



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

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PROPOSAL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NETWORK OF SITES
OF IMPORTANCE FOR MARINE TURTLES

The Fifth Meeting of the Signatory States (Bali, 2008) created an intersessional working group for the purpose of furthering the development of a proposal to establish a network of sites of importance for marine turtles. While the concept has been under consideration for several years and has been favourably received, it had not progressed for lack of resources. Between April 2010 and May 2011, the Secretariat worked with a consultant, Dr. Eric Gilman, to further develop and refine the proposal in close consultation with members of the Working Group, the IOSEA Advisory Committee and other experts. The result is a much clearer, more coherent description of what the proposal aims to accomplish.

The objectives of the 'IOSEA Marine Turtle Site Network' are to:

- (i) Provide a regional mechanism to enhance the conservation of sites of importance to marine turtles that might otherwise not be adequately protected, that will attain additional benefits from being in a network irrespective of their current status, and that serve as regional models of effective governance;
- (ii) Derive ecological and governance benefits that are not possible to achieve by managing individual sites in isolation;
- (iii) Contribute, through enhanced regional conservation of marine turtles and their habitats, to more effective maintenance of ecosystem services that support human well-being; and
- (iv) Catalyse opportunities for participatory resource management and community development centred on marine turtles, through network-wide information exchange.

The proposal is outlined in two separate papers:

Working Paper #1 explains the rationale for the site network proposal; presents a draft suite of criteria against which to assess sites for possible inclusion in the network; describes a process for site nomination and evaluation of candidate sites; and presents alternative approaches for coordinated governance of network sites.

Working Paper #2 presents, in more detail, the draft suite of criteria that may be used to: evaluate nominations of new sites; (ii) re-assess the rationale for continued inclusion of existing sites; and (iii) conduct gap analyses for the overall network to identify priorities for inclusion of additional sites. The latter document is important insofar as it is meant to assist the IOSEA Advisory Committee in its evaluation of site nominations; but some readers may prefer to concentrate on Working Paper #1, which describes the overall initiative.

While the revised Site Network proposal has found good support within the Working Group, it has yet to be circulated among the wider IOSEA membership. Therefore, it remains in the form of working papers that are meant to be carefully reviewed by all Focal Points. To that end, the Secretariat is circulating the proposal in its current form with the agreement of the Working Group Chair, Ms. Alexis Gutierrez. In addition to seeking general or specific comments on the contents of the working papers, the Secretariat intends to circulate another note in the coming weeks outlining a process for concluding the initiative at the forthcoming Meeting of the Signatory States.