

# REPORT OF THE 9<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN MARINE TURTLE TASK FORCE

*Online*  
23 March 2021



**Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Marine  
Turtles and their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia**



---

## **9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Western Indian Ocean Marine Turtle Task Force**

### **Report**

#### **Contents**

1. Welcoming Remarks and Adoption of the Agenda.....	3
2. Agreement on Chair for the Meeting.....	3
3. Introductions and Brief Country Updates .....	3
4. Overview of Outcomes of the 8 <sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Signatories (MOS8) .....	8
5. Revision of the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the WIO-MTTF .....	8
6. Election of New Leadership .....	10
7. Plans for the Celebration of the 20 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU .....	10
8. Closing of the Meeting.....	11
Annex 1: List of Participants .....	12
Annex 2: Agenda.....	14
Annex 3: Revised Terms of Reference for the Western Indian Ocean Marine Turtle Task Force.....	15



## Report of the 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Western Indian Ocean Marine Turtle Task Force

### 1. Welcoming Remarks and Adoption of the Agenda

The MOU Coordinator, Heidrun Frisch-Nwakanma (Secretariat), welcomed all present to the 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Western Indian Ocean Marine Turtle Task Force. It was the first time the Task Force met online, and she thanked all for joining. She did a tour de table inviting participants to introduce themselves.

Task Force Members from the Comoros, France, Mozambique, the Seychelles, South Africa, the United Republic of Tanzania and the United Kingdom, as well as several observers attended the meeting. The list of participants is contained in Annex 1.

The Secretariat invited comments on the [Provisional Agenda](#) which was adopted without revision (Annex 2).

### 2. Agreement on Chair for the Meeting

Noting that the WIO-MTTF did not have a Chair at this point and that Lindsey West (Tanzania) had chaired the previous meeting as Vice-Chair, the Secretariat proposed Ronel Nel (WIO-MTTF Member, South Africa / Nelson Mandela University) as Chair for this meeting, which was supported by members. Ms Nel was appointed as Chair.

The Chair thanked participants and remarked that this was a historic moment in time for the WIO-MTTF.

### 3. Introductions and Brief Country Updates

The Chair invited country representatives to present their updates on activities and developments in their countries. Copies of the presentations are contained in Annex 4.

#### Comoros

Anfani Msoili (WIO-MTTF Member / Association pour le Développement Socio Économique d'Itsamia - A.D.S.E.I.) presented a country update for the Comoros.

Moheli National Park, ADSEI Itsamia and Kelonia were working on a project identifying turtle nesting sites in the WIO region.

A major concern was that the Comoros government was building a luxury hotel on Nioumachoi island in the Moheli National Park which was a key turtle reproduction site. Poaching was still a major problem in Moheli and there were also concerns about the impacts of climate change.

Raising public awareness was an important aspect of turtle conservation and 28 May had been celebrated as the Day of the Turtle in Comoros since 1998.



### La Réunion and other French territories

Claire Jean (Kélonia) presented a country update for La Reunion and other French territories.

A number of studies and projects were underway: the TImOI research project collaboration with other countries in the region, exploring the distribution and connectivity of Hawksbill Turtles; the NExT project on genetic stability and stress analysis related to environmental change in several countries in the region on the Green and Hawksbill Turtles; the IOT project on developing new low cost satellite tags; the WIOSN seagrass monitoring project, which emerged from the COPRA project, developing a standard method of monitoring through a WIO Seagrass Network; SEMMADRONE on foraging Green Turtle mapping by UAV through semi-automated tools that allow mapping of individuals. In addition, the LIFE CHELIDEE project on implementation of sea turtle conservation actions on IO French territories and the QWIO project assessing the interactions between sea turtles and vessel traffic and underwater noise in the WIO region were both awaiting funding.

In La Réunion there was a large road (the NRL) for which compensatory measures had been identified to rehabilitate nesting beaches impacted by the development; and on Mayotte, there was a project supporting the creation of a sea turtle care centre.

Work was underway in La Réunion on the reduction of the impact of boat strikes on sea turtles through a study to better understand interactions between snorkellers and sea turtles in shallow areas, and on light pollution in coastal areas to develop new policies locally. In Mayotte, poaching laws were being strengthened through a multi-partner programme involving recruitment of agents to patrol the beaches and counter poaching measures on nesting beaches. There was also work underway on the development of a national indicator for the conservation of marine turtle populations.

Emerging major threats or challenges in La Réunion included plastic debris, boat strikes, and interactions between snorkellers and sea turtles in the lagoon and, on Mayotte, challenges included increasing demographic growth and insecurity during poaching patrols.

Success stories included, in La Réunion: the rehabilitation of 20ha of beaches; a photo ID citizen science programme enabling the identification of 665 turtles; and the establishment of a successful partnership with fishermen to reduce bycatch and increase knowledge; while in Mayotte, a multi-partner anti-poaching programme and stranding network had been established.

### Mozambique

Cristina Louro (WIO-MTTF Member / Centro Terra Viva) presented a country update for Mozambique.

A number of research projects were underway, including: a PhD project by Gelica Inteca on nests and inundation on the BANP and Vamizi Island; a consultation by Jessica Williams on fisheries interactions with marine megafauna in the Sofala Bank and Maputo Bay; a study of occurrence in nesting in the Nacala Bay by Alvaro Vetina; and cooperation between South Africa and Mozambique on the WildOceans Blue Action Plan project.

As a result of the construction of the large bridge that connects Maputo City and the coastal dunes of Ponta do Ouro, access to this area, which was an important nesting site for Loggerhead and Leatherback Turtles, had increased construction in the dunes area. Concerns about the Techobanine deep water port development continued with news of the potential upcoming construction of a railway in March 2020.



Since WIO-MTTF-8, a new area, the Maputo Environmental Protection Area (EPA) was declared in 2019 which was much bigger than the Ponta do Ouro Partial Marine Reserve in terms of the terrestrial and ocean site. Work was underway on the management plan. Efforts were also underway to declare the Maputo National Park which would connect Ponta do Ouro Partial Marine Reserve and the Maputo Special (elephant) Reserve, which were adjoining protected areas. There were also efforts being made to declare a new EPA from Rio Save River to Pomene which included nesting areas for 5 species of marine turtles. There were current efforts to nominate the coastal strip areas within and adjacent to the Ponta do Ouro Partial Marine Reserve and Maputo Special Reserve as a World Heritage Site.

Emerging trends and challenges included: the reduction in tourism due to COVID during the nesting season, which meant that subsidies had been very low and monitoring quality had been reduced; that cyclones were becoming more frequent which had led to a substantial dolphin stranding for example; coastal shoreline construction was increasing; and there was new waste along the shoreline, including face masks.

Key successes included: increased government awareness which led to the suspension of a SASOL oil and gas prospecting project adjacent to the Bazaruto Archipelago National Park; Centro Terra Viva organised a successful national webinar on sea turtles in July 2020; there had been strengthened capacity on sea turtle research as well as coordination and communication among programmes, in particular linkages with government.

### Seychelles

Jeanne Mortimer (WIO-MTTF Member / Turtle Action Group of Seychelles) presented the country report for the Seychelles.

A seagrass project (Pew Trusts/Oxford University) was underway conducting national mapping and quantifying the carbon sequestration for the Nationally Determined Contributions for the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Paris Agreement. This was important for raising public awareness of the environmental value of seagrass which is crucial for turtle conservation.

The Seychelles were contributing to regional genetic studies including a Green Turtle study (Michael Jensen/Jerome Bourjea) and a Hawksbill Turtle genetic study (Katia Ballorain, the TIMOI project). There was continuing long-term monitoring at 19 nesting sites, most of which had been ongoing for 10-50 years, with more planned. In all well-protected areas the nesting turtle populations were increasing, but especially in the inner islands at sites with large human population centres and intense coastal development they were decreasing. One exception was the Hawksbill nesting population at remote Farquhar atoll, where numbers were not increasing despite protection at the nesting site.

At Baie St Anne, Praslin, a land reclamation and jetty extension project has been proposed. In the inner islands of the Seychelles the available land suitable for construction was limited, so land reclamation was considered important for the economy, but it negatively affected the nearshore marine habitats. There was also constant pressure to develop tourism along the coastline.

The Seychelles Ministry of Agriculture, Climate Change and the Environment was reviewing legislation relevant to the Convention on Illegal Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Wild Animals and Birds Protection Act, Reserves and Conservancy Bill, and National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) legislation. The Ministry of Fisheries was updating the Fisheries Act.



COVID was an emerging challenge as tourism contributed to monitoring and conservation programmes so the lack of tourism due to COVID had financial implications. In addition, coastal erosion was impacting key nesting beaches in South Mahe and throughout the Seychelles.

Successes included the national level marine spatial plan initiative which had been ongoing for several years. On 26 March 2020, Seychelles designated 30% of its EEZ protected – 15% is Zone 1 (no take), 15% Zone 2 (sustainable use), refining the framework for these two zones and creating a management authority. In addition, a Global Environment Fund (GEF) outer islands project was underway analysing turtle data at major outer island sites from the 1980s to the present to ascertain the trends. In the outer islands all the trends were up except at the South end of the country.

Ms Mortimer referred to a paper by Mortimer, Esteban, Guzman and Hays (2020) providing a literature overview of the situation in the SWIO (ref Oryx: DOI:10.1017/s0030605319001108). The findings were: Seychelles Hawksbill Turtles, ~5,550 egg clutches laid annually (35-40% of total in the IO); and Green Turtles, ~44,000 egg clutches laid annually (31-42% of egg clutches produced in the SWIO). She further referred to another paper by Stokes, Mortimer, Laloe, Esteban (2019, Marine Biology) which found that Green Turtle diet is dominated by seagrass in the WIO except amongst gravid females during nesting season, despite available forage.

### South Africa

Ronel Nel (WIO-MTTF Member / Nelson Mandela University), presented a country update for South Africa.

She highlighted: new collaborations with Mozambique, in particular on the Blue Action Fund project; and a new citizen science project with Sharklife, Ezemvelo and Nelson Mandela University, incorporating an MSC, to gather more information on the in-water distribution of Green and Hawksbill Turtles. There were three PhDs underway on: the longline bycatch issue in the South African EEZ; Ms Louro's research on Marine Spatial Planning and Community Voice Method for the Transfrontier Conservation Area focusing on genetic analysis of all 5 species of stranded turtles; and one evaluating the impact of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) such as IOSEA on turtle conservation.

Potential port developments on both sides of the South Africa/Mozambique border in the heart of the SWIO Loggerhead and Leatherback rookeries were a constant threat as were other related developments which were in strategic planning and a number of road developments providing easy access directly onto a nesting beach without any restrictions.

Changes in policies and management frameworks included 21 new MPAs in 2019, the Threatened or Protected Species Regulations, the draft Oiled Wildlife Preparedness Response and Contingency Plan and the overhaul of environmental legislation with a new Marine and Spatial Planning legislation which came into effect in 2018 under which the entire ocean space would be managed.

Poaching was a continuing threat, with 7 cases confirmed in the 2020/21 season, flagging the enforcement challenge and apparently relating to traditional medicine practices around COVID.

There had been an expansion of protection, with 5% of the EEZ under protection with the management plan being under development. South Africa was making legislation; enforcing it was the main challenge.



### United Republic of Tanzania

Lindsey West (WIO-MTTF Member / Sea Sense) presented the country update for Tanzania.

Tanzania was involved in the regional Hawksbill genetics project (TIMOI project) and Ms West was undertaking a PhD on the human dimensions of marine turtle conservation looking at how social dynamics within the community influence the day-to-day practice of marine turtle conservation.

The government of Tanzania had a strong industrialisation agenda with the support of the new President. The East African Crude Oil Pipeline in Tanga was going ahead with the storage terminal and export facility impacting Green and Hawksbill Turtle foraging habitat. An LNG plant in Lindi district was also going ahead which impacted Green Turtle nesting beaches and foraging grounds. There were further proposals for development which had potential to impact turtle habitat, including: a fishing harbour Bagamoyo; oil and gas exploration in Mnazi Bay, Mtwara), and the establishment of infrastructure to support Special Economic Zones (SEZ) and Export Processing Zones (EPZ).

There had been an expansion with World Bank funding of Collaborative Fisheries Management Areas (CFMAs) and the CFMA network has really taken off, with 4 out of the 5 coastal regions having CFMAs which the community were managing with quite detailed management plans. The review of the National Fisheries Act seemed to be nearing conclusion, with a final round of stakeholder consultations planned for later in the year. The establishment of a Transboundary MPA between Kenya and Tanzania was progressing.

Emerging threats included recent changes in the tax regime which affected rules around engagement of community turtle monitors. The number of monitored sites would have to be scaled down in the short or medium term and more funding would need to be secured in the longer-term. Tanzania had also felt similar impacts to others as a result of COVID in terms of funding and income from tourism.

Successes included the recording of 6,500 nests by community turtle monitors since 2001. Tanzania had been undertaking stakeholder consultations for the preparation of a National Plan of Action for Marine Turtles, which were made more challenging as a result of COVID, but despite this there was now a draft National Plan of Action for Marine Turtles. Further stakeholder consultations were planned.

### United Kingdom (Chagos Archipelago)

Nicole Esteban (WIO-MTTF Member / Swansea University) presented an update on the Chagos Archipelago noting that these territories mainly comprised uninhabited islands.

New research and conservation projects included: investigation of a population aggregation in the lagoon of Diego Garcia of immature Hawksbill Turtles using a mark-resight approach with quadcopter surveys (PhD Holly Stokes); a study comparing abundance, size and movement of immature Hawksbill Turtles between reef and lagoon via drone surveys and satellite tracking; and nesting emergence surveys for Hawksbill and Green Turtles (PhD). This was being added to by deploying remote camera traps on remote islands. There was also research looking at the effect of the marine heatwaves on incubation temperature; a trial to assess the effects of microplastics on incubation conditions was underway at four sites; an assessment of accumulation of marine debris on beaches across the archipelago was underway using a Marine Debris Tracker app: <https://debristracker.org/> which could be useful on a regional basis; and the territories participated in the French genetic studies on Green and Hawksbill Turtles.

A new Biodiversity Action Plan for Hawksbill and Green Turtles was initiated in 2020.



Emerging threats included the obvious ones like climate change. A major threat was the accumulation of debris along the turtle nesting line affecting nesting and hatchling emergence. In response, the UK ran a successful plastic bottle campaign (funded by the Darwin Foundation and ZSL) to reduce the use of plastics which reduced the purchase of water bottles in Diego Garcia by 50% in 2020.

Successes included: a regional study of nesting in the WIO, with long term nest monitoring having started in the 1990s, meaning that it was possible to confidently report increases in the nesting populations as reported by Ms Mortimer (IOSEA Newsletter (19/2/21)). In addition, satellite tracking had been used to show that Green Turtles were coming across the WIO to nest in the Chagos Archipelago from as far as Mozambique, Kenya, Somalia, Maldives, Madagascar and Seychelles.

#### **4. Overview of Outcomes of the 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Signatories (MOS8)**

Heidrun Frisch-Nwakanma (Secretariat) drew participants' attention to the Work Programme 2020-2024, which had been adopted by the 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Signatory States (MOS8) and had been made available as document WIO-MTTF-9/Inf.4. She explained that the purpose of the document was to guide the activities in the period between MOS8 and MOS9.

During WIO-MTTF-8 the Secretariat had presented the review of past recommendations relevant for the sub-region, drawing together all the recommendations and mandates that might still have been relevant, together with indicated priorities. Based on this review the Secretariat had then prepared the draft work programme, comprising a long list of tasks and identifying the actors relating to each task. The purpose was to outline clearly the most important actions, track progress and enable reporting back transparently to the next meeting of Signatory States. The draft document was discussed extensively at MOS8 in sub-regional working groups and each activity prioritized.

The final Work Programme adopted by MOS8 had 120 measures with a great variety of complexity; 58 of the measures had been rated as high priority for the WIO sub-region.

The Chair said the Work Programme was extremely useful and a great deal of work had gone into its development. South Africa had used it as a blueprint in the absence of a national action plan. She stressed that it had government endorsement and regional prioritization and suggested that as a regional body the MTTF should review it and see what the pressing actions were.

#### **5. Revision of the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the WIO-MTTF**

The Chair introduced this agenda item, saying the ToR were a reminder that the MTTF was an official body under both the Nairobi Convention and the IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU. With the idea coming up in 2004, and the Task Force endorsed in 2007 and 2008, respectively. It had been established as a technical advisory committee to the region and individual governments as the first task force under IOSEA.

The interaction with the Nairobi Convention was an important aspect to discuss. This was also an opportunity to pause, review the terms of reference and reorganise.

The Secretariat presented CMS/IOSEA/WIO-MTTF-9/Doc.5 [Proposed Changes to the Terms of Reference of the WIO-MTTF](#) and drew attention to CMS/IOSEA/WIO-MTTF-9/Inf.5 [Terms of Reference of the WIO-MTTF \(2008\)](#). The revisions had emerged from the challenges in





finding new leadership when the chair had to step down, as well as funding challenges and a number of aspects which had been found to be unclear.

The document was displayed on screen and proposed changes considered section by section. The Chair invited comments and participants then considered revisions in turn.

On the purpose and objectives, the Chair stressed that WIO-MTTF was a non-political technical body supporting governments with a regional overview but with no decision-making power.

On leadership, the Chair outlined different possibilities, noting the need for participation from island nations as well as mainland to account for language differences. Members agreed that it was preferred to continue with a chair and a vice chair serving the group. They requested that more detail on the role of the chairs be added to the document.

On the length of the leadership term, discussion focused on whether to link the term to WIO-MTTF in-person meetings or to the MOS. In the past, the term had been a fixed length of time, which had not worked well in practice given how sporadic meetings had been. The Chair proposed and it was agreed to tie the term to two in-person meetings of the Task Force.

The section on observers was revised and updated, eliminating the distinction between observers and ex officio members. It was emphasized how important it was to ensure that the Nairobi Convention was represented at future meetings to strengthen this relationship. This was supported and agreed.

On the relationship with the Nairobi Convention, the Secretariat highlighted that for administrative reasons it was considered necessary to specify who the Secretariat would be for the WIO-MTTF and proposed appointing the MOU Secretariat for this purpose.

Mwangi Theuri (Nairobi Convention) outlined linkages between the work of the Nairobi Convention on marine turtles and the work of the WIO-MTTF. He pointed to the work of the NGO consortium WildSea; science-to-policy symposiums organised by the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA), in particular on seagrass restoration; the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) work on marine noise and ship strikes; and discussions on connectivity between biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction and those ones in the EEZ. He recommended attendance of WIO-MTTF representatives at meetings of the Nairobi Convention to strengthen linkages to the decision-making process. The 2015 State of Coasts report gave a strong mention of the need for activities supporting the conservation of marine turtles in the region.

The Chair suggested that the two Secretariats communicate on how to continue to strengthen collaboration and Melanie Virtue (Secretariat) welcomed the interlinkages between the two conventions and said it was important that each forum invites the other to their respective meetings.

On rules and procedures, members agreed to establish a 50% quorum for formal Task Force meetings, while recognizing that there would be opportunities for informal meetings in case this quorum was not met.

The section entitled "Tasks" was changed to "Roles and Responsibilities" to fit more clearly with the substance. It was also agreed that the list of tasks and detailed work programme would be included on the agenda of WIO-MTTF-10 to allow time for in depth discussions.



The Secretariat informed the meeting that the draft ToR would be finalized following the meeting and circulated to the national focal points for adoption. The revised TOR as agreed by the Task Force can be found in Annex 3.

## 6. Election of New Leadership

Ronel Nel (Chair) called for nominations for the next Chair of the Task Force. Jeanne Mortimer (Seychelles) was nominated, noting her extensive experience, and elected as Chair of the WIO-MTTF.

The Chair then invited nominations for the position of Vice-Chair, preferably from the African mainland coastal countries. Cristina Louro (Mozambique) was nominated, highlighting her experience in marine turtle conservation and emphasising her ability to network and connect, and elected as Vice-Chair of the WIO-MTTF.

The Chair congratulated both new officers and thanked Lindsey West (Tanzania) for her hard work keeping the Task Force active as Vice-Chair while the new leadership arrangements were being agreed.

## 7. Plans for the Celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU

Heidrun Frisch-Nwakanma (Secretariat) introduced CMS/IOSEA/WIO-MTTF-9/Doc.7 [Plans for the Celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU](#), which outlined plans for the celebrations developed between the AC and the Secretariat and presented to Signatory States at the end of the previous year.

It had been decided to designate the whole of 2021 as a year of celebration of IOSEA and to use the opportunity to connect the people involved in turtle conservation across the region, exchange information and promote collaboration and support.

The document outlined rough plans for the proposed multi-pronged approach, showing proposed areas of focus, including implementation of the Work Programme. It was hoped that both task forces would have an active role throughout the year, and that all sub-regions would meet in the course of the year. Planned activities across the year included developing a longer term strategy for capacity-building, as well as circulating a questionnaire assessing the past 20 years and lessons learned.

For World Sea Turtle Day (WSTD), celebrated in June in many countries, AC Member Jarina Mohd Jani had developed a plan for a 24-hour online celebration involving all the sub-regions and as many of the countries as possible. The event would take place on Saturday, 19 June 2021. An overview of possible event slots had been prepared, giving possibilities for 'global events' involving several countries, and 'local events'. All would be made available on a live streaming channel (possibly YouTube), with hosts taking it in turns around the region. The global event suggested for the WIO region called "Ask Me Anything" was aimed at children with experts from several countries across the region being available to answer questions in multiple languages.

The Organising Committee, comprising the Secretariat and Jarina Mohd Jani, would prepare briefing notes and provide technical assistance, and would be in contact with Focal Points, inviting countries to host event slots. There would be a sign-up option online on the IOSEA website where everyone could register their WSTD event and an interactive map would showcase how the IOSEA region was working together.



The Chair invited representatives to encourage their countries to get involved.

The Nairobi Convention strongly supported the initiative and said the Convention would dedicate the Monday Weekly News Round-up on 14 June to the WTSD event. He highlighted a Nairobi Convention project on marine turtles and sea grass conservation in Madagascar as a relevant initiative.

## **8. Closing of the Meeting**

Ronel Nel (Chair) thanked everyone for their participation in particular the AC Members and welcomed the ground-breaking support from the Nairobi Convention representatives. Melanie Virtue (Secretariat) thanked everyone for the active participation and interest and was looking forward to strengthening the relationship with the Nairobi Convention.

Jeanne Mortimer (Seychelles), as the new WIO-MTTF Chair, thanked everyone, looked forward to the celebrations of WSTD and officially closed the meeting.

## List of Participants

### Task Force Members

#### **Comoros**

Anfani MSOILI  
Point Focal National IOSEA Comores  
(PFN/IOSEA)  
Direction Générale de l'Environnement et  
des Forêts (DGEF)  
Ministère de l'Environnement  
Union des Comores  
Email: [amsoili@yahoo.fr](mailto:amsoili@yahoo.fr)

#### **South Africa**

Ronel NEL  
Associate Professor  
The Nelson Mandela University (NMU)  
Department of Zoology  
P.O. Box 77000  
Port Elizabeth 6031  
South Africa  
Email: [Ronel.Nel@mandela.ac.za](mailto:Ronel.Nel@mandela.ac.za)

#### **France**

Stephane CICCIONE  
Kélonia  
Pointe des Châteaux  
46 Rue Gral de Gaulle  
Saint-Leu 97436  
Réunion  
Email:  
[stephane.ciccione@museesreunion.re](mailto:stephane.ciccione@museesreunion.re)

#### **United Republic of Tanzania**

Lindsey WEST  
Sea Sense  
P.O. Box 105044  
Dar es Salaam  
United Republic of Tanzania  
Email: [lindsey@seasense.or.tz](mailto:lindsey@seasense.or.tz)

#### **Mozambique**

Cristina LOURO  
Centro Terra Viva  
Bairro da Coop  
Rua C. 148  
Maputo  
Mozambique  
Email: [cristinammlouro@gmail.com](mailto:cristinammlouro@gmail.com)

#### **United Kingdom**

Nicole ESTEBAN  
Swansea University  
United Kingdom  
Email: [n.esteban@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:n.esteban@swansea.ac.uk)

#### **Seychelles**

Jeanne A. MORTIMER  
Turtle Action Group of Seychelles (TAGS)  
P.O. Box 1443  
Victoria, Mahé  
Seychelles  
Email: [jeanne.a.mortimer@gmail.com](mailto:jeanne.a.mortimer@gmail.com)

## **Country Observers**

### **Seychelles**

Ashley DIAS  
Environment Department  
Ministry of Environment  
Seychelles  
Email: [a.dias@env.gov.sc](mailto:a.dias@env.gov.sc)

### **South Africa**

Millicent MAKOALA  
Department of Environment, Forestry and  
Fisheries  
South Africa  
Email: [MMakoala@environment.gov.za](mailto:MMakoala@environment.gov.za)

### **United Kingdom**

Lauren BROOKES  
DEFRA  
United Kingdom  
Email: [lauren.brookes@defra.gov.uk](mailto:lauren.brookes@defra.gov.uk)

## **Intergovernmental Organizations**

### **Nairobi Convention**

Rose MACHAKU  
Programme Assistant  
Nairobi Convention Secretariat  
Email: [rose.machaku@un.org](mailto:rose.machaku@un.org)

MWANGI THEURI  
Project Officer  
Nairobi Convention Secretariat  
Email: [theuri.mwangi@un.org](mailto:theuri.mwangi@un.org)

## **Non-Governmental Organizations**

### **Kélonia**

Matthieu BARRET  
Email: [mathieu.barret@museesreunion.re](mailto:mathieu.barret@museesreunion.re)

Claire JEAN  
Email: [mathieu.barret@museesreunion.re](mailto:mathieu.barret@museesreunion.re)

Kélonia  
Pointe des Châteaux  
46 Rue Gral de Gaulle  
Saint-Leu 97436  
Réunion

## **Advisory Committee**

Jack FRAZIER  
IOSEA Advisory Committee Chair  
Email: [kurma@shentel.net](mailto:kurma@shentel.net)

## **Secretariat**

Heidrun FRISCH-NWAKANMA  
IOSEA Turtle MOU Coordinator & CMS  
Aquatic Species Team  
Phone: +49 228 815 2491  
Email: [heidrun.frisch-nwakanma@un.org](mailto:heidrun.frisch-nwakanma@un.org)

Melanie VIRTUE  
Head, Aquatic Species Team  
Phone: +49 228 815 2491  
Email: [melanie.virtue@un.org](mailto:melanie.virtue@un.org)

Tine LINDBERG-RONCARI  
Conference Services  
Phone: +49 228 815 2491  
Email: [tine.lindberg-roncari1@un.org](mailto:tine.lindberg-roncari1@un.org)

UNEP/CMS Secretariat  
UN Campus  
Platz der Vereinten Nationen 1  
53113 Bonn  
Germany

## **Agenda**

1. Welcoming Remarks and Adoption of Agenda
2. Agreement on Chair for the Meeting
3. Introductions and Brief Country Updates
4. Overview of Outcomes of the 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Signatories (MOS8)
5. Revision of the Terms of Reference of the WIO-MTTF
6. Election of New Leadership
7. Plans for the Celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU
8. Closing of the Meeting

## Revised Terms of Reference for the Western Indian Ocean Marine Turtle Task Force

(as agreed by the 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the WIO-MTTF, online, 23 March 2021)

### 1. Introduction

The Western Indian Ocean (WIO) sub-region comprises the following Signatory States: Comoros, France, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, South Africa, United Kingdom, and United Republic of Tanzania. Somalia is the only country in the sub-region that is not yet a Signatory State to the MOU.

The WIO region hosts five species of marine turtles: Green (*Chelonia mydas*), Hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), Leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*), Loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*) and Olive Ridley (*Lepidochelys olivacea*), and multiple life stages of each species (reproductive (mature adults and eggs), hatchlings, juveniles, sub-adults and adults). Marine turtles are highly migratory and move across multiple national jurisdictions during their different life history stages. They also have high cultural and socio-economic significance for many communities in the region. Therefore, strong cooperation among States in the WIO region is crucial for effective conservation.

Marine turtles in the WIO region face a multitude of threats including unsustainable exploitation for meat and eggs, destruction of nesting beaches and feeding habitats, incidental mortality in fishing operations ('bycatch'), climate change, marine pollution (especially plastic); abandoned fishing nets ('ghost nets'), inappropriate beach management strategies, and natural predation.

This Task Force was set up as a joint initiative of the [Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia](#) (hereafter: MOU) and the [Amended Nairobi Convention for the Protection, Management, and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Western Indian Ocean](#) (hereafter: Nairobi Convention).

### 2. Purpose and Objectives

The objective of the IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU is to protect, conserve, replenish and recover marine turtles and their habitats, based on the best scientific evidence, taking into account the environmental, socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the signatory States.

The Western Indian Ocean Marine Turtle Task Force (WIO-MTTF) has been set up to promote implementation of the IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU and its integral Conservation and Management Plan (CMP) in the WIO region. It recognises that the Nairobi Convention provides an important political platform for raising the profile of marine turtle conservation issues in the region, while the IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU offers a comprehensive conservation plan combined with effective monitoring of implementation.

*The Task Force's role is one of technical support to the National Focal Points and Sub-Regional Focal Point of the IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU and the National Focal Points of the Nairobi Convention. As technical experts with detailed knowledge of marine turtle-related research and conservation in their countries, Task Force Members work actively with one another and the governmental Focal Points to assist governments in the implementation of the MOU.*

### 3. Composition

The WIO-MTTF shall consist of members of all Signatory States in the WIO region. Members will be nominated by each Signatory State, using a form provided by the Secretariat. While each country nominates the Member to serve for it on the Task Force, this does not imply any decision-making power or authorization to speak on behalf of the country.

Signatory States should make their nominations on the basis of the Members' technical expertise and the knowledge they have about turtle-related work in the country and within the sub-region. In addition, Signatory States are invited to consider the expertise required to address the priorities for the sub-region as expressed in the IOSEA Work Programme.

In advance of each in-person meeting of the Task Force, the IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU Secretariat will give Signatory States the opportunity to review the membership and inform about any changes. Task Force Members are eligible for reappointment.

The Task Force shall elect a Chair and a Vice-Chair from among its members. The Chairs' terms of office span two in-person meetings of the Task Force, after which a new election will be called for. The Chairs are eligible for re-election. They shall jointly be the principal point of contact between the Task Force, IOSEA Secretariat and other stakeholders.

### 4. Observers

Meetings of the Task Force shall be open to participation of observers from other relevant organizations and institutions contributing to or affecting marine turtle conservation.

National Focal Points of the IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU shall be informed of each planned meeting and invited to attend as observers.

The following organizations shall be invited to participate in each regular Task Force meeting:

- African Union Development Agency-NEPAD ([AUDA-NEPAD](#))
- Indian Ocean Tuna Commission ([IOTC](#))
- International Union for Conservation of Nature ([IUCN](#))
- [Nairobi Convention](#)
- Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission ([SWIOFC](#))
- The Nature Conservancy ([TNC](#))
- Wildlife Conservation Society ([WCS](#))
- Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association ([WIOMSA](#))
- [WWF](#)

Additional observers, including invited experts, may be proposed by Task Force Members to the Chairs and the Secretariat, in advance of each meeting. Except for invited experts, observers shall attend the meetings at their own cost.

### 5. Rules of Procedure

The IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU Secretariat shall serve as the Secretariat for this Task Force.

The Task Force shall decide its own regional work programme in line with the priorities identified by the latest meeting of Signatory States and with the support of the IOSEA Advisory Committee, if necessary.



The Task Force shall organize its own business, supported by the Secretariat.

The Task Force shall strive to reach all decisions by consensus.

A quorum shall be complete when members from at least half of the countries are present in a meeting. If a quorum cannot be reached, the meeting will continue as an informal meeting.

The members of the Task Force shall communicate the implementation of the regional work programme to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Task Force.

The Chair and Vice-Chair shall

- facilitate communications to and amongst Task Force Members, and with the Secretariat
- organize meetings of the Task Force in collaboration with the Secretariat
- report to each Meeting of the Signatory States of IOSEA on activities of the Task Force and implementation of the regional work programme
- attend, when feasible, relevant meetings of the IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU and the Nairobi Convention to ensure the recommendations of the Task Force are brought to the attention of governments.

The Secretariats of the IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU and the Nairobi Convention shall invite each other as observers to relevant meetings, and shall strive to keep each other informed of relevant developments and opportunities to provide input to each other's processes.

## **6. Meetings and Communications**

To minimise costs, the Task Force should conduct as much of its activity as possible through electronic communication on a regular basis.

The Task Force should strive for regular meetings to review progress and decide its work programme for the next intersessional period. Meetings could include annual online meetings, as well as in-person meetings to be held at least every two years. Where possible, in-person meetings shall be arranged in conjunction with other related meetings, such as the Meetings of IOSEA Signatory States, the meeting of Nairobi Convention Focal Points, or other relevant meetings or conferences organized in the WIO sub-region.

One or both of the Chairs should endeavour to participate in the relevant meetings of the MOU and the Nairobi Convention, and may also participate in the meetings of related and associated agreements and organisations. Other members are also encouraged to attend as observers.

## **7. Roles and Responsibilities**

Taking into account the priorities set by Signatory States in the Work Programme for the IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU, the Task Force shall:

### Strengthen regional cooperation and coordination

- Serve as the coordinating and technical advisory body on marine turtle conservation to Signatories from the WIO sub-region.
- Develop linkages and dialogue between the conservation sector and other sectors and industries, such as development, tourism, planning, economy, fisheries, protected areas etc., and encourage National Committees to make these linkages.

- Support the implementation of the goals of both the Nairobi Convention and the IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU.
- Advocate and direct collaborative efforts for marine turtle conservation among stakeholders, including governments, management authorities, the private sector, coastal communities and non-governmental organisations.
- Ensure good relations are maintained among Governments, NGOs, regional, national and local groups and individuals interested in marine turtle conservation, by conveying information to support ideas, goals, achievements and lessons learned.

#### Review and Reporting

- Develop and standardize protocols for data collection, management and data sharing for research and monitoring programmes.
- Develop methods to regionally review the collective implementation of national commitments to the IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU, making use of the standardised IOSEA National Report template.
- Review and recommend best practice principles for activities requiring the interaction with turtles such as monitoring, education facilities (aquaria) and hatcheries, filming and ecotourism ventures.
- Promote both biophysical and socio-economic monitoring and more effective coordination with regional and international monitoring programmes.

#### Planning, Conservation and Management

- Collaborate with National Committees, NGOs, regional, national and local groups and individuals interested in marine turtle conservation to recommend coherent subregional priorities for marine turtle conservation, based on the IOSEA CMP.
- Encourage signatories and non-signatories to the MOU to develop national marine turtle conservation action plans or strategies within the context of the regional framework of the Nairobi Convention and IOSEA CMP.
- Work with National Committees to ensure national planning is compatible with marine turtle conservation planning across the region.
- Obtain government and convention endorsement for a regional strategy.
- Collaborate with National Committees to prioritise future work for the implementation of the IOSEA MOU with individual respect given to each country's situation.
- Solicit funds for activities to be undertaken by the WIO Marine Turtle Task Force and assist in fundraising for other marine turtle conservation activities/projects that will benefit the region and individual countries.
- Assist National Committees to solicit funding for national conservation activities.

#### Capacity Building

- Support the development of local capacity in research, management and governance by identifying capacity needs, implementing exchange programmes or (where possible) seeking resources to conduct research and monitoring programmes.
- Facilitate the creation or strengthening of National Committees in all countries.
- Encourage National Governments to recognise local issues and establish national legislation or enforcement to further protect marine turtles and their habitats

#### Facilitate Communication

- Provide and facilitate access to technical advice. Act as a reference body and provide advice on proposals for marine turtle conservation projects in the region. Encourage

proposals to have a regional perspective and provide linkages between local, national and regional networks where possible.

- Facilitate linkages and collaboration with regional organisations such as IUCN, WIOMSA, WCS, WWF, SWIOFC, and IOTC.
- Facilitate communication and the dissemination of information for the purposes of scientific and public awareness.
- Facilitate and support communication at the national level and serve as a platform to coordinate local initiatives (where required in the absence of national committees).
- Encourage active participation in sub-/regional meetings by institutions and relevant parties in order to raise awareness about priority and emerging issues concerning marine turtles.

The sub-region has very limited resources for implementation. It is therefore expected that the responsibilities and activities should not be reliant on many additional resources from governments. All activities of the WIO-MTTF will take place in consultation with the Secretariat, and will seek additional resources, opportunities and frameworks.



**Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Marine  
Turtles and their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia**

