



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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Annex 9

FOURTH MEETING OF THE SIGNATORY STATES
Muscat, Oman, 11-14 March 2006

REPORT OF THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
9-10 MARCH 2006 (and addendum)

Present: George Hughes (Chair), Bundit Chokesanguan (10 March only), Jack Frazier, Colin Limpus, Nyawira Muthiga; Douglas Hykle (IOSEA Secretariat), Mark Hamann (observer), Suppachai Ananpongsuk (observer: 10 March).

Agenda item 1: Welcoming remarks

1. Dr. Hughes, the Chairman, opened the meeting at 1130, welcoming the members of the Advisory Committee (AC) and expressing apologies on behalf of Jeanne Mortimer and Sejah Woral.

Agenda item 2: Adoption of Agenda

2. The agenda (attached hereto) was adopted without amendment. The Committee proposed to meet for the remainder of the day and for the full day of 10 March. Dr. Frazier agreed to serve as rapporteur.

3. The Chairman extended congratulations to Dr. Muthiga for having received the National Geographic Society-Buffer award, and to Dr. Limpus and the Queensland Marine Turtle Project, who had been nominated for the Eureka Award. In their absence, he commented on the achievements of Sejal Woral and Bundit Chokesanguan; and congratulated the Secretariat for the production of the 2006 Year of the Turtle (YoT) Calendar.

Agenda item 3: Secretariat overview of the Fourth Meeting of the Signatory States

4. Mr. Hykle, Secretariat, summarised the preparations for the forthcoming meeting of the Signatory States (SS4). All Signatories except Cambodia were expected to attend, together with observers from China, Malaysia, Yemen and the United Arab Emirates, as well as a major NGO working in Somalia. A large number of participants were expected for the opening ceremony, including two ministers and several other senior Omani officials; some 60-70 participants were expected for the substantive portion of the meeting. The Omani hosts had assumed many organisational tasks, greatly relieving Secretariat's responsibilities in those areas. An overnight excursion would be organised from the afternoon of 14 March.

Agenda item 4: Summary of Committee members' marine turtle activities since SS3

5. Each member of the Committee provided a summary of their recent activities in relation to the IOSEA Marine Turtle MoU. Dr. Frazier mentioned the publication of a multi-authored special edition of MAST on marine turtles as flagship species, the organization of a panel for the upcoming meeting of the International Association for the Study of Common Property. Dr. Limpus described various activities including: long-term monitoring various stocks of green, loggerhead, hawksbill, and flatback turtles; administering a dynamic tag recovery programme; co-supervising a graduate student from Viet Nam; training of Sabah Parks and MTSG staff; production of a DVD for children; working on the problem of ghost nets in Arafura sea and capacity building; examining management options for

directed take; re-election at the Eight Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species as marine turtle advisor; and work on climate change implications for marine turtles. Dr. Muthiga had collaborated in the finalisation of the proceedings from a Western Indian Ocean marine turtle meeting which she had co-organized in 2004; was organizing a coastal ecology workshop in May 2006 that would include aspects of turtle conservation; was preparing proposals for research on fisheries and economic aspects of turtle conservation for various agencies; continued to chair KESCOM (the Kenyan sea turtle conservation programme); was helping to fund and promote the Year of the Turtle (YoT) in Kenya; and was promoting the IOSEA Marine Turtle Task Force concept with the Nairobi Convention. The Chair summarised that Dr. Woral had been active in marine turtle training and awareness programs in Orissa, India. Dr. Hughes mentioned that his activities had been mainly administrative: promoting South Africa's leatherback program, helping with planning of a new turtle resource centre in Reunion, France, and evaluating a mass mortality of turtles in Angola evidently a red tide event.

Agenda item 5: SS4 agenda items possibly requiring Advisory Committee advice

6. The Secretariat introduced a number of topics dealing with the national reporting, each of which was followed by discussion.

(a) National reporting

7. The template and online system for reporting information from the Signatory States had been updated, adding a number of useful innovations (Doc 8.1). Many countries had not updated their reports; and in many cases there was likely significant under-reporting of activities actually undertaken. A lengthy discussion considered points that needed consideration for future reporting procedures.

(b) Review of implementation progress

8. Criteria for evaluation of IOSEA national reports had been introduced for the first time, setting a clear standard for reporting (Doc. 8.2). It was important to differentiate between plans and activities on the one hand and actual outcomes (results) on the other. There was also a fundamental need to go beyond reporting and to evaluate effectiveness of measures on the basis of trends in marine turtle populations.

9. In addition to a very comprehensive review of implementation (Doc. 8.3), the Secretariat had produced a synthesis of 11 key points (Doc 8.3 – Addendum) which it would circulate during the meeting. A lengthy discussion ensued with recommendations on basic points that need consideration for future work. It was fundamental to emphasize that the reporting exercise undertaken to date had focused mainly on the actions being taken by Signatory States, and that the just completed leatherback assessment would complement that reporting with information on population status and trends. It was considered important to extend this work to other species, and to analysis the rest of the data on sites and threats contained in the national reports.

10. Important issues related to implementation progress were discussed with particular attention to the major points that need to be discussed in the working groups. Guidelines were produced for the working group facilitators, covering the range of topics expected to be covered in the sub-regional groups.

(c) Region-wide review of Leatherback conservation status and tsunami impacts

11. Dr. Hamann described the work involved in the production of the report, soliciting suggestions for dealing with certain points needed for its finalization, and pointing out steps that could be improved for future reports on other species. In many cases, national specialists were not able to provide the required information. The Committee suggested a number of steps for finalizing the report, and

agreed to propose to the Signatory States that the next step should be to produce a report on the Loggerhead *Caretta caretta* within 12 months and a report on the Green turtle *Chelonia mydas* within 24 months, with much of the initial information collection done simultaneously.

(d) Status reports on other CMS/IOSEA-funded projects (Doc. 8.4)

12. Two reports that would be presented to the SS4 meeting were briefly mentioned, covering conservation work in Kenya and India.

(e) Issue-based priorities

13. Fisheries-turtle interactions in the IOSEA region were discussed briefly. SEAFDEC has been very active in South-East Asia, offering a programme that was worthy of emulation elsewhere. It was noted that a representative of FAO fisheries department would participate in the meeting, and that the IOTC was gradually progressing with the consideration of bycatch, though turtle bycatch had not been accorded very high priority.

14. It was agreed that the issue of coastal development had not been given adequate importance in the national reporting, and that it would be useful to construct a new question that could be inserted into the existing template.

15. Dr. Limpus described the beach management policy paper that he was producing, including discussion of the ramifications of climate change, and estimated that it would be available around August 2006.

(f) Network of sites of importance for marine turtles (Doc 10)

16. It was agreed that there was a need for clear and objective criteria for assigning importance value of nesting beaches. Dr Limpus reported on a current initiative in Australia in this area. The Secretariat would continue the development of the site network initiative, which was presently under review by colleagues in UNEP/GEF.

(h) Other priority site-specific interventions

17. The massive bycatch and mortality at Orissa, India, continued to be a major concern. Dr Limpus reported an increase in tortoise-shell trade in Papua and Papua New Guinea. The Advisory Committee expressed concern, signalling the pressing need to obtain basic information on compliance with national and international measures regulating exploitation and trade in this critically endangered species.

Agenda item 6: Advisory Committee

18. The possibility of slightly modifying the Committee's terms of reference was discussed to avoid misunderstanding in the process of national nominations to the committee. With regard to the nomination or re-nomination of AC members, all of the serving members (including those subject to renomination) agreed to continue for the coming year. It was agreed that there was a lack of representation on the Committee from two geographic areas, notably: Arabic-speaking and French-speaking countries. A need for strengthening certain specialist capacities, particularly in the social sciences (e.g., social economist) was also expressed.

Agenda item 7: Other matters

19. Dr. Limpus described his activities in relation to the IOSEA Interactive Mapping System (IMapS). The Secretariat emphasised the importance of building into the system a protocol that would enable others to provide data in the future, to create a sense of ownership among contributors

and users. Progress made in this area at the Third Meeting of the Advisory Committee needed to be followed up with UNEP-WCMC.

20. With regard to the use and promotion of IOSEA information management tools, the Secretariat summarised use of the website, explaining that 14 of top 20 user groups were countries from the region.

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

21. The Chair briefed the Committee on the report that he would be making to the Signatory States during plenary, summarise the work of Advisory Committee members and the main issues covered in the present meeting.

Agenda item 9: Other business

There being no additional matters of business, the Chair thanked the members and Secretariat for their work and the meeting adjourned at 17:00.

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ADDENDUM: 14 MARCH 2006 SESSION

1. As planned, the Advisory Committee reconvened briefly immediately following the close of the Fourth Meeting of the Signatory States, at 1345 on 14 March 2006, for the main purpose of discussing arrangements for the chairmanship. All five Committee members present in Muscat were in attendance.
2. Dr. Hughes announced his intention to step down from the chair, as foreseen when he took up the post in March 2005; but indicated that he would continue to serve on the Committee for one more year. Dr. Jack Frazier was the unanimous choice of his peers to take over as Advisory Committee chair, which he agreed.
3. Members then revisited the issue of additional expertise required for the Committee to function effectively, bearing in mind that Dr. Sejal Worah's term had come to an end. In accordance with paragraph 4 of the Committee's terms of reference, members proposed that Mr. Ali Al-Kiyumi (Oman) be put forward to the Signatory States for consideration. [*Secretariat note: supporting documents to accompany the nomination will be secured as soon as possible.*]
4. The Committee expressed its enthusiasm to move forward with the species reviews for Loggerhead and Green turtles as soon as possible, with a similar assignment of responsibilities as for the Leatherback assessment (i.e. Dr. Limpus working closely with Dr. Hamann on the compilation of information from a variety of sources, and Dr. Hughes involved in the editing of the final product). The Secretariat cautioned that the necessary administrative arrangements would take at least until May 2006 to process, once the Leatherback project had been completely wrapped up.
5. There being no other business, following the customary exchange of courtesies the meeting concluded at 1405.