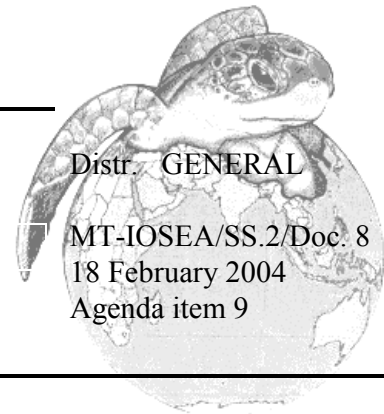

Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia



SECOND MEETING OF THE SIGNATORY STATES
Bangkok, 16-19 March 2004

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

The purpose of this paper is to draw attention to, and briefly introduce, a number of tools already available on the IOSEA MoU Website (www.ioseaturtles.org) that are designed to facilitate exchange of information. While some of the tools are still rudimentary, with limited data having been input so far, they will be developed much further during the course of 2004. Their usefulness will ultimately depend on the extent to which users provide information on their own projects, publications and other work.

I. Electronic Library

Useful information on marine turtles can be accessed from many websites. The IOSEA site does not seek to duplicate general information on marine turtles that is already available elsewhere on the Internet, in conveniently centralised locations such as (www.seaturtle.org). Rather, it aims to concentrate on the IOSEA region and on information that is not readily available elsewhere or at least not in one place.

The IOSEA Electronic Library currently consists of four sections:

Papers: A small selection of papers has been posted to give an indication of the kind of material that one may expect to find in this part of the Electronic Library. Typically, this may include papers presented at workshops, but never published as part of formal proceedings; interesting papers retrieved from websites that do not specialise on marine turtle conservation (and therefore are less likely to be visited by someone looking for information on turtles); and consultancy reports produced for a specific purpose, and containing valuable information, but not necessarily made widely available.

No claim is made that the papers have been peer-reviewed or edited; they are reproduced more or less in the form in which they have been obtained. Instead, the philosophy behind this initiative is to try to facilitate access to a wealth of useful information that has not been published or is not easily retrieved; and to allow readers to judge for themselves whether it is worthwhile to follow up with the authors.

It is expected that this selection of papers will be expanded, and a proper indexing system developed, as the Secretariat's capacity to solicit and retrieve information from other sources is enhanced in the coming months. Meeting participants are requested to contribute papers to this online resource, and to inform colleagues of its availability.

Powerpoint Presentations: A great deal of effort goes into preparing informative Powerpoint presentations that are delivered to conferences or smaller workshops. Often, this may be the only use of the presentation, or perhaps it is recycled and used for other audiences of a similarly restricted number. This section of the Electronic Library features a number of such Powerpoint presentations which the authors have kindly made available to the Secretariat. The Presentations themselves have been converted to handouts (six slides per page) that are saved in pdf format, with security measures applied to prevent extraction of images etc. The

idea is to enable viewers to have an overview of what was presented and to contact the author if more information is required.

Again, the aim of this tool is to provide access to very current information that rarely sees the light of day, at least not in published material. It is hoped that more people will contribute their presentations, motivated by the potential of reaching much larger audiences. Some enhancements will be made to the interface and, hopefully, it will be possible to find a method to reduce the file sizes to make them quicker to download. (It now takes a few minutes to download a presentation of around 2 MB.)

Posters: This section of the Electronic Library has yet to be populated, but the rationale behind it is similar to that described above for Powerpoint presentations. Poster board presentations at conferences have a very limited readership and “lifespan”, but with today’s digital photography, it is relatively easy to capture the content of such posters and make them available to vast numbers of people who have not been able to participate in the conference. Those who are interested in finding out more details of the poster will have the option of contacting the author directly.

Photo Gallery: Given the number of people working with marine turtles, it is perhaps surprising that there are not better collections of quality images of marine turtles available on the Internet. Such photo galleries do exist (for example, on www.seaturtle.org), but many of the images they contain are not of a good quality or they are not freely available for unrestricted use. This is understandable, of course; nevertheless, there must be countless numbers of very good photographs in private collections that amateur photographers would be willing to share for no more than a photo credit.

As the www.seaturtle.org image gallery is already well-organised and may be seen as a central repository for such material, there is no intention of developing a gallery of similar sophistication on the IOSEA website. Rather, it would be a place for people to share digital photographs from around the IOSEA region; seeking as far as possible to display only material of a good quality and that which can be used freely for non-commercial purposes.

II. Projects database

The IOSEA Marine Turtle MoU Projects Database is meant to provide information on marine turtle conservation projects -- large and small -- throughout the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia. The term "project" is used loosely, and is meant to include the activities or specialised programmes of non-governmental organisations (or the NGOs themselves, if their work is focused primarily on marine turtle conservation), government agencies, international initiatives sponsored by multilateral donors etc. While the IOSEA region is the primary focus of the database, entries from the Pacific region will also be included, as they arise.

The online facility has two components: an Editor allows the user to submit information on a particular project. The information is then transmitted to the IOSEA MoU Secretariat for follow-up with the author and any necessary editing, in order to assure consistency. A Viewer enables the user to examine all of the projects in the database. Initially, the viewing function is limited to a basic display of the details of each project, one-by-one. A more efficient interface and query function will be offered in the next phase of the development.

Only a few non-governmental organisations have so far taken advantage of the opportunity to list their projects. As of April 2004, the Secretariat expects to have the capacity to enter information on more projects of which it is aware, and to contact organisations more pro-actively to solicit their contributions.

The ultimate goal is to populate the database with details of virtually every marine turtle conservation project in the Indian Ocean - South-East Asia region (and beyond). This should appeal also to large organisations that may be supporting or running many projects on marine turtles in the region, but without

a central place to keep track of them all. The completeness and accuracy of the database will depend, of course, on those who are running the projects.

III. IOSEA Marine Turtle Mapping Interactive System (IMapS)

A unique interactive mapping system developed for the IOSEA Marine Turtle MoU was launched in mid-February 2004, accessible via the URL: www.ioseaturtles.org/mapping. The system gives an unprecedented overview of decades of data on marine turtle nesting and migration, vital for informed decision-making on issues affecting the conservation and management of marine turtles in the Indian Ocean – South-East Asian region.

The Marine Turtle IMapS enables users to query data on turtle nesting sites and numbers, along with other vital information such as the location of seagrass beds, coral reefs and protected areas. The system is fully integrated with the IOSEA MoU Website, which provides additional information on projects being undertaken around the region.

The initiative is the result of a fruitful collaboration between the United Nations Environment Programme's World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), and Dr. Colin Limpus (Australia), who has provided data collected from 30 years of research.

Scientists and conservationists working on marine turtles will be able to input their data to the system and draw regional and global analyses, while retaining ownership and credit for their own work. While the Marine Turtle IMapS has the distinction of having a "headstart" of decades of data collected from around the region, it will be important to maintain and improve the accuracy of the database by gathering current information from researchers in all countries. The website directs interested partners to register to become a contributor to Marine Turtle IMapS and to provide data by writing to species@unep-wcmc.org.

The meeting is invited to discuss how best to encourage this collaboration and facilitate the integration of other existing datasets. Signatory States will be invited to endorse the Marine Turtle IMapS as a common repository for data generated on marine turtles in their countries, and to request that relevant agencies be contacted with a view to providing current information.

IV. Profile of the Month

Each month, a project or site of importance for marine turtles is given a prominent place on the IOSEA website, normally as a descriptive text embellished with photographs. The Profile remains on the homepage for one month, before is it shifted to an archive, where it remains available for viewing. The Profile of the Month is meant to draw attention to projects of all sizes that might not otherwise be widely known to the public or even to other conservation organisations. This may be especially useful for NGO's or government agencies that wish to publicize their activities, but which may not have a popular website that people can easily locate. Contributions from around the region – from NGOs and government agencies on all levels – would be much appreciated.

V. Useful contacts

At present, the IOSEA website maintains a list of about 250-300 useful contacts (most of them with their own websites) from around the region, divided into 11 categories:

ACD = Academic institution; CLR = Clearing House; FND = Funding agency / Foundation;
GOV = Government agency; IGO = Intergovernmental organisation; INS = Research institution;
MED = Media; NET = Network; NGO = Nongovernmental organisation; PRJ = Project; RFB =
Regional fisheries body.

The list, currently saved in three separate Word files, can be sorted according to country, category or sub-region.

In the next phase of development, a proper database will be established which will permit more advanced queries to be made. By way of example, the user would be able to extract, for instance, all of the “NGOs and Academic institutions in a particular sub-region” or “all of the research institutions and Government agencies in a particular country”.

VI. Additional tools

To complement the information already found on the IOSEA website, it is planned to develop a number of brand new tools:

- The information gathered from national reports will be made available online, so that users can access information from all countries, from individual countries or sub-regional groupings. During the course of 2004, a facility will be developed that will enable users to query and analyse the national report data with a much higher level of sophistication.
- A new section will be developed to give overviews of the species covered by the Memorandum of Understanding, including their conservation status.
- Finally, a new “Resources” section will link users to useful publications that are available online or, alternatively, it will provide contact details of where they may be obtained.

Action requested / Expected outcome:

The Meeting is invited to take note of these developments and future plans, as well as the specific actions requested; and to cooperate as far as possible with the provision of information of benefit to all users.