



Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Dugongs and their Habitats throughout their Range

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OPTIONS FOR TECHNICAL SUPPORT AND ADVISORY SERVICES

Prepared by the Dugong MOU Secretariat

Purpose

1. This document reports on an assessment of the need for the formal establishment of technical support and advisory services to Signatory States and the Secretariat to assist in the implementation of the Dugong MOU, as requested at the First Signatory State Meeting (SS1).

Background

2. To date, the Dugong MOU Secretariat has needed technical advisors' expertise to assist in developing overall strategies, tools, ideas, documents and applications for funding projects. Technical advisors, engaged primarily through the Strategic Support Team (SST), represent a network of specialists with different skills who help contribute to the Dugong MOU projects and activities.
3. Technical advisors have contributed to the successful development of key tools such as the Standardised Dugong Catch / Incidental Catch Survey Tool and its application (presented under Agenda Item 11.1). In addition, they have played a critical role in the development of the GEF Dugong and Seagrass Conservation Project (see Agenda Item 11.2).
4. While some of the contributions from technical advisors have been remunerated (e.g. time to provide technical expertise for project development or at specific meetings), most of their contributions in terms of time and technical expertise have been voluntary or supported in-kind by their institutions.
5. The rewards for these technical advisors are particularly intangible and include: prestige, altruism, learning about new techniques and innovative approaches from other fields of expertise, broadening networks, and opportunities for cross-fertilisation of ideas.
6. Given the increasing demand for technical support required through the GEF Dugong and Seagrass Conservation Project and other projects, more formal acknowledgment of the substantive contribution by technical advisors will be required.
7. Thus, a more defined role for the technical advisors is required which acknowledges their substantial contribution. This may be necessary when the role extends beyond those similar to other voluntary commitments such as the IUCN SSC Sirenia Specialist Group, other CMS Technical Advisory Groups and other bodies.
8. There is also a need to acknowledge that where substantive time and technical contribution is requested from technical advisors (e.g. to attend specific meetings which requires their substantive input/expertise), adequate remuneration may be necessary.

9. At SS1, two main suggestions for obtaining technical advice and support were presented: (1) compiling a list of registered technical experts and, (2) formulating a formal advisory group (see: SS1 document “Consideration of the need and options to progress a technical advisory group”¹). Signatories raised their concern that significant additional funding resources may be required for the establishment of a formal advisory group.
10. Also, SS1 noted the need for flexibility in accessing appropriate technical advice as has been successfully applied to develop key tools such as the Standardised Survey Questionnaire² and the Incidental Catch Survey Tool (see: SS1 report³, pages 11-16).
11. While the Dugong MOU does not explicitly call for the establishment of a Technical Advisory Group, paragraphs 6 and 7 call on Signatories to:

“Assess the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding, including the Conservation and Management Plan, at regular meetings to be attended by representatives of each of the Signatory States concerned, and persons and organisations technically qualified in dugong conservation and management”, and to:

“Facilitate the timely exchange of relevant information necessary to coordinate conservation and management measures and to cooperate with relevant organisations and recognized experts and so as to facilitate the work conducted in relation to the Conservation and Management Plan.”
12. Since 2009, the Secretariat has engaged with a team of technical advisors (Annex I) who have provided strategic and technical support on various issues pertaining to implementation of the Dugong MOU and associated Conservation and Management Plan (CMP).

The need for technical support and advice

13. As reported in SS1, the effective implementation of the MOU and CMP will require expertise and guidance from technical specialists in different disciplines including dugong biology, marine resource management, coastal development, bycatch, sustainable development, social sciences, economics, law, and other relevant disciplines. This includes expertise which are not necessarily discipline based, for example risk management, micro-financing, carbon offset financing and marketing.
14. Overall, the number of technical experts with the appropriate credentials, knowledge and experience specific to dugong conservation and management (including dugong habitat) is relatively small compared to other marine species, such as marine turtles. Those suitably qualified technical experts are already heavily committed to activities and it is most likely they will have limited capacity to extend their existing workloads by being available for extended periods of time. However, experience has shown that such experts are often willing to be involved in highly targeted ways that maximise their input and minimise the time involved.
15. The level of technical capacity to implement conservation and management actions for dugongs is likely to be highly variable across the Range States. Similarly, different management tools may be more appropriate than others to address a particular conservation issue in different Range States. Thus, it is likely that a variety of technical expertise may be required and that it will be crucial to seek those experts with the appropriate combination of knowledge, skills and experience – particularly with regards to being sufficiently flexible to work across the diverse capacity and cultural environments of the Range States.

¹ http://www.cms.int/species/dugong/meeting_of_sigs_1/doc12_technical_advisory.pdf

² <http://www.cms.int/species/dugong/pdf/Standardised%20Dugong%20Questionnaire%2015Sep12.pdf>

³ http://www.cms.int/species/dugong/meeting_of_sigs_1/meeting_report.pdf

16. The purpose of providing technical support and advice would be to assist the Signatory States to help meet their obligations to the Dugong MOU and implement actions that contribute to the conservation and management of dugongs under associated CMPs.
17. The Secretariat, in consultation with its current technical advisors, suggests establishing a formal technical support and advisory service in the form of a “Dugong Technical Group (DTG)” that will provide scientific and technical advice to the Secretariat on the conservation and management of dugongs and their habitats. This would in turn contribute to the Signatories’ effective implementation of the MOU and CMP.
18. Membership of the DTG will not preclude an individual from being recruited as a paid consultant. Selection of, and remuneration for consultants, will be in line with current United Nations established practice.
19. In order to maintain the provision of adequate technical support to the Dugong MOU work programme, it is recommended that, in the first instance, the DTG be comprised of the existing technical advisors (Annex I). Any additional expertise identified by the Signatories will be sought through a “Call for expressions of interest” process organised by the Secretariat.

Action requested

The Meeting is requested to endorse the establishment of technical support and advisory services (“Dugong Technical Group”) including the Draft Terms of Reference for the Dugong Technical Group as set out in Annex II.