



**CONVENTION ON
MIGRATORY
SPECIES**

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FOURTH MEETING OF THE SIGNATORIES TO
THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR
THE CONSERVATION OF CETACEANS AND THEIR
HABITATS IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION

5-6 August 2021, *Online*

**REPORTS FROM COLLABORATING ORGANIZATIONS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MOU:
WHALE AND DOLPHIN CONSERVATION**

WDC Opening Statement

4th Meeting of the Signatories to the CMS Memorandum of Understanding for the Conservation of Cetaceans and their Habitats in the Pacific Islands Region (PIC MOS4)

We would like to thank CMS for their efforts in bringing the signatories of this important regional cetacean MoU together once again.

WDC was present at the initial scoping meetings that eventually led to the development of this MoU and we remained closely involved through the negotiations. We proudly became a Collaborating Organisation and invested in supporting and chairing the Technical Advisory committee to the MoU, placing a staff member in the Pacific, developing much of the underpinning documentation, including the *Current State of Knowledge of Cetacean Threats, Diversity and Habitats in the Pacific Islands Region* that served each of the three MoU meetings in 2007, 2009, and 2012, and helping to coordinate key research.

WDC has also, proudly represented the MoU in other fora, taking forward the Pacific Islands' vision for cetaceans and helping to coordinate between different bodies. For example, by integrating the MoU into the CMS Global Programme of Work for Cetaceans (adopted at CoP10, 2011).

During the early years of the MoU WDC also provided in-country implementation support to three signatories. We later took a step back from such close involvement when CMS handed MoU coordination to SPREP. We welcome the renewed dialogue and look forward to contributing to the discussions ahead.

We are specifically interested in efforts to prevent the bycatch and entanglement of cetaceans, understand the extent of small cetacean takes and pollution, as well as address the data gaps to help understand the status of populations across the region, including more cryptic species. We welcome efforts to develop a regional threat listing system and research to quantify the impacts of warming oceans and changing ecosystems, as well as consideration of how practical, sustainable solutions can be found to help minimise threats such as increasing tourism on potentially vulnerable populations.

We remain committed to the development of Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) as a key tool for helping develop better homes for whales and dolphins and note the designation of 20 IMMAs across the region, with four further IMMAs under development.

Finally, we draw attention to work being undertaken through the CMS Scientific Council on social learning and animal culture, which can provide important insights for defining the unit to conserve and for understanding how these behavioural processes can potentially increase resilience, but also create vulnerabilities, within and between populations.

We look forward to working together with you all to identify best practice standards to help minimise threats to cetacean in this richly biodiverse region.

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