

FIRST MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP TO THE DUGONG MOU

Online, 20 March 2023, 10am – 12.30pm (+4 UTC)

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TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP TO THE CMS MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ON THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF DUGONGS AND THEIR HABITATS THROUGHOUT THEIR RANGE (DUGONG MOU TAG)

Preamble

The CMS Dugong MOU proposes the establishment a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) in order to support the work of the Dugong MOU and provide advice to partners and Signatories. These Terms of Reference (ToR) have been established to describe the roles and responsibilities of members of the TAG.

Purpose

1. The purpose of the TAG is to provide expert advice to the Signatories and the CMS Dugong MOU Secretariat ('the Secretariat') in relation to the scope of the Dugong MOU and its associated Conservation and Management Plan (CMP).

Role of the Secretariat

2. The Secretariat will be responsible for finalizing the selection of the experts nominated for the TAG, in close consultation with the Signatories and taking into account advice from the IUCN Sirenian Specialist Group.
3. The Secretariat will be responsible for organizing and convening meetings of the TAG, either virtually or in person.
4. The Secretariat shall act as the intermediary between the TAG and the Signatories and partners. The Secretariat will receive and transmit requests for advice from the Signatories and partners to the TAG, and identify the most appropriate experts within the TAG to engage with. The Secretariat will also communicate and share information, resources and guidelines generated by the TAG with the Signatories and partners.

Role of the TAG

5. The main tasks of the TAG are to:
 - a) Provide expert advice and recommendations to the Signatories, the Secretariat, and partners on the implementation of the Dugong MOU and CMP, as requested.
 - b) Identify experts who can prepare best practice and technical guidelines needed for implementation of the Dugong MOU and CMP and provide peer review on publications of the Dugong MOU.
 - c) Support in setting conservation and management priorities for dugongs and their habitats.
 - d) Analyze and review scientific data and status assessments and provide recommendations on actions needed from the TAG, the Signatories, the Secretariat, partners, and other stakeholders.

- e) Propose amendments to the Secretariat on the CMP and review any proposed amendments to the CMP.
 - f) Provide technical support in workshops, webinars, and capacity building programmes
6. The Secretariat, either following requests from the Signatories (provided that the requests are in line with the mandate and available resources of the Dugong MOU and CMP) or following identification of needs by the Secretariat, may request the TAG to give priority to certain activities and tasks which include, but are not limited to:
- a) Evaluating and providing advice on conservation and/or management programmes concerning dugongs and their habitats proposed by or implemented within Range States.
 - b) Assisting the Secretariat in the development of projects and initiatives so that regional, national, and local contexts are considered.
 - c) Providing advice to the Meeting of Signatories (MOS) on any revisions proposed to the CMP.
 - d) Evaluating the efficiency of different measures and activities proposed or implemented to conserve dugong populations.
 - e) Promoting the use of appropriate and robust dugong research techniques, monitoring programmes, data collection, data storage and reporting.
 - f) Reviewing and contributing to the design of (where relevant) scientific reports, annual reports and other relevant documents produced by the Signatories and partners, to assist the Secretariat in assessing progress in the implementation of the MOU and its CMP.
 - g) Bringing to the attention of the Secretariat relevant novel information relating to the conservation and management of dugongs and their habitats.

Membership

- 7. Members of the TAG serve in their capacity as expert individuals rather than as representatives of Governments or organizations with which they may also be affiliated.
- 8. Membership of the TAG should include diverse geographic representation, gender balance and diverse areas of expertise in research, conservation and/or management of dugong and their habitats, including dugong life history and behavioural ecology, population size estimation, tracking, survey techniques including drones use, seagrass ecology, restoration of seagrass habitats, catch/by-catch, genetics, social and economic values, alternative livelihoods, veterinary husbandry, community-based conservation, and protected area planning and management, including traditional ecological knowledge.
- 9. Membership shall include:
 - a) Seven experts nominated by Signatories representing the main geographical regions covered by the Dugong MOU: the Western Indian Ocean, the Northwest Indian Ocean (Arabian Gulf and Red Sea), South Asia, Southeast Asia (two members representing coastal and archipelago states), Australia, and Oceania.
 - b) Up to five additional experts representing diverse expertise.
 - c) A member of the IOSEA Turtle MOU Advisory Committee, to promote synergies and cooperation in the region.
- 10. Criteria for membership include:
 - a) Widely recognized experience and expertise in one or more aspects of research, conservation and/or management of dugongs and their habitats.
 - b) Experience working with relevant experts and organizations at local, national, or international levels.
 - c) Commitment to undertake the work required of the TAG with the support, where relevant, of the member's organization or institution.

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- d) Good working knowledge of English.

Nominations and Appointments

11. A list of potential expert members for the TAG will be determined through a “Call for expressions of interest” process organized by the Secretariat in collaboration with the IUCN.
12. Sirenian Specialist Group. The notification will go out to all Dugong MOU national focal points, to all Dugong MOU partners and through the network of the IUCN Sirenian Specialist Group.
13. Signatories and Dugong MOU technical partners may nominate experts for the TAG.
14. Both Signatories and technical partners can nominate experts for regional representation as well as experts representing diverse expertise, as appropriate.
15. Nominations will be collated by the Secretariat, assessed based on pre-selected criteria by the Secretariat, and the final list of the proposed TAG members will be presented to the Signatories. Final decisions on selection of members of the TAG will be agreed with the Signatories. If multiple nominations are made for a region and the assessment results are equal, a democratic process will be organized so that Signatories in the region can vote on which member can join the TAG. Nominated experts who do not join the TAG to represent a region will also be given the opportunity to join the TAG to represent an area of expertise, if required.
16. The Secretariat will report the list of appointments to the Signatories and Range States within 4 weeks of appointments.
17. One Chair and one Vice Chair will be elected by the TAG members. The Chair and Vice Chair will be limited to one term. One term is the equivalent of two MOS cycles. All members of the TAG will have two-term limits.

Meetings of the TAG

18. To minimize costs, the TAG will conduct as many of its activities as possible through emails and online calls, including its meetings. Online meetings will be held at times convenient for all relevant timezones, where possible.
19. In-person meetings of the TAG will be organized when possible and as funds permit. Expenses will be covered by the Secretariat.
20. Members of the TAG may be invited to participate in the MOS of the Dugong MOU and/or other relevant meetings.

Conditions of Membership

21. Membership of the TAG is voluntary and members will provide advice on a pro-bono basis.
22. Membership of the TAG is valid for a maximum limit of two MOS cycles and may be ended at any time by either party by written notice via email. Membership of the TAG may be renewed by mutual agreement. In order to avoid disruptive turn-over of TAG membership, a staged replacement of TAG members will be followed.
23. New members may be nominated when required by Signatories and Dugong MOU partners.