

Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Dugongs and their Habitats throughout their Range

Distr. General

DM/SS.1/Doc.12
Agenda item 13

Rev. 1 – 26 September 2010

FIRST OFFICIAL SIGNATORY STATE MEETING
Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, 4–6 October 2010

CONSIDERATION OF THE NEED AND OPTIONS TO PROGRESS A TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP

Purpose

This agenda item proposes the establishment of technical support and advisory services to Signatory States through the Secretariat to assist in the implementation of the Dugong MOU.

Background

1. The issues that confront Signatory States and others in the efforts to conserve dugong populations and habitats, in appropriate social, economic and cultural ways are complex and often highly technical. The effective implementation of the MoU and associated Conservation and Management Plan (CMP) will in part, require application of expertise and guidance from technical specialists in different disciplines including dugong biology, marine resource management, coastal development, sustainable development, social sciences, economics, law, and other relevant disciplines.
2. While the Dugong MoU does not explicitly call for the establishment of a Technical Advisory Group, Paragraph 6 calls on Signatories to:

“Assess the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding, including the Conservation and Management Plan, at regular meetings to be attended by representatives of each of the Signatory States concerned, and persons and organisations technically qualified in dugong conservation and management.”

and, Paragraph 7:

“Facilitate the timely exchange of relevant information necessary to coordinate conservation and management measures and to cooperate with relevant organisations and recognized experts and so as to facilitate the work conducted in relation to the Conservation and Management Plan.”

The Need for Technical Advice and Support

3. Although some Range States are fortunate to have highly competent and internationally recognised dugong researchers who provide technical support and advice, most Range States may find it difficult to have direct access to relevant technical expertise, when required.
4. There are very significant local and regional social, political, and economic issues to be confronted and addressed if dugong conservation is to have a chance of success. Given the level of complexity and

difficulty involved to adequately address dugong conservation issues, a multi-disciplinary approach is necessary.

5. Overall, the number of technical experts with the appropriate credentials, knowledge and experience specific to dugong conservation and management is relatively small compared to other marine species, such as marine turtles. Those suitably qualified technical experts are already heavily committed to activities and it is most likely that most already have limited capacity to extend their existing workloads by being available for extended periods of time. However experience has shown that such experts are often willing to be involved in highly targeted ways that maximises their input and minimises the time involved.

6. The level of technical capacity to implement conservation and management actions for dugongs is likely to be highly variable across the Range States. Similarly, different management tools may be more appropriate than others to address a particular conservation issue in different range states. Thus, it is likely that a range of different technical expertise may be required and that it will be crucial to seek those experts with the appropriate combination of knowledge, skills and experience – particularly with regards to being sufficiently flexible to work across the diverse capacity and cultural environments of the Range States.

Purpose of a Technical Advisory Group

7. The purpose of a Technical Advisory Group would be to assist the Signatory States to help meet their obligations the Dugong MoU and implement actions that contribute to the conservation and management of dugongs under and associated CMPs.

8. The Technical Advisory Group would improve the Secretariat's capacity to coordinate technical support to Signatories by tapping into existing expertise within Signatory States which would be supplemented by external technical advisors.

Options for Obtaining Technical Advice

9. Apart from the current ad-hoc approach to obtaining individual advice, there are two other main options for obtaining technical advice:

a. List of registered technical experts: This option involves inviting expressions of interests from technical experts with knowledge, skills, and experience as specified in a draft generic Terms of Reference document (see Annex 1). The list of registered technical experts would be used by the Secretariat to fulfil specific needs, either by *pro bono* assistance (expected to be limited) or through specific contracts. The registered technical experts will also widen the pool of expertise available when there is a need for further *ad hoc* approaches.

b. Formal Advisory Group: This option involves the nomination of a group of skilled technical experts to periodically provide advice either in meetings or through video/telephone conferences. Members would be selected on the basis of technical expertise, rather than representation of governments or organizations with which they also may be affiliated. Draft Terms of Reference for a Technical Advisory Group to support Signatory States through the Secretariat are at Annex 1.

10. To date, the Secretariat has used internal technical expertise and sought the assistance of selected external technical experts to provide advice on specific issues on an *ad hoc* basis for example in the development of the Standardised Dugong Catch/Incidental Catch Survey Tool (Agenda Item 11). A technical advisor has been appointed to provide technical advice and guidance to project partners in

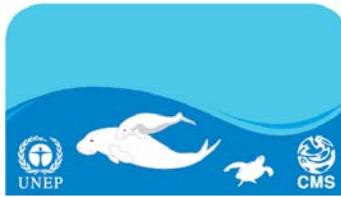
relation to use of the standardised survey tool (Agenda Item 11).

11. The Secretariat proposes that a formal Technical Advisory Group be established to provide support as needed to the Secretariat and to Signatory States through the Secretariat.

12. It is proposed that in the first instance, the Technical Advisory Group, remain as an informal arrangement, a resource group, from which to draw upon on an 'as needs' basis.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Signatory States support the establishment of a Technical Advisory Committee with the Terms of Reference as set out in Annex 1.



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TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP

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Nomination and Appointment

1. Each Signatory State may nominate one or more individuals from their country serve as members of the Technical Steering Committee. Nominations for any vacancies should be provided in writing to the Secretariat and should include detailed and complete *curriculum vitae*.
2. Expressions of Interest will be sought from technical advisors via advertisement on the Dugong MoU website and other avenues. The Secretariat will maintain a register of external experts and draw upon a short list to appoint External Technical Advisors on an ad hoc or as needs basis for specific tasks.

Mode of Operation

3. The Secretariat will be the coordinating point for the management of meetings and discussions by technical experts, requests for technical assistance and responses.
4. A core Technical Advisory Group of 10 members should be comprised of the national (Signatory State) technical experts and external technical advisors. The core group could be extended by the inclusion of further technical advisors who can be appointed at an ad hoc or as needed basis.
5. To minimize costs, Technical Advisory Group should conduct as much of its activity as possible through electronic communication. The Technical Advisory Group or a sub-group can be convened whenever necessary, subject to available resources.
6. While there is no remuneration for any members of the Technical Advisory Group, members may be formally contracted by the Secretariat for specific tasks, pending available resources.
7. Members of the Technical Advisory Pane; should participate as observers in the meetings of the Signatory States, and may also participate in the meetings of related and associated agreements and organisations that is deemed relevant to the work of the MoU, pending available resources.

Mandate and Tasks

8. The purpose of the Technical Advisory Group is to serve and assist the Signatory States in the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding. Members of the Technical Advisory Group serve in

their individual capacities, rather than as representatives of Governments or organisations with which they also may be affiliated.

Coordinated by the Secretariat, the key mandate and tasks of the Technical Advisory Group include:

- Provide technical advice to the Signatory States on the implementation of conservation and management actions outlined in the Conservation and Management Plans;
- Review scientific reports, annual reports of the Signatory States, and other appropriate documents to assist the Secretariat in assessing progress in the implementation of the Conservation and Management Plan;
- Participate, on request and pending available resources as observers in the meetings of the Signatory States, and also participate in the workshops or meetings organized by the Secretariat or deemed relevant to the work of the MoU,
- Evaluate and provide technical advice, at the request of any Signatory State, on any conservation and management programme proposed or implemented within the State; and
- Assist Signatory States in the development of projects and initiatives so that regional, sub-regional and local concerns and interests are taken into account.