



Report
On
Workshop for strategic Activity Orientation of
the Regional Unit Coordinating the
Memorandum of Understanding on Marine
Turtle Conservation on the Atlantic Coast of
Africa
Dakar, Senegal 8-10 March 2007

URTOMA. Dakar – Senegal



Foreword

The Atlantic Coast of Africa stretches across 14 000 kilometres from Morocco to Cape Town in South Africa. It is a zone that harbours six of the eight species of marine turtles in the world. These species are the green turtle, or the *Chelonia mydas*, the Leatherback turtle or *Caretta caretta*, the Loggerhead turtle or *Dermochelys coriacea*, the Olive Ridley turtle or *Lepidochelys olivacea*, the Hawksbill turtle or *Eretmochelys imbricata* and finally Kemp's Ridley turtle or *Lepidochelys kempii*. The zone also has marine turtle nesting beaches, growth areas and migration corridors.

For several decades, marine turtle populations have been reducing progressively due to the excessive levels of direct and incidental exploitation by communities living along coastal areas, by-catch by fishing vessels or beach seines, and the degradation of the natural habitats of these species.

Although scientific researchers are taking keener interest in conservation activities and considerable progress has been witnessed in that regard in some countries, much still has to be done. There is a lack of understanding of the state of marine turtle distribution. Moreover, cross-border initiatives for the coordination of conservation programmes, particularly on the Atlantic Coast, are fraught with difficulties and still in the embryonic stages.

It is against this backdrop that the African countries along the Atlantic coast, meeting in 1999 in Abidjan at the behest of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), set out to discuss and open for signature the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that had been designed to improve the conservation of marine turtles and their habitats. Today, almost eighty percent (80%) of the twenty six countries concerned have signed the memorandum (Angola, Benin, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Gabon, Ghana, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Liberia, Morocco, Mauritania, Namibia, Nigeria, Portugal, Spain, UK, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Sao Tome and Principe, South Africa, Togo). The Conservation Plan (CP) for these species, a document annexed to the MOU, was finalized in May 2002 during the first meeting of signatory states that took place in Nairobi. The objectives of the MOU and its Conservation Plan are:

1. to improve knowledge on the species, their status, the threats facing them, their use and their movements.
2. to reduce the direct and indirect causes of mortality among marine turtles.
3. to incorporate conservation projects in socio-economic initiatives.
4. to stimulate cooperation and coordination among states within the marine turtle distribution area.
5. to provide financing for the institution or pursuit of marine turtle conservation programmes.

However, some countries are still slow in implementing the MOU and its CP, owing to the lack of adequate technical and financial resources. Being that marine turtles are a migratory species, efficient protection would warrant conservation efforts that are concerted, coordinated and synergized. Indeed, protection of a migratory species cannot be effective unless it covers the full spectrum of its area of habitat. In order to trigger the conservation efforts of all parties, the United Nations Environment Programme's CMS (UNEP/CMS) and Senegal, coordinator of the Environment Component of NEPAD, signed a Memorandum of

Understanding as far back as October 2005. In doing so, they assigned to the Interim Secretariat of the Environment Component of NEPAD (SINEPAD/Env.) the responsibility of overseeing a Regional Unit for Coordinating the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the Conservation of Marine Turtles of the Atlantic Coast of Africa. That body has its headquarters in Dakar as the **Regional Unit for Marine Turtles on the Atlantic Coast of Africa (URTOMA)**.

The missions of the unit are to:

- 1 assist African countries on the Atlantic coast, the favourite area of habitat of marine turtles, in implementing the said Memorandum of Understanding;
- 2 promote implementation of the Marine Turtle Conservation Plan on the Atlantic coast of Africa, with a view to:
 1. (i) preserving the species;
 2. (ii) promoting research;
 3. (iii) training local communities;
 4. (iv) cooperating with existing or potential NGO networks;
 5. (v) raising public awareness;
 6. (vi) Ensuring sustainable use of the species.
- 3 Harnessing and collecting all resources that can be mobilized from donor agencies and partner institutions working on the protection of turtles.

It is to mark the launch of the Unit's activities that a strategic activity orientation workshop was organized at Hotel Savana, Dakar from 8 to 10 January 2007. The workshop brought together about eighty participants, including national focal points, NGOs and national, regional and international agencies involved in the protection of marine turtles. The participants did an in-depth analysis of the turtle conservation and came up with strategic areas and themes for action, such as:

THEME 1: INSTITUTIONAL ASPECTS, (ORGANIZATIONAL CHART), CONSOLIDATION OF REGIONAL AND SUB-REGIONAL COOPERATION

THEME 2: SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH, MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT OF DATABASES.

THEME 3: CAPACITY BUILDING, TRAINING, COMMUNICATION, SENSITIZATION,

THEME 4: PUBLIC AND NGO INVOLVEMENT AND ATTENDANT MEASURES.

There is no doubt that implementing appropriate activities tied to these themes will make it possible for the Unit to significantly enhance the conservation of marine turtles and their habitats on the Atlantic coast of Africa.

The objectives of this workshop were attained, to say the least. Enlisting the support of new partners was one of the expected outcomes. 21 signatory countries went into the workshop. Today, there are 22 signatory countries now that Cape Verde has

joined. We can say that African States are displaying quasi-effective commitment. In that regard, we are grateful to all the persons who contributed, in one way or the other, to the success of the workshop.

The URTOMA Secretariat expresses thanks to the Minister of Environment and Protection of Nature and all his technical and administrative staff. Our sincere gratitude also goes to Mr. Bakary KANTE, UNEP Director of Conventions and Laws and Mr. Lahcen El KABIRI, Executive Director of CMS, for their support and involvement. This meeting would not have been organized so perfectly without the financial support of the programme for Integrated Management of Marine and Coastal Resources (GIRMAC), COMO/DPN, the WWF West Africa Office's Marine Programme based in Dakar and SOPTOM. We want to thank them sincerely for their collaboration. I give particular thanks to the Director of National Parks in Senegal, the Executive Secretary of SINEPAD, as well as their entire staff.

OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The goals were:

1. to explain clearly the objectives assigned to the Regional Unit in the Memorandum of Understanding:
 - (i) Devise a joint and concerted strategy for marine turtle conservation;
 - (ii) Determine practical methods for coordinating the various national and sub-regional programmes; and

2. to:
 - (i) Develop synergized efforts between NGOs and partners to mobilize the resources needed to sustain conservation initiatives
 - (ii) Make it possible to share experience at the national and sub-regional levels in order to highlight the constraints and opportunities in the various programmes
 - (iii) Invite non-signatory countries to adopt the MoU

The expected outcomes were:

1. strategic areas defined for better coordination of programmes for the protection of marine turtles, their habitat and migration corridors;
2. elements obtained for updating the conservation plan, which has changed considerably since it was developed in 2002, to prepare the ground for an effective launch of the plan;
3. new signatories to the MoU and a higher level of interest shown by non-signatory countries to adopt and sign the MoU.
4. new partnership with donors and specialized agencies for the roll-out of national, sub-regional and regional projects/Programmes.

I. INTRODUCTION

On 8 – 10 January, 2007, the Regional Unit for Marine Turtle Conservation on the Atlantic Coast of Africa (URTOMA) held its Strategic Activity Orientation Workshop at Hotel Savana in Dakar, Senegal. The workshop was organized by the URTOMA Secretariat with funding from the Government of Senegal and support from Girmac, the WWF Dakar Office and the CMS Secretariat.

II. WORKSHOP PROCEEDINGS

1 Agenda item 1: Opening Ceremony

The opening ceremony was chaired by Mr. Thierno LO, Minister of Environment and Protection of Nature in the Republic of Senegal.

Three speeches were delivered at the opening ceremony.

- **Speech by Mr. Bakary KANTE, Director of Conventions, United Nations Environment Programme.**

Mr. KANTE recognized that Marine Turtles are actually suffering from aggression. There is a real threat that they may go extinct if measures are not taken urgently. This induces the need to engage with strategic partners (UICN, WWF, etc...) to create the conditions for a dynamic partnership to implement the protocol by ensuring effective take-off of URTOMA's activities.

- **Speech by the Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Environment Programme's Convention for the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (UNEP/CMS).**

Mr Lahcen El KABIRI began with an apology from Mr. Robert HEPWORTH, CMS Executive Secretary, who wanted so badly to take part in the workshop, but could not do so because of urgent commitments that came his way at the last minute.

After expressing thanks on behalf of CMS to the Government of Senegal for accepting to host URTOMA, he went over the various stages that led to the signing of the Abidjan Memorandum of Understanding in 1999 and the early efforts to develop the Conservation Plan (CP) at the first meeting of Signatory States in

Nairobi in 2002. He suggested that a consultative committee, like the one in IOSEA, should be formed in the near future, appealing that the list of MoU signatory countries should be completed with new signatories like Spain, Portugal and France joining in.

- **Speech by Mr. Thierno LO, Senegal's Minister of Environment and Protection of Nature**

On behalf of His Excellency the President of the Republic of Senegal, the Prime Minister and the government, Mr. LO welcomed all the participants in the Dakar meeting to Senegalese soil.

He recalled that for thousands of years, marine turtles have been crossing warm oceans and seas in search of jellyfish and seaweed, finding niches on tropical and inter-tropical coastal areas. The Atlantic coasts and beaches are favoured nesting sites for the majority of marine turtle species. Today, however, these nesting sites look like turtle cemeteries because of the severe and incommensurate nature of the disaster, the Minister added. To conclude, he expressed sincere thanks to CMS for assisting URTOMA and for giving Senegal, coordinator of the Environment Component of NEPAD, the privilege to host this Unit.

After these speeches, the Republic of Cape Verde signed the Memorandum of Understanding on the conservation of marine turtles on the Atlantic Coast, becoming the 22nd signatory country. Minister Thierno LO, seizing the opportunity of having the CMS Deputy Executive Secretary in Dakar, signed the memorandum of understanding on the conservation of elephants in West Africa.

Thereafter, the proceedings were adjourned.

When the participants reconvened, they elected the bureau and adopted the agenda of the workshop. Thereafter, three papers were presented.

- **Composition of workshop bureau**

Chairpersons: The workshop was chaired in a revolving manner by Colonel Soulyèe NDIAYE, Inspector of Administrative and Financial Affairs at MEPN (IAAF/MEPN) and former Director of National Parks in Senegal, and Colonel Pape Walil GUEYE, Coordinator of the Unit for Studies, Planning and Monitoring at MEPN (CEPS/MEPN).

Moderator: El Hadji SENE, retired FAO worker, former Director of Water, Forest Resources and Hunting in Senegal and chairperson of Hylea International, an NGO.

Rapporteurs: Colonel Oumar BALDE (URTOMA) and Manjula TIWARI NOAA

Agenda item 2: Presentations

2. 1. Managing cross-border marine and coastal resources within the framework of NEPAD by David Samuel NJIKI NJIKI, Executive Secretary of NEPAD's Environment component

The Executive Secretary gave an overview of the history of NEPAD and its environmental component, and then presented the NEPAD and marine sector programme that revolves around the following themes:

- Thematic areas of the action plan
 - ✓ 1- Prevention of soil degradation, drought and desertification;
 - ✓ 2 - Conservation of wetlands in Africa;
 - ✓ 3 - Prevention, control and management of non-native weed species;
 - ✓ 4 – Sustainable conservation and use of marine and coastal resources;
 - ✓ 5. – Prevention of climate change;
 - ✓ 6 – Cross-border conservation and management of natural resources (fresh water, biodiversity, forests);
 - ✓ 7 – Cross-cutting concerns.

- Challenges for African countries
 - ✓ In 1997, sea fish exports brought in US \$ 445 million. However, there has been a drop in the rate of catches along the African coast. Africa has at least 68% of protected areas considered to be under threat and needs therefore to be thoroughly organized for appropriate management of its marine and coastal resources.

Mr. NJIKI also talked about the regional efforts being made in Africa to ensure appropriate management of marine and coastal resources: the Algiers Convention in 1968; the Nairobi Convention; the Abidjan Convention in 1985; and the Bamako Convention in 1991 prohibiting the import, cross-border transfer, and

management of hazardous waste in Africa. Apart from these conventions, there are the African Process and the durable use of living resources, the management of key habitats and ecosystems, as well as tourism. He also mentioned the major projects on the NEPAD Action Plan on Marine and Coastal areas. These include the Grand Ecosystem in Guinea; the Grand Ecosystem in the Canary Islands; the Sustainable Coastal Tourism Project; the Project on Adapting to Climate Change; the Grand Marine Ecosystems of Agulhas and Somalia; UNIDO's integrated coastal management project and the evaluation of coelacanthides, dugongs and manatees.

Mr. NJIKI finally looked at the prospects of marine and coastal resource conservation. He wished that policy makers would include environmental problems in their national development plans, and noted there was a need for coherence in programme delivery and interventions (e.g. target LME, conventions and programmes).

2.2 Presentation on the Memorandum of Understanding on Marine Turtle Conservation on the Atlantic coast of Africa, as presented in the conservation plan and report of the Nairobi meeting on 6 - 9 May 2002 by Mr. Lahcen El KABIRI, Deputy Executive Secretary of CMS and Jacques FRETEY, Scientific Coordinator of the MoU.

Lahcen El Kabiri recalled that the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the conservation of Marine Turtles (MT) of the Atlantic Coast of Africa was adopted in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire in 1999. In May 2002, there was a first meeting of signatory States in Nairobi. At the Dakar meeting on 8 - 10 January 2007, there were 21 Signatory Countries. Mr. Lahcen indicated further that a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), signed between the United Nations Environment Programme, represented by the Secretariat, and the Government of Senegal, Coordinator of the Environment Component of NEPAD, in October 2005 to coordinate and develop a three-year programme, was born out of the need to find a close and concerted regional coordination mechanism to trigger implementation of the MoU on MT of the Atlantic coast, and to reinforce synergy between existing NGO initiatives on the coast and networks on the field. The MoU concerns the implementation of the MoA on the conservation of MT of the Atlantic Coast of Africa and its Conservation Plan (PC).

Mr. Lahcen recalled the five general objectives of the CP as follows:

Objective 1: to improve understanding of MT species in Africa, their status, the threats they are facing, their use and their movements;

Objective 2: to reduce the direct and indirect causes of MT mortality;

Objective 3: to include conservation projects in socio-economic initiatives;

Objective 4: to stimulate cooperation and coordination in and among States in the distribution area;

Objective 5: to provide funding for the initiation or pursuit of MT conservation programmes.

After a detailed report on the meeting of the signatory countries in 2002, Mr. Lahcen gave a great deal of information on the opportunities of setting up an online report. He stressed the need to harmonize the CP of the MoU on the Atlantic Coast of Africa and the one on the conservation and management of IOSEA that looks more practical and less detailed than the one that was being looked at in the meeting.

Jacques FRETEY reviewed the background, process and prospects of the Abidjan Memorandum, drawing on the following events:

- 1 On 26-30 November 1979, the first world conference on MT conservation was held in Washington, D.C., USA
- 2 In 1994 – efforts to collect bibliographic and field data on marine turtles in West Africa were launched, building on the references of L.D. BRONGERSMAN.
- 3 In 1995, there was the WWF IUCN regional meeting in SODWANA on MT of the West Indian Ocean. This meeting launched the idea of creating a West African network. In 1996, several meetings were held (CMS, IUCN, and WWF) on this project at the National Museum for Natural History in Paris.
- 4 In 1997, there was the EKwata meeting that culminated in the creation of PROTOMAC, the first MT conservation network in Africa.
- 5 In 1999, there was the Abidjan conference, which was the first international meeting of all constituents of the Atlantic coast of Africa for the conservation of MT. Nineteen Heads of State attended this meeting that culminated in the creation of the Abidjan Memorandum as the founding act on the regional network.
- 6 In 2000, the Kudu regional office, in charge of the MoU interim secretariat, was set up.
- 7 In March 2005, URTOMA was set up under the auspices of SINEPAD

Mr. Fretey highlighted the existence of:

- Successful activities, some of which had been completed, such as:
 - ✓ The good projects based in 3 West African countries, 2 on the Slave Coast, and 4 in Central African countries
 - ✓ The production of a methodology manual
 - ✓ The good projects on monitoring of female adults (*C. caretta*, *C. mydas*, *D. coriacea*) by Argos emitters (Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde Archipelago, Gabon...)
 - ✓ Good sub-regional coordination of the PROTOMAC network (Central Africa).

- He also emphasized the need for:
 - ✓ Sustainable funding for ALL projects
 - ✓ ALL data to be made available to and registered in the regional base to make it possible to obtain the most reliable estimates on the number of females and the nesting areas for each species across the region
 - ✓ Improved monitoring of the Abidjan MoU by CMS Secretariat, with the organization of the 2nd conference in 2007
 - ✓ Precise data on the impact of by-catch
 - ✓ A regional organization similar to that of WIDECAST or IOSEA with a regional office endowed with adequate resources and permanent employees

Since the Kudu Programme was transformed into URTOMA, the presenter pointed out that it was vital for:

- ✓ The regional coordination unit and the sub-regional offices to be well-structured, to exist as independent legal entities with an adequate operational budget over the long term,

and to have salaried and skilled workers that are vital to ensuring good management of the offices;

- ✓ All field projects to have the technical and financial resources to undertake sustainable and cross-border initiatives;
- ✓ Conventions to get support from major partners (European Union, USA, France, United Kingdom, Spain, Portugal, UNEP, UNESCO, FAO, FFEM, international NGOs...)

3.2 Marine turtle conservation in the Atlantic coast of the WAMER Zone: reviewing progress, challenges and prospects by Dr. Mamadou DIALLO, WWF

Dr. DIALLO began by defining the intervention area of the Regional Programme for Marine and Coastal Turtle Conservation (PRCM) across the seven Member States: Mauritania, Senegal, Gambia, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Guinea Conakry and recently Sierra Leone. These countries all belong to the sub-regional commission of CSRP Fisheries.

Dr. Diallo looked at the advantages of the regional approach, the activities already conducted, the ongoing activities and those planned in the future. To conclude, he highlighted the challenges and opportunities for promoting cooperation with the sub-regional commission for fisheries (preventing use of trawlers in fish, shrimp and pelagic catching programmes) and conducting long-term surveillance of key nesting sites to evaluate the impacts of conservation.

The afternoon of day one was reserved for country presentations on the state of marine turtle conservation and implementation of the memorandum.

Agenda item 3: Country reports

Mauritania report by: Mohamed ould M.F ould Hamza

Mauritania has signed all the conventions and agreements on marine turtle conservation (CDB, CITES, CMS, ABIDJAN MoU, etc). It has also enacted national legislation on the protection of marine turtles (hunting and fauna protection code, fishing code, etc.).

Mauritania hosts six species of turtle:

- 1 Chelonia mydas (green turtle): has high populations in the PNBA and often captured by artisanal fishermen with nets or harpoons. They eat the meat and gather the fat.
- 2 Caretta caretta (leatherback turtle): some few captures in the nets of artisanal fishermen have been observed. The species gathers in the Greyhound Bay
- 3 Lepidochelys kempii (Kemp's Riddle turtle): found on Mauritania's coastline between 1977 and 1982
- 4 Lepidochelys olivacea (Olive Ridley turtle): a few have been identified (shells)
- 5 Dermochelys coriacea (Loggerhead turtle): surveys conducted by researchers in the '70s and '80s suggest that the species goes to Mauritania's coastal areas and uses the migration corridors between Banc d'Arguin and Saint – Louis in Senegal, nesting in some areas around there.
- 6 Eretmochelys imbricata (hawksbill turtle): according to field observations and surveys conducted by researchers among Imraguen communities, the species goes to Mauritania's coastal areas.

Unfortunately though, there is no specific conservation programme for these six species.

Benin report by Jos a S. Dossou-Bodjr nou, Nature Tropicale (NGO)

The report from Nature Tropicale, an NGO in Benin, was presented by Mr. DOSSU. It focused on the WASTCON network's activities on the *Safeguard of threatened species of the Atlantic Coast of West Africa (WASTCON): the case of marine turtles*.

His report covered the objectives of the Kudu Programme, the background on the creation of the WASTCON network, and the state of turtle conservation in the sub-region, particularly in Benin, as well as the opportunities, constraints and prospects.

While the actions pursued have made it possible to improve the state of marine turtle conservation in Benin, much still has to be done.

Gambia report by Alpha DJALLO, focal point, WAMER zone

It focused on the state of marine turtle distribution and conservation in the Gambia that hosts four species of marine turtles (*Eretmochelys imbricata*, *Lepidochelys olivacea*, *Dermochelys coriacea*, *Chelonia mydas*). Gambia probably has four or five species of marine turtles. The nesting habitats and seasonality of nesting of these species are not well known. Conversely, the potential foraging areas have been identified. The threats and conservation measures have been assessed. The population estimate by CPUE method is planned to take place in July 2007.

Guinea Bissau report by Justino Biai and Castro Barbosa was on the state of marine turtle conservation in Guinea Bissau. It also covered the difficulties in implementing conventions, laws, codes and regulations in force in the country.

Five of the eight species existing worldwide do live in Guinea Bissau's waters, especially the RBABB (*Chelonia mydas*, *Lepidochelys olivacea*, *Dermochelys coreacea*, *Eretmochelys imbricata* and *caretta caretta*).

Conservation activities in the country include conventional monitoring and marking activities (FIBA, CMS) for (ten) marine turtles. Turtle promotion campaigns are also conducted through tourist sight-seeing programmes. Environmental awareness and education programmes are also organized among people living in parks and the fishermen working in the region.

**State of marine turtle conservation in Guinea
by Mr. Bakary MAGASSOUBA**

Guinea has legislative provisions (fishing code, environment code and water code). Marine turtle conservation was not seen as a priority at the time, although conservation sites were put in place on the coast to protect marine turtles (e.g. the wildlife sanctuary on the Loos Islands).

Guinea hosts species such as the: loggerhead turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*), Green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), Leatherback turtle (*Caretta caretta*), Hawksbill turtle, (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), Olive Ridley turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea*).

Guinea is currently designing national conservation plans for certain key species, including: marine turtles, manatees, dolphins, sharks and whales.

Liberia report by Benjamin S. Karmorh, Jr., Society Against Environmental Degradation (SAED)

The Liberia report presented the state of turtle conservation in Liberia.

The 1976 forest code is the current legislative framework and was reviewed in 2006 to protect all marine turtle species. Liberia has also ratified conventions such as: RAMSAR, CITES, ABIDJAN and BAMAKO. Five species of turtles have been identified in the country, namely: *Chelonia myda*, *Dermochelys coriacea*, *Caretta caretta*, *Eretmochelys imbricata* and *Lepidochelys olivacea*.

Finally, we can say that the risks of turtle mortality are very high. There is little knowledge on marine turtle protection and conservation. Few countries participate in regional and sub-regional programmes and/or in activities for marine turtle protection. There is need to strengthen human and institutional capacities and to develop appropriate national programmes for marine turtle management.

The Senegalese report on the state of marine turtle conservation in Senegal by Dr. Djibril Diouck, Directorate for National Parks, Senegal's focal point for marine turtles

Senegal has a legislative and regulatory framework for marine turtle protection (hunting and wildlife protection code, maritime fishing code). Senegal has ratified conventions and agreements (CMS, CITES, CDB, RAMSAR, MoA) for the protection of turtles on the IUCN red list.

With a 700-km coastline and a significant river system, Senegal is endowed with a huge coastal and marine biodiversity base. Most of the parks and reserves in Senegal include a maritime component. This network of parks and reserves mostly includes migration corridors and/or nesting and foraging sites for marine turtles. Six of the eight marine turtle species worldwide have been identified in Senegal: the green turtle (*Chelonia Mydas*), the leatherback turtle, the loggerhead turtle, the olive Ridley turtle and Leatherback turtle (*Caretta*

Caretta), and the Kemp's Ridley turtle (*Lepidochelys Kempii*).

Although Senegal has turtle protection measures in place, it has done little on scientific research or the monitoring of marine turtle movements. There are some sector-based monitoring and surveillance programmes (Joal Fadhiouth, PNLB, PNDS, etc.) undertaken by national parks, WWF and IUCN. There is a need therefore to review the state of marine turtles (identification of species, foraging and nesting sites, migration corridors, environmental follow-up) in and out of protected areas and to devise a national plan for marine turtle conservation.

The Togo report was presented jointly by **Mr. Agbodji Kossi, turtle focal point, and Mr. Akpamou, Agbo-Zegue NGO**. This report was on a draft national action plan on marine turtles. Togo's national plan, designed jointly by several relevant departments of State, is the result of the recommendations and objectives of the CMS regional conservation plan for marine turtles in West Africa that is based on the Abidjan Memorandum that was signed by Togo. It is part of Togo's national action plan for Environment (PNAE) and the efforts for Planning and Monitoring Coastal Management (PSGL). The plan includes pertinent recommendations, but the financial resources for implementing them are still lacking.

The report on PROTOMAC, done by Alain GIBUDI, focused on marine turtle protection in Central Africa.

The scientific objectives of this programme are basically to:

- improve understanding on the status and distribution of the five marine turtle species in the Gulf of Guinea, and couple this with surveillance and protection of nesting sites;
- involve local communities by developing tourism around turtles, as well as by creating alternative sources of income for those depending on the sale of turtles for a livelihood.

The activities of the PROTOMAC network have been executed by local organizations over the past three years under the Major Species Project with funding from the European Union. They include tracking, identification, the recording of observations and beaching, monitoring of nesting sites, public awareness raising activities, capacity strengthening and marine turtle development activities.

The network has an operational database on the sub-region.

Since June 2006, PROTOMAC operates as an NGO and has been joined by the Democratic Republic of

Congo and Angola.

Côte d'Ivoire's representative reported on the state of marine turtle conservation in his country. Côte d'Ivoire has legislative and regulatory provisions for the protection of marine turtles (Wildlife Protection and Hunting Act). It has ratified the Bonn Convention as well as the MoU.

Côte d'Ivoire has four species of turtles: *Dermochelys coriacea*, *Lepidochelys olivacea*, *Chelonia mydas* and *Eretmochelys imbricata*.

A project on "Ecology and biology of marine turtles in Côte d'Ivoire", funded by the UNDP/FEM micro-credit programme, was implemented from 2001 to 2003 by an NGO called SOS FORETS.

The pilot phase of a second project on "marine turtle conservation and preservation" began in 2003-2004, with funding from the UNDP/FEM micro-credit programme.

Resources need to be made available in a sector-based programme for sustainable conservation of marine turtles.

A concise report on marine turtles in Angola was presented by **Nascimento António**

The Republic of Angola has set in place a legislative and regulatory framework for the protection of marine turtles (Environment Act, Aquatic Biological Resources Act, Decree on Environmental Impact Assessment) Angola has also ratified conventions and agreements, such as CMS, CDB, and the MoA.

Five species of marine turtles have been identified in Angola's coastal areas: Loggerhead turtle (*Dermochelys coreacea*), Green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), Leatherback turtle (*Caretta caretta*), Hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), and Olive Ridley Turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea*).

The most significant nesting areas are in Cabinda, Zaíre (Soyo) and South Luanda.

The main threats to marine turtle conservation include the loss of habitat, by-catches by fishermen, hunting, oil extraction and egg collection.

Projects for studies and the conservation of marine turtles are in need of funding.

The report on the marine turtle conservation programme in Sierra Leone was done by Edward Aruna, Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL)

The Republic of Sierra Leone has a legislative and regulatory framework for the protection of marine turtles and has ratified conventions and agreements for marine turtle protection.

The five species on Sierra Leone's coastal areas are: *Caretta caretta*, *Chelonia mydas*, *Lepidochelys olivacea*, *Eretmochelys imbricata*, and *Dermochelys coriacea*.

A marine turtle conservation programme was launched in 1999 in collaboration with WWF. A management plan is being developed. Monitoring and research have to be included in the budget and submitted to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

Morocco has a coastline of about 2900 km and has signed most of the conventions and agreements on marine turtle conservation. The species on its coastline include the Leatherback turtle, the Green turtle, the Olive Ridley Turtle, and the Loggerhead turtle. There are studies on turtles in Morocco. Coastal erosion and fishing are the major threats this species is facing. Morocco is planning to set up a project to study the ecology and dynamics of marine turtle populations and to install a pilot centre to care for turtles.

These presentations were followed by debates during which the participants most often highlighted the following points:

1. the importance of synergy, cooperation and cross-border initiatives;
2. the need for emphasis on communication, information and public awareness raising at the community level;
3. some initiatives for follow-up, monitoring and harmonization of data gathering techniques;
4. the progressive consolidation of data collection and database creation initiatives;
5. the importance of integrating the training of observers in economic activities as a first step for doing

so;

6. the poor emphasis on research and the need to encourage and further institutionalize research work;
7. the sustained support of NGOs, community-based organizations and practitioners.

The workshop appealed for:

1. crosscutting approach
2. research aimed at improving knowledge on turtle populations, their biology and the specific ecology of their economic and social environment
3. understanding of the status and evolution of the ecosystems hosting turtles

It appealed also for:

1. the involvement of local communities and traditional knowledge
2. the involvement of NGOs and the need for local development
3. knowledge of cultural and traditional practices

The workshop recalled the need for better understanding, application and popularization of the provisions and laws on marine turtle conservation.

Agenda item 4: presentation on strategic areas for developing a coordination strategy by Mrs. Ndeye SENE THIAM, Coordinator, URTOMA.

The Coordinator of URTOMA gave a summary of country reports, highlighting the achievements as well as the constraints on turtle conservation. The major achievements were in the fields of public awareness raising, capacity building, activity monitoring and sub-regional cooperation. This is evidenced by the three networks set up in the area covered by URTOMA:

1. the Protomac (Marine Turtle Protection in Central Africa) network that is composed of Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, Sao Tome and Principe, and Angola, and functions well thanks to financial support from the European Union's project on major species.
2. the Wastcon (West African Sea Turtle Conservation) network that is composed of Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Ghana, Coté d'Ivoire and Liberia, and is more or less functional.
3. the TOMAO (West Africa Marine Turtles) network that is composed of Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea Bissau, Republic of Guinea, Sierra Leone, the Gambia and Cape Verde. This network has truly not

been operational since it was set up in 2002.

The main constraints observed were in the areas of:

- research on and monitoring of species,
- capacity building of actors,
- involvement and motivation of communities to conserve turtle species,
- evaluation and reduction of by-catches.

The workshop observed also that several technicians were engaged in turtle conservation, but their initiatives were often highly localized and lack synergy. Furthermore, the activities conducted hardly covered all the important sites at national level, not to mention the sub-regional and/or regional level.

It recognized that although progress had been made, marine turtles continued to face threats at all stages in their life:

- At birth (on land)
- During growth (in water)
- During mating (in water)
- During nesting (on land)

Mrs. THIAM, coordinator of URTOMA, gave an introduction to the coordination strategy and stated the areas for reflection during group sessions. The three (3) working groups were made up as follows:

group 1: participants from Protomac member countries;

group 2: participants from Wastcon member countries; and

group 3: those from Tomao member countries.

Countries with several participants were asked to send members to the three different groups. The participants from countries that did not belong to any of the three networks were asked to join the group of their choice.

The three groups were expected to reflect on the following themes:

Theme 1: Institutional aspect: (organization chart), consolidation of regional and sub-regional cooperation.

Theme 2: Scientific research, Monitoring and management of databases

Theme 3: Capacity building, training, communication, public awareness raising

Theme 4: Community and NGO involvement and attendant measures

Agenda item 5: Synthesis of Group work

PROTOMAC group

Chair: Hamady SOW (Senegal)

Rapporteurs: Alain GIBUDI (Gabon)

TOMAO group

Chair: JUSTINO BIAI (Guinea Bissau)

Rapporteurs: ALPHA OMAR JALLOW (Gambia), ABDOULAYE DIOP (Senegal)

WASTCON group

Chair: GBETOHO Pascal (Benin)

Rapporteurs: AKPAMOU Kokouvi Gbetey (TOGO) and KARMOR Benjamin (Liberia)

The following recommendations were made on the work of these three groups (see appendices for details):

- Reinforce regional and sub-regional cooperation
- Set up national, sub-regional and regional databases
- Capitalize on the Protomac database
- The scientific committee's position on the URTOMA organization chart triggered considerable discussion. The meeting decided that it should be an independent body composed of members chosen by merit to serve as an advisory mechanism to URTOMA.
- It was proposed that two new networks should be set up: one with Morocco, Ceuta, the Canary Islands, Madeira and the Azores; and the other with South Africa, Namibia, Saint Helena and Ascension Island.
- It was proposed that the WASTCON network should be called GOSTCON, because WASTCON and TOMAO mean the same thing respectively in English and in French.

After the two plenary sessions (presentation of country focal points and the three work groups) and intense debates, the participants issued recommendations, including:

1. The need to act quickly, placing emphasis on synergy and coordination among signatory countries
2. The need to sustain the Memorandum and extend it to other countries
3. The need to develop the marine and coastal sector to ensure the survival of marine turtles
4. The need for protection measures at the national, sub-regional and regional levels to efficiently address the constraints on marine turtles (by-catch, poaching, egg harvesting, loss of habitat, etc.)
5. Evaluate the impact of climate change on marine turtles
6. Set up alternative income generating activities for local communities
7. Develop national databases that will feed the regional and sub-regional base
8. Invite academics and research institutes in the debate on marine turtle conservation
9. Reinforce this agreement and promote its ownership by signatory and non-signatory countries
10. Set up a system for reporting on line with a number of management criteria and indicators
11. Harmonize the concept of the conservation plan or the conservation and management plan
12. Institute coordination at national level
13. Review fishing agreements to ensure better management of marine and coastal resources, and particularly marine turtles
14. Reinforce the responsibility of professional fishing organizations in marine turtle conservation efforts
15. Reinforce cross-border cooperation
16. Appeal to France and Spain to sign the MoA
17. Scale up public awareness raising, communication and capacity building for various players involved in marine and coastal resource management
18. Set up scientific research programmes for good ecological monitoring of turtles
19. Capitalize on the experience gained by NGOs
20. Capitalize on traditional and cultural knowledge for good marine turtle management
21. Endow the URTOMA secretariat with the resources to appropriately coordinate marine turtle conservation activities in the sub-region.
22. Implement the conventions and agreements signed by States.
23. Transfer the PROTOMAC database to Dakar
24. Couple the Kudu programme with the regional unit
25. Use the turtle exclusion device (TED) in fishing programmes
26. Prevent coastal erosion and preserve habitats.

Presentation of the URTOMA.ORG website

A brief presentation on URTOMA's future website was given by the Web Master. This bilingual website is going to become a trilingual website with materials in English, French and Portuguese. The participants made several suggestions on ways of improving the home page, content, and headings of the different columns.

After this presentation, the coordinator stated the activities to be conducted in the immediate future, as follows:

- Work with CMS and SINEPAD to initiate the necessary steps and raise funds for activities on the coordination strategy.
- Define terms of reference for updating the list of country focal points
- Work with CMS to take necessary steps for the authorities to ensure that South Africa, the only non-signatory African country, signs the MoU.
- Make efforts for EU Member States, such as Great Britain, Spain, Portugal and the other countries that have fishing agreements with African countries, to sign the MoU. In this particular case, make an amendment to the Abidjan MoU in order to include the appropriate provisions.
- At the meeting of signatory countries, a work group led by Mr. Fretey went very far in developing a draft national report. Begin to work on the document again to finalize it and have a ready "format" to be presented at the second conference of signatory countries.
- Take the necessary steps to harmonize the conservation plan of the Abidjan MoU and the IOSEA conservation and management plan.
- Ask the Government of Senegal to assign an expert in database management (terms of reference for the future database that would build on the assets of the PROTOMAC network's database).
- Conduct working and exchange visits in all countries of the distribution area.
- Work together with CMS to make the necessary contacts at the FAO to establish a TCP so as to reduce catch and by-catch
- Prepare terms of reference (composition, mandate, modalities and duration of election), for the creation of URTOMA's scientific and technical committee. These terms of reference will be submitted for review via electronic mail. This document will then be submitted for approval to the signatory countries during the second meeting of the MoU signatory countries

- Take steps towards a partnership with the conventions, particularly the Abidjan convention, and sub-regional and regional programmes like the "courant de Guinée".
- Look into the possibility of conducting a training workshop and a film for information and public awareness raising on the turtle exclusion device

Agenda item 6: closing ceremony

The closing ceremony was chaired by the MEPN Cabinet Director (DC). At the ceremony, the workshop report, vote of thanks and the DC's closing statement were presented to the participants. The DC summarized the main points addressed at the workshop and expressed satisfaction with the conclusions and recommendations made after three days of debate.

CONCLUSION

- 1 The actions listed above are the elements that are going to inform the elaboration and implementation of the regional strategy for the conservation of marine turtles on the Atlantic Coast of Africa
- 2 Funding for all these activities can be sought in each of the countries concerned (PIP of specialized directorates), small funds at embassies, and foreign institutions (EU, GTZ, UNEP, UNDP, WB, FAO, FEM etc.) with recommendation from URTOMA
- 3 URTOMA can raise funds needed for regional projects from interested partners
- 4 URTOMA needs to institute an efficient monitoring and evaluation system to be able to perform all its tasks efficiently.

ANNEX 1: FEEDBACK ON GROUP WORK

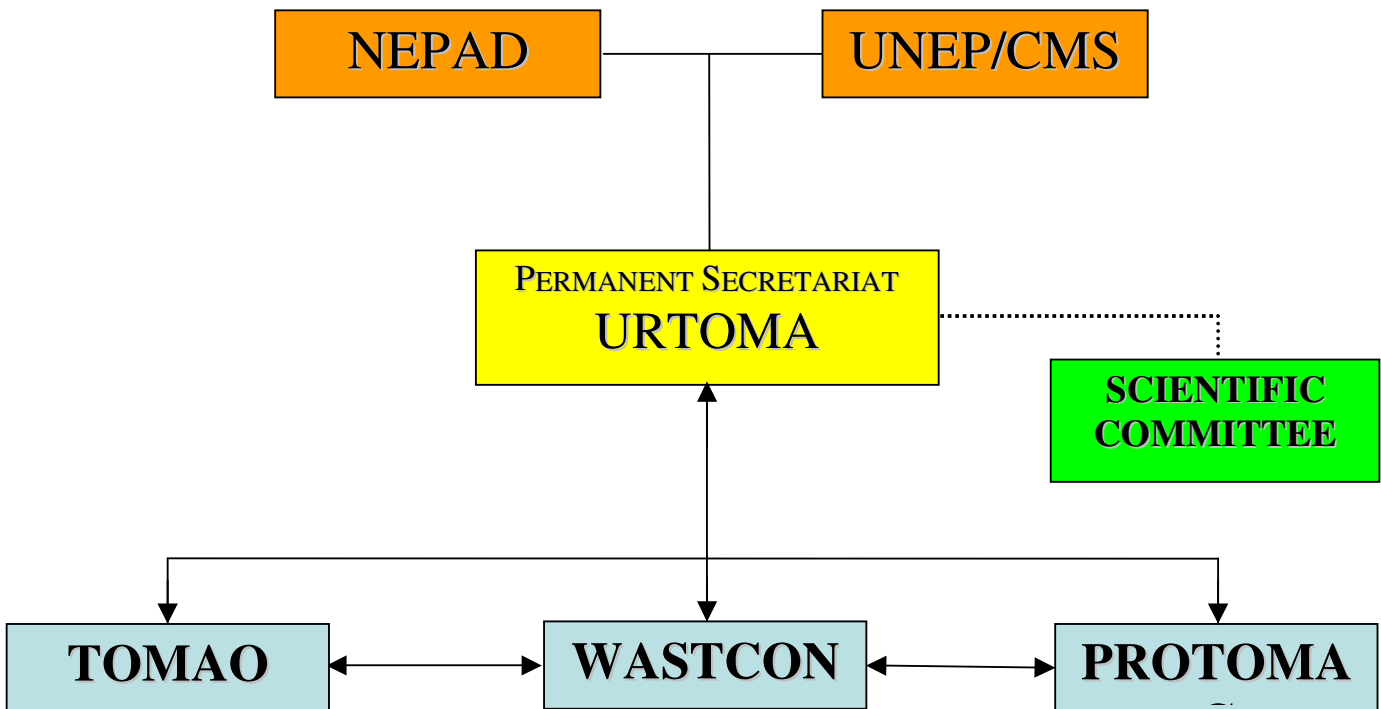
TOMAO NETWORK GROUP

Chair: JUSTINO BIAI (Guinea Bissau)

Rapporteurs: ALPHA OMAR JALLOW (Gambia), ABDOULAYE DIOP(Senegal)

THEME 1:

- **Proposed organization chart:**



Give the URTOMA Permanent Secretariat adequate means:

- To encourage States to allocate financial resources for operationalizing the networks
- To develop cooperation between URTOMA and the other sub-regional organizations (CSRP, PRCM, etc.)
- To set up a web site for URTOMA (capitalize on gains)
- To promote the Goree Sea Museum for sub-regional and regional cooperation
- To develop programmes like shared stocks
- To implement the Abidjan Convention
- To encourage the creation of cross-border reserves
- To organize workshops for sharing ideas and experience in and between networks

THEME 2:

- Review knowledge on turtle populations and their habitats (existing publications by country and by species) and undertake more research programmes
- Take stock of research and training institutes, researchers and scientific productions
- Encourage mobility of students in the field of marine turtle research
- Publish and disseminate the scientific research findings
- Encourage States to pursue research programmes on marine turtles
- Set up a network of researchers on marine turtles
- Capitalize on traditional and cultural knowledge and know-how
- Explore existing funding opportunities to promote research programmes (e.g. ACCC, GIRMaC, WWF, etc;)
- Use and adapt existing databases on marine turtles
- Identify and map out the nesting, foraging, and growth sites, as well as migration corridors and develop protection activities
- Identify the potential actors involved in data gathering
- Set up databases at the national, sub-regional and regional levels
- Develop a secure system for sharing information
- Develop an ecosystem approach

- Harmonize the fact sheets used by observers on board trawlers to include marine turtles
- Develop and capitalize on existing information on coastal erosion
- Prioritize operational research to identify real needs
- Establish a monitoring and evaluation system for marine turtle populations

THEME 3:

- Design, implement and assess a participatory communication plan and IEC programmes (web site, newsletters, various materials, radio programmes, expositions, etc.)
- Identify needs in capacity building and training
- Develop a training programme for actors (tourist guides, eco-guides, eco-guards, fishermen, technicians, etc.)
- Task existing training centres to make contributions (Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, etc.)
- Encourage visits for experience-sharing among countries and networks
- Encourage the holding of day-long conferences on marine turtles
- Encourage training for Turtle thematic groups
- Promote the use of TED (turtle exclusion devices)

THEME 4:

- Encourage communities to understand marine turtle conservation measures
- Find participatory ways of identifying alternative income generating activities for communities to incite them to engage in marine turtle conservation
- Encourage the creation of natural reserves at community level
- Associate and network professional organizations (artisanal and industrial fishing) as well as CBOs (village committees, beach committees, inter-village networks, etc.) in marine turtle safeguard initiatives
- Create a fund for supporting and promoting local initiatives on marine turtle conservation initiatives

GROUP OF PROTOMAC MEMBER COUNTRIES

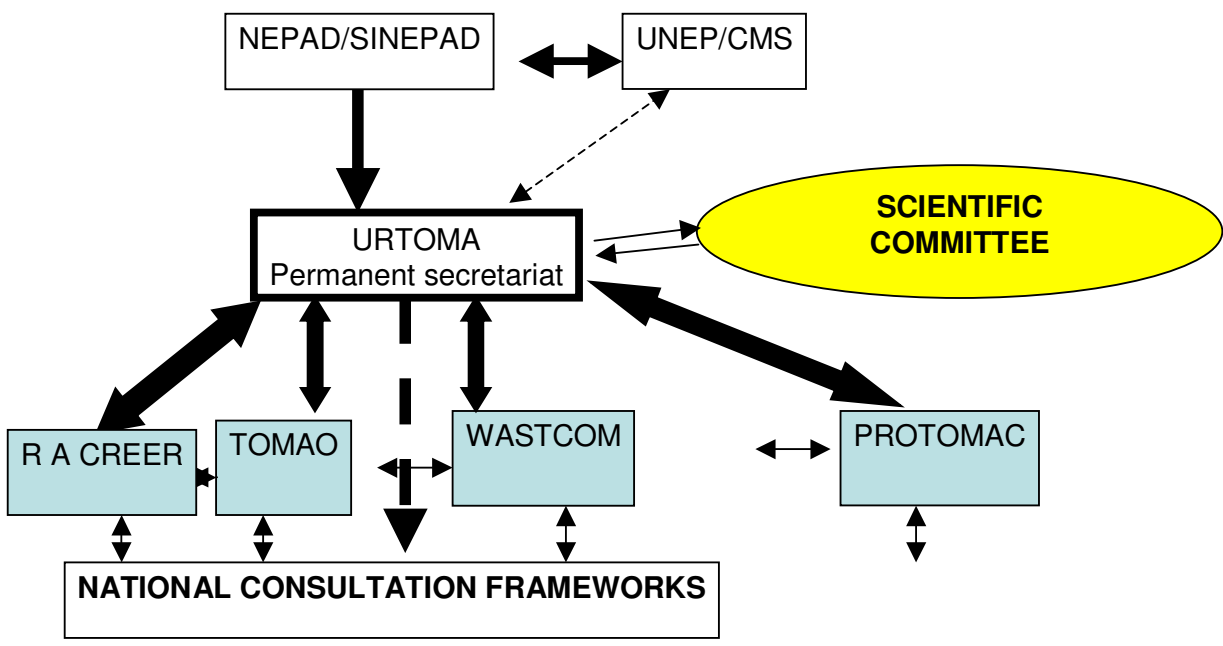
It is very important to emphasize that the countries in this group were almost all absent despite the several invitations sent by the URTOMA and CMS secretariats.

Chair: Hamady SOW (Senegal)

Rapporteurs: Alain GIBUDI (Gabon)

Theme 1:

- Proposed organization chart



- The office of the permanent secretariat should include the administrative section and two scientists to manage the database and ensure daily management
- The Kudu logo can be maintained because it has been used for eight years

- URTOMA should seek to establish itself as a legal entity under Senegalese law
- Find a mechanism for financial and technical support to sub-networks
- Institute an accounts, administrative and financial procedure manual
- Financial planning should be done for at least five years with provision for a mid-term review
- Contribution from Member States (in kind, customs dues, premises, etc...)
- Organize an annual programme review meeting at least for the heads of sub-networks.
- Organize emergency meetings as much as possible
- Organize a bi-annual conference of parties alongside the COP
- Encourage non-signatory countries to sign conventions
- National legislation need to be harmonized with international conventions

Theme 2:

- Standardize protocols, methods and data gathering techniques
- Adopt a unique database format for all the players
- Define a model framework for report writing
- Make provision for databases from the bottom to the top
- Adapt the Protomac database in URTOMA
- Research can be sub-divided in three components:
- Land research that will cover all routine monitoring work
- (beach monitoring)

- Sea research for studies in nesting and foraging areas
- Studies on by-catch
- Research based on Argos-monitored satellite expertise.
- Make provision for scientific workshops and promote scientific publications.
- The findings should inform decision making at State level, and
- Publish the findings widely among the public

Theme 3:

- Encourage and promote university education
- Train grassroots actors in monitoring techniques, etc.
- Provide logistical support to sub-networks and consultation frameworks
- Develop environmental education programmes for primary schools, etc.
- Institute a turtle day
- Produce information, education, public awareness raising materials, etc
- Design and promote gazettes

Theme 4:

- Organize, reinforce and /or create turtle conservation groups or associations
- Train, involve and empower groups
- Encourage communities to create community reserves
- Develop eco-tourism

- Promote the emergence and involvement of local NGOs in marine turtle protection activities
- Promote access to micro-credit

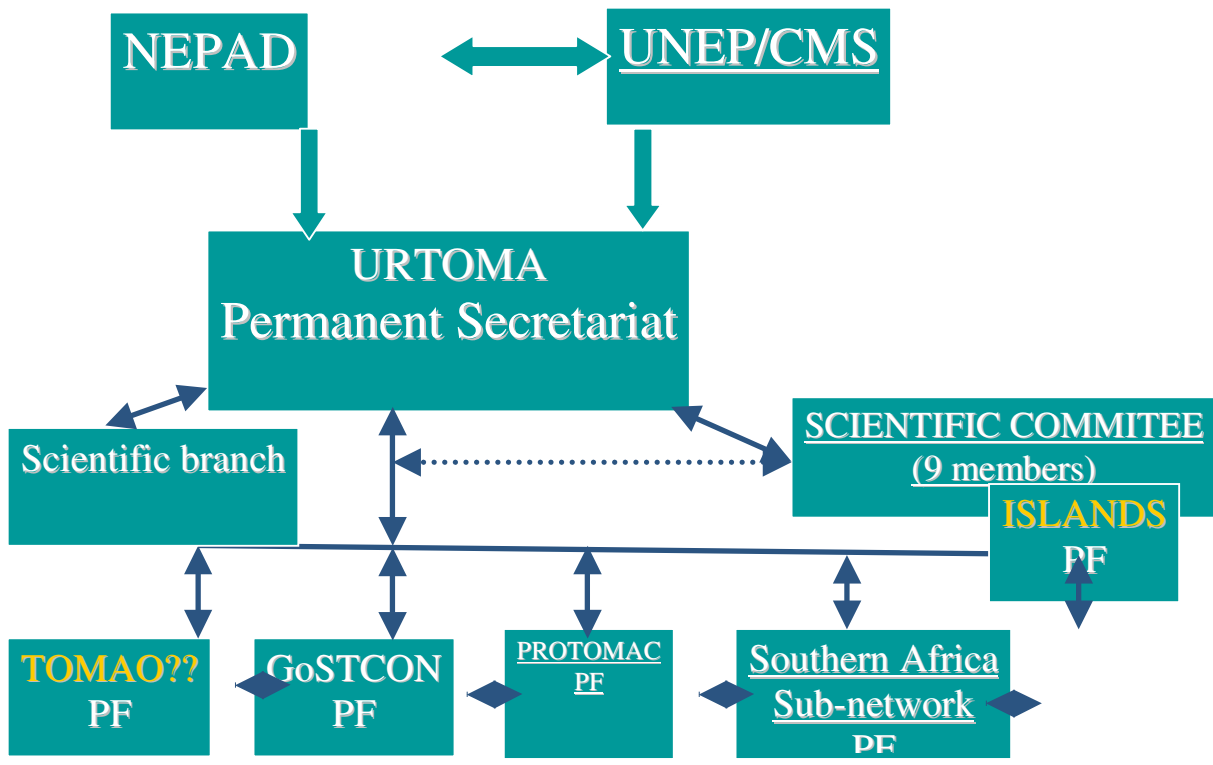
WASTCON GROUP

Chair: GBETOHO Pascal (Benin)

Rapporteurs: AKPAMOU Kokouvi Gbetey (TOGO) and KARMOR Benjamin (Liberia)

Theme 1:

- **Proposed organization chart:**



- Organization chart amended in terms of:
 - ✓ The position of the Scientific Committee, taking into account its role (adviser to URTOMA and the networks on all scientific issues)
 - ✓ Network names (the TOMAO and WASTCON networks bear the same name and cover the same geographic area)
- Efforts will be made to rename the two networks:
 - ✓ WASTCON GoSTCON: Gold Coast Sea Turtle Conservation Network
 - ✓ TOMAO: (Still to be defined)
- GoSTCON: Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and Liberia
- *TOMAO*: Cape Verde, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Gambia, Mauritania, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Morocco ???
 - ✓ Maintaining Sierra Leone in the TOMAO network is justified by the existence of several agreements and joint projects with countries in the network (fishing agreement)
- Create a sub-network in Southern Africa made up of South Africa and Namibia (same for Islands)
- Make provision for national focal points in each country for the coordination of the network's activities at national level
- The CMS focal point assumes the role of the **URTOMA** focal point. He should set up a multidisciplinary national committee on marine turtles. URTOMA should take account of this aspect when sharing information among networks.
- Establish a link for sharing experiences among the sub-networks

- Composition of the Scientific Committee: (9) members: IUCN (1); CMS (1); UNEP (1); already existing sub-regional networks (3); networks to be set up (2); other partners (1).
 - ✓ The representatives should be from a research institution or should be resource persons renowned for their skills on marine turtle issues
- Consolidating cooperation:
 - ✓ Identify all the organizations working on marine turtles at the country and sub-regional levels
 - ✓ Organize missions for experience sharing among the different networks

THEME 2:

- Develop research programmes in the following areas: ethnozoology, the biology and ecology of the species, threats on the species (by-catches, destruction and pollution of habitats, etc.)
- Develop a mechanism for beach surveillance and protection (mapping of nesting sites, track stranded turtles, set up local safeguard committees, etc.)
- Develop and set up a mechanism for collecting data on marine turtles and their habitats (using a standardized format; updating the PROTOMAC database and ensuring it is updated regularly:

THEME 3:

- Develop an appropriate mechanism for communication and target group awareness raising (fishermen, coastal communities, public administration officials, the scientific community, etc.)
- Develop adequate communication tools: local media (public and private); traditional mediums; turtle days; web sites, teaching/learning toolkits; etc.

- Training in various areas (ecoguards, local administration; forest guards, students; etc.)
- Laboratory equipment and field protection structures (adequate materials for performing activities)

THEME 4

- Develop alternative income generating activities, taking into account the specific challenges in the areas
- Take all the actors into consideration when implementing actions for the safeguard of marine turtles
- Pay compensation when there is major damage to nets

APPENDIX 2 TENTATIVE AGENDA

Monday 8 January 2007			
8H30	9h 30	Arrival of participants	
POINT 1 OPENING CEREMONY			
		<p>Opening ceremony (Speeches)</p> <p>Election of the meeting bureau, Signing of the Memorandum of Agreement on marine turtle conservation by Cape Verde</p> <p>Signing of the Memorandum of Agreement on the conservation of marine turtles on the Atlantic coast of Africa</p> <p>Signing of the Memorandum of Agreement on the Conservation of Elephants in West Africa (MEPN Senegal)</p>	<p>Director of environmental conventions and laws</p> <p>CMS Executive Secretary</p> <p>Minister of Environment and Protection of Nature</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Cape Verde/CMS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Minister MEPNS / CMS</p>
10h30	11h	Coffee break	
Point 2 PRESENTATIONS			
11 h	11h30	Management of cross-border marine and coastal resources within NEPAD	SINEPAD/Env.
11h 30	13H	<p>Presentation of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Marine Turtles of the Atlantic Coast of Africa- conservation plan and report on the Nairobi meeting</p> <p>6-9 May 2002</p>	CMS Secretariat
13h	14h 30	Lunch break	
1 4h30	15h30	Marine Turtle conservation on the Atlantic Coast of Africa (Wamer zone: status report, challenges and prospects).	WWF/URTOMA

POINT 3 COUNTRY REPORTS			
15h30	18h	Presentation by focal points on the state of progress in the implementation of the MoA and conservation in their countries.	Participants
Tuesday 9 January 2007			
POINT 4 PRESENTATION OF WORKING AREAS AND GROUPS			
9h	9h 30	Presentation of the strategic areas for developing the coordination strategy.	URTOMA
9h 30	11 h	Group work to elaborate the draft coordination strategy for implementing the MoU on marine turtles	Participants
11h	11h30	Coffee break	
11h30	13h	Group work (cont'd)	Participants
13h	14h 30	Lunch break	
14h30	16h30	Group work (cont'd)	Participants
16h 30	17h	Coffee break	
17h	18h	Group work (cont'd)	
Wednesday 10 January 2007			
POINT 5 FEEDBACK ON GROUP WORK AND DISCUSSIONS			
9h	10h 30	Feedback on group work and discussions	Participants
10h30	11h	Coffee break	
10h 30	12h 30	Synthesis of group work, presentation and validation of the draft coordination strategy	-0 URTOMA
12h	14h	Conclusion and Prospects Closing	-1 URTOMA Cabinet Director
		Side meeting	
14h30	17h	Reflection on better ways of conserving coastal and marine biodiversity in the PRCM zone, creation of the bio-marine network	-3 PRCM, WWF, Wetland International, Participants and URTOMA

APPENDIX 3: Opening Statement by Mr. Thierno LO, Minister of Environment and Protection of Nature, Senegal

Your Excellency, the Representative of the Embassy of Cape Verde in Dakar

Your Excellency, the Director of UNEP's Division of Environmental Conventions, and our dear compatriot

Your Excellency, the Executive Secretary of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)

Your Excellency, the Deputy Executive Secretary of CMS,

Your Excellency, the Executive Secretary of *SINEPAD*,

Ladies and Gentlemen, Representatives of International Agencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen, General and National Directors,

Ladies and Gentlemen, Representatives of Development Partners,

Ladies and Gentlemen, Experts,

Dear Guests, dear participants

*On behalf of His Excellency the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister and the Government of Senegal, I would like, first of all, to welcome all our guests here today to Senegal. **This workshop for strategic activity orientation by the Regional Unit for Marine Turtles on the Atlantic Coast of Africa, URTOMA**, which coordinates implementation of the memorandum of understanding on the protection of marine turtles on the Atlantic Coast of West Africa, is dedicated to the key issue of preserving our marine and coastal resources, and specifically the survival of marine turtles in their preferred habitat on the Atlantic coast of Africa, from Morocco to Cape Town in South Africa.*

Ladies, Gentlemen, dear guests

For thousands of years, marine turtles have been crossing warm ocean and sea waters in search of jellyfish and seaweed, and nesting on tropical and inter-tropical beaches and coasts.

Dear Experts, as you all know, marine turtles have a very strong sense of time and direction, and can cover thousands of kilometres a year. An adult female can find and return to its place of birth to nest even after thirty or forty years of absence.

The coasts and beaches on the Atlantic are favourite nesting areas for the majority of marine turtle species. Today, these nesting sites look much more like cemeteries because of the incommensurable scope of the disaster that has struck them.

Each year, thousands of female turtles are tracked, trailed, captured and killed. They suffer all forms of vandalism and destruction. Their eggs are plundered on land. Young and adult turtles are captured at sea for their meat and shells. Some are suffocated to death due to physical and chemical pollution caused by non-biodegradable materials. Others get caught in fishing nets or captured without reason by seamen.

Sand extraction along the coastline, induced by the growing need for urbanization and the development of seaside resorts, is another source of the threats causing so much concern.

Ladies, Gentlemen, Dear Participants,

We note today that there is a looming threat over all marine turtle species along the coast. These species are among those included in annexes 1 and 2 of CMS, annex 1 of CITES, and the IUCN red list of threatened species. The researchers at the 24th Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation in San Jose, Costa Rica, warned that the leatherback turtle could go extinct in Latin America in the next ten years, if nothing were done to preserve it.

By-catch during fishing expeditions by trawlers and longliners represent the biggest threat marine turtles are facing today. According to the FAO, an estimated number of over 40,000 turtles die each year as a result of longline fishing in Costa Rica.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

You will agree with me that turtles have the same nesting and foraging areas. They suffer the same damage and the same difficulties from the same enemies and predators.

As you know, the 14,000 km stretch of the Atlantic Coast of Africa is the marine turtle's favourite environment, because it offers ecological and geographic conditions that are conducive to the development of these species.

Furthermore, this region has certain key characteristics that are tied to the fact that:

It harbours six (6) of the seven (7) species of marine turtles in the world today that are of importance at the:

- 1 **Global level** for the leatherback turtle in Gabon; and the
- 2 **Regional level** for the green turtle in Guinea-Bissau, the *Caretta caretta* in Cape-Verde and the Olive Ridley turtle in Sao Tome and Principe.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

These facts show just how crucial it is to take a global and regional approach to the conservation of marine turtles in the countries that harbour their areas of habitat. Implicit in this approach is the need for Africans themselves to drive initiatives for the conservation of Africa's marine and coastal environment and the species living there, such as marine turtles. This is a lesson that His Excellency Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal, emphasizes in all his works and pursuits for harmonious and sustainable development in Africa, including his vision as one of the founding fathers of NEPAD.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is why our meeting today must crystallize the thinking that our partners already initiated and have been pursuing in a sustained manner for an efficient and long-term strategy on the protection of marine turtles. In the face of the challenges that completely hinder the conservation of turtles, you will agree with me that we need urgently to synergize our initiatives, design strategies and fight together. The lessons we learned from our fights against desert locusts and the avian flu suggest that such approaches are always more efficient. We need to further prepare and engage in actions that are more inclusive and adapted to our needs.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The CMS quickly recognized the need for inclusive action that would improve the state of turtle conservation. It is in this regard that CMS is supporting countries in the distribution area to enter the memorandum of understanding signed in Abidjan in 1999. With 22 signatories so far, out of the twenty six countries in the distribution area, the agreement is almost ready to go into effect.

We are still convinced that some of the countries that have not yet signed the MoU are going to do so in the near future, because there is true will to do well in preserving these resources.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The mandate of your meeting is to find ways of meeting these goals of conservation that will certainly enable the Unit to have a consensual and participatory approach.

The fundamental issues to which we are expected to respond judiciously may be summed up as follows:

- 1 How do we ensure that the marine turtles on the Atlantic coast of Africa are preserved efficiently within the framework of the Regional Unit?
- 2 How do we build synergy between States and other partners to ensure satisfactory delivery of the conservation plan?

In addition to conserving and protecting marine turtles, we need also to raise public awareness and provide training in

communities, and to guarantee fair and equitable benefits of conservation to ensure proper and sustainable use of natural resources.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are challenged to use our creativity in framing a vision and charting a clear strategic direction to enable the Regional Unit to prepare the ground for sustainable and rational protection and conservation of our coastal marine resources as a whole, and our fascinating marine turtles in particular.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before I conclude, let me wish you a Happy New Year. May 2007 be a year full of joy, health and prosperity for you and your families.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to CMS for their assistance and for choosing Senegal, the coordinator of NEPAD's environment component, to host that unit. I wish also to thank GIRMAC, PRCM, WWF and the Maison des Tortues de France for the contributions they gave the organizers of this meeting.

It is on this note of hope that I am wishing you all success in your proceedings. I now declare open the Strategic Activity Orientation Workshop of the Regional Unit for Marine Turtles on the Atlantic Coast of Africa.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Annex 4: Address by Mr. Lahcen El KABIRI, Deputy Executive Secretary of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)

Honourable Minister of Environment and Protection of Nature for Senegal
Your Excellency, the Representative of the Ambassador of the Republic of Cape Verde in Dakar
Mr. Director of Conventions and Laws on the Environment at the United Nations Environment Programme,

Mr. Executive Secretary of SINEPAD

Ladies and Gentlemen, Representatives of International Agencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen, General and National Directors,

Ladies and Gentlemen, Representatives of Development Partners,

Ladies and Gentlemen, Experts,

Dear Guests and Participants,

It is a real pleasure for me to take part in this workshop, organized by the Government of Senegal, to mark the inauguration of the Regional Unit for the Conservation of Marine Turtles on the Atlantic Coast of Africa.

I would like, first of all, to apologize on behalf of Mr. Robert Hepworth, Executive Secretary of CMS, who was eager to attend this workshop, but was held down by pressing commitments at the last minute. Indeed, he told me just how important it was for him to be here with Mr. Bakary KANTE of UNEP to highlight the importance of the partnership on marine turtle conservation in Africa and witness the signing of the MoU on African Elephants and Turtles, respectively by Senegal and Cape Verde.

It is on his behalf and on the behalf of CMS that I am going to be here with you for the next three days to contribute towards successful cooperation and synergy among the States in the distribution area (EAR), international organizations (OI) and the non-governmental organizations (NGO) concerned by the key issue of marine turtle conservation on the Atlantic coast of Africa.

I am glad also to be able to use this forum to express CMS's recognition and consideration for the Government of Senegal as the country hosting SINEPAD/Environment under the auspices of the His Excellency Abdoulaye WADE, one of the founding fathers of NEPAD.

Let me also express consideration for UNEP's Division for Conventions and Laws on Environment, managed by Mr. Bakary KANTE, who is here with us, for the support they have provided over time to be able to set up this unit (URTOMA).

With specific regard to the proceedings of our workshop, it might be important, in my view, to highlight the particularities of the MoU on the Atlantic Coast of Africa, since it was put in place in 1999 and what still has to be done to ensure it becomes fully effective.

Thanks to the devoted efforts of the persons and scientists who work with CMS, the first steps we made have been crowned with success. The meeting that CMS held in Abidjan in May 1999 prepared the ground for signing the MoU and drafting the attendant conservation plan (CP).

The first meeting of signatory countries, held in May 2002 in Nairobi three years later, yielded encouraging outcomes, making it possible to add to the number of signatories and to make progress with the CP and Nairobi Declaration. However, this meeting also marked a slow-down in the initial momentum due to several factors inherent in the MoU Secretariat, especially the lack of human resources.

But apart from this, the MoU on the Indian Ocean and South East Asia (IOSEA) witnessed a sharp upturn in the level of interest in the six threatened species of turtle at a time when other positive initiatives were crystallizing on the ground in Africa, such as the Kudu Network and the design of a strategy by WWF-Senegal.

To revamp the process, the partnership between CMS, UNEP and SINEPAD/Env was developed as an efficient way of making up for the time lost in this regard. The MoU that CMS signed in October 2005 provided a basis for coordination that made it possible to set up URTOMA, with the support of the unit's first programme of work for 2006.

While working to strengthen the initiative, efforts should be made to set up an advisory committee in the future, like the one in IOSEA, in order to ensure scientific and technical monitoring.

To do so, it is useful to work from the current database and then feed it on an ongoing basis with contributions from across the countries and relevant organizations in the distribution area. Issue n°6 of the CMS technical series, published by Jacques FRETEY, could be a good entry point.

I think the conservation plan should be completed and its objectives streamlined with those of IOSEA. However, the electronic reporting model should not raise too many problems for the creation of a web site and the pursuit of standardized data collection. In this regard, the national report model should respond to criteria, such as reliability, simplicity and homogeneity with the information system that need to be put in place.

One of the points to work on in the near future is to complete the list of MoU signatories. Commitments have been made with CMS in this regard (Great Britain, still ongoing, South Africa and the Republic of Cape Verde).

Efforts to solicit countries like Spain, Portugal and France to sign the MoU should be reopened and extended to other organizations such as IUCN and WWF.

To conclude on relevant issues, I would like to make some preliminary remarks on the second meeting of signatory countries. While on a recent mission, Mr. Robert Hepworth and Mr. Dixon, the UNEP Representative, looked into the possibility of merging it with that on Regional Seas in 2007.

The agenda of this meeting should cover basic aspects such as:

- Updating the database on marine turtles
- Finalizing the CP
- Legal implications of enlisting prominent countries and organizations in the MoU
- Designing a web site and a strategy for increasing financial receipts
- Partnership like the one on the Global Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg), etc.

If the issue is addressed during the workshop, other points on the subject are surely going to be added to this list.

Let me end by reiterating my gratitude to the Government of Senegal and UNEP for making it possible for us to come together. I wish you all a successful workshop.

Thank you for your attention.

Annex 5 CLOSING STATEMENT by Mr. Mamadou TALL, Director of Cabinet (DC), Ministry of Environment and Protection of Nature in Senegal»

Mr. Deputy Executive Secretary of CMS,

Ladies and Gentlemen, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Ladies and Gentlemen, Representatives of National and International Organizations,

Ladies and Gentlemen, National Directors and Chiefs of Service,

Ladies and Gentlemen, Experts,

I am honoured to chair the closure of this important workshop on Strategic Activity Orientation for the Regional Unit for Marine Turtles on the Atlantic Coast of Africa.

I am highly pleased to be with a panel of experts that has spent three days brainstorming on the fundamental issue of marine turtle survival in the distribution areas located in our region, as well as ways of implementing a strategy for orienting the activities of the Regional Unit for Marine Turtles on the Atlantic Coast of Africa.

I would like to seize this opportunity to reiterate the thanks expressed by the Government to the Secretariat of the United Nations Environment Programme's Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) for offering our country, in its capacity as Coordinator of NEPAD's Environment Component, the honour and privilege of hosting such an important Unit as URTOMA.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

His Excellency Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal, and the Prime Minister accord great importance to your proceedings under the auspices of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, NEPAD.

As you know, the President of the Republic of Senegal, Coordinator of the Environment Component of NEPAD, accords boundless importance to environmental protection as a whole, and to the protection of marine and coastal areas in particular.

These zones are crucial to our national economies and the livelihood of our people. The conservation and rational use of these zones is decisive to the survival of people with the same customs and beliefs.

Our country can not afford to be indifferent to this challenge, for our humid areas are important tourist centres that feature among the main sources of foreign currency for our national economy that relies on tourism as one of its key sectors.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me commend you for succeeding in such a short space of time to:

- Carry out an in-depth review of marine turtle conservation;
- Pick out strategic areas and themes as relevant as the following:

THEME 1: INSTITUTIONAL ASPECT, (ORGANIZATION CHART), CONSOLIDATION OF REGIONAL AND SUB-REGIONAL COOPERATION

THEME 2: SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH DATABASE MONITORING AND EVALUATION

THEME 3: CAPACITY BUILDING, TRAINING, COMMUNICATION, SENSITIZATION

THEME 4: COMMUNITY AND NGO INVOLVEMENT AND ATTENDANT MEASURES

Implementing appropriate activities attendant to these themes will obviously enable the Unit to significantly improve the state of marine turtle habitat and conservation.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this workshop has achieved its objectives. Enlisting new partners was one of the outcomes it was expected to reach. It opened with 21 signatory countries and ended with 22 signatories after Cape Verde signed to enter the MoU, putting a quasi-final seal on the commitment of African States.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

When we gathered all these practitioners and experts here in Dakar, we believed that your conclusions would have sound scientific relevance. You have used your ideas to take a key step forward in efforts to devise joint strategies for preserving and conserving shared marine resources like marine turtles.

This is another big step towards closer regional and sub-regional integration that is so dear to our leaders and people.

This is why I want to commend you all for the quality of work you have performed and salute the initiative **URTOMA** has taken to organize such a workshop, bringing together our brothers and guests with whom we share the same problems and challenges.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My thanks go to the:

GIRMAC programme, PRCM, WWF and SOPTOM for their support and assistance in making this workshop a success and their commitment to improving the state of marine turtle conservation.

All the experts for the ongoing support they have been providing in several ways.

Representatives of our development partners, and

To all the participants.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I declare closed the workshop for strategic activity orientation, organized by the Regional Unit for Marine Turtle Conservation on the Atlantic Coast of Africa and wish all of you a safe journey home.