



**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ON  
THE CONSERVATION AND  
MANAGEMENT OF MARINE TURTLES  
AND THEIR HABITATS OF THE INDIAN  
OCEAN AND SOUTH-EAST ASIA**

CMS/IOSEA/MOS8/Doc.9.1

17 October 2019

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8<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE SIGNATORY STATES  
Da Nang, Viet Nam, 21-25 October 2019  
Agenda Item 9.1

**THE NETWORK OF SITES OF IMPORTANCE FOR MARINE TURTLES IN THE INDIAN  
OCEAN - SOUTH-EAST ASIA REGION (IOSEA SITE NETWORK):  
STATUS UPDATE AND WAY FORWARD**

*(Prepared by the Secretariat)*

Action Requested:

- Consider the proposed ways forward.
- Consider taking up the recommendations of this document in the IOSEA Work Programme 2020-2024.

## Background

1. The Network of Sites of Importance for Marine Turtles in the Indian Ocean - South-East Asia Region was formally adopted by the Signatory States to the IOSEA Marine Turtle MoU at their 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting, held in Bangkok in 2012. Ten sites were accepted into the Network<sup>1</sup> when it was officially launched at the 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Signatories to IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU (MOS7) in September 2014.
2. The overarching goal of the Site Network is to promote the long-term conservation of sites of regional and global importance to marine turtles and their habitats. The network serves as a mechanism for sites to operate more cooperatively and synergistically, both ecologically and administratively, rather than working in isolation with minimal coordination. The use of robust criteria to evaluate sites nominated for inclusion in the network aims to prioritise the most critical sites needed to secure the future of marine turtle species or management units.
3. As detailed in the *Report of the MOS7 (CMS\_IOSEA SS7\_MR-1)*<sup>2</sup>, proponents of some of the accepted sites were asked to provide missing information for their submission after the Meeting. This was the case with Comoros, Islamic Republic of Iran, Myanmar, Philippines and United Arab Emirates, all of which completed their documents in the intersessional period.
4. New sites can be listed as Sites of Importance for Marine Turtles, according to a defined procedure. The Secretariat sends out a call for proposals to solicit new proposals from Signatory States. Signatory States can submit their proposals using the agreed [Site Information Template](#) to the Secretariat a minimum of six months in advance<sup>3</sup> of the Meeting of Signatory States and the proposals are then evaluated according to a set of defined [criteria](#).
5. The criteria for listing the sites were developed and tested by the Advisory Committee (AC) in 2014. The AC scores the proposals according to the criteria and either recommends the site for inclusion or does not recommend it, depending on the result of the evaluation. For a site to be recommended for inclusion in the IOSEA Site Network, it must obtain a minimum score against each of the four categories, as well as a minimum total score. The site must also achieve a minimum total score of 75 across all of the criteria.

## Process for the Revision of the Site Information Sheets, Criteria, and Process

6. In light of the lessons learned from the first nomination cycle, MOS7 agreed on a revised decision framework as follows:
  - 1) *Proposal is accepted (evaluation score is equal to or above the 75 minimum threshold)*
    - a. *Site Information Sheet is ready to publish on the IOSEA website*
    - b. *Site Information Sheet needs revision prior to publication on the IOSEA website*

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.cms.int/iosea-turtles/en/activities/site-network> for details on the Sites.

<sup>2</sup> Available at [https://www.cms.int/iosea-turtles/sites/default/files/document/CMS\\_IOSEA%20SS7\\_MR-1\\_Meeting%20REPORT%20including%20annexes.pdf](https://www.cms.int/iosea-turtles/sites/default/files/document/CMS_IOSEA%20SS7_MR-1_Meeting%20REPORT%20including%20annexes.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> The recommended submission deadline of six months prior to the Meeting of Signatory States was intended to give time for the Secretariat to offer initial feedback and editorial guidance, and for the Advisory Committee to suggest improvements that would strengthen the proposals' content.

- 2) *Proposal is not accepted (evaluation score is below the 75 minimum threshold)*
    - a. *Proposal lacks substantial detail and needs significant reworking before resubmission*
    - b. *Proposal does not meet the criteria.*
7. Further, it was agreed that the application documents, including evaluation and scoring criteria, should be reviewed. MOS7 Action Point 12 requested the Secretariat and Advisory Committee to "Revise the site network application template (and/or instructions) to be more specific so that all relevant data are captured in the initial application to reduce the need for lengthy revisions".
8. In 2015, some progress was made in the implementation of this Action Point, with several teleconferences having been arranged by the Secretariat, involving AC Members as well as representatives of Signatory States that had shown an interest in being part of these discussions (Oman, United Kingdom, United States).
9. Discussions showed that the Site Information Sheets used for applications needed to be amended in order to reflect the evaluation criteria more closely. Also, some clarifications as to the criteria are required, as proponents seemed to be unsure what information to include in some cases, or AC Members being uncertain how certain terms were to be interpreted, e.g. whether references to rare species describe species that are rarely sighted, but known to occur in the region, or species that are threatened. . In addition, the weighting scale to be applied during the scoring might need revisiting.
10. In addition, both Signatory States and the Advisory Committee had commented that the process applied for updating proposals found to be lacking in detail or clarity was too onerous. This process should therefore also be revisited with a view to simplifying it.
11. The review and revision of the criteria, nomination forms and processes have not yet been completed. For this reason, the Secretariat has not called for proposals to nominate new sites in 2019. Instead, this document is proposing steps to be included in the Work Programme 2020-2024 (see Doc.8.2) to implement the existing mandate and bring this revision process to a timely conclusion.
12. The Secretariat proposes that MOS8 establishes a working group to address the above-mentioned issues and develop revised documents and instructions in the months following the meeting. In particular:
  - a. A first draft of revisions to the Site Information Template will be provided by the Advisory Committee.
  - b. Membership and leadership of the working group should be defined by MOS8, with opportunity for absent Signatory States to join the working group after the meeting. It is proposed that the working group conducts its business by means of electronic communication (email, teleconferences, video conferences, shared documents). Should this prove ineffective at any stage of the process, consideration may be given to allocating funds for a face-to-face meeting to finalise the drafts.
  - c. A deadline should be set by which the working group should submit proposals for a revised Site Information Template, refined evaluation criteria and scoring instructions, and a simplified post-scoring process to the Secretariat for circulation to the Signatories.

- d. Signatory States will receive two months to provide comments on the submissions, after which the working group has two months to revise and resubmit their output as final drafts.
- e. The Secretariat will circulate the final proposals to Signatory States for intersessional adoption by correspondence in order to enable their use in the run-up to the 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Signatories.

### **Operationalizing the Network**

13. MOS7 also agreed to “Establish a steering committee to seek financial support for the IOSEA Site Network in the months following the meeting” (Action Point 35) and assigned this task to Signatory States, Secretariat and Advisory Committee. A working group was set up to tackle this issue, which consisted of the representatives of: the UK, Australia, Mauritius, Oman, Seychelles, Thailand, and the United States, as well as the AC member Ronel Nel.
14. The IOSEA Site Network Discussion Group was formed in December 2015 for the purpose of exchanging ideas on operationalizing the IOSEA Marine Turtle Site Network, including on opportunities to identify more easily any funding sources. Information on its membership can be found on the IOSEA website.<sup>4</sup>
15. Early discussions within the Group have focused on: the need for official certification for each of the Network Sites, exchanging ideas about the design elements that ought to be incorporated into physical sign boards to be produced for each site, and summarizing the key attributes of each site for the purpose of identifying common themes and opportunities for collaboration. Ideas have also been exchanged about the elements that ought to be featured on outdoor sign boards designed for public viewing at Network Sites, including: target messages; factual information in appropriate languages, together with images and maps; instructions aimed at influencing visitor behaviour, in the form of "Do and Don'ts"; and contact details for responsible authorities, logos etc.
16. There appears to be significant overlap between the mandates of the steering committee and the Site Network Discussion Group, and the Secretariat is seeking clarification whether Signatories consider these separate processes, or all related tasks are to be assigned to the Discussion Group. Membership and leadership should also be revisited.
17. When defining the tasks for the group or groups carrying this forward, consideration may also be given to further defining the main goals and the role of the IOSEA Site Network as well as its relationship with existing sites of importance, such as Ramsar and UNESCO.

### **Proposal for Inclusion of Con Dao National Park, Viet Nam, in the Site Network**

18. As mentioned above, in view of the ongoing revision process of the documentation and criteria for inclusion of new sites, the Secretariat had not called for applications to add new sites to the Network in 2019. During this time, the Government of Viet Nam submitted a well-developed proposal to list Con Dao National Park as a Site of Importance for Marine Turtles. The Secretariat requested the Advisory Committee to review the proposal despite the ongoing revision process, and three volunteers of the AC reviewed it, making use of the existing criteria, as well as the decision framework agreed by MOS7.

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<sup>4</sup> Available at <https://www.cms.int/iosea-turtles/en/site-network/criteria-process>.

19. Some minor comments and requests for clarifications were provided to the proponent, and a revised document was resubmitted by Viet Nam, which has been published as Doc.9.2. The proposal and outcome of the AC's evaluation will be discussed under agenda item 9.2, and the meeting will be requested to decide on the site's inclusion in the Network.

### **Recommendations**

20. The Meeting of Signatories is recommended to:
  - a) Consider the proposal for steps to bring to conclusion the revision process requested by MOS7, as outlined in paragraph 12 above, and include the agreed way forward in the Work Programme for 2020-2024.
  - b) Provide guidance on the tasks of the steering committee and/or Site Network Discussion Group, and define the membership and leadership.