



**Indian Ocean – South-East Asian Marine
Turtle Memorandum of Understanding**

**Terms of Reference and Guidance for
IOSEA Focal Points
and
Sub-regional Focal Points**

**Adopted by the Sixth Meeting of IOSEA Signatory States
(Bangkok, January 2012)**

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Terms of Reference and Guidance for IOSEA National Focal Points

Introduction

This document has been developed to clarify the general roles and responsibilities of IOSEA Focal Points and to make participation in Signatory State meetings more effective. Given periodic turnover of official delegates, it is considered that a document serving as a basic guide to activities before, during and after a Signatory State meeting would be useful. This will allow IOSEA representatives to contribute more effectively to the conduct of IOSEA business between regular meetings of the Signatory States and to better understand the process surrounding the meeting itself – in order to enhance the value of this special event for international cooperation in marine turtle conservation.

The terms of reference are not meant to be prescriptive, insofar as it is recognised that the Memorandum of Understanding is not legally binding and the circumstances for implementation differ from one Signatory State to another. However, they are considered to offer helpful guidance to Focal Points to assist them in the important tasks for which they have been appointed.

Intersessional activities

With a view to maximising efficiency and enhancing outcomes, each IOSEA Focal Point should:

1. Inform the Secretariat as soon as possible about any changes in the personnel responsible for IOSEA matters, so that the Secretariat can ensure that they receive all relevant communications.
2. Take the lead in the establishment and active functioning of a national marine turtle committee or network¹, as appropriate, to bring together representatives of relevant ministries, agencies, departments, and other relevant stakeholders, including research and academic organisations, non-governmental organisations, private sector (such as fishing organisations, tourism organisations, etc). This Committee should meet periodically to exchange information on marine turtle conservation and to review IOSEA implementation.
3. Oversee the preparation and/or updating of the IOSEA National Report, including the Site Data Sheets, making use of the Online Reporting Facility created for this purpose. The process of soliciting stakeholder inputs to the National Report should begin at least 6-9 months prior to the Signatory State meeting. (The 'Editor' allows Focal Points with password access to make changes to the report at any time.)
4. Identify and delegate appropriate technical specialist(s) for the preparation of periodic species assessments, in accordance with decisions of the Meeting of the Signatory States.

¹ Programme 6.4c) of the Conservation and Management Plan of the IOSEA MoU encourages cooperation within and among government and non-government sectors, including through the development and/or strengthening of national networks. Progress towards the establishment of such national 'coordinating committees' has been under review since the Third Meeting of the Signatory States (2005); and a special page on the IOSEA website (under 'Membership') is devoted to this important topic.

5. Consult the IOSEA website (www.ioseaturtles.org) at least once a month, and preferably more often, to be acquainted with the latest developments from around the region, and to make sure that general information from their country is accurate and up to date.
6. Compile and send periodically to the Secretariat information of general interest on marine turtle conservation activities being conducted in their country, for publication on the IOSEA website, including plans for new work and details of upcoming meetings of interest.
7. Communicate with the respective IOSEA sub-regional Focal Point as and when necessary (ideally, at least twice a year), and respond in a timely manner to requests for information.
8. Identify and describe, in as much detail as possible (in Section 5.4.1 of the national report template), the resources that would be required (in terms of human, equipment, training, etc.) to better implement the provisions of the MoU and CMP within the country and, in particular, identify essential activities that are not being conducted for lack of resources.
9. Solicit funding and support within the national budget and from other sources within the country for implementation of IOSEA-related activities, for attendance at relevant IOSEA meetings, and for voluntary contributions towards IOSEA operational costs, in keeping with decisions of the Signatory States.
10. Where applicable, consider submitting an application to benefit from funding through the IOSEA Technical Support and Capacity Building Programme.
11. Call attention to and promote implementation of the IOSEA MoU in national and international forums, with a view to promoting synergy and avoiding unnecessary duplication of effort.

Before the Meeting of the Signatory States: Preparation

12. An important step in preparing for a Signatory State meeting is to hold national consultations several months before the meeting. Among other things, this will facilitate a review of the national report and compilation of any final inputs. Typically, the Secretariat issues reminders at least six months prior to the Meeting of the Signatory States calling for updates to the national reports to be finalised at least 2-3 months in advance of the Meeting, to enable the Secretariat to prepare an overall synthesis of implementation progress.
13. The Secretariat will circulate a provisional agenda for the upcoming Meeting of the Signatory States at least three months in advance. It is important for the Focal Point to review this document: (1) to be informed of the major topics that will be discussed, as well as the focus of any thematic workshops; (2) to consider proposing additional agenda items and discussion topics; and (3) to offer any other general feedback. Delegates should prepare themselves to discuss national activities in these specific areas, as well as any international or regional initiatives. Delegates who are expected to make a presentation at the meeting will be mentioned in the provisional agenda.

14. Prior to the meeting, Focal Points are encouraged to compile information on new marine turtle conservation and management actions / initiatives that have been carried out in their country since the previous Meeting of Signatory States. This would be a useful preparatory exercise for the sub-regional Working Group meetings, held at the Meeting of the Signatory States, where Focal Points may be called upon to present an update of activity in their country.
15. IOSEA Signatory States have decided that any draft resolutions should be submitted to the Secretariat, for wider circulation (to other delegations, Advisory Committee etc.) at least 60 days prior to the meeting (cf. Report of the Fifth Meeting of the Signatory States). Whereas draft resolutions must be submitted through a Focal Point, they may be drafted by the Advisory Committee or any other interested party. Any exceptions to the 60-day deadline must be agreed by the Signatory States by consensus at the meeting. Focal Points should consult with interested partners as widely as possible on the contents of any draft resolution they wish to introduce.
16. An important topic of discussion at the Signatory State meeting will be securing funding and other support for the work to be conducted in the coming year. Focal Points are encouraged to hold internal discussions prior to the Signatory State meeting to explore possible sources of funding that their government or outside organisations may be able to offer. Where possible, Focal Points are requested to come to the Meeting of the Signatory States prepared to indicate the amount of financial resources their Government might be in a position to provide during the next 1-2 years.

During the Meeting: Participation

17. Focal Points should review any resolutions proposed by Signatory States and to provide input as requested by other delegations, the Secretariat, or Advisory Committee. They may be called upon to give feedback on a procedural question, provide information on regional or national conservation and management activities, or discuss proposed activities and priorities for implementing the IOSEA MoU.
18. During the Meeting of the Signatory States, countries of each of the four IOSEA sub-regions will have an opportunity to discuss among themselves their current conservation programmes, priorities, challenges and successes; as well as future plans and opportunities to coordinate at the sub-regional level. Each sub-region will report back to the meeting as a whole.

After the Meeting: Follow-up

19. Focal Points are encouraged to review the minutes and make any suggestions (within a time frame to be agreed at the meeting) for corrections or changes to be incorporated in the final document. This will allow delegates to stay focused on what was decided at the meeting as well as the next steps needed to further the goals of the IOSEA MoU.
20. Focal Points should arrange to reconvene their national committee/network (as appropriate) as soon as possible to keep all parties up-to-date on IOSEA decisions and goals for the coming two years. This should include discussions among national

stakeholders as to how they plan to collectively implement the IOSEA MoU requirements at the national level; and make arrangements for future marine turtle conservation actions in light of the results of the meeting.

21. Also as follow-up, Focal Points should submit any outstanding or requested documents to the Secretariat; and should make it a priority to finish updating the national report if this was not done prior to the meeting.
22. To assure continued implementation of the MoU, Focal Points should take personal responsibility to initiate the internal process of securing the financial or in-kind contributions volunteered at the Signatory State meeting. Focal Points should inform the Secretariat within 45 days of the meeting about the status of the voluntary financial contribution.
23. Focal Points should continue to collaborate with sub-regional partners between the periodic Meetings of the Signatory States, with a view to implementing the projects and collaborative activities agreed during the sub-regional discussions.
24. In addition to giving diligent attention to IOSEA matters domestically, Focal Points should work with the Secretariat to promote the conservation of marine turtles and their habitats, as well as the work of the IOSEA, in other relevant forums.

Terms of Reference and Guidance for IOSEA Sub-regional Focal Points

Introduction

1. The mandate for sub-regional² collaboration arises from the Basic Principles outlined in the IOSEA Memorandum of Understanding. Paragraphs 5 and 6 provide for the Signatory States to establish bilateral, sub-regional or regional management plans to support the MoU, as well as to coordinate with sub-regional institutions in the region.
2. The Western Indian Ocean – Marine Turtle Task Force, a collaborative body established in 2008 under the aegis of the IOSEA MoU and the Nairobi Convention, is one example of a sub-regional initiative set-up expressly to support IOSEA implementation. The Task Force has met periodically and has exchanged information inter-sessionally through e-mail.
3. In South-East Asia, an ASEAN MoU on sea turtle conservation and protection provides a general framework for sub-regional cooperation, with practical activities conducted under the auspices of a long-term SEAFDEC project, once known as the “Regional Technical Consultation on Research for Stock Enhancement of Sea Turtles”. The IOSEA Secretariat has actively participated in regular meetings of this consultative group.
4. In 2004, the Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (PERSGA) drafted a comprehensive Regional Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Turtles and their Habitats in the Red Sea. The PERSGA plan makes extensive reference to the IOSEA MoU, which was just becoming operational during the period the former was being drafted. PERSGA member States (Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen) have in turn prepared national action plans. Although practical implementation of the Regional Action Plan appears not to have advanced as quickly as desired, it nevertheless serves as a benchmark for monitoring sub-regional marine turtle conservation efforts. The potential for linkages between this PERSGA initiative and IOSEA warrants further exploration.
5. The Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME), based in Kuwait, provides a framework for the eight countries that make up the so-called “ROPME Sea Area” to cooperate on environmental matters. The coastal states concerned are Bahrain, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. ROPME has sought to conclude a separate protocol on biodiversity and protected areas, which might also provide for the

² The four IOSEA sub-regions are defined as follows: **South-East Asia +**: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Viet Nam + Australia, China, Japan, Republic of Korea, United States; **Northern Indian Ocean**: Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan, Sri Lanka; **Northwestern Indian Ocean**: Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, United Arab Emirates, Yemen; **Western Indian Ocean**: Comoros, France, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania.

development of a marine turtle monitoring and conservation strategy in the ROPME Sea Area. IOSEA was invited to a regional workshop of ROPME member states, organised in Tehran in 2010, to share information and explore possibilities for future collaboration. At the time of writing, it is unclear whether the ROPME biodiversity protocol has been formally adopted or whether an ambitious programme of work on marine turtles has commenced.

6. Currently, it appears that no comparable mechanisms exist for countries of the Northern Indian Ocean (i.e. Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan, Sri Lanka) to collaborate in marine turtle conservation efforts, notwithstanding a compelling need for better communication and coordination among national sea turtle conservation initiatives.
7. The IOSEA Signatory States recognised in 2006 that, whether or not formal sub-regional coordination mechanisms are in place, there is benefit in designating specific individuals to try to improve coordination and exchange of information within each sub-region. These individuals also serve as observers to the deliberations of the IOSEA Advisory Committee and they receive intersessional correspondence and documents, as outlined in the Advisory Committee's Terms of Reference (reproduced in part, below).

The following Terms of Reference serve to further clarify the roles and responsibilities of IOSEA Sub-regional Focal Points.

Roles and Responsibilities

8. The Sub-regional Focal Point is expected to maintain regular contact with sub-regional IOSEA members, as well as non-state actors, during the intersessional period between Signatory State meetings. In doing so, the Sub-regional Focal Point can act as a reference point for major activities in the sub-region and possibly identify potential possibilities for cooperation among them. To minimize costs such communication should be conducted as far as possible by email or during other events that involve members of the sub-region.
9. Each sub-regional Focal Point should participate in a periodic conference call, to be organised by the Secretariat, that would involve all four sub-regional Focal Points and also the Chair of the Advisory Committee or his/her representative, for the purpose of sharing information from the respective regions, as well as exchanging information about the current secretariat work programme.
10. The Sub-regional Focal Point should facilitate communication and information exchange among sub-regional members by soliciting information from state and non-state actors, and promoting use of the IOSEA website as a vehicle for dissemination of information to a wider audience. By soliciting and posting periodic articles to the website, and making use of its online discussion forum, members will be kept abreast of marine turtle conservation initiatives in the sub-region that might present valuable opportunities for collaboration.
11. Each Sub-regional Focal Point should organise and conduct a meeting of the members of their sub-region in conjunction with the Meeting of the Signatory States, held at roughly two year intervals. The purpose of this meeting is to form a clearer picture of recent developments within the sub-region. This may be achieved by discussing

activities undertaken since the last meeting, exchanging information about conservation measures and projects, recognising challenges and successes, discussing national and sub-regional priorities, and identifying plans and sub-regional goals for the upcoming years.

12. Subject to availability of funding and support, other meetings may be organised at the Sub-regional Focal Point's discretion and with the consent of the members, in addition to the one held during the Signatory State meeting.
13. The Sub-regional Focal Point is expected to report, or to designate a member of the group to report, on sub-regional developments to each Meeting of the Signatory States. This report should highlight the main activities undertaken and outcomes achieved in the sub-region since the previous meeting, summarise the deliberations of the session held in conjunction with the Meeting of the Signatory States, and outline the priority needs and challenges, as well as activities planned for the upcoming two year period.
14. Sub-regional groups should develop annual work plans that identify the specific objectives that the group wishes to pursue over the coming year. This document would guide the ongoing activities of the sub-region and serve as a reference against which to review progress in future meetings.
15. Sub-regional Focal Points are encouraged to attend relevant meetings of related institutions and associations involved with marine turtle conservation in the region; and to encourage other members of the sub-region to attend as well. Wherever possible, a brief report of the main outcomes should be prepared for publication on the IOSEA website.
16. Sub-regional Focal Points should promote collaboration with non-signatory States in the sub-region, with a view to encouraging additional key players to become signatories to the IOSEA Marine Turtle MoU.

Extract from the Terms of Reference of the IOSEA Advisory Committee (adopted March 2006)

"7. The Advisory Committee may benefit from additional participation in the form of observers from each of the IOSEA sub-regions. The sub-regional observers should attend meetings of the Advisory Committee and receive inter-sessional correspondence and documents of the Committee. In addition to observing the work of the Advisory Committee, sub-regional observers may provide input, views and comments to the Committee as appropriate.

8. Each sub-regional observer [Focal Point] shall be decided by consensus of the Signatory States of each sub-region, and that decision shall be communicated to the IOSEA Secretariat. The designated individual may be a Focal Point from a Signatory State of the sub-region or another competent person working on marine turtle conservation who would be in a position to: (1) attend meetings of the Advisory Committee and Signatory States (using their own resources to support their attendance/participation), (2) effectively communicate to the Advisory Committee and the Secretariat the views and the issues of concern of the countries of the sub-region they represent, and (3) report back to the other members of their sub-region."