

Oceania's Implementation of the Convention on Migratory Species

Report to Standing Committee 31

28-29 September 2006

Oceania Region - Parties

Australia (1 September 1991)
Cook Islands (31 August 2006)
New Zealand (1 October 2000)
Phillipines (1 February 1994)
Samoa (1 November 2005)

The Oceania region welcomes the accession of the Cook Islands to the Convention for Migratory Species on the 1st of August 2006.

First CMS Arrangement for the South Pacific

On Friday 15 September the following nine countries signed the South Pacific Cetaceans MOU bringing it into effect:

Vanuatu
Samoa
Australia
Cook Islands
Federated States of Micronesia
Fiji
France
New Zealand
Niue

It is likely that a further 3 countries will also sign in the near future.

Country Reports

Australia

Australia has expanded its migratory species conservation actions since Standing Committee 30, successfully proposing new initiatives for marine turtles in the Pacific region, as well as for migratory sharks throughout their global ranges at the recent 8th Conference of the Parties. Australia and its regional partners have also led the significant progress made towards developing and implementing regional conservation arrangements

for marine species such as cetaceans and dugong. These and other conservation actions are detailed below.

Marine Mammals

Significant progress has been made towards finalising the Memorandum of Understanding for the Conservation of Cetaceans and their Habitats in the Pacific Islands region since Standing Committee 30, and a final version was opened for signature at this year's Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) Ministerial Meeting in September. 9 countries, including Australia signed the MOU bringing it into immediate effect. The signing and implementation of the MoU represents an important step forward for the conservation of whales and dolphins in the Pacific Region. The implementation of the MoU will demonstrate the determination of countries in the region to protect cetaceans, as well as CMS' mandate to contribute to the conservation of these magnificent creatures for the world's benefit.

Marine Turtles

Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South East Asia (IOSEA MoU):

On 2 March 2006, Australia joined the international IOSEA Year of the Turtle campaign which was officially launched in Bangkok on 1 March 2006. Australia will be celebrating the Year of the Turtle through various activities including the development of a Year of the Turtle Webpage.

Australia attended the 4th Meeting of Signatory States held on 11 - 14 March in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman. The purpose of the meeting was to report on developments since the 3rd Meeting of Signatory States held in Bangkok on 29 - 31 March 2005, to review strengths and weaknesses in implementation of the Conservation and Management Plan, and to identify priorities for concerted intervention. The Australian Government has continued to provide financial support for the Secretariat of the IOSEA MOU, recently contributing AUD\$55 000 to promote on-ground activities.

Pacific Turtles:

At CMS CoP8, Australia's proposal to encourage the development of a regional conservation arrangement for marine turtles in the Pacific was successfully adopted as Recommendation 8.17 "Marine Turtles". Australia has contributed AUD\$35,000 to assist developing country delegates attend the first meeting to develop the arrangement, tentatively scheduled for early 2007. Australia also contributed AUD\$11,000 to support the launch of the Pacific "Year of the Sea Turtle".

Dugong

A regional arrangement for the conservation of the dugong and its habitats has been developed at two international meetings held in Bangkok, Thailand. Both meetings were co-hosted and fully financially supported by the Australian Government and the Kingdom of Thailand and well attended by countries spanning the geographical range of the dugong, from East Africa to Vanuatu. The First Meeting, held from the 23 to 25 August 2005, was attended by delegates from 20 countries. The Second Meeting, held

from 15 to 18 May 2006, was attended by delegates from 21 countries. The text of MoU and Conservation and Management Plan are now open for final consideration and signature. The CMS Secretariat will coordinate with willing States to make arrangements for signing the MoU and to hold the first official meeting of Signatory States, which will occur within 6-12 months of it entering into force.

Migratory Sharks

Australia's leadership in shark conservation and sustainable management of sharks was boosted by the adoption of Recommendation 8.16 "Migratory sharks" by CMS CoP8. The Recommendation, jointly proposed by Australia, the Seychelles and New Zealand, calls for the development of a global conservation instrument for migratory sharks to build on existing management measures such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation's International Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks (FAO IPOA-Sharks) to study and protect migratory sharks throughout their ranges.

Three species of migratory shark are currently listed on the CMS Appendices – the whale shark, great white shark, and the basking shark (successfully nominated to Appendices I and II by Australia and the United Kingdom at CMS CoP8). Australia has contributed AUD\$75,000 to assist developing country delegates attend the first meeting to develop the instrument, scheduled for January 2007 and hosted by the Seychelles Government.

Australia has set up an email list server to assist with preparations for the meeting and has circulated a number of information papers on migratory sharks and the potential role of the CMS in this regard. The list server currently includes Governments, Scientists and Non-governmental Organisations from Australia, Philippines, Seychelles, United Kingdom, New Zealand and Mauritius, as well as key CMS Secretariat staff.

Interested Parties should email Australia's CMS focal point (robyn.bromley@deh.gov.au) to join the migratory shark list server.

Albatrosses and Petrels

Australia continues to provide the interim Secretariat to the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Albatrosses. This arrangement will continue until the permanent Secretariat is established after a Headquarters Agreement is concluded between the Agreement and the Secretariat. A draft Headquarters Agreement has been developed and will be discussed at ACAP's 2nd Meeting of the Parties, to be held in Christchurch, New Zealand, on 13-16 November, 2006.

Domestically, Australia continues to actively manage fisheries to ensure seabird bycatch is maintained at low levels. In 1998, a Threat Abatement Plan was established that aimed to minimise the death of seabirds in longline fisheries - it led to a substantial reduction in seabird bycatch in Australian waters. This Plan was reviewed recently, in consultation with the fishing industry and conservation groups, and a revised Threat Abatement Plan approved. The revised Plan will remain in effect for the next five years and provides for a range of management options to minimise bycatch, including mandatory use of mitigation measures on fishing vessels, and spatial and temporal fishing closures, if necessary, to keep bycatch to very low levels in high-risk areas.

Cook Islands

Nil input at time of submission of report.

New Zealand

Cetaceans

New Zealand has worked closely with Samoa and Australia in finalising the draft of the MoU for the Conservation of Cetaceans and their Habitats in the Pacific Islands region, and signed the MOU when it was opened for signature at the SPREP Annual Meeting.

In association with SPREP and a wide range of government and non-government sponsors, including NZAid, Department of Environment and Heritage (Australia), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (USA), and guided by advice provided by Dr William Perrin of the CMS Scientific Council, New Zealand is organising two workshops for Pacific Island participants, to be held shortly in Auckland.

The first of these is a capacity-building workshop in cetacean research and management, as specified in number 15 the list of projects to be discussed by the Standing Committee. Thanks to the contributions of Dr Perrin, who is a member of the Organising Committee, it is expected that this workshop will provide a significant degree of upskilling and capacity-building, as have similar previous CMS workshops in South Asia and South-East Asia.

The second workshop will provide training in the management of cetacean strandings in the Pacific Islands region, and will also provide a framework of upskilling that will facilitate the implementation of the Action Plan to accompany the MoU.

Migratory sharks

New Zealand is an active participant in the working group established to develop a conservation instrument for migratory sharks under CMS, and will send a shark specialist to the Seychelles meeting in January 2007. New Zealand is in the final stages of implementing protection for great white sharks and whale sharks in New Zealand waters and will soon be moving to introduce protection for basking sharks.

An Initial Position Paper canvassing public opinion on protection mechanisms for white sharks (*Carcharodon carcharias*) in NZ was released in March. The submission period has closed and officials are preparing a briefing to ministers incorporating the results of the consultation. Similar consultation is anticipated for protection of basking shark following its listing on Appendix I of CMS. Possible protection mechanisms include combined protection under both the Wildlife Act 1953 and Fisheries Act 1996. This would protect these species within the New Zealand EEZ, and also extend protection to New Zealand vessels operating beyond the EEZ. The combined powers of the Fisheries

Act and the Wildlife Act make it possible to meet the full obligations required under CMS.

New Zealand, in collaboration with scientists from the US, is continuing to invest in research on the movement of white sharks within the EEZ, and between NZ and other range states in the SW Pacific. This research programme is scheduled to run for at least 1 more year.

Albatrosses and Petrels

New Zealand continues to work on a number of projects to mitigate the by-catch of seabirds during fishing operations and to protect seabird breeding sites from land-based threats. At the 2nd ACAP Advisory Committee meeting in Brazil between 5-8 June 2006, New Zealand reported on a number of programmes that will address the ACAP Action Plan, including:

- the review and implementation of New Zealand's National Plan of Action - Seabirds, including the associated Research Plan;
- implementation of a national strategy prioritising seabird issues and research areas;
- observer programmes to investigate the nature and extent of seabird bycatch in New Zealand fisheries, including bycatch of ACAP species;
- population and distributional studies of selected seabird species, with specific reference to the effects of fisheries bycatch;
- investigation of subantarctic seabird foraging patterns with a view to using this information in the development of marine protected areas;
- predator control operations at priority island breeding sites for albatrosses and petrels;
- implementation of seabird-related conservation and management measures for RFMOs to which New Zealand belongs or intends to join.

The New Zealand Government will host the second Meeting of the Parties in Christchurch from 13 to 17 November 2006.

Philippines

Samoa signed the South Pacific Cetaceans MOU at the September SPREP ministerial meeting.

Samoa

Nil input at time of submission of report.