



# Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals



## TECHNICAL WORKSHOPS AND MEETING TO SIGN THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING CONCERNING CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF DUGONGS (*DUGONG DUGON*) AND THEIR HABITATS THROUGHOUT THEIR RANGE

28 - 31 October 2007, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

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### REPORT OF THE TECHNICAL WORKSHOPS AND MEETING TO SIGN THE DUGONGS MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

#### Introduction

1. The Technical Workshops and Meeting to sign the Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Conservation and Management of Dugongs (*Dugong dugon*) and their Habitats throughout their Range was held at the Beach Rotana Hotel, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, from 28 to 31 October 2007. The Workshops and Meeting were convened under the auspices of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and were hosted by the Government of Abu Dhabi, represented by the Environment Agency–Abu Dhabi.
2. The development of a Memorandum of Understanding for the Conservation of Dugongs had been called for in Recommendations 7.5 and 8.5 of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species, in 2002 and 2005 respectively (CMS/DUGONG/Inf.1). A draft Memorandum of Understanding (CMS/DUGONG/Inf.5) and associated Conservation and Management Plan (CMS/DUGONG/Inf.6) had been developed at two meetings on dugong conservation and management held in Bangkok, Thailand, in August 2005 and May 2006.
3. The purposes of the current meeting were to further discuss the Implementation of the Conservation and Management Plan; to obtain updates on progress made by various Range States; and to sign the Memorandum of Understanding. The meeting would commence with two concurrent workshops concerning the Implementation of the Conservation and Management Plan in the Western Indian Ocean sub-region and in the Eastern Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean sub-regions and would conclude with a Plenary Meeting at which the Memorandum of Understanding would be signed.
4. A list of participants attending the meeting is attached as Annex 1 to this report.
5. The Workshop and Meeting participants adopted the Agenda on the basis of the Provisional Agenda contained in document CMS/DUGONG/Doc.1 attached as Annex 2 to this report.

## **I. TECHNICAL WORKSHOPS**

### **Agenda Item 1: Dugong Workshop on issues concerning the Eastern Indian Ocean and the Pacific sub-region and other issues related the general implementation of the Dugong Conservation and management Plan**

#### **Opening remarks**

6. The Workshop was opened by Mr. Lahcen El Kabiri, Deputy Executive Secretary of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), who welcomed the participants and thanked the Government of the United Arab Emirates for its hospitality. The participants decided to conduct their work on the basis of the work programme set out in document CMS/DUGONG/Doc.5. The moderator of the workshop was Ms. Kirstin Dobbs, Director of Conservation, Heritage and Indigenous Partnerships, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Australia. In her opening remarks she said that the objective of the workshop was to increase understanding of the challenges of dugong conservation, identifying common issues and priorities through the presentation of country reports and related discussions.

7. Ms. Helene Marsh, Professor of Environmental Science, James Cook University, Queensland, Australia, gave an overview of aspects of Dugong Biology and Behaviour (Annex 3) that justified the development of a conservation agreement under CMS. The dugong, she said, was the only member of the family Dugongidae and the only strictly marine herbivorous mammal. Its rate of breeding was slow and sensitive to environmental change and it was classed as vulnerable on a global scale by the World Conservation Union (IUCN). It was of cultural and dietary significance in certain areas. While it relied on seagrass beds for grazing it migrated widely throughout its range and there was therefore a compelling case for management planning on a regional scale. The dugong was, encouragingly, still present in the extremities of its range. Both the animal and its habitat were under increasing threat throughout its range, however, and its loss in certain areas could lead to a decline in the quality of the seagrass beds that it farmed. Research had indicated that there was a mismatch between the geopolitical scale at which a resource such as the dugong was typically managed and the biological scale at which it functioned. In conclusion, she said that dugongs needed to be managed at biological scales of hundreds of kilometres and that the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding would represent significant progress towards the international cooperation that was essential for the conservation of the species. The presentation by Ms. Marsh can be found on the website of the Convention on Migratory Species ([http://www.cms.int/bodies/meetings/regional/dugong/dugong\\_3.htm](http://www.cms.int/bodies/meetings/regional/dugong/dugong_3.htm)).

8. Mr. Douglas Hykle, Coordinator of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia (IOSEA) Marine Turtles Memorandum of Understanding, gave an overview of the dugong Memorandum of Understanding and the Conservation and Management Plan. He summarized their historical development over the previous five years but said that it was important to concentrate on practical plans for the future. The approach taken had been to develop a non-binding agreement. The experience of CMS had shown that Governments were still willing to cooperate and to contribute financially in instances where agreements were not legally binding. Both the Memorandum of Understanding and the Conservation and Management Plan were solid and comprehensive tools and provided a strong basis for actual implementation on the ground. An impressive amount of information about the status of dugongs had been gathered in many areas and the need now was to focus attention on the

specific actions that needed to be taken to implement the agreement, based on the examples set out in the annex to the Conservation and Management Plan. In that regard it was important to take each of the nine themes of the plan and review progress made, document continuing work and base new action on identified priorities. Finally, he stressed that the added value of the agreement lay in those actions that would only succeed through concerted international work.

### **Presentations by countries and others**

9. Representatives of the following countries made audiovisual presentations on aspects of dugong management and conservation within their jurisdictions, including consideration of status, actions taken, threats and recommendations for future action: Australia (Annex 4a), France (Mayotte and New Caledonia) (Annex 4b), Myanmar (Annex 4c.) and Thailand (Annex 4d). The presentations can be found on the website of the Convention on Migratory Species <[http://www.cms.int/bodies/meetings/regional/dugong/dugong\\_3.htm](http://www.cms.int/bodies/meetings/regional/dugong/dugong_3.htm)>. The representative of Pakistan delivered a report in which he said that there had been no recent sightings of dugongs in Pakistan but the presence of seagrass off the eastern coast indicated that dugongs might migrate through the area.

10. The representative of the Secretariat of the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) provided an overview (Annex 4e.) of the revised Dugong Action Plan for the Pacific Region (2008–2012), which would take effect in January 2008. The presentation can be found on the CMS website <[http://www.cms.int/bodies/meetings/regional/dugong/dugong\\_3.htm](http://www.cms.int/bodies/meetings/regional/dugong/dugong_3.htm)>.

11. A number of key themes emerged from the presentations. The importance of involving indigenous peoples and other local communities in monitoring and conservation activities was highlighted. In Australia, for example, the Turtle and Dugong Management Project sought to assist indigenous communities to develop their own management plans for turtles and dugongs based on customary values. Innovative methods of carrying out effective work with limited funding were noted. In Thailand, for example, monitoring and mapping had been done using microlight aircraft, and work in Myanmar using a grant of \$1,000 from the Society for Marine Mammalogy showed that significant progress could be made through modest funding.

### **Interactive Mapping Exercise**

12. The Workshop participants undertook an interactive mapping exercise in which country representatives marked on a regional map important areas for dugongs and their habitats. As well as providing a useful overview of dugong distribution, the exercise prompted informative discussion on several aspects of dugong status including threats, gaps in knowledge, regional cooperation, behavioural characteristics of dugongs, conservation efforts and projects and opportunities for further action.

### **Conservation and Management Plan**

#### **(a) Objectives 1, 3, 5, 7, 8: Threats and Management Tools**

13. **Threats to Dugongs.** During an interactive discussion the Workshop participants compiled a matrix of threats to dugongs, listing them by country. The major categories of threats identified were incidental capture in fishing gear, marine debris, habitat destruction, boat strike, disturbance, pollutants, unsustainable hunting and poaching. For each country, the

threats were classified as of high, medium or low importance or not applicable. It was recognized that not all threats were found in all countries and that the impact of the identified threats varied in intensity. The matrix is set out in Annex 5 to the present report.

14. **Management Tools.** In another interactive discussion, a number of current management actions and tools were identified for the threat categories recognized in the previous exercise. Further potential management tools were also identified. The types of tools suggested were wide ranging and included education and awareness raising; fisheries management techniques (e.g., temporal and spatial closures and gear modification); community-based management regimes; environmental impact assessment; and legislation. The matrix of current and potential management tools for dugongs is set out in Annex 6 to the present report.

**(b) Objectives 2, 4: Improving Understanding of Dugongs and their Habitats through Research and Monitoring**

15. The representatives of Australia, Myanmar, New Caledonia, Pakistan, Thailand and SPREP identified a number of information needs in relation to dugongs and their habitats within their jurisdictions. Opportunities existed for international cooperation in research projects, for example, addressing knowledge gaps regarding the genetic characteristics of dugongs, for which international funding might be available. Information gaps were identified in a number of areas, including dugong movement and habitat use, mapping and monitoring of seagrass, traditional knowledge and practices and dugong management within traditional community structures. There was a significant lack of baseline data in many areas. The matrix compiled during the exercise also identified key national and international research priorities. The workshop sought to identify specific activities that might be carried out to fill knowledge gaps and the organizations and agencies that might be best placed to assist with the process.

16. The problem of attracting funding for dugong research and conservation was discussed; Mr. Hykle stressed the importance of ensuring that project proposals were clearly defined in order to attract funding. Another representative said it was possible that some existing or planned projects in the region had the potential to include dugong-related activities. Another suggested developing a pro forma on which initial project proposals could be laid out, following which advice might be sought from the CMS Secretariat as to which proposals were most appropriate for full development and most likely to attract funding. There was a budgetary surplus from the present meeting that could be used to fund some priority small-scale projects.

17. It was not possible to compile a comprehensive list of information needs and priorities as a number of countries were not represented at the workshop. The matrix of information needs and priorities for improving understanding of dugongs and their habitats is set out in Annex 7 to the present report.

**(c) Objective 9: Enhance National, Regional and International Cooperation on Capacity-Building**

18. During an interactive discussion, a number of suggestions were offered on ways in which national, regional and international cooperation might be enhanced in order to build capacity for dugong conservation.

19. Various internet options were discussed, including the establishment of a website for the Memorandum of Understanding, possibly modelled on the IOSEA website. In that context, it was recognized that setting up, maintaining and updating such a site would require substantial human resources. Using an international list server, such as the Sirenian International list server, to exchange information was also suggested.

20. Dissemination of information posed particular challenges, given the considerable geographical spread of the dugong, the wide range of stakeholders and communities with particular information needs and the budgetary limitations of the Memorandum of Understanding. Suggestions included promoting Memorandum of Understanding meetings and activities via the IUCN Sirenian Specialist Group newsletter, and sharing common resources and ideas, such as educational material.

21. Options for the governance structure of the Memorandum of Understanding were considered, including the establishment of a dedicated secretariat that would act as a coordination point for the agreement. That would again require significant resources and funding. It was generally considered advantageous to explore opportunities to carry out work in tandem with existing bodies within the region, for example the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC).

22. To assist research, sharing of technical support and knowledge could be promoted through the provision of internships, university degrees and marine studies courses by countries with specialist expertise.

## **Agenda Item 2: Dugong Workshop on key themes for the Western Indian Ocean sub-region**

### **Opening remarks**

23. Mr. Thabit Al Abdessalaam, Environment Agency–Abu Dhabi, opened the workshop on the conservation and management of dugongs in the Western Indian Ocean sub-region. He recalled the history of previous meetings on dugongs and noted the importance of the new focus on dugongs among States of the Western Indian Ocean region. He noted that previous attention had been largely focused on dugongs in the Eastern Indian Ocean and Pacific sub-region and said that his Government was willing to provide leadership for dugong conservation in the Western Indian Ocean sub-region.

24. Outlining the agenda for the workshop, Mr. Abdessalaam said that there were two topics to be addressed. First, representatives would review and, if necessary, update the available information on the status, conservation and management of dugongs and their habitats in each country. Second, representatives would review and finalize the Conservation and Management Plan for Dugongs (*Dugong dugon*) and their Habitats of the Arabian Gulf, Red Sea and Western Indian Ocean Sub-region, which had been developed to aid implementation of the regional Conservation and Management Plan within the sub-region.

25. Observing that the present meeting would conclude with a signing ceremony for a new Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Dugongs, Mr. Abdessalaam said that the United Arab Emirates was prepared to be a founding signatory and

further expressed the hope that many other representatives of States from the Western Indian Ocean sub-region would commit their Governments to the proposed new accord.

### **Review of the status, current threats and management concerning dugongs and dugong habitats within the Arabian Gulf, Red Sea and Western Indian Ocean**

26. Mr. Abdessalaam called on Mr. Himansu Das, Environment Agency–Abu Dhabi, to present a consolidated overview of the available information pertaining to dugongs and dugong habitats, as prepared by and collected from Governments of countries in the sub-region.

27. In his presentation, Mr. Das highlighted the research and conservation efforts on dugongs undertaken by the United Arab Emirates. Information regarding dugong populations in the territorial and adjacent waters of that country included qualitative and anecdotal reports, quantitative data and aerial survey observations. Dugong mortality was largely due to incidental catch in fishing nets and vessel strikes, while habitat destruction resulted from coastal development activities and marine pollution. In response, the Government had already developed and implemented a Conservation and Management Plan that involved the passage of protective legislation in 1999 and the establishment of three marine protected areas encompassing zones of known dugong population concentrations and critical dugong habitats.

28. Turning to information on dugongs and their habitats from other countries in the Western Indian Ocean sub-region, Mr. Das reviewed the quality of available data on a country-by-country basis. He noted that there was a need for greater knowledge concerning the size, range and habitats of dugong populations. Human threats to dugongs, including hunting, destructive fishing practices, incidental catch, vessel strikes, habitat destruction, marine pollution and other local or specific risks, also needed further elaboration through expanded research. Summary data from the sub-region indicated that only three countries had implemented legislation related to dugong conservation and only five countries had gathered reliable, quantitative data on dugong populations in their waters. Dugong habitat degradation was widespread in all of the Range States and, while causes of mortality had not been well studied, it was clear that fishing equipment and practices harmful to dugongs such as the use of underwater explosives, gill and fish nets and trawlers and traps were in widespread use across the sub-region. In concluding his remarks, Mr. Das highlighted three priority areas for dugong conservation in the Western Indian Ocean: basic research on dugong populations and causes of mortality; legislation; and implementation of management actions.

29. Ms. Patricia Davis, Community Centred Conservation, made a presentation on dugong conservation and management in the Union of the Comoros, including its coordination of work with Mayotte, an overseas department of France. She briefly reviewed the recent history and current status of dugongs and their range in the Comoros Islands. Dugongs were now found around only one of the three islands, in large part due to past hunting, and across the East African coast and islands their populations were drastically reduced. Although data on dugong sightings by fishermen extended back to 1950 there was a lack of awareness concerning dugongs even among fishermen and the public was largely unaware of their presence in the Comoros. In response, Community Centred Conservation, a non-governmental organization working in partnership with the Government of Comoros on coastal research and development, was implementing a dugong conservation programme involving community participation in research, awareness raising and development of a national action plan. Public involvement in conservation activities and other dugong

management efforts were being pursued in preference to continued aerial surveys, which were not considered cost-effective in the current context. She concluded by noting that the Government of Comoros would sign the Memorandum of Understanding in the near future and expected to be the first State to pass legislation to implement it.

30. In the ensuing discussion, representatives welcomed the information presented and a few indicated that they might be able to provide supplementary data from their respective countries. Mr. Abdessalaam expressed his thanks for the presentations and said that they would inform and guide the discussions on the Conservation and Management Plan for the Western Indian Ocean sub-region.

### **Conservation and Management Plan**

31. Mr. Abdessalaam served as Chair of the Workshop review of the draft Conservation and Management Plan for the Western Indian Ocean sub region. He introduced the draft plan and led a systematic review of its goals, objectives and actions.

32. Three issues dominated the discussion of the draft plan. Particular attention was paid to the need for further research on the status of dugong populations and evaluation of the threats to both dugongs and their habitats. A need to expand stakeholder involvement was also recognized; and local communities, the private sector and other international conventions were identified as appropriate partners for implementation of the plan. Toward that end, it was considered useful to promote the dugong as a flagship species, similar to the dolphin and the giant panda, in order to generate public interest and goodwill and concomitant additional financial support. Finally, the relative prioritization of management actions was debated extensively and it was ultimately agreed that Signatory States would accept the sub-regional Conservation and Management Plan as a whole and make individual prioritizations of activities according to their local circumstances.

33. At the conclusion of the review and debate, representatives agreed that the final version of the Conservation and Management Plan for the Western Indian Ocean sub-region would be forwarded to the Plenary Meeting for consideration.

### **Agenda Item 3: Session for Integration of Outcomes of Workshops and Working Groups**

#### **Synthesis Report and Discussion**

34. The representatives of the Eastern Indian Ocean and Pacific sub-region and the Western Indian Ocean sub-region came together in a joint meeting to synthesize their observations and findings. In her summary of the two sub-regional technical workshops, Ms. Dobbs said that both had received updated information from countries on threats to dugongs and current management actions and research. The workshops, while adopting different approaches, had both used the regional Conservation and Management Plan as the basis for discussion of threats to dugongs and their habitats; potential management tools to address the threats; research and information needs for Dugongs and their habitats; and ideas for cooperation, information sharing and capacity-building at the national, regional and international levels. It was recognized that not all countries across the range of the dugong were represented at the Workshops. Further updated information on management of, threats to

and status of research on dugongs was therefore required for those Range States in order to obtain as full a picture as possible of dugong status and identify priorities.

### **Presentations to joint session**

#### **(a) Presentation by Coordinator of IOSEA**

35. To assist representatives in their deliberations regarding a possible governance structure for the dugong Memorandum of Understanding, Mr. Hykle gave a presentation on the IOSEA Marine Turtle Memorandum of Understanding, which had 27 Signatory States and covered a similar geographical range to that of the dugong. The IOSEA website ([www.ioseaturtles.org](http://www.ioseaturtles.org)) had proved very successful in assisting in the exchange of information on seas turtles. It was updated regularly and contained a “profile of the month” featuring a particular activity. It also included an electronic library of reference materials, a project database, an interactive mapping system and information on tagging. National reports could be submitted and viewed online. The Year of the Turtle 2006 campaign had proved very successful in raising awareness among Governments, non-Governmental organizations and grass-roots organizations.

36. The Memorandum of Understanding, he said, facilitated cooperation with a range of agencies, for example fisheries organizations, now that solid agreement had been reached on such matters as by-catch, and acted as a focus to bring Range States together in regional meetings. Finally, it opened up further funding opportunities, allowing the establishment of a Secretariat to coordinate activities across the region.

#### **(b) Presentation on Justification for Dugong Memorandum of Understanding**

37. Ms. Marsh gave a further presentation on aspects of dugong biology and behaviour that justified the development of a conservation agreement under CMS. In response to queries following the presentation, she said that the analysis of DNA to identify dugong populations could be carried out in any modern genetics laboratory and offered considerable scope for international collaboration. She saw great advantage in a website similar to that of IOSEA which countries could use to easily update information on dugong-related matters, including status and protected areas. She drew attention to the western Red Sea as a high-priority area for which up-to-date information was lacking.

#### **(c) Preparation for signing the Memorandum of Understanding**

38. Mr. El Kabiri presented the text of the draft Memorandum of Understanding, as amended. The text was in Arabic, Chinese, English and French. After some discussion it was agreed that only Range States could sign the MoU; other organizations could attend meetings as observers. Further, based on a submission from the representative of France, it was decided that all language versions of the Memorandum of Understanding would be considered equally authentic.

## **II. MEETING OF SIGNATORY STATES**

### **Agenda Item 4: Welcoming remarks**

39. The Meeting of Signatory States was opened by Ms. Khansa Al Blouki, Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi. She welcomed representatives to the Meeting on Dugong Conservation and called on Mr. Majid Al Mansouri, General Secretary of the Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi, Mr. El Kabiri and Mr. Abdessalaam to address the participants.

40. In his remarks, Mr. Al Mansouri welcomed representatives to the United Arab Emirates and to the Emirate of Abu Dhabi and expressed his hope that the meeting would prove productive, particularly given the recent efforts in the just-concluded Workshops. He noted the long-standing commitment of the United Arab Emirates and of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi to the Marine Environment, which reflected its fishing and sea trading heritage and its rich endowment of dugongs and other marine species. The Conservation and Management Plan for Dugongs adopted by the United Arab Emirates was consistent with the proposed plan for the dugong Range States. He concluded by urging the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding and the adoption of the proposed Conservation and Management Plan as first steps toward implementation of programmes for dugong conservation.

41. In his remarks, Mr. El Kabiri noted that the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) was a global Convention concerned with migratory species, hosted by UNEP in Bonn, Germany, that promotes species conservation and habitat preservation through its operational instruments (CMS Article IV). Under the auspices of the Convention on Migratory Species, more than 140 Range States had signed around 20 agreements and memoranda of understanding for the conservation and management of migratory wild animals and five new CMS initiatives were underway. The Memorandum of Understanding on Dugong conservation would lead to important outcomes for regional cooperation and for the promotion of biodiversity.

42. In his opening statement, Mr. Abdessalaam said that the impetus for the development of the Memorandum of Understanding had been the increasing vulnerability of the dugong and its habitat, the declining numbers of dugong throughout much of its range and the animal's ability to migrate over great distances. In his overview of the Memorandum of Understanding, he stressed that it was a voluntary agreement, of which the Conservation and Management Plan was an integral component. The Memorandum of Understanding would take effect with two signatures. The original text, in Arabic, Chinese, English and French, would be deposited with the Secretariat of the Convention on Migratory Species.

### **Agenda Item 5: Adoption of the Agenda and Work Programme**

43. The Meeting participants adopted an agenda and work programme on the basis of the Provisional Agenda (CMS/DUGONG/Doc.1) (Annex 2) and the Annotated Provisional Agenda and Meeting Schedule (CMS/DUGONG/Doc.2/Rev.2).

## **Agenda Item 6: Election of Officers and a Credentials Committee**

44. Mr. Abdessalaam was proposed as Chair of the Meeting by the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania and was duly elected.

45. Mr. El Kabiri and the representatives of Myanmar and Saudi Arabia were proposed as members of the Credentials Committee and duly elected. Members of the Credentials Committee were not required to be signatories of the Memorandum of Understanding. Mr. El Kabiri asked delegates who had not yet presented their credentials to do so in order to enable them to sign the Memorandum of Understanding.

## **Agenda Item 7: Secretariat's Report on advancement of the MoU adoption progress**

46. Mr. El Kabiri presented a note by the Secretariat on progress on adoption and implementation of the dugong Memorandum of Understanding (CMS/DUGONG/Doc.4). He gave a brief overview of the process by which the Memorandum of Understanding had been developed. He noted that a number of outstanding issues remained, including the next actions to be taken, the governance structure of the Memorandum of Understanding, the establishment of a website, the format for reporting and the frequency of meetings.

47. Regarding the location of the Secretariat of the Memorandum of Understanding, Mr. Hykle said that several options were being considered. The minimum that might be expected of a host organization was the provision of offices and staff, development of a website and assistance with coordinating the activities of signatory countries across the range of the dugong. IOSEA was co-located with the United Nations Environment Programme in Bangkok, but there was no fixed model, with different arrangements pertaining to the various agreements under CMS. The issue was often one of finance, and which organization in which country was in a position to offer the services required in addition to having the resources, capacity and skills to host a secretariat.

## **Agenda Item: 8: Brief Statements from Range States and Observers**

48. The representatives of the following Range States made brief statements: Australia, the Comoros, Eritrea, France (New Caledonia), the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Myanmar, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania and Yemen. The representative of Iran said that his country was willing to assist in the administration of the Memorandum of Understanding. Statements were also made by the representatives of some commercial organizations and non-governmental organizations, who underlined their commitment to the protection of the dugong.

## **Agenda Item 9: Report of the Credentials' Committee**

49. The representative of Myanmar presented the Report of the Credentials Committee. He said that original credentials had been received from the representatives of Australia, Eritrea, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Madagascar and Myanmar. In addition, he said that the Ambassadors of France and the United Republic of Tanzania to the United Arab Emirates and

the Minister for Environment and Water of the United Arab Emirates would attend and sign the Memorandum of Understanding.

#### **Agenda Item 10: Official opening for signature of the Memorandum of Understanding**

50. Introducing the official signing of the Memorandum of Understanding, Mr. El Kabiri expressed his gratitude to those Range States that had committed to signing the MoU, thereby founding a new era of cooperation in the region. The MoU was then formally signed by the Ambassadors of France and the United Republic of Tanzania, the Minister for Environment and Water of the United Arab Emirates, and the representatives of Australia, Eritrea, Madagascar and Myanmar. The Memorandum of Understanding is attached as Annex 8 and the associated Conservation and Management Plan as Annex 9 to the present report.

#### **Agenda Item 11: Any other business**

51. Mr. Abdessalaam noted that documents for the current meeting would remain available on the website of the Environment Agency–Abu Dhabi, at [www.ead.ae](http://www.ead.ae), which would also include a list of meeting participants.

52. Mr. El Kabiri said that, in consultation with all dugong Range States and, while an offer was presented to host a unit for the coordination of dugong activities, the Secretariat for the new Memorandum of Understanding was assured by the CMS Secretariat. The Secretariat would pursue conservation and management efforts within the region.

#### **Agenda Item 12: Closure of the Meeting**

53. Mr. Mansouri, on behalf of His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Chair of the Board of Directors of the Environment Agency, thanked all those who had attended the meeting. After the usual exchange of pleasantries, Mr. Abdessalaam declared the Meeting closed at 2.42 p.m. on Wednesday, 31 October 2007.