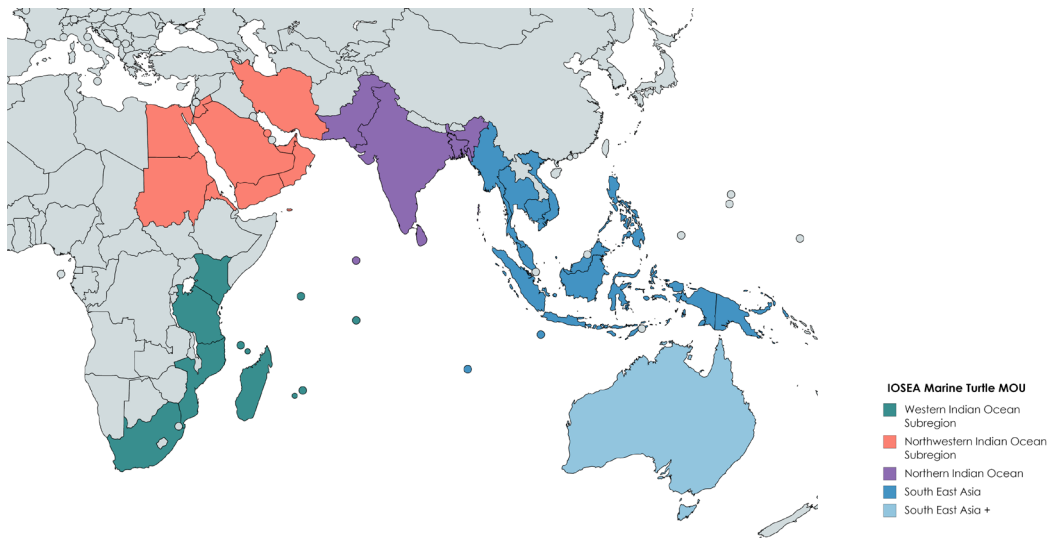




Purpose, Organization and Operation of a Marine Turtle Task Force

In order to facilitate implementation, the vast and diverse area covered by the MOU has been divided into four sub-regions.



Map: The division of Signatory States of the IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU into sub-regional groups.

Each of these sub-regions has nominated a Sub-Regional Focal Point from among the National Focal Points. The Sub-Regional Focal Points have been appointed to improve coordination and exchange of information within each subregion, acting as a reference point for major activities in the sub-region and identifying potential possibilities for cooperation. This role can only be realistically fulfilled between National Focal Points, i.e. with a policy focus.

In addition, there are also benefits of establishing a mechanism with a more technical focus, which can support communication and information exchange, also including non-state actors.

This has led to the establishment of the first Marine Turtle Task Force (MTTF) under the IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU in 2007, serving the Western Indian Ocean ([WIO-MTTF](#)). In 2015, a second one serving the Northern Indian Ocean ([NIO-MTTF](#)) was established.

Purpose

The role of the Marine Turtle Task Forces is one of technical support to the National Focal Points and relevant Sub-Regional Focal Point of the IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU.

As technical experts with detailed knowledge of marine turtle-related research and conservation in their countries, Task Force Members work actively with one another and the governmental Focal Points to assist governments in the implementation of the MOU.



Organization

While each country nominates the Member to serve for it on the Task Force, this does not imply any decision-making power or authorization to speak on behalf of the country. Selection of the Task Force Members is made on the basis of their technical expertise and the knowledge they have about turtle-related work in the country and within the sub-region.

The objectives, roles and responsibilities of the two existing MTTFs are the same. However, the two sub-regions have chosen different options with regard to the composition of the group, illustrating that there is flexibility to tailor an MTTF to the specific needs and wishes of each sub-region.

In the case of the WIO-MTTF, each country nominates one member. These include National Focal Points, researchers and NGO staff. The NIO-MTTF decided that each country should nominate two Members, one of them governmental and one non-governmental, i.e. experts from academia or civil society.

Both Task Forces foresee the election of a Chair and a Vice-Chair from among the membership. The length of term can be set according to the preferences of the sub-region.

Operation

Records of meetings of the Task Forces are available on the MOU website. In addition to in-person meetings, which have been held more irregularly than foreseen due to funding constraints, recently the MTTFs have started making use of online meeting possibilities. Furthermore, regular exchanges are maintained through electronic communication.

The budget of the MOU does not foresee the financial support of MTTF meetings. Hence, for in-person meetings, each sub-region should cover the related costs of its own MTTF. Equally, funds required for implementation of joint activities cannot be provided by the Secretariat, but should be provided by Signatory States of the sub-region, or be raised through joint fundraising efforts.

Way Forward

Sample Terms of Reference, based on the ToR of the existing MTTFs and taking into account lessons learnt since their adoption, are attached as Annex 1.

Signatory States in the North-Western Indian Ocean (NWIO) Sub-Region, comprising Bahrain, Egypt, Eritrea, Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen, are invited to consider:

- whether a MTTF would be a suitable instrument to provide technical support for the implementation of the MOU in the sub-region
- and if so, how they wish to take its establishment forward.



Sample Terms of Reference for a North-Western Indian Ocean Marine Turtle Task Force

1. Introduction

The North-Western Indian Ocean (NWIO) sub-region comprises the following Signatory States: Bahrain, Egypt, Eritrea, Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. Djibouti, Kuwait and Qatar are the only countries in the sub-region that are not yet a Signatory States to the MOU.

The NWIO region hosts five species of marine turtle (Green, Hawksbill, Leatherback, Loggerhead and Olive Ridley) and multiple life stages of each species (reproductive (mature adults and eggs), juveniles, sub-adults and adults). Marine turtles are highly migratory and move across multiple national jurisdictions during their different life history stages. They also have high cultural and socio-economic significance for many communities in the region. Therefore, strong cooperation among States in the NWIO region is crucial for effective conservation.

Marine turtles in the NWIO region face a multitude of threats including unsustainable exploitation for meat and eggs, destruction of nesting beaches and feeding habitats, incidental mortality in fishing operations ('bycatch'), climate change, marine pollution (especially plastic); abandoned fishing nets ('ghost nets'), inappropriate beach management strategies, and natural predation.

2. Purpose and Objectives

The objective of the IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU is to protect, conserve, replenish and recover marine turtles and their habitats, based on the best scientific evidence, taking into account the environmental, socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the signatory States.

The North-Western Indian Ocean Marine Turtle Task Force (NWIO-MTTF) has been set up to promote implementation of the MOU and its integral Conservation and Management Plan (CMP) in the NWIO region.

The Task Force's role is one of technical support to the National Focal Points and Sub-Regional Focal Point of the MOU. As technical experts with detailed knowledge of marine turtle-related research and conservation in their countries, Task Force Members work actively with one another and the governmental Focal Points to assist governments in the implementation of the MOU.

3. Composition

The NWIO-MTTF shall consist of members of all Signatory States in the NWIO region. Each Signatory State shall nominate [one][two] member[s], [one from the governmental and one from the non-governmental sector], using a form provided by the Secretariat. While each country nominates the Member[s] to serve for it on the Task Force, this does not imply any decision-making power or authorization to speak on behalf of the country.

Signatory States should make their nominations on the basis of the Members' technical expertise and the knowledge they have about turtle-related work in the country and within the



sub-region. In addition, Signatory States are invited to consider the expertise required to address the priorities for the sub-region as expressed in the IOSEA Work Programme.

In advance of each in-person meeting of the Task Force, the Secretariat will give Signatory States the opportunity to review the membership and inform about any changes. Task Force Members are eligible for reappointment.

The Task Force shall elect a Chair and a Vice-Chair from among its members. The Chairs' terms of office span [two] in-person meetings of the Task Force, after which a new election will be called for. The Chairs are eligible for re-election. They shall jointly be the principal point of contact between the Task Force, Secretariat and other stakeholders.

4. Observers

Meetings of the Task Force shall be open to participation of observers from other relevant organizations and institutions contributing to or affecting marine turtle conservation.

National Focal Points shall be informed of each planned meeting and invited to attend as observers.

The following organizations shall be invited to participate in each regular Task Force meeting:

- [XXX]

Additional observers, including invited experts, may be proposed by Task Force Members to the Co-Chairs and the Secretariat, in advance of each meeting. Except for invited experts, observers shall attend the meetings at their own cost.

5. Rules of Procedure

The IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU Secretariat shall serve as the Secretariat for this Task Force.

The Task Force shall decide its own regional work programme in line with the priorities identified by the latest meeting of Signatory States and with the support of the Advisory Committee, if necessary.

The Task Force shall organize its own business, supported by the Secretariat.

The Task Force shall strive to reach all decisions by consensus.

A quorum shall be complete when members from at least half of the countries are present in a meeting. If a quorum cannot be reached, the meeting will continue as an informal meeting.

The members of the Task Force shall communicate the implementation of the regional work programme to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Task Force.

The Chair and Vice-Chair shall

- facilitate communications to and amongst Task Force Members, and with the Secretariat
- organize meetings of the Task Force in collaboration with the Secretariat
- report to each Meeting of the Signatory States on activities of the Task Force and implementation of the regional work programme
- attend, when feasible, relevant meetings of the MOU to ensure the recommendations of the Task Force are brought to the attention of governments.



6. Meetings and Communications

To minimise costs, the Task Force should conduct as much of its activity as possible through electronic communication on a regular basis.

The Task Force should strive for regular meetings to review progress and decide its work programme for the next intersessional period. Meetings could include annual online meetings, as well as in-person meetings to be held at least every two years. Where possible, in-person meetings shall be arranged in conjunction with other related meetings, such as the Meetings of Signatory States, or other relevant meetings or conferences organized in the NWIO sub-region.

One or both of the Co-Chairs should endeavour to participate in the relevant meetings of the MOU, and may also participate in the meetings of related and associated agreements and organizations. Other members are also encouraged to attend as observers.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

Taking into account the priorities set by Signatory States in the Work Programme, the Task Force shall:

Strengthen regional cooperation and coordination

- Serve as the coordinating and advisory body on marine turtle conservation to Signatories from the NWIO sub-region.
- Develop linkages and dialogue between the conservation sector and other sectors and industries, such as development, tourism, planning, economy, fisheries, protected areas etc., and encourage National Committees to make these linkages.
- Support the implementation of the goals of the MOU.
- Advocate and direct collaborative efforts for marine turtle conservation among stakeholders, including governments, management authorities, the private sector, coastal communities and non-governmental organizations.
- Ensure good relations are maintained among Governments, NGOs, regional, national and local groups and individuals interested in marine turtle conservation, by conveying information to support ideas, goals, achievements and lessons learned.

Review and Reporting

- Develop and standardize protocols for data collection, management and data sharing for research and monitoring programmes.
- Develop methods to regionally review the collective implementation of national commitments to the MOU, making use of the standardised IOSEA National Report template.
- Review and recommend best practice principles for activities requiring the interaction with turtles such as monitoring, education facilities (aquaria) and hatcheries, filming and ecotourism ventures.
- Promote both biophysical and socio-economic monitoring and more effective coordination with regional and international monitoring programmes.



Planning, Conservation and Management

- Collaborate with National Committees, NGOs, regional, national and local groups and individuals interested in marine turtle conservation to recommend coherent subregional priorities for marine turtle conservation, based on the CMP.
- Encourage signatories and non-signatories to the MOU to develop national marine turtle conservation action plans or strategies in line with the CMP.
- Work with National Committees to ensure national planning is compatible with marine turtle conservation planning across the region.
- Obtain government and convention endorsement for a regional strategy.
- Collaborate with National Committees to prioritise future work for the implementation of the MOU with individual respect given to each country's situation.
- Solicit funds for activities to be undertaken by the NWIO Marine Turtle Task Force and assist in fundraising for other marine turtle conservation activities/projects that will benefit the region and individual countries.
- Assist National Committees to solicit funding for national conservation activities.

Capacity Building

- Support the development of local capacity in research, management and governance by identifying capacity needs, implementing exchange programmes or (where possible) seeking resources to conduct research and monitoring programmes.
- Facilitate the creation or strengthening of National Committees in all countries.
- Encourage National Governments to recognise local issues and establish national legislation or enforcement to further protect marine turtles.

Facilitate Communication

- Provide and facilitate access to technical advice. Act as a reference body and provide advice on proposals for marine turtle conservation projects in the region. Encourage proposals to have a regional perspective and provide linkages between local, national and regional networks where possible.
- Facilitate linkages and collaboration with regional organizations such as [XXX].
- Facilitate communication and the dissemination of information for the purposes of scientific and public awareness.
- Facilitate and support communication at the national level and serve as a platform to coordinate local initiatives (where required in the absence of national committees).
- Encourage active participation in sub-/regional meetings by institutions and relevant parties in order to raise awareness about priority and emerging issues concerning marine turtles.

The sub-region has very limited resources for implementation. It is therefore expected that the responsibilities and activities should not be reliant on many additional resources from governments. All activities of the WIO-MTTF will take place in consultation with the Secretariat, and will seek additional resources, opportunities and frameworks.