



## **TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE NORTHERN INDIAN OCEAN - MARINE TURTLE TASK FORCE**

### ***Membership:***

Current Signatory States to the IOSEA Marine Turtle Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) from the Northern Indian Ocean region, consisting of Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, selected experts from nongovernmental organizations and scientific institutions from these countries, as well as observers from other relevant organizations contributing to or affecting marine turtle conservation, as required.

### ***Objectives:***

The objective of the Task Force is to serve explicitly to facilitate implementation of the IOSEA Marine Turtle MoU (including its Conservation and Management Plan) in the Northern Indian Ocean sub-region and, in particular, the regional work programme decided by the Task Force.

The objective of the IOSEA MoU is to protect, conserve, replenish and recover marine turtles and their habitats, based on the best scientific evidence, taking into account the environmental, socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the signatory States.

The NIO MTTF is therefore a technical committee spanning both scientific and management expertise.

### ***Nomination and Appointment***

The NIO-IOSEA Marine Turtle MoU Task Force shall be comprised of:

- One country representative from each of the five signatory States of the NIO region, who can be the IOSEA Focal Point or an alternate, depending on the expertise required under the work programme of the Task Force;
- One expert from a selected nongovernmental organization or scientific institution, appointed by the IOSEA signatory State;
- Observers from other relevant organizations and institutions contributing to or affecting marine turtle conservation, as proposed by the Chair of the Task Force in consultation with the Task Force members or the IOSEA Secretariat.

The Task Force members should serve for three years and are eligible for re-nomination and reappointment pending Government approval.

The Task Force shall elect its own Chair and Vice-Chair from among its members on a three-year rotational basis. The Chair and Vice-chair are eligible for re-election for a maximum of two consecutive terms. The Chair and Vice-Chair shall be the principal point of contact between the Task Force, IOSEA Secretariat and other Stakeholders.

## ***Rules of Procedure***

The Task Force shall decide its own regional work programme in line with the priorities identified by the latest signatory States Meeting with the support of the IOSEA Advisory Committee, if necessary.

The Task Force shall organise its own business and strive to reach all decisions by consensus.

A quorum shall be complete when at least one member from each country is present in a meeting.

The members of the Task Force shall communicate the implementation of the regional work programme to the Chair of the Task Force, who shall provide annual updates on the activities and implementation of the regional work programme of the Task Force to the IOSEA Secretariat as well as to each of the Meetings of signatory States.

## ***Meetings and communications***

To minimise costs, the Task Force should conduct as much of its activity as possible through electronic communication on a regular basis.

The Task Force should meet annually.

The Task Force should strive to meet in conjunction with the Meeting of IOSEA Signatory States or in conjunction with meetings of other international and regional bodies to review progress, confirm funding and decide on a regional work programme.

The Chair and/or Vice Chair should endeavour to participate in the relevant meetings of the IOSEA Signatory States and may also participate on behalf of the Task Force in the meetings of related regional and international instruments and networks. Wherever possible, the other members of the Task Force should also participate in the meetings of the IOSEA Signatory States.

## ***Mandate***

### **Strengthen regional cooperation and coordination**

- Serve as the coordinating and advisory body to Signatories from the NIO sub-region on marine turtle conservation.
- Develop linkages and dialogue between the conservation sector and other sectors and industries, such as development, tourism, planning, economy, fisheries, protected areas etc., and encourage National Committees to make these linkages.
- Advocate and direct collaborative efforts for marine turtle conservation among stakeholders, including governments, management authorities, the private sector, coastal communities and non-governmental organisations.
- Ensure good relations are maintained among Governments, NGOs, regional, national and local groups and individuals interested in marine turtle conservation, by conveying information to support ideas, goals, achievements and lessons learned.

### **Review and Reporting**

- Develop and standardize protocols for data collection, management and data sharing for research and monitoring programmes.
- Develop methods to regionally review the collective implementation of national commitments to the IOSEA Marine Turtle MoU, making use of the standardised IOSEA National Report template.

- Review and recommend best practice principles for activities requiring the interaction with turtles such as monitoring, education facilities, such as rehabilitation centres and hatcheries, filming and ecotourism ventures.
- Promote both biophysical and socio-economic monitoring and more effective coordination with regional and international monitoring programmes.

### Planning, Conservation and Management

- Collaborate with National Committees, NGO's, regional, national and local groups and individuals interested in marine turtle conservation to recommend coherent sub-regional priorities for marine turtle conservation, based on the IOSEA CMP.
- Encourage signatories and non-signatories to the MoU to develop national marine turtle conservation action plans or strategies within the context of the regional framework of the IOSEA CMP.
- Work with National Committees to ensure national planning is compatible with marine turtle conservation planning across the region.
- Obtain government endorsement for a regional strategy.
- Collaborate with National Committees to prioritise future work for the implementation of the IOSEA MoU with individual respect given to each countries situation.
- Solicit funds for activities to be undertaken by the NIO-IOSEA Marine Turtle MoU Task Force and assist in fundraising for other marine turtle conservation activities/projects that will benefit the region and individual countries.
- Assist National Committees to solicit funding for national conservation activities.

### Capacity Building

- Support the development of local capacity in research, management and governance by identifying capacity needs, implementing exchange programmes or (where possible) seeking resources to conduct research and monitoring programmes.
- Facilitate the creation or strengthening of National Committees in all countries.
- Encourage National Governments to recognise local issues and establish national legislation or enforcement to further protect marine turtles.

### Facilitate Communication

- Provide and facilitate access to technical advice. Act as a reference body and provide advice on proposals for marine turtle conservation projects in the region. Encourage proposals to have a regional perspective and provide linkages between local, national and regional networks where possible.
- Facilitate linkages and collaboration with regional organisations such as IOTC, BOBP-IGO, SACEP, BOBLME Project, SRCWPP, IUCN, WWF, relevant SAARC Centres, etc.
- Facilitate communication and the dissemination of information for the purposes of scientific and public awareness.
- Facilitate and support communication at the national level and serve as a platform to coordinate local initiatives (where required in the absence of national committees).
- Encourage active participation in sub-/regional meetings by institutions and relevant parties in order to raise awareness about priority and emerging issues concerning marine turtles.

Considering the current level of implementation, it is clear that the sub-region has very limited resources for implementation. It is therefore expected that the responsibilities and activities should not be reliant on many additional resources from governments. All of the NIO-MTTF activities will take place in consultation with the IOSEA Secretariat, and will seek additional resources, opportunities and frameworks.