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

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FIRST MEETING OF THE SIGNATORY STATES
Bangkok, 22-24 January 2003

REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION AND PRIORITISATION OF THE
CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

1. The Memorandum of Understanding, in its paragraph 3, provides for a regular assessment of progress made towards implementation of its provisions, notably with regard to habitat protection; management of direct harvesting and trade; reduction of threats to marine turtles, including fisheries by-catch; research and education; information exchange; and capacity building.
2. The meeting to conclude the Conservation and Management Plan (CMP), held in Manila in June 2001, foresaw the need to prioritise actions within the CMP and to review progress in implementation by way of a rolling table. The approach follows that which has been used successfully to chart progress in the implementation of the comparable *Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation Measures for Marine Turtles of the Atlantic Coast of Africa* and other similar instruments under the Convention on Migratory Species. Implementation reviews conducted in the framework of those instruments give Signatory States an opportunity to set realistic targets for additional measures to be undertaken within subsequent reporting periods¹.
3. A number of columns have been added to the Conservation and Management Plan reproduced in Annex 1 in order to facilitate reporting in this regard. First, there is a column to indicate the priority attached to a given activity -- nominally "High", "Medium" and "Lower" -- reflecting the general consensus of the meeting (which may or may not coincide with the situation of individual Signatory States). A second column headed "Implementation Progress to Date" is provided to reflect, by way of concise bullet points, progress made in each Signatory State towards implementation of a given activity contained in the Conservation and Management Plan. Finally, a third column would be used to indicate commitments made by Signatory States, at the meeting, to undertake specific activities during the forthcoming reporting period.
4. An example of how this reporting scheme works in practice is given in document MT-IOSEA/SS.1/Inf. 4, which is an advanced draft of a comparable Conservation Plan developed earlier this year by the Signatory States to the Marine Turtle MoU for the Atlantic coast of Africa. The table is still incomplete, as it represents only the first iteration of a longer-term assessment. Nevertheless, one can see the level of detail that is foreseen. In the case of the African MoU, which has about 20 Signatory States (out of a potential 25 or so), the accomplishments and future activities are ordered country-by-country, within a number of geographic sub-regions. Thus, there is a certain logic to the presentation of information which helps to keep it manageable. The same approach is suggested for whole of the Indian Ocean - South-East Asian region, by making use of the four sub-regional groupings proposed in Manila (and still to be confirmed), namely: ASEAN plus Australia and Papua New Guinea; Northern Indian Ocean; Western Indian Ocean; and Northwest Indian Ocean.

¹ For example, this has worked very effectively in the case of CMS' Siberian Crane Memorandum of Understanding, through four meetings of Range States spanning nearly a decade.

Signatory States are expected to reach consensus at this meeting on the priorities to be attached to specific activities contained in the Conservation and Management Plan. Representatives are requested to come to Bangkok with written documentation or other information from which one can identify the progress already made towards implementation of specific activities. While a start can be made in Bangkok to fill in some of the detail, the meeting may wish to call upon the Advisory Committee and Secretariat to continue to flesh out the table inter-sessionally. Finally, representatives should also be prepared to indicate what specific measures their Governments intend to undertake in the short- to medium-term, with a view to reporting on progress at the next meeting.

Expected outcome:

An extended Conservation and Management Plan that: (1) prioritises specific conservation actions; (2) demonstrates the progress that has already been made towards implementation (to the extent that information is made available at the meeting); and (3) indicates what activities Governments and cooperating organisations are likely to undertake in the forthcoming reporting period.

ANNOTATED CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

Objective 1. Reduce direct and indirect causes of marine turtle mortality

Programme	Activity	Priority	Implementation progress to date	Further specific actions
1.1 Identify and document the threats to marine turtle populations and their habitats	a) Collate and organise existing data on threats to marine turtle populations		AUS: PHL: VNM: KHM: MMR: LKA: IRN: KEN: TZA: COM: MUS: GBR: USA:	AUS: PHL: VNM: KHM: MMR: LKA: IRN: KEN: TZA: COM: MUS: GBR: USA:
	b) Establish baseline data collection and monitoring programmes to gather information on the nature and magnitude of threats			
	c) Determine those populations affected by traditional and direct harvest, incidental capture in fisheries, and other sources of mortality			
1.2 Determine and apply best practice approaches to minimising those threats to marine turtle populations and their habitats	a) Identify and document best practice protocols for conserving and managing marine turtle populations within the region			
	b) Adapt and adopt the best conservation and management practices for marine turtle populations			
1.3 Implement programmes to correct adverse economic incentives that threaten marine turtle populations	a) Conduct socio-economic studies among communities that interact with marine turtles and their habitats			
	b) Identify desired modifications to the economic incentives in order to reduce threats and mortality, and develop programmes to implement the modifications			
	c) Identify resources and sources of funding for the programmes			

Programme	Activity	Priority	Implementation progress to date	Further specific actions
<p>1.4 Reduce to the greatest extent practicable the incidental capture and mortality of marine turtles in the course of fishing activities</p>	<p>a) Develop and use gear, devices and techniques to minimise incidental capture of marine turtles in fisheries, such as devices that effectively allow the escape of marine turtles, and spatial and seasonal closures</p>			
	<p>b) Develop procedures and training programmes to promote implementation of these measures, such as vessel monitoring systems and inspections at sea, in port and at landing sites, and national on-board observer programmes</p>			
	<p>c) Exchange information and, upon request, provide technical assistance to other signatory States to promote these activities</p>			
	<p>d) Liaise and coordinate with fisheries industries and fisheries management organisations to develop and implement incidental capture mitigation mechanisms in national waters and on the high seas</p>			
	<p>e) Support the UN General Assembly resolution 46/215 concerning the moratorium on the use of large-scale driftnets on the high seas</p>			
	<p>f) Develop and implement net retention and recycling schemes to minimise the disposal of fishing gear at sea and on beaches</p>			
	<p>g) Provide and ensure the use of port facilities for the disposal of ship-borne waste</p>			

Programme	Activity	Priority	Implementation progress to date	Further specific actions
<p>1.5 Prohibit the direct harvest (capture or killing) of, and domestic trade in, marine turtles, their eggs, parts or products, whilst allowing exceptions for traditional harvest by communities within each jurisdiction provided that: such harvest does not undermine efforts to protect, conserve and recover marine turtle populations and their habitats; and the marine turtle populations in question are able to sustain the harvest</p>	<p>a) Enact, where not already in place, legislation to prohibit direct harvest and domestic trade</p>			
	<p>b) Assess the level and impact of traditional harvest on marine turtles and their eggs</p>			
	<p>c) Establish management programmes that may include limits on levels of intentional harvest</p>			
	<p>d) Determine the cultural and traditional values and economic uses of marine turtles (both consumptive and non-consumptive)</p>			
	<p>e) Negotiate, where appropriate, management agreements on the sustainable level of traditional harvest, in consultation with other concerned States, to ensure that such harvest does not undermine conservation efforts</p>			
<p>1.6 Develop nesting beach management programmes to maximize hatchling recruitment</p>	<p>a) Evaluate the effectiveness of nest and beach management programmes</p>			
	<p>b) Reduce the mortality of eggs and hatchlings to maximise hatchling recruitment and survival, preferably using conservation techniques that emphasize natural processes wherever possible</p>			
	<p>c) Minimise the mortality of eggs, hatchlings and nesting female turtles caused by feral and domestic animals</p>			

Objective 2. Protect, conserve and rehabilitate marine turtle habitats

Programme	Activity	Priority	Implementation progress to date	Further specific actions
2.1 Establish necessary measures to protect and conserve marine turtle habitats	a) Identify areas of critical habitat such as migratory corridors, nesting beaches, inter-nesting and feeding areas			
	b) Designate and manage protected/conservation areas, sanctuaries or temporary exclusion zones in areas of critical habitat, or take other measures (e.g. modification of fishing gear, restrictions on vessel traffic) to remove threats to such areas			
	c) Develop incentives for adequate protection of areas of critical habitat outside protected areas			
	d) Undertake assessments of the environmental impact of marine and coastal development and other human activities that may affect marine turtle populations and their habitats			
	e) Manage and regulate within each jurisdiction the use of beaches and coastal dunes, for example location and design of buildings, use of artificial lighting, and transit of vehicles in nesting areas			
	f) Monitor and promote the protection of water quality from land-based and maritime pollution, including marine debris, that may adversely affect marine turtles			
	g) Strengthen the application of existing bans on the use of poisonous chemicals and explosives in the exploitation of marine resources			

Programme	Activity	Priority	Implementation progress to date	Further specific actions
2.2 Rehabilitate degraded marine turtle habitats	a) Re-vegetate, where appropriate, frontal dunes at nesting beaches, with indigenous flora as far as possible, in order to provide visual barriers to coastal development and to restore appropriate beach temperature regimes			
	b) Remove debris that impedes turtle nesting and hatchling production			
	c) Enhance recovery of degraded coral reefs			
	d) Enhance recovery of degraded mangrove and seagrass habitats			

Objective 3. Improve understanding of marine turtle ecology and populations through research, monitoring and information exchange

Programme	Activity	Priority	Implementation progress to date	Further specific actions
<p>3.1 Conduct studies on marine turtles and their habitats targeted to their conservation and management</p>	<p>a) Conduct baseline studies or gather secondary information on marine turtle populations and their habitats</p> <p>b) Initiate and/or continue long-term monitoring of priority marine turtle populations in order to assess conservation status</p> <p>c) Characterise genetic identity of marine turtle populations</p> <p>d) Identify migratory routes through the use of tagging, genetic studies and/or satellite tracking</p> <p>e) Carry out studies on marine turtle population dynamics and survival rates</p> <p>f) Conduct research on the frequency and pathology of diseases of marine turtles</p> <p>g) Promote the use of traditional ecological knowledge in research studies</p> <p>h) Review periodically and evaluate research and monitoring activities</p>			
<p>3.2 Conduct collaborative research and monitoring</p>	<p>a) Identify and include priority research and monitoring needs in regional and sub-regional action plans</p> <p>b) Conduct collaborative studies and monitoring on genetic identity, conservation status, migrations, and other biological and ecological aspects of marine turtles</p>			

Programme	Activity	Priority	Implementation progress to date	Further specific actions
3.3 Analyse data to support mitigation of threats and to assess and improve conservation politics	a) Prioritise populations for conservation actions			
	b) Identify population trends			
	c) Use research results to improve management, mitigate threats and assess the efficacy of conservation activities (e.g. hatchery management practices, habitat loss, etc.)			
3.4 Exchange information	a) Standardise methods and levels of data collection and adopt or develop an agreed set of protocols for <i>inter alia</i> monitoring of nesting beaches, feeding ground studies, genetic sampling, and collection of mortality data			
	b) Determine the most appropriate methods for information dissemination			
	c) Exchange at regular intervals scientific and technical information and expertise among nations, scientific institutions, non-governmental and international organisations, in order to develop and implement best practice approaches to conservation of marine turtles and their habitats			
	d) Disseminate traditional knowledge on marine turtles and their habitats for conservation and management			
	e) Compile on a regular basis data on marine turtle populations of regional interest			

Objective 4. Increase public awareness of the threats to marine turtles and their habitats, and enhance public participation in conservation activities

Programme	Activity	Priority	Implementation progress to date	Further specific actions
<p>4.1 Establish public education, awareness and information programmes</p>	a) Collect, develop and disseminate education materials			
	b) Establish community learning / information centres			
	c) Develop and implement accurate mass media information programmes			
	d) Develop and conduct focused education and awareness programmes for target groups (e.g. policy makers, teachers, schools, fishing communities, media)			
	e) Encourage the incorporation of marine turtle biology and conservation issues into school curricula			
	f) Organise special events related to marine turtle conservation and biology (e.g. Turtle Day, Year of the Turtle, symposia, Track-a-turtle)			
<p>4.2 Develop alternative livelihood opportunities for local communities to encourage their active participation in conservation efforts</p>	<p>Identify and facilitate alternative livelihoods (including income generating activities) that are not detrimental to marine turtles and their habitats, in consultation with local communities and other stakeholders</p>			

Programme	Activity	Priority	Implementation progress to date	Further specific actions
4.3 Promote public participation	a) Involve stakeholders, and local communities in particular, in planning and implementation of conservation and management measures			
	b) Encourage the participation of Government institutions, non-governmental organisations, the private sector and the general community (e.g. students, volunteers, fishing communities, local communities) in research and conservation efforts			
	c) Implement, where appropriate, incentive schemes to encourage public participation (e.g. T-shirts for tag returns, public acknowledgement, certificates)			

Objective 5. Enhance national, regional and international cooperation

Programme	Activity	Priority	Implementation progress to date	Further specific actions
<p>5.1 Collaborate with and assist signatory and non-signatory States to regulate and share information on trade, to combat illegal trade, and to cooperate in enforcement activities relating to marine turtle products</p>	<p>a) Encourage signatory States that have not already done so to become Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)</p> <p>b) Review at a national level compliance with obligations under CITES relating to trade in marine turtles, their eggs, parts or products</p> <p>c) Facilitate better compliance with CITES through training of relevant authorities in cooperation with other signatory States, the CITES Secretariat and other relevant organisations</p> <p>d) Identify routes of international illegal trade through monitoring, and seek cooperation to take action to prevent, deter and, where possible, eliminate illegal trade</p> <p>e) Exchange and discuss information on compliance and trade issues at regular intervals, such as through annual reporting to the MoU Secretariat and at meetings of the signatory States</p> <p>f) Identify, prevent, deter and, where possible, eliminate domestic illegal trade through monitoring, implementation of legislation, identification of gaps in enforcement capabilities in each country, and training of enforcement officers</p>			
<p>5.2 Assist signatory and non-signatory States, upon request, to develop and implement national, sub-regional and regional action plans for the conservation and</p>	<p>a) Develop a set of key management measures that could be used as a basis for action plans, through consultation with concerned Government authorities, research institutions, NGOs, local communities and other stakeholders</p> <p>b) Identify existing action plans that could be used as models</p>			

Programme	Activity	Priority	Implementation progress to date	Further specific actions
management of marine turtles and their habitats	c) Identify specific local management issues where cooperation among States is required for successful conservation and management			
	d) Review action plans at regular intervals to take into account recent advances in skills and knowledge regarding marine turtle conservation and management, as well as changes in conservation status of marine turtle populations			
5.3 Enhance mechanisms for cooperation and promote information exchange	a) Identify and strengthen existing mechanisms for cooperation at the sub-regional level			
	b) Develop a website and/or newsletter to facilitate networking and exchange of information			
	c) Develop a web-based information resource for marine turtle conservation (including data on populations, nesting, migration, on-going projects)			
	d) Create a directory of experts and organisations concerned with marine turtle conservation			
	e) Develop networks for cooperative management of shared populations, within or across sub-regions, and, where appropriate, formalise cooperative management arrangements			
	f) Cooperate where possible in the establishment of transboundary marine protected areas using ecological rather than political boundaries			
	g) Develop a streamlined format for reporting and exchanging information (through the MoU Secretariat and among signatory States) on the state of marine turtle conservation at the national level			

Programme	Activity	Priority	Implementation progress to date	Further specific actions
	<p>h) Encourage MoU signatory States that have not already done so to become Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)</p> <p>i) Encourage signatory States to become Parties to global fisheries agreements such as the UN Fish Stocks Agreement (1995) and the FAO Compliance Agreement (1993) and implement the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (1995)</p> <p>j) Establish relationships with regional fisheries bodies with a view to obtaining data on incidental capture and encourage them to adopt marine turtle conservation measures within EEZs and on the high seas</p>			
5.4 Build capacity to strengthen conservation measures	<p>a) Identify needs for capacity-building in terms of human resources, knowledge and facilities</p> <p>b) Provide training (e.g. through workshops) in marine turtle conservation and management techniques to relevant agencies, individuals and local communities</p> <p>c) Coordinate training programmes and workshops</p> <p>d) Develop partnerships with universities, research institutions, training bodies and other relevant organisations</p>			
5.5 Strengthen and improve enforcement of conservation legislation	<p>a) Review domestic policies and laws to address gaps or impediments to marine turtle conservation</p> <p>b) Cooperate in law enforcement to ensure compatible application of laws across and between jurisdictions (including through bilateral/multilateral agreements and intelligence sharing)</p>			

Objective 6. Promote implementation of the MoU including the Conservation and Management Plan

Programme	Activity	Priority	Implementation progress to date	Further specific actions
6.1 Broaden membership in the MoU, and ensure continuity of MoU activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Encourage non-signatory States to sign the MoU b) Arrange sub-regional workshops involving non-signatory States to raise awareness of the MoU c) Consider at the first meeting of the signatory States the development of a timetable for possible amendment of the MoU to make it a legally binding instrument 			
6.2 Promote the role of the Secretariat and the Advisory Committee of the MoU in ensuring the objectives of the Conservation and Management Plan are met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Secure reliable sources of funding to support the MoU Secretariat b) Appoint at the first meeting of the signatory States the members of the Advisory Committee c) Establish lines of communication between the MoU Secretariat and the Advisory Committee to facilitate advice to the signatory States 			
6.3 Seek resources to support the implementation of the MoU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Prioritise conservation and management activities for funding b) Explore funding options with Governments and other donors such as the Asian Development Bank, World Bank, UNDP, European Union, UNEP, GEF, etc. c) Solicit funding and other contributions from industries that have impacts on marine turtles and their habitats (e.g. fisheries, tourism, oil industry, real estate) d) Explore the use of economic instruments for the conservation of marine turtles and their habitats e) Approach the private sector, foundations and NGOs that may have an interest in funding activities in particular countries to catalyse the creation of a small grants fund 			

Programme	Activity	Priority	Implementation progress to date	Further specific actions
	<p>f) Generate funding for conservation and management activities through managed ecotourism and other self-supporting schemes (while benefiting local communities)</p> <p>g) Seek synergies (with respect to fund-raising, provision of institutional support, etc.) with other regional/global convention secretariats</p> <p>h) Explore international funding support and other incentives for signatory States that effectively manage marine turtle populations, which might include the complete prohibition of direct harvest (capture or killing)</p>			
6.4 Improve coordination among government and non-government sectors in the conservation of marine turtles and their habitats	<p>a) Review the roles and responsibilities of government agencies related to the conservation and management of marine turtles and their habitats</p> <p>b) Designate a lead agency responsible for coordinating national marine turtle conservation and management policy</p> <p>c) Encourage cooperation within and among government and non-government sectors, including through the development and/or strengthening of national networks</p>			