



**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING  
ON THE CONSERVATION AND  
MANAGEMENT OF MARINE TURTLES  
AND THEIR HABITATS OF THE INDIAN  
OCEAN AND SOUTH-EAST ASIA**

CMS/IOSEA/MOS8/Doc.14.1.c

11 October 2019

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8<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE SIGNATORY STATES

Da Nang, Viet Nam, 21-25 October 2019

Agenda Item 14.1

**SCHEDULING OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

*(Prepared by the Secretariat)*

Action Requested:

- Consider the options presented
- Decide on the future frequency and timing of Advisory Committee Meetings.

## SCHEDULING OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

1. The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Advisory Committee (found [here](#)) determine the following:

*9. To minimize costs, the Advisory Committee should conduct as much of its activity as possible through electronic communication. Regular meetings of the Advisory Committee should occur immediately prior to the regular meetings of the Signatory States, also to minimize travel and meeting costs. At the direction or approval of the Signatory States, the Advisory Committee may hold additional meetings.*

*10. The Advisory Committee Chair should participate in the meetings of the Signatory States, and may also participate in the meetings of related and associated agreements and organisations that the Signatory States deem relevant to the work of the MoU. The other members of the Advisory Committee are encouraged to participate as observers in the meetings of the Signatory States.*

2. The Advisory Committee has so far held all its meetings back-to-back with the Meetings of the Signatory States. This arrangement has the advantage of making it easier for AC Members to attend the Meeting of the Signatories but allows no time for Signatories to read and consult on any advice coming from the AC's discussion so it can be adequately taken into account by the MOS immediately following it.
3. Many of the Agreements and MOUs of the CMS Family used to follow a similar model, including CMS itself, which used to hold the meetings of the Scientific Council immediately prior to the Conference of the Parties (COP). However, in recent years, most of these instruments moved away from this practice, with Parties or Signatories requesting their technical advisory body to meet several months before the decision-making meeting. Since 2014, the CMS Scientific Council has been meeting approximately four months before COP, and the arrangement is much preferred by Councillors, the Parties and the Secretariat.
4. Similarly, the Sharks MOU, which is comparable to IOSEA in many ways, having a similar sized AC and MOS, also changed from holding the AC meeting immediately before MOS to having it six months or more in advance. AC Members expressed their appreciation for this change, as they were able to deliberate in peace. The Secretariat then has time to finalise the documents for the MOS in time for Signatories to consider them fully in advance of the meeting. The AC Chair would then attend the MOS to convey the thoughts of the AC.
5. Bearing in mind these experiences from the wider CMS Family, the Secretariat proposes that Signatories consider amending the Terms of Reference for the AC to separate its meetings from the MOS. Our proposal would be to follow the example of the Sharks MOU and aim for AC meetings approximately six months before the MOS takes place. This will allow the Signatories to receive the AC's advice in well laid out documents, in advance of the MOS.
6. A disadvantage of separate AC and MOS meetings is that for cost reasons it is less likely that many of the AC members would be able to attend the MOS. The AC would therefore have to be represented at MOS by its Chair, with the attendance of other members depending on the availability of external funds.

7. In addition, meeting only once in the intersessional period has proven to be a challenge for addressing the many tasks given to the AC by Signatories. While most work is conducted by electronic communication and conference calls, much more efficient collaboration is possible when people are sitting in one room.
8. Also in this respect, many of the instruments of the CMS Family have chosen to hold at least one additional meeting in each intersessional period. The Secretariat advises Signatories to consider whether this would be advantageous for the IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU, as well. It would allow a more thorough review of progress since the last MOS, and efficient planning of the work to be done in preparation for the next MOS, results of which can then be reviewed at the AC meeting some months before the MOS.
9. Assuming a four-year interval between the Meetings of Signatories, the Advisory Committee could for example meet in the second year, and then again early in the fourth year. In the budget proposal presented to Signatories in Doc.13.3, the estimated implications of such an arrangement have been laid out.
10. An additional, significant advantage of holding two AC meetings in each intersessional period is that in case holding the MOS is delayed for financial reasons, as was the case this time, more momentum can be maintained in the implementation of the Work Programme.
11. The Secretariat therefore proposes that Signatories consider:
  - holding two AC meetings between MOS8 and MOS9
  - holding the second intersessional AC meeting approximately six months before MOS9.
12. At MOS9, Signatories can review this arrangement based on the experiences made.

### **Recommended Actions**

13. The Meeting of the Signatories is recommended to:
  - a) consider the options presented.
  - b) decide on the future frequency and timing of Advisory Committee Meetings, and if necessary, amend the Terms of Reference for the Advisory Committee.