



CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES

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THIRD MEETING OF THE SIGNATORIES TO THE
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ON
THE CONSERVATION OF CETACEANS AND THEIR
HABITATS IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION
8 September 2012
Agenda Item 3.2

REVIEW OF PROGRESS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MOU ACTION PLAN

(Prepared by SPREP)

Background

1. It is standard practice within CMS to review the conservation status of the species and the implementation of the MoU and Action Plan at all meetings of the Signatories. This report is solely focused on the review of the implementation of the MoU Action Plan.
2. The CMS Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Cetaceans and their Habitats in the Pacific Islands Region (Pacific Cetaceans MoU) was officially opened for signing at the 17th SPREP Meeting of Officials in Noumea, New Caledonia in 2006. The development of the Pacific Cetaceans MoU was a collaborative undertaking between the CMS, the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), key Pacific Island countries / territories and interested partners.
3. The MoU text captures the spirit of collaboration in the implementation of the MoU and consequent Action Plan, whereby the signatories “*DECIDE to work closely together in the Pacific Islands Region, and to foster cooperation, build capacity and ensure coordinated region-wide actions to achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for all cetaceans and their habitats occurring in the region, and to safeguard the associated cultural values for Pacific Islands peoples*”.
4. The Pacific Cetaceans MoU Whale and Dolphin Action Plan 2009 – 2012 (MoU AP 2009 – 2012) was officially endorsed at the Second Meeting of the Signatories in Auckland, 2009. It is based on the SPREP Whale and Dolphin Action Plan, 2008 – 2012 (SPREP WDAP 2008 – 2012). This reflects the key role played by SPREP in the Pacific islands region for the conservation of cetaceans, as well as coordinating with the CMS Secretariat, the implementation of the PI Cetaceans MoU and action plan.
5. Apart from some changes to the language under Objective 2 of Theme 2 in reference to direct take, which was discussed and agreed to at the Second Meeting of the Signatories, the MoU AP 2009-2012, is identical to the SPREP WDAP 2008 – 2012. Both contain 9 themes, 25 objectives and 94 actions.

Assessment methodology:

6. During the March 2012 review of the SPREP Regional Marine Species Action Plans, an assessment of the status of implementation of the MoU Action Plan 2009 – 2012 / SPREP WDAP 2008 – 2012 was undertaken.

7. As such, all SPREP member countries, including 13 MoU Signatories and 5 Collaborating Organizations (COs), were asked to complete a reporting table in order to provide a preliminary idea of implementation progress.

8. Four completed review templates were received from the MoU Signatories and two from COs. Two COs (Whales Alive and SPWRC) combined their submissions, whilst one (WWF SPPO) submitted theirs as part of a national report (Fiji). Therefore, a total of 8 Signatories and COs (approximately 44.4 per cent) reported on progress in March 2012. In addition, 6 completed templates were received from non-Signatories to the MoU. Additional information on Signatory / CO activities was sourced from presentations delivered at the March 2012 Marine Species Action Plan review meeting.

Assessment analysis:

9. It is to be reiterated that the represented analysis is only reflecting activities submitted by Signatories / COs through the review templates, or from presentations delivered at the March 2012 meeting. For reasons including department restructure, time / staff constraints, certain Signatories were unable to submit their reviews. A mechanism for determining an improved reporting process is proposed in CMS/PIC/MoS3/Doc.5.2. A graphical representation of Signatory submissions is attached as Annex 1.

10. Key achievements extracted from the review templates and presentations delivered include:

- i. Increased political commitment to the conservation and management of cetaceans and their habitats in the Pacific Island region by Tonga and Tuvalu when they signed the MoU in 2010.
- ii. Development and finalization of the Oceania Humpback Whale Recovery Plan. This is the first arrangement of this type in the region, which focuses solely on the recovery of a particular species.
- iii. Increased efforts in the region to synergise national efforts (e.g. inclusion of whales and dolphins in the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans of Fiji and the Solomon Islands; Cook Island's inclusion of whales in their 2012 – 2016 National Environment Strategy Framework).
- iv. Research initiated into the threat of depredation (marine mammals and fishery interaction) through an Australian Marine Mammal Research Centre Initiative (Dr. Derek Hamer) and being implemented in Fiji and Samoa.
- v. Supporting the non-lethal research of whales through regulations (e.g. Samoa's 2009 Marine Wildlife Protection Regulations that stipulate clearly the use of only non-lethal research methodologies).
- vi. Development and dissemination of regional guidelines for whale watching. National guides have also been developed following this (e.g. Samoa).

- vii. 2009 – 2011 research into the Solomon Islands dolphin population – a collaboration between the government and the South Pacific Whale Research Consortium. This has resulted in the formulation of a basis for deciding on quotas for the dolphin export industry.
- viii. Increased research efforts at the national level to determine population trends (e.g. humpback whale assessments in Fiji; dolphin surveys in Samoa – both with strong engagement of communities and provincial governments).
- ix. Increased effort in communication and outreach at national and regional level. This includes the audience range (communities, schools, church, government agencies, general public) and also modes of delivery (print media, radio, television, World Wide Web through social networks).
- x. Increased engagement of partners by SPREP to support the delivery of the MoU Action Plan via the Regional Whale and Dolphin Action Plan and the PI-Cetaceans Listserv.
- xi. Continued support provided to the Signatory States to increase engagement and profiling of efforts in the Pacific Islands region, through participating at international fora such as the First Marine Mammal Protected Areas Conference (2009).

11. General comments on implementation of the MoU AP:

- i. Of the 94 actions comprising the MoU Action Plan, Signatories and COs individually recorded activities taken towards implementing 67 (71.3 per cent) of these. When combined with actions undertaken jointly with SPREP and WDCS, the figure rises to 74 (79 per cent). All nine themes recorded between 50 - 95 per cent implementation of actions, with Themes 3 (Ecosystem / Habitat Protection) and 4 (Capacity Building) recording 100 per cent implementation of the four and nine respective activities.
- ii. The most implemented action was 5.4 which refers to utilising “existing community networks and venues to deliver public presentations.”
- iii. Overall, a total of 20 actions (28 per cent) recorded ‘Nil’ activity against them with Themes 8 (Research and Monitoring) and 9 (Whale and Dolphin based tourism) reflecting the least action (i.e. 5 of 15 and 12 actions under the respective themes, recorded nil activity). This is perhaps a reflection of funding, human / technical capacity, and reporting constraints in addition to national priorities.
- iv. Reflected strongly in the reports are the collaborative efforts undertaken by Signatory States / Territories with intergovernmental organizations, research institutions and non-government organizations. But it is reiterated that the current status of implementation reflects only information available from the review templates received / presentations delivered.

12. A further analysis of the impact of implementation of the current MoU AP is necessary and also reflects the need to agree upon a reporting process with reference to format and frequency. It must however, be nested within national processes (e.g. NBSAPs) so as to ensure mainstreaming and ease reporting fatigue experienced by national government agencies.

13. This preliminary report on implementation by no means provides a position on the population trends of cetaceans and their habitats in the region. That work will need to be jointly

undertaken with the Technical Advisory Group.

Action requested:

The Signatories, and where appropriate other meeting participants, are requested *inter alia* to:

- Seek any clarification that might be necessary;
- Note the report on implementation.
- Encourage responsible national agencies to provide updates on MoU AP implementation to CMS and SPREP.

ANNEX 1

