



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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SIXTH MEETING OF THE SIGNATORY STATES  
Bangkok, Thailand, 23-27 January 2012

PROPOSAL FOR CREATION OF AN INTER-SESSIONAL  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

1. The IOSEA Marine Turtle MoU has benefitted, since its inception, from scientific and technical advice provided by its Advisory Committee – a body of experts established through a specific reference in the text of the Memorandum of Understanding. Though common to other multilateral agreements, no comparable entity was foreseen to provide advice or guidance in relation to other matters of a more administrative, operational or substantive nature. Indeed, the relative simplicity of the arrangements for IOSEA could be a deliberate reflection of its non-binding legal status; and they appear to have served the MoU quite well so far.
2. That the agreement has functioned well in the absence of more formal oversight may be attributed to a combination of a mature secretariat nested within a stable UN bureaucracy, consistency in voluntary funding from Signatory States, and relatively few disruptive, extraneous influences. Additionally, the Secretariat has established good working relationships with representatives of a number of Signatory States who have shown personal interest in the work of the MoU and have been available, periodically, to discuss ideas and act as a sounding-board for the Secretariat's ongoing pre-occupations.
3. While there is no immediate reason to believe that this favourable situation will not continue indefinitely, the Signatory States may wish to consider options for strengthening their involvement in the operational oversight of the Memorandum of Understanding, perhaps by creating a special body or identifying other interlocutors with whom the Secretariat could expect to have more regular contact.
4. Various models exist from other agreements – including the Convention on Migratory Species, IOSEA's parent organisation – that could be explored, without necessarily invoking the creation of a "Standing Committee", which has specific terms of reference and is required to meet regularly.
5. Rather, in keeping with the less formal, voluntary nature of IOSEA, it might be worthwhile considering a slightly more dynamic role for the four sub-regional Focal Points which, it must be said, still have not been utilised to their full potential. For example, one might envisage the Secretariat organising a periodic conference call – perhaps 3-4 times a year – that would involve all four sub-regional Focal Points and perhaps also the Chair of the Advisory Committee, for the purpose of sharing information from the respective regions, as well as communicating information about the current secretariat work programme. It might not be necessary to develop new terms of reference for this entity; or even to assign it a name, as the title of this paper suggests. Indeed, it might suffice to make a small adjustment to the terms of reference for the sub-regional Focal Points that have already been circulated with Document 11 (IOSEA Focal Point Roles and Responsibilities).

*Action requested:*

Signatory States are invited to consider the merits of strengthening linkages between the four IOSEA sub-regions and the Secretariat, through a modest expansion of the existing sub-regional Focal Point arrangements or some other option.