



# CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: REVIEW OF CMS EXISTING INSTRUMENTS AND PROJECTS ON MARINE TURTLES

*(Introductory note prepared by the Secretariat and Summary by UNEP-WCMC for CMS)*

1. Reproduced below is the Executive Summary of the Review of CMS Existing Instruments and Projects on Marine Turtles excerpted from the Report (UNEP/CMS/Inf.10.16) prepared by UNEP-WCMC for CMS.
2. The Review was commissioned from UNEP-WCMC, after a tender process, in response to Resolution 9.2, which decided to conduct reviews of the existing CMS Agreements and related projects on terrestrial mammals, marine species and birds, in the context of the inter-sessional process regarding the Future Shape of CMS, initiated by Resolution 9.13.
3. The report is an evaluation of the two existing CMS instruments on marine turtles, namely, the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia and the Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation Measures for Marine Turtles of the Atlantic Coast of Africa, and considers the extent to which they address the threats facing these taxa. Options are proposed for the effective implementation of existing instruments and the further development of CMS instruments, in order to maximise the geographic coverage of CMS, while enhancing its credibility and influence.

### **Action requested:**

The Conference of the Parties is requested to:

- a. Note the outcomes of the review;
- b. Adopt the recommendations on marine turtles proposed in the draft Resolution on Priorities for Agreements, contained in UNEP/CMS/Res.10.16; and
- c. Make suggestions for other actions which could be added to the draft Resolution or to relevant programmes of work.

# **REVIEW OF CMS EXISTING INSTRUMENTS AND PROJECTS ON MARINE TURTLES**

## **Executive Summary**

### **Overview of the main threats and conservation issues affecting marine turtles included in the CMS Appendices**

1. Multilateral conservation efforts are particularly important for marine turtles due to their global distributions, long migrations and complex movement patterns at different stages of their life cycles. According to the IUCN Red List, six of the seven species of marine turtle are globally threatened, including three species classified as Critically Endangered. Marine turtles suffer multiple threats including incidental capture in fisheries, direct take of turtles and their eggs and coastal development, as well as climate change, pollution and pathogens and natural threats.

### **Coverage and evaluation of existing CMS and non-CMS multilateral instruments / frameworks**

2. The CMS Appendices contain all marine turtle species and the two CMS existing instruments on marine turtles cover significant range areas in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia (the IOSEA MoU) and along the Atlantic Coast of Africa (the MoU of Abidjan). However, major gaps in the geographic coverage of CMS instruments include most of the Pacific Ocean and the central and western Atlantic Ocean (including important feeding grounds and migration routes).
3. A host of other multilateral instruments/frameworks cover marine turtles, their habitats or significant threats. These include i) IAC, SPREP and WIDECAST addressing marine turtles; ii) IAC, the SPAW protocol, the Berne Convention and the EU Habitats Directive prohibiting the killing/capture/possession/trade of marine turtles; iii) regional fisheries agreements such as IOTC, SEAFDEC, SEAFO, ICCAT, IATTC, NAFO and WCPFC addressing fisheries bycatch; and the Nairobi, Abidjan, Lima and OSPAR Conventions, the SPAW protocol, PERSGA, PRCM and NEPAD/COSMAR protecting marine and coastal habitats. However, there is a lack of an overall mechanism to bring these disparate activities together in a common framework or coordinated response.
4. The two CMS existing instruments on marine turtles have had very different levels of success. IOSEA is widely recognised as successful, with i) active participation from its signatories, ii) regular Meetings of the Signatory States, iii) strong collaborations with various conservation and fisheries organisations, iv) regular donations from a number of Developed countries, v) good website facilities and vi) effective support from the IOSEA Secretariat and the Advisory Committee. The MoU of Abidjan has succeeded in having all major range States as signatories and in establishing a coordinating unit URTOMA. However, the MoU of Abidjan appears to have made slow progress towards gathering the commitment and active participation of range States, securing adequate funding, collaborating with conservation and fisheries organisations and implementing (and reporting on) its Conservation Management Plan(CMP).

## **Options for more effective implementation of existing CMS instruments and priorities for development**

5. Priorities for strengthening these CMS instruments include giving the MoU of Abidjan additional support, including strengthening the coordination unit URTOMA. Both CMS existing instruments on marine turtles would benefit from *inter alia*: i) strengthening their CMPs through development of targets and indicators, ii) completion and regular review of regional species assessments, iii) developing programmes/initiatives on cross-cutting themes, iv) increased collaboration with exiting CMS and non-CMS instruments/frameworks (including Regional Fisheries Management Organisations), v) establishment of a critical sites network and vi) sharing of online databases and resources.
  
6. Future options are presented including expansion of existing instruments or development of new instruments. The priorities include exploring the development of a CMS/SPREP MoU on marine turtles in the Pacific Island region and the possibility of expansion of the MoU of Abidjan to the European Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts (or at least increase collaboration with key stakeholder in these regions), as well as improving collaboration with IAC. An ambitious option in the long term may be to consider a single global instrument covering the geographic range of all marine turtles.