



Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

Secretariat provided by the United Nations Environment Programme



Extraordinary Meeting of the Standing Committee

Bonn, 22 September 2008, 14.00 German Time

Planned duration of meeting 2 hours (max 2.5 hours)

CMS/StC33/2/Rev.2

Agenda Item 5

OFFER FROM ABU DHABI TO PROVIDE COORDINATING UNIT FOR CMS MOU AGREEMENTS ON RAPTORS, DUGONGS AND TURTLES

1. The CMS Memorandum of Understanding concerning the Conservation and Management of Dugongs was opened for signature in Abu Dhabi in October 2007, following the successful conclusion of a series of negotiation meetings organised under the Convention. To date, the non-binding CMS agreement has been signed by eleven States that share dugong populations of the Indian and eastern Pacific Oceans and adjacent waters.
2. The CMS Dugong MoU is modelled to a large extent on a parallel CMS Memorandum of Understanding for marine turtles of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia, also developed under the Convention. One of the reasons behind the successful implementation of the IOSEA Marine Turtle MoU has been the establishment of a dedicated secretariat to coordinate activities of governmental and non-governmental partners. Situated in Bangkok, the office has benefited from its co-location with the UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.
3. Recognising the importance of having a permanent body to underpin and support wider regional efforts to conserve dugongs (and other species), the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD) has offered to host an independent unit to carry out day-to-day secretariat functions for the Dugong MoU. EAD's expression of interest was circulated to Signatory States for comment in early 2008 and a detailed proposal was formally presented to a meeting of Dugong MoU Signatory States, held in Bali on 19 August 2008. The meeting welcomed the EAD's generous offer, described below, and looked forward to the operationalisation of the UNEP/CMS Abu Dhabi Agreement Secretariat. A written process will now confirm this with Dugong Signatory Parties.
4. Arrangements for the Dugong MoU Secretariat are now being discussed in detail between the CMS Secretariat, the Senior CMS Advisor, and the Abu Dhabi authorities. The secretariat unit is likely to be co-located with the EAD offices in order to benefit from its support infrastructure, but it will be staffed and operated autonomously as part of the CMS Secretariat. The EAD offer seems sufficient to provide for full funding of personnel costs, meetings, equipment and premises, operating costs, as well as funding for a small grants programme.
5. The Meeting of Dugong Signatory States would continue to determine MoU policy, while substantive linkages to the parent Convention on Migratory Species would be assured through appropriate lines of reporting. In addition to providing overall management leadership for the Dugong MoU, the central CMS Secretariat in Bonn would provide support on several specific topics including media, publications, fundraising, reporting, science, synergies with other agreements, recruitment of non-Signatory states, data and central administration.

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6. Financed through the core-funding provided by EAD, as well as voluntary contributions of other partners, the basic functions of the secretariat unit will include: coordination and communication between range states, project development, capacity-building, and regional administration. It is envisaged that all of these functions can be fulfilled by a small secretariat unit comprising an executive co-ordinator and head of unit, programme officer and administrative assistant, supported as necessary by specialised consultants.

Further considerations – Marine turtles of the Persian Gulf and Red Sea

7. The IOSEA Marine Turtle Memorandum of Understanding now has a membership of 28 States across the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia. From its inception, the MoU has recognized the importance of complementary sub-regional coordination mechanisms, as a means of enhancing MoU implementation. These already exist or have recently been established, in South East Asia and the Western Indian Ocean, respectively.

8. In 2004, the Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (PERSGA) drafted a comprehensive *Regional Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Turtles and their Habitats in the Red Sea*. Although practical implementation of the Regional Action Plan appears not to have advanced as quickly as desired it nevertheless serves as a benchmark for monitoring sub-regional marine turtle conservation efforts. Evidently, no comparable mechanism exists for countries of the Persian Gulf, notwithstanding a compelling need for better communication and coordination among national sea turtle conservation initiatives.

9. The UNEP/CMS Abu Dhabi Agreement Secretariat unit can play a role, in partnership with PERSGA, in strengthening collaborative work on marine turtle conservation among countries of this sub-region. It will have sufficient dedicated capacity to facilitate coordination of IOSEA Marine Turtle MoU activities sub-regionally, while building linkages and working in close cooperation with PERSGA and other relevant bodies.

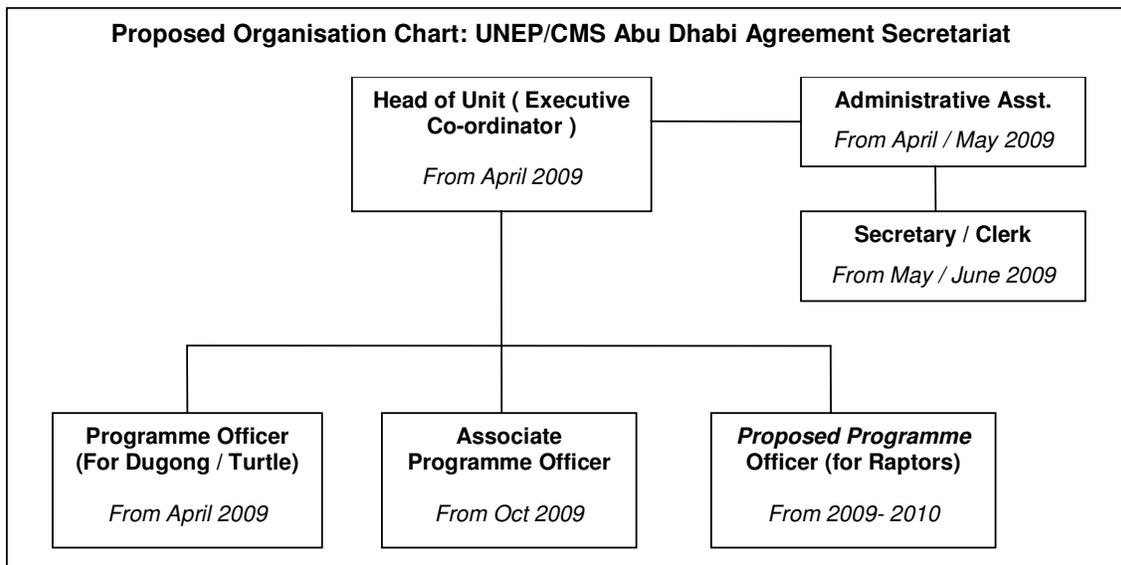
10. An IOSEA “sub-regional coordination unit” (IOSEA SRCU) would serve the thirteen countries of the Persian Gulf and Red Sea, namely: Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, United Arab Emirates and Yemen (of which eight are already IOSEA signatories). It would use the same complement of staff in the unit assigned to service the Dugong MoU, with additional turtle-related responsibilities and staff resources introduced over time.

Birds of prey (raptors)

11. In October 2008, Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi will host an intergovernmental meeting aimed at concluding a CMS Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia. While there are some issues including financial matters still to be resolved, EAD has indicated its willingness to host an interim secretariat for the agreement, once it has been concluded. The EAD offer to establish a UNEP/CMS Agreement Secretariat foresees sufficient capacity to assume this additional specialized function, beginning in late 2009 or early 2010, with support in the form of a dedicated programme officer, together with additional funding for meetings, specialized consultancies, and project activities.

Office start-up and staffing considerations

12. April 2009 is the target date for the establishment of the new UNEP/CMS Abu Dhabi Agreement Secretariat, by which time Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi is expected to have moved into new premises. When fully staffed, the Agreement Secretariat personnel will comprise an Executive Co-ordinator, supported by up to three programme officers, sharing responsibility for the dugong, marine turtle and raptor programmes, together with administrative staff. The Executive Co-ordinator will report to CMS Executive Secretary and be responsible to the respective Meetings of the Signatory States. The financial support offered by EAD for the first three years of the secretariat’s existence is in the order of USD 3.4 million.



13. EAD has expressed a preference for the Head of Unit/Executive Co-ordinator position to be administered by UNEP, in the interest of ensuring (and being seen to ensure) the unit's autonomy and links to UNEP/CMS. Preliminary investigations of the cost of UNEP- versus EAD-administered programme officers suggest that EAD-administration of the three programme officers would be more economical and might bring other advantages. The cost of support staff would be more or less the same under either model. Further investigation is needed into the merits and feasibility of the different options, and UNEP headquarters consulted, before a final decision is taken.

14. Establishing a new secretariat unit from scratch and shaping it into an effective operation could take considerable time and effort. Discussions are under way to see if the process could be expedited by drawing upon relevant experience sitting in Bangkok, via the current IOSEA Coordinator/Senior CMS Advisor, Douglas Hykle. Under the arrangement that is contemplated, Mr. Hykle would continue to be based in Bangkok, but would divide his time between the IOSEA-Bangkok and Abu Dhabi secretariat units until a more permanent solution is reached.

15. It is expected that the ongoing discussions with EAD will be concluded before the end of this year, so that preliminary recruitment and procurement activities can be initiated in the first quarter of 2009, with a view to meeting the April 2009 target for establishment of the secretariat unit.

Action requested

The Standing Committee is invited to

- (a) note that Signatory States of the CMS Dugong MoU have accepted an offer from the Abu Dhabi authorities to host and provide substantial funds for a secretariat co-ordination unit for their activities, starting in 2009, and that a similar offer for the unit to provide also for the proposed CMS MoU on African Eurasian raptors will be considered at the final MoU negotiation meeting in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, on 20-22 October 2008;
- (b) thank the authorities of Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi for their generous offer;
- (c) authorise the CMS Secretariat to continue to participate in negotiations to develop a satisfactory structure for the unit, within the parameters set out in the paper and after further consultations with the Abu Dhabi authorities, UNEP and other stakeholders; and
- (d) consider any budgetary and wider implications for CMS as part of the discussions at CoP9 on the CMS Budget for 2009-11 and during the proposed intersessional process to consider the future organisation and direction of CMS which are likely to take place during the period between CoP9 and CoP10.