the geographic scope of the MoU

64. The Co-ordinator introduced document MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Doc 8.6, which had been prepared jointly with Australia. The paper outlined two options for developing an institutional arrangement similar to the IOSEA MoU in the Pacific, either by extending the range of the IOSEA MoU and effectively creating another sub-region with co-ordination provided through SPREP, or developing a new Pacific regional agreement. He noted that the paper did not go into great detail as it had been assigned a low priority by the

Signatories at their Second Meeting. Many fundamental questions remained unanswered. Certain Signatories maintained the view that the IOSEA MoU should continue to focus its efforts on increasing the participation of non-Signatory States in the region, before moving further afield. After discussion, it was agreed that the IOSEA MoU Secretariat, Australia and SPREP would collaborate on a further elaboration the exploratory options paper, with a view to presenting it at a Pacific Regional Environment Programme meeting in September 2005.

(g) Timetable for possible amendment of the legal character of the MoU

65. The Co-ordinator briefly introduced this standing agenda item. He noted that apart from information gleaned from the analysis of national reports, suggesting that Signatory States were roughly evenly divided on the issue of amending the legal character of the MoU, there were no new developments. The new reporting template might offer Signatories an opportunity to express their preference more clearly, from a temporal stand point. The Meeting agreed to revisit the matter at its next meeting.

Agenda Item 10: Special considerations related to the impacts of the Indian Ocean tsunami

66. The Co-ordinator introduced document MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Doc.9, which included suggestions of a possible role for the IOSEA MoU in rehabilitation and research efforts in the aftermath of the December 2004 tsunami. Extracts from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report "After the Tsunami: Rapid Environmental Assessment" were circulated as document MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Inf.8. He reported that the Secretariat had compiled information on the impacts of the tsunami on various projects and habitats within the IOSEA region, which had been made available on the IOSEA MoU website. The observer from the IUCN-MTSG commended the Secretariat for its timely and detailed work on priority areas for relief efforts; and advised that the MTSG had set up a relief fund to rebuild conservation projects impacted by the tsunami.

67. Dr. Kongkiat Kittiwattanawong presented an overview of the tsunami impacts in Thailand. Coral reefs and a small percentage of sea grass beds were damaged by the tsunami, particularly on the west coast/Andaman Sea side. To address the damage, underwater clean-up was underway to remove debris, reposition coral, and reattach broken sea fans. While there was initially high turbidity around some islands, this abated after a few days, suggested rapid exchange of water. In some areas water quality was found to be higher than before the tsunami, as there was less human pollution. Overall, the impacts on biota were considered minimal. A variety of animals were found injured or deceased, with around 47 turtles rescued. Turtles ranged young sub-adults to full grown male turtles. As no stranded hatchlings were found, it was assumed they had returned to the sea. PTT satellite transmitters were attached to some surviving adults. One of the important nesting beaches – Koh Phra Thong was significantly damaged, and fishing communities were also heavily hit.

68. The Meeting expressed appreciation for the informative presentation and sympathy for those affected by the tsunami. The Chairman acknowledged that notwithstanding the favourable water quality analyses, long-term environmental management of the area remained a difficult task. He noted that as less than 1% of mangroves were adversely affected, certain ecosystems may be resilient to these kinds of events. He added that while Thailand had received many offers of financial aid, the Government had decided to accept only technical assistance.

69. Mr. Thushan Kapurusinghe reported on the effects of the tsunami on marine turtles and turtle conservation in Sri Lanka. Coastal communities had suffered many deaths, and turtle projects there had sustained damage. Relief work had been ongoing, and conservation programs such as the Turtle Conservation Project (TCP) were restarted as soon as possible to ensure local people remained employed. Other activities included the re-evaluation of hatcheries, and holding of a workshop to update the national

marine turtle action plan. He reported that the Rekawa beach area would soon be declared a new turtle refuge.

70. Participants expressed their appreciation to Mr. Kapurusinghe for sharing these insights. Further brief interventions were made on the situation in Bangladesh, India and Indonesia. A discussion followed on the re-establishment of hatcheries in Thailand and Sri Lanka. It was suggested that introducing a strict permit system for hatcheries would encourage better management. The Meeting noted that Thailand would hold a meeting in the next year to review its egg harvesting and hatchery practices.

71. The representative of the United States believed that reconstruction was paramount to improve human welfare, and observed that if additional new fishing gear was introduced there could be an increase in catch, as well as turtle bycatch. The long-term effects of donating fishing trawlers to the region were discussed in this context. The United States sponsored a draft resolution on the subject of tsunami restoration activities (MT-IOSEA/SS.3/CRP.3). After thorough discussion in plenary, with some preambular text introduced at the request of Thailand, the Meeting adopted the resolution (reproduced at Annex 6b).

72. Dr. Limpus, Advisory Committee Chairman, remarked that lessons could be learned from the impacts of the tsunami on turtle populations and habitats. He noted that it was likely that the 1994 East Java tsunami experience would provide some direction for activities. He expressed concern for the survival of Leatherback turtles in the Indian Ocean, given their restricted numbers and nesting areas, which included the Nicobar Islands and Sri Lanka.

73. Accordingly, the Meeting requested the Advisory Committee to provide a general assessment of the tsunami's impacts on turtles and turtle habitats, giving priority to the completion of an assessment of the status of the Leatherback turtle in the Indian Ocean before the next Meeting of the Signatory States. The Secretariat requested that Signatory States contribute baseline and other information to the Advisory Committee for these purposes.

Agenda Item 11: Advisory Committee

Report on activities and future work programme

74. The Chairman of the Advisory Committee, Dr. Limpus, outlined the Committee's activities over the past year. He observed that to date, the bulk of the Committee's advice had been provided to the Secretariat, rather than to Signatory States. While this was only a minor issue, Committee members remained keen to provide further support to Signatories with their conservation and management efforts. Dr. Limpus also drew attention to the networking benefits resulting from back-to-back scientific meetings. He mentioned that the Committee was looking at reporting on the management and population status of one or two turtle species per year, in parallel to the national reports. Both the Chair and other participants thanked the Advisory Committee for their work, and expressed support for the idea of evaluating the status of a number of turtle species each year.

75. Dr. Limpus related the success of turtle conservation efforts in South Africa and commended the decades-long efforts of his colleague, Dr. Hughes, in this regard. He also noted that the world's first conservation attempt for turtles had been initiated in Sarawak, Malaysia in the 1950s. He reported the good news that the population decline in green turtles appeared to have finally ceased.

Nomination of members and review of terms of reference

76. The Secretariat introduced document MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Doc. 10 and related attachments. The Meeting had two main issues to consider under this agenda item: (1) the appointment of members of the Advisory

Committee and (2) a proposal to include selected regional representatives in the Advisory Committee from among the IOSEA Focal Points.

77. The Co-ordinator reported that there had been no objection from Signatory States to the proposal that the three Advisory Committee members who had been appointed inter-sessionally be re-appointed for another term. The Meeting had thus to: (1) decide on the reappointment of three current Advisory Committee members whose term was ending, but who had been duly renominated by Signatory States; (2) consider a proposal from the Advisory Committee to fill an outstanding vacancy in the area of protected areas management; and (3) consider two additional candidates whose names had been put forward by Signatory States to serve on Committee. The Meeting had agreed to consider nominations received after the closing date, given that this would be in the interest of the functioning of the Advisory Committee.

78. Regarding the second main issue, the Secretariat proposed that the four IOSEA sub-regions (South-East Asia “plus”, Northern Indian Ocean, Northwest Indian Ocean, and Western Indian Ocean) each agree to nominate, by consensus, a focal point who would serve on the Advisory Committee on a two-year rotational basis. The intent of increasing the membership of the Advisory Committee from eight to twelve members was to ensure more balanced geographical representation and to provide additional feedback inter-sessionally, at no additional cost to the MoU. If accepted, the terms of reference of the Advisory Committee would need to be adjusted accordingly.

79. Support was expressed for the inclusion of regional representatives in the Advisory Committee, but as observers rather than full members. Queries were raised regarding the process of selecting regional focal points, and whether this move would introduce an undesired political element into the Committee. The observer from the IUCN-MTSG proposed that that body also be invited to attend Advisory Committee meetings as an *ex officio* member, noting that the MTSG comprised numerous international turtle specialists and was willing to fund its own attendance.

80. The Meeting agreed to form a screening committee to evaluate the role of regional representatives in the work and meetings of the Advisory Committee, the selection of appointees to the Advisory Committee from the list of nominees, and the proposal that the MTSG be invited as an *ex officio* member of the Advisory Committee. The representative of the United States, Mr. David Hogan, agreed to act as Chair, with other members drawn delegations of Australia, South Africa, United Kingdom, United States and one impartial member of the Advisory Committee.

81. The Chair of the screening committee reported back to the plenary as follows. The committee had reviewed the list of nominees and had recommended the re-appointment of Drs. Frazier, Limpus and Mortimer. The committee had also reviewed the new nominees. An analysis was conducted based on criteria established through the terms of reference and in discussions of plenary sessions during the first two Signatory States meetings, as well as discussions of the Advisory Committee itself.

82. After significant deliberation, the screening committee had agreed to support the Advisory Committee’s recommended nominee, Dr. Nyawira Muthiga, based on her expertise in marine turtle conservation and protected areas. The committee also took note of her qualification of serving as chair of KESCOM, a community-based organisation. The committee decided that although impressive in scope, the expertise offered by the other two nominees would not bring new, additional or necessary qualifications to the Advisory Committee and did not recommend their appointment.

83. The committee determined that it would be preferable that, in addition to the core members of the Advisory Committee, each of the four sub-regions of the MoU be invited to participate as observers in the Committee’s work on a voluntary basis through a single representative. That individual could be a Focal

Point from a Signatory State of the sub-region, or another competent person working on sea turtle conservation who would be in a position to attend meetings of the Advisory Committee and Signatory States.

84. It was proposed that the regional representative be chosen by consensus from among the Signatory States of that sub-region. The decision of those Signatory States on their designated regional representative should be communicated to the Secretariat before the end of the Meeting of the Signatory States, or as soon as possible thereafter. The main criterion for selection of a regional representative would be an ability to effectively communicate to the Advisory Committee and the Secretariat the views and the issues of concern of the countries of the sub-region they represented.

85. Regional representative appointments should be effective for two regular Meetings of the Signatory States, and normally the individuals would not be eligible for immediate reappointment (i.e. it was expected that the Focal Point appointments would rotate on a biennial basis). Should an individual regional representative not be in a position to serve his/her full term, the Signatory States of the sub-region would agree among themselves on a replacement.

86. The screening committee chairman clarified that this recommendation had been made only with regard to participation by regional representatives in the work or meetings of the Advisory Committee, and not with regard to the administration of or communications relating to the implementation or management of the MoU itself; and that such an arrangement should be adopted on an experimental basis to allow for a review in the near term to determine if this arrangement best served the needs of the Advisory Committee and the Signatory States.

87. Regarding the proposal that the MTSG be invited as an *ex-officio* member of the Advisory Committee, the screening committee noted that several of the current or potential Advisory Committee experts were also members of the MTSG, and in that light did not feel strongly that there would be an additional benefit from inviting the MTSG to serve as an institutional *ex-officio* member. However, the committee considered that if the composition of the Advisory Committee were to change in future, in such a way that its MTSG representation were diminished, the Signatory States should again consider the proposal to invite the MTSG to participate as an *ex-officio* member of the Advisory Committee.

88. The Meeting thanked the screening committee for its work and after consideration, adopted its recommendations. In the light of these conclusions, it was agreed that the terms of reference for the Advisory need not be amended and that the decision in respect of regional observers be reflected instead in the meeting report.

Sub-regional representation

89. The issue of sub-regional observer representation in the Advisory Committee was taken up in each of the working groups: (1) South-East Asia, Australia and the United States; (2) Northern Indian Ocean and Northwest Indian Ocean (combined); and (3) Western Indian Ocean.

90. The South-East Asia group reported that Indonesia had been suggested as the sub-regional representative, but that it was considered more appropriate for the candidate to be selected in consultation with SEAFDEC. The Northern Indian Ocean group did not reach consensus, as some members were unclear about the criteria to use to select a representative (for instance, whether or not the individual should be a government representative). The delegates undertook to consult with their Governments, before finalising a view. The Western Indian Ocean group reported that it too had deferred a decision since members were hoping to make sub-regional arrangements through the IOSEA-Nairobi Convention task force. The Northwest Indian Ocean group confirmed that the Islamic Republic of Iran had been selected to fulfil the representational role for that sub-region for the following two years.

91. Concluding the discussion, the Chairman noted that while the concept of sub-regional observer participation had been agreed, in most cases the selection of specific representatives had not been resolved at this meeting. Signatory State representatives from each sub-region were encouraged to continue their dialogue inter-sessionally and to communicate any agreed arrangements, even if only interim, to the Secretariat.

Agenda Item 12: Financial and administrative matters.

(a) Review of expenditure and status of voluntary contributions

92. The Co-ordinator presented document MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Doc.11, and outlined the contents of the associated annexes. He reiterated his gratitude to all of the Signatory States and other organisations that had contributed funds and in-kind support, and advised that funding received had been used judiciously to stay on budget.

(b) Work programme and indicative budget for 2005-2006

93. The Co-ordinator drew attention to the indicative work programme outlined in the Report of the Secretariat (document MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Doc. 5, paragraph 38). The budget estimates for 2005-2006 were considered realistic and in keeping with the voluntary nature of the available funding. Higher amounts had been budgeted for consultancies, in connection with anticipated Year of the Turtle and other activities, and for meetings, reflecting more attendance expected at the Fourth Meeting of the Signatory States.

94. The Meeting took note of the budget and statement of expenditure, as presented. Responding to a query, the Co-ordinator indicated that his parent organisation, the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) covered a portion of the indicated salary cost. It was hoped that this arrangement would continue, if agreed by the CMS Parties at their conference in November 2005.

(c) Additional sources of funding for implementation

95. The Co-ordinator emphasised that according to current projections of income from all sources, there was sufficient funding to cover the core operating costs of the Secretariat, with very little provision for consultancies, only through the end of 2005. All of the available funds – amounting to about US\$ 250,000, including the pledges made thus far for 2005 – would be exhausted by the end of December 2005, with no reserve going into 2006. He added that a critical deadline would be reached in July-August 2005 when the Secretariat would be requested to confirm acceptance of another “Youth Ambassador” from Australia for one year beginning September 2005 to assist, among other things, with Year of the Turtle activities. He said the Secretariat would be morally obliged to decline this generous offer of support if there were not an assurance by that time, of adequate funding to continue the IOSEA MoU programme for the entire period of the placement.

96. He explained that continuation of the IOSEA MoU programme as it currently existed into 2006 would be contingent on: (1) existing donors continuing to provide voluntary contributions, and pledging those funds well in advance; (2) some or all of those donors increasing the funding they provide in support of Secretariat operations, meetings and related activities; and (3) identification of new sources of funding. Signatory States were urged to keep this in mind when considering pledges of support for the coming year and, if at all possible, to communicate concrete pledges of support for 2006 by July 2005.

97. In response, the representative of Australia reiterated that its financial contribution to date had been supplemented by additional in-kind support, such as the Australian Youth Ambassador for Development. In

the next weeks, his agency would be transferring a further AUSD 30,000 as core support for 2006, and an additional AUSD 55,000 which had been earmarked for the Year of the Turtle. He urged other countries to provide the necessary financial support in a timely manner to ensure that the hard work from the last three years did not go to waste. The representative of the United Kingdom flagged her Government's intention to provide support, but noted that due to the budget cycle, details would only be available in two to three months. The representative of the United States drew attention to the contribution pledged by Congress of USD 50,000 for 2005, which had not yet been transferred. He anticipated that a comparable amount would be forthcoming in 2006, and undertook to provide as early an indication as possible.

Agenda Item 13: Further development of implementation tools

98. Having presented the many features of the IOSEA website, the Secretariat referred the Meeting to a detailed questionnaire on the subject and asked for all participants to provide their feedback by the end of proceedings.

Agenda Item 14: Any other business

Forthcoming meetings and events

99. The Co-ordinator introduced document MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Doc. 13 (Organisation of the Fourth Meeting of the Signatory States) and referred also to document MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Inf.6 regarding indicative requirements for hosting such a meeting. He reminded participants that that meeting would mark the launch of the 2006 Year of the Turtle campaign and thus represented an excellent opportunity for the host country to showcase its marine turtle conservation activities. He reminded delegates that the IOSEA MoU intended for a different country to host the Meeting of the Signatory States each year, which had yet to happen. While the UN conference facilities in Bangkok continued to provide an excellent venue, the Year of the Turtle warranted a special arrangement. Delegates were encouraged to take the merits of his idea back to their capitals, and to discuss with the relevant authorities the possibility of hosting that historic meeting.

Agenda Item 15: Closure of the meeting

100. There being no other business, the Chairman thanked the participants for their valuable contributions and the Secretariat for the excellent logistical and substantive preparations, and declared the meeting closed.