



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



**Report of the First Meeting of the Advisory Committee**  
*Kuala Lumpur, 16 March 2003*

1. The Advisory Committee held its first meeting on 16 March 2003, in Kuala Lumpur, in conjunction with the 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation. Four of the six members were present: Dr Jack Frazier, Dr Jeanne Mortimer, Dr Nicolas Pilcher and Romeo Trono; apologies were received from Dr Colin Limpus and Dewapriya Amarasooriya. (Annex 1 contains the contact details of all Advisory Committee members.)

**Agenda item 1: Welcoming remarks**

2. The CMS Deputy Executive Secretary, responsible for the interim secretariat to the Memorandum of Understanding, welcomed the members to the inaugural meeting of the Advisory Committee. Its main purpose was to familiarize members with recent MoU developments, to exchange information and to share ideas about the role and function of the Advisory Committee.

**Agenda item 2: Arrangements for the Chair**

3. The Terms of Reference for the Advisory Committee provide for the members to choose their own Chair. It was agreed that in the absence of two of the members, it would be preferable to defer the formal selection process until a later stage, through correspondence. The Secretary undertook to make the necessary arrangements once the MoU Secretariat was operational.

**Agenda item 3: Adoption of the agenda and timetable**

4. The agenda, reproduced at Annex 2, was adopted without amendment. It was agreed to meet from 1430 to 1700, and for those still present to try to meet again informally later in the week.

**Agenda item 4: Briefing from the interim secretariat**

5. The Secretary described the lengthy process that had led to the creation of the secretariat of the Memorandum of Understanding, to be co-located with the UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, in Bangkok, as of April 2003. A work plan for the coming year would be developed as one of the first tasks, which would be shared with the Advisory Committee in due course. The Secretary outlined the main results of the First Meeting of the Signatory States, which had been held in Bangkok in January 2003, the report of which was made available to all members. Among other things, that meeting had served to establish the Advisory Committee, to review implementation of the Conservation and Management Plan and to identify complementary regional initiatives.

6. In the context of a discussion of sub-regional collaboration, the Committee was informed that the Signatory States had agreed that for the purposes of the Memorandum of Understanding, Australia and Papua New Guinea would join the South-East Asian sub-regional group. The Committee considered it important to draw this to the attention of the ASEAN Secretariat, and the Secretary undertook to do so within the framework of a letter aimed at promoting close collaboration with ASEAN.

7. Referring in particular to a tri-national (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines) conservation effort in the Sulu-Sulawesi Marine Eco-region, which was contributing to the implementation of the IOSEA MoU, the Committee considered that initiatives such as this merited formal recognition by the Meeting of Signatory States. Endorsement in some form would be valuable to the projects themselves, but would also encourage other programmes to link their activities to the work of the MoU. The Committee discussed ways in which it might facilitate the process, for example, by acting on a request of the Meeting of Signatory States to vet relevant programmes according to certain agreed criteria. The Signatory States might then decide whether or not to cite a particular programme or project as meriting formal recognition in the context of the IOSEA MoU.

#### **Agenda item 5: Review of Advisory Committee terms of reference and *modus operandi***

8. Attention was drawn to the Report of the Screening Committee, which had been formed by the Meeting of Signatory States to make recommendations regarding nominations for the Advisory Committee and to revise the Committee's terms of reference. It was noted that the Signatory States had intentionally left room for the Advisory Committee to grow (to a maximum of 10 members), after conducting a self-assessment of additional expertise that might be required within the Committee, beyond the realm of conservation biology. A similar nomination procedure would take place prior to the next meeting of Signatory States which might result in some additions to the Committee. It would therefore be important for the Advisory Committee to assess its needs and communicate these to the Secretariat by around September or October 2003.

9. In a general discussion of the *modus operandi* of the Committee, it was stressed that the Advisory Committee members were serving in their personal capacity, without remuneration. While all members wished to convey to the Signatory States their enthusiasm and willingness to assist in the implementation of the MoU, they wished also to have a clear understanding from the Signatory States that the Committee's role was primarily advisory and supportive in nature, as opposed to responding to directives which it did not have the capacity or resources to undertake.

#### **Agenda item 6: Activities requiring Advisory Committee intersessional input**

##### *Review and further refinement of the Conservation and Management Plan*

10. The Secretary briefed the Committee on the work that had been started by the First Meeting of Signatory States to review implementation of the Conservation and Management Plan (CMP) and to identify activities that needed to be undertaken as a high priority. This work was still very preliminary, and considerable editing remained to be done by the Secretariat before the annotated CMP could be circulated for further input, as had been agreed by the Meeting. The Advisory Committee would be requested to provide input, in due course, particularly to contribute information for those countries and regions with which they were most familiar.

##### *Identification of priority areas for provision of advice, and means of delivery*

11. The Secretary indicated that within the framework of the review of the Conservation and Management Plan, Committee members would be invited to indicate the fields of activity in which action was required as a high priority and for which the Committee could assist through the provision of advice. The Committee members welcomed the opportunity to provide their input in this regard.

##### *Development of "2005 Year of the Turtle" proposal*

12. Referring to the discussion of this topic at the First Meeting of Signatory States and addressing a concern expressed by one of the members, the Secretary clarified that the Committee had not been requested to develop a full-blown proposal for the Signatory States to consider at its next meeting.

Rather, the short paper would have the character of a feasibility analysis, presenting an outline of what would be involved in organizing a “Year of the Turtle”, based on precedents, including an indication of the financial and logistical implications. With this explanation, the Committee agreed to undertake such a study, to enable the Signatory States to reach a decision on whether or not to pursue an event in 2005 or beyond.

#### *Suggestions for IOSEA MoU Web site content*

13. The Secretary outlined plans to develop a web site for the Memorandum of Understanding, which would serve as a visible demonstration of the usefulness of the MoU, in terms of information exchange and regional coordination. There was a general discussion of what such a Web site might include. In addition to incorporating the online nesting beach and migration mapping application, currently under development as a joint effort of CMS, the UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre and Dr. Colin Limpus, the site would house basic information on the MoU, a comprehensive list of contacts, links to home pages of complementary initiatives, a database of relevant projects and a search engine, to name just a few items. The Web site content could be expected to grow over time in response to demands from Signatory States for additional features.

#### *Assessment of need for additional Advisory Committee expertise*

14. As mentioned above, the Committee acknowledged the need to examine what additional expertise from which it might benefit from other disciplines (e.g. social anthropology, impact assessment etc.) and also to undertake a periodic review of its own performance.

#### **Agenda item 7: Exchange of information of upcoming meetings of relevance**

15. Members indicated meetings of relevance to the MoU which they hoped to attend or organise in the coming months. These included ITMEMS (2<sup>nd</sup> International Tropical Marine Ecosystem Management Symposium); a WWF species network meeting (Trono – March); a meeting of the trilateral initiative mentioned in para. 7 above (Trono – May); marine turtle training workshops in Thailand and Myanmar (Pilcher – subject to availability of funds); and the World Parks Congress in South Africa (Trono – October).

#### **Agenda item 8: Any other business**

16. There were no other items of business to report.

#### **Agenda item 9: Date and venue of the next Advisory Committee meeting**

17. While indicating the desirability of holding a meeting of the Advisory Committee in 2003 with all members present, the Secretary noted that financial constraints made this unlikely, unless funds could be sourced elsewhere. Moreover, there did not appear to be a common event at which most members would be present during the course of the year. That being the case, the Advisory Committee would most likely not meet again until immediately before the Second Meeting of the Signatory States (provisionally scheduled to take place in Bangkok in February 2004). The Committee and Secretariat would, as envisaged by the Signatory States, communicate as effectively as possible by e-mail in the interim.

#### **Agenda item 10: Closure of the meeting**

18. The Secretary thanked the members for their participation and closed the meeting at 1700.

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MT-IOSEA/AC.1/Doc. 1  
Agenda item 3

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FIRST MEETING OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
Kuala Lumpur, 16 March 2003

AGENDA

1. Welcoming remarks
2. Arrangements for Chair
3. Adoption of the agenda and timetable
4. Briefing from the interim secretariat
  - a. Secretariat arrangements
  - b. First Meeting of Signatory States (Bangkok, January 2003)
  - c. Other matters
5. Review of Advisory Committee terms of reference and *modus operandi*
6. Activities requiring Advisory Committee intersessional input
  - a. Review and further refinement of the Conservation and Management Plan
  - b. Identification of priority areas for provision of advice, and means of delivery
  - c. Development of "2005 Year of the Turtle" proposal for consideration by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of Signatory States
  - d. Suggestions for IOSEA MoU web site content
  - e. Assessment of need for additional Advisory Committee expertise
  - f. Other
7. Exchange of information on upcoming meetings of relevance
8. Any other business
9. Date and venue of the next Advisory Committee meeting