



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

20 February 2013

### Twenty-Six Countries Meet to Progress Sea Cow and Seagrass Conservation

**Manila, Philippines, 20 February 2013** - The Second Signatory State Meeting for the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Dugongs and their Habitats throughout their Range (Dugong MOU) was hosted by the Government of the Philippines on 19 and 20 February in Manila, Philippines. The Dugong MOU was concluded in 2007 under the auspices of the UNEP Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals to protect an endangered sea cow species. The Dugong MOU Secretariat coordinates support for international efforts to conserve dugongs and seagrasses from the UNEP/CMS Abu Dhabi Office which is hosted by the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi (EAD), on behalf of the Government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

While dugong populations and seagrass habitats remain threatened, the Second Signatory State Meeting for the Dugong MOU highlights the fact that considerable progress is being made. The ten new Signatories to the MOU since the first meeting in 2010 and the proposed international Global Environment Facility (GEF) Project in seven countries are encouraging signs for supporters of dugong conservation. The governments of the 26 nations attending are demonstrating their commitment to take positive action. A number of coastal communities that have been approached to participate in conservation projects have shown their willingness to make adjustments in an effort to live in harmony with dugongs. The plight for survival of the charismatic dugong has captured people's imagination on an international scale.

In total, 26 countries registered to attend the two-day meeting, including 17 of the 21 Signatory States ranging from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific, to discuss priorities in conserving dugongs. In a joint ceremony, four new Signatories – Bangladesh, Egypt, Somalia and Sudan – joined the Dugong MOU bringing the total to 25.

The meeting attracted government officials and experts to consider the conservation status of dugongs and share information on related conservation efforts worldwide. Leading authorities on marine mammals, in particular Professor Helene Marsh from James Cook University (Australia) and Dr. John Reynolds from Mote Marine Laboratory (United States of America) gave presentations highlighting the challenges facing dugong and seagrass conservationists. These marine mammals are affected by a range of human-related threats such as capture in net fishing gear and habitat degradation. In addition, extreme weather patterns such as severe storm events destroy critical seagrass beds on which dugongs depend.

In association with the meeting of Signatory States to the MOU, an international workshop of the GEF Dugong and Seagrass Conservation Project is also being held with the seven GEF Partner Countries and the four GEF Supporting Partners in attendance. The GEF Dugong and Seagrass Conservation Project is currently being prepared to address a range of key threats to dugongs and their critical seagrass habitats through a set of activities including working with local communities and government agencies.

**Notes to Editors:**

The United Nations Environment Programme's Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (UNEP/CMS) works to conserve terrestrial, aquatic and avian migratory wildlife. The UNEP/CMS Dugong MOU aims to protect and conserve dugongs and their seagrass habitats. The UNEP/CMS Abu Dhabi Office hosts the Dugong MOU Secretariat, which coordinates support for countries in their efforts to conserve dugongs and seagrasses: [www.cms.int/species/dugong/index.htm](http://www.cms.int/species/dugong/index.htm)

**Conservation Action:**

The dugong is listed on CITES Appendix I and CMS Appendix II.

**25 Signatories to the Dugong MOU:**

Australia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Comoros, Egypt, Eritrea, France (Mayotte and New Caledonia), India Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Myanmar, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Seychelles, Solomon Islands, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Vanuatu and Yemen

**7 GEF Partner Countries:** Indonesia, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mozambique, Sri Lanka, Timor Leste and Vanuatu.

**4 GEF Supporting Partners:** Australia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines and Solomon Islands.

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