



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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Report/ Annex 7

REPORT OF THE THIRD MEETING OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Bangkok, 28 March 2005

Present: Bundit Chokesanguan, Jack Frazier, George Hughes, Colin Limpus (Chair), Jeanne Mortimer, Sejal Worah, Douglas Hykle (Secretariat); apologies were received from Romeo Trono.

Agenda item 1: Welcoming remarks

1. The Secretariat welcomed the Advisory Committee members to the third meeting of the Committee, taking place on the eve of the Third Meeting of the Signatory States (hereinafter referred to as the Meeting). He noted that an informal meeting of a number of members had been held the previous day to discuss the IOSEA Marine Turtle Interactive Mapping System (IMapS).

Agenda item 2: Adoption of the agenda

2. The agenda (attached at Annex 1) was adopted without amendment. The Committee proposed to meet for the full day. Dr. Frazier agreed to serve as rapporteur.

Agenda item 3: Overview of the Third Meeting of the Signatory States

3. The Secretariat summarised the expected attendance at the forthcoming meeting. It was anticipated that all but one or two of the Signatory States would participate, and observers were expected from the non-Signatory States of France, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Timor-Leste. Observers from a number of intergovernmental and nongovernmental organisations were also expected to attend.

4. The Secretariat advised that, due the limited funds available, it had generally not been possible to provide support for the travel expenses of non-Signatory States. Expressions of interest in the IOSEA MoU from countries of the Gulf region would need to be followed up by other means.

5. The Committee was pleased to note that the Ambassador of Indonesia would sign the IOSEA MoU on the last day of the Meeting. Indonesia was considered an important addition to the countries participating in the agreement.

Agenda item 4: Summary of Committee members' regional marine turtle activities since the Second Meeting of the Signatory States

6. Members of the Committee provided a summary of their recent activities in relation to the IOSEA MoU as follows:

- Dr. Limpus reported that he had engaged in many initiatives involving indigenous communities, fisheries (on the issue of ghost nets and the longline industry), collaboration with other States (namely Timor-Leste), networking and training activities with NGOs, and interactions with various levels of government in Australia.

- Mr. Chokesanguan outlined the various training activities carried out by the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC) on issues such as incidental catch of marine turtles. The Committee noted from his presentation that SEAFDEC had completed an analysis of the effectiveness of Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) in the region, and had been involved in demonstrations and experiments on circle hooks for longline fishers, tagging work, genetic analyses, and head-starting.

- Dr. Hughes advised that he had participated in training workshops, had been actively involved with the Francophone island states of his region, and had initiated preparations for the Year of the Turtle (YoT) campaign with various aquaria in South Africa.
- Dr. Mortimer detailed her work on the flipper tag database for the IOSEA website, her coordination of marine turtle work in the Seychelles, and her contribution to the Western Indian Ocean workshop organised by KESCOM in September 2004.
- Dr. Frazier expanded on the topic of the workshop, emphasising the singular importance of developing a model for cooperation between the IOSEA MoU and the Nairobi Convention. He also mentioned that he was finalising a multi-authored publication on marine turtles as a flagship species to promote the work of researchers in the IOSEA region and elsewhere.
- Dr. Worah recounted her activities to promote community-based conservation, which included a complex analysis of the exploitation of turtle eggs in the Turtle Islands, Philippines, as well as the development of work in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India.

Agenda item 5: Issues arising from the Second Meeting of the Signatory States (Bangkok, March 2004)

7. In a general discussion of points arising from the Second Meeting of the Signatory States, members touched on the necessary linkages to be made with other organisations, and the need to involve Signatories and non-Signatories alike in different aspects of IOSEA work. SEAFDEC's leadership role in marine turtle research and conservation initiatives in the South-East Asian region was discussed. Attendees agreed that it would be valuable to link the meetings of the Signatory States, SEAFDEC, and SEASTAR, in order to promote networking and information interchange.

8. Dr. Limpus highlighted the importance of coastal waters over extensive areas of continental shelf for the survival and maintenance of marine turtle populations. He noted that the Australian continent provided fundamental developmental and foraging habitat for many major populations, of all species, in the IOSEA region. For this reason, it was essential that Australia be actively involved in regional conservation and management initiatives.

9. The Committee considered encouraging the involvement of smaller ASEAN states that are particularly important for trade, including Brunei and Singapore, in the IOSEA MoU. It was noted that non-Signatory States would be encouraged to provide information on their activities relevant to the IOSEA MoU at the Signatory State meeting.

Agenda item 6: Discussion of the expected issues and presentations during the Third Meeting of the Signatory States

6.1 Advisory Committee

10. The Secretariat explained that it had proposed, and no Signatory State had objected, that the three members who had been nominated inter-sessionally continue in their positions for a full two-year term. He further noted that three current members of the Committee had been re-nominated by the Signatory States: J. Frazier, C. Limpus, and J. Mortimer. Two additional nominations had also been received, from the Islamic Republic of Iran (nominating Dr. Behzad Saeedpour) and Sri Lanka (nominating Mr. Wellaketeye Sarath Kumarasingha Pathirathna).

11. The Committee acknowledged that it had been tasked with identifying an expert who could provide expertise on protected marine areas, and the site network initiative. After discussion, it was agreed that Dr. Nyawira Muthiga, a coral marine biology expert based in Kenya with the Wildlife Conservation Society, would provide a valuable contribution, and her name was proposed for Advisory Committee membership.

12. The Committee discussed a proposal of the Secretariat to alter the Committee's composition, whereby eight core members would be selected by consensus of the Signatory States, and four more members chosen from each of the four sub-regions. The Secretariat explained the need to have more active feedback from the Advisory Committee, and suggested that certain Focal Points could be useful members. This would provide a hybrid structure, allowing for most members to be selected by consensus on the basis of technical expertise and other members to be added on the basis of sub-regional and national interests, in principle by consensus in the sub-region.

13. Another issue considered was the need to have greater representation on the Committee from both Arabic and Francophone specialists. Discussions indicated there was a need for clear objectives and criteria for the function and selection of Advisory Committee members. Also, it was noted that suggestions should be provided to the Signatory States regarding potential amendments to the Committee's terms of reference. To that end, Drs. Mortimer and Worah agreed to provide a draft proposal on Advisory Committee member selection criteria, bearing in mind the need to include wide geographic and linguistic representation.

6.2 Implementation progress

14. The Secretariat asked the Committee for its thoughts on the implementation of the IOSEA MoU Conservation and Management Plan. Discussion centred on section 5.2 (Action plans and further international collaboration) of document MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Doc. 7.2. After lengthy debate it was decided to propose to that the Meeting break into sub-regional working groups. These groups would discuss the identification of high priority turtle conservation actions within their respective sub-regions, each with an Advisory Committee facilitator, as follows: South-East Asia and beyond (facilitators: B. Chokesanguan and C. Limpus); Northwest and Northern Indian Ocean (facilitators: J. Frazier and S. Worah); and Western Indian Ocean (facilitators: G. Hughes and J. Mortimer).

15. The Committee considered specific issues requiring enhanced international cooperation, based on the information provided by the Signatory States through the reporting process, as summarised in section 5.2 mentioned above. It was agreed that this information could be structured into a matrix that gave a specific definition of problems encountered; detailed the co-operative international approaches used to resolve problems; evaluated whether these attempts had worked; noted what further collaboration and commitments were required; and listed the major actors.

6.3 General considerations

16. The Secretariat indicated that some activities had not been reported in the national reports, or had been reported only briefly, so that it was sometimes difficult to interpret the level and success of their implementation. The Secretariat was seeking to solicit more information from Focal Points and others, and had circulated a questionnaire (attached to document MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Doc.12) to that end.

17. The meeting considered other agenda papers, as follows:

a) *Network of sites: MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Doc. 8.1*

This paper was discussed at length, as the Committee was interested in the main objectives of the proposal, including whether or not established and important sites should be omitted from a network. After considerable debate about what kinds of sites ought to be included in a network, it was concluded that the options and their implications should be explained to the Signatory States during the plenary session. Delegates would be asked to provide their views on the overall objectives of the network, and once these had been clarified, criteria for site selection could be developed.

b) *Year of the Turtle (YoT): MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Doc. 8.2*

The Secretariat observed that to date, it was aware of interest among the NGO community and some Government circles for the YoT, but that demonstrated commitment to the proposal – in terms of planning and financial support – had yet to materialise in a significant way. A discussion ensued about whether or

not the YoT should proceed as a region-wide initiative, and what impacts this might have on Signatory States that had expressed enthusiasm for the idea. The Committee agreed that the Meeting should solicit responses from Signatories to determine their interest in, and intended support for, the YoT. Once these had been analysed, the Secretariat would assess whether central coordination of the initiative was warranted, or whether activities might be conducted on a more ad hoc basis.

c) *Traditional and cultural use: MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Doc 8.3*

The Committee considered this paper, drafted by Dr. Frazier, and identified that a central issue was the conflict between 'Western, preservation-based' conservation initiatives, and 'indigenous rights to exploit and utilise resources'. Dr. Limpus opined that there was no charter for indigenous use to either take a species/population to extinction, or result in the inhumane treatment of wildlife. The view was expressed that the national reporting template could be modified to solicit more specific information on the issue of traditional and cultural use.

d) *Hatchery management: MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Doc. 8.4*

Dr. Limpus explained that he had yet to complete the paper requested on hatchery management, but that he had broadened its scope and hoped to complete it in the coming months. The document for the Meeting did, however, contain his review of a recent, comprehensive SEAFDEC publication, "Guide to Set-up and Manage Sea Turtles Hatcheries in the Southeast Asian Region". Members considered it important to convey to the Signatories that hatcheries could be one of many useful options for conservation, in instances where *in situ* nest protection was impossible, but that they were certainly not the only activity required.

e) *Fisheries-turtle interactions: MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Doc. 8.5*

The Committee was advised that this paper was based on a new analysis by Birdlife International, which had thoroughly evaluated the performance of Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs). The document summarised findings for those RFMOs that were most relevant to the IOSEA region. Although the development of FAO guidelines was very promising, from past experience with international plans of action for other marine species, it was questionable as to how much follow-up these would receive from FAO. Given this situation, it was proposed that the IOSEA MoU serve as a reporting mechanism for Signatory States, to enable them to compile information on measures to deal with fisheries-turtle interactions in the IOSEA region.

f) *Possible extension of the geographic scope of the IOSEA MoU: MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Doc 8.6*

The Secretariat noted that this paper resulted from the Second Meeting of the Signatory States, and had been drafted in collaboration with the Australian delegation. It was suggested that, as a representative of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme was likely to attend the Meeting, there would be an opportunity for informed discussion on the present situation in the Pacific.

6.4 Impacts of the Indian Ocean tsunami

18. The Secretariat referred members to the useful compilation of information on the impacts of the December 2004 tsunami presented in document MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Doc. 9. Dr. Limpus advised that his agency could make him available for conducting consultancies throughout the region, in regard to post-tsunami recovery and evaluation. The Secretariat added that the Meeting of the Signatory States would receive presentations on this issue from Sri Lanka and Thailand.

6.5 Species-specific issues within the IOSEA region

19. Dr. Limpus outlined a proposal for the Advisory Committee to report on one species of marine turtle on an annual basis. This would provide an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the conservation situation for that species throughout the IOSEA region, and different species would be considered each year.

Agenda item 7: Other issues

20. The Committee considered other issues before the Meeting, including the IMapS project and the flipper tag database. The importance of including reliable data in the IMapS was highlighted, as well as the desirability of including functions to sort information by date of acquisition and to select a subset of data according to the data provider. Dr. Limpus noted that it had been difficult to obtain and coordinate data from satellite tracking to incorporate into the IMapS; more of this and other types of data was needed.

21. Members discussed documents relating to the flipper tag database (MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Doc 8.6 and MT-IOSEA/SS.3/Inf. 9). The Secretariat advised that there was now very good coverage, but that more information was required from the Northwestern and Western Indian Ocean, including Madagascar, Reunion, and South Africa. Advisory Committee members were asked to facilitate the provision of data through their own sources or contacts.

Agenda item 8: Oral report of the Chair to the Third Meeting of the Signatory States

22. Dr. Limpus asked to be provided with the draft report for the present meeting, being prepared by Dr. Frazier, to enable him to incorporate these comments into his oral report to the Signatory States.

Agenda item 9: Other business

23. The Secretariat outlined, for the Committee's benefit, the further development of the IOSEA website and some of its newer features; and encouraged members to promote its use.

24. The Committee discussed potential changes to the national report template. Dr. Mortimer raised the need to clearly define key terms used in the template's questions, including terms such as "feeding habitat" and "developmental habitat". Dr. Limpus emphasised the need for more information on pelagic phases. The Secretariat explained that as such information would not be linked to a specific site, the database as currently structured would not be able to handle it. Such information, if provided in future, would need to be incorporated differently.

25. Dr. Mortimer highlighted the usefulness of including information on the relative level of importance of sites, acknowledging that this was a subjective measure that was not necessarily comparable across countries. The Secretariat indicated that, for technical reasons, the database could not easily accommodate another independent variable, but that users could always indicate alongside the name of the site (in parentheses, for example) its relative importance, using the subjective measure of HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW. This would avoid the need for extensive reprogramming. He noted that, despite the limitations of the national reporting template, this system, which had been developed with only modest resources, was significantly more advanced than other reporting systems.

26. The Secretariat suggested that in the future it would be desirable to dedicate two full days to the meeting of the Advisory Committee, if funding allowed. He also mentioned that a recent strategic planning session of his parent organisation, CMS, had been especially fruitful, and that the IOSEA MoU might take advantage of this experience with involvement of the Advisory Committee.

27. Dr. Hughes suggested that it might be more effective to have biennial meetings of the Signatory States, with meetings of the Advisory Committee held six months before each of these. The Secretariat considered that annual meetings of the Signatory States were still necessary to promote more rapid development of the instrument and its implementation process, but that in time a format along the lines proposed by Dr. Hughes might well be contemplated.

28. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1910.

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. Welcoming remarks
 2. Adoption of the agenda
 3. Secretariat overview of the Third Meeting of the Signatory States
 4. Committee member to summarise their regional marine turtle activities undertaken since SS2
 5. Issues arising from the Second Meeting of the Signatory States (SS2 - Bangkok, March 2004)
 6. Discussion of expected issues / presentations during SS3
 - 6.1 Advisory Committee
 - Terms of reference; strengths and weaknesses
 - Nominations / re-nominations
 - Additional expertise
 - How can AC become more useful to SS in assisting them to develop and/or implement projects?
 - 6.2 Implementation progress (Doc 7.2)

AC facilitation of SS3 Working Groups with regard to the following:

 - (a) Identification / review of areas/issues of high priority turtle conservation actions within the IOSEA (ongoing AC function that could form part of the annual reporting to the SS):
 - Western Indian Ocean
 - Northwestern Indian Ocean
 - Northern Indian Ocean – especially India
 - South-East Asia “plus” – especially Indonesia (see Inf. 10), PNG
 - (b) Identification / integration of other project activities around the region
- 6.2 General considerations (Doc 8 series)
 - Network of sites
 - 2006 Year of the Turtle
 - Traditional and cultural use
 - Hatchery management
 - Fisheries-turtle interaction (including gill nets, ghost nets/marine debris)
 - Possible extension of geographical scope of MOU
- 6.3 Indian Ocean tsunami (Doc 9)
- 6.4 Species-specific issues within IOSEA
7. Other issues
 - IOSEA Interactive Mapping System (IMapS)
 - AC encouragement / promotion of external inputs to IOSEA information management tools (see Inf. 9)
8. Oral report of Chair to Meeting of SS
9. Other business