



Memorandum of Understanding on the
Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and
their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia

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18 January 2006

FOURTH MEETING OF THE SIGNATORY STATES
Muscat, Oman, 11-14 March 2006

INFORMATION NOTE FOR PARTICIPANTS

General

1. The Fourth Meeting of the Signatory States to the *Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia* will be held at Crowne Plaza Hotel, Muscat, from 11 to 14 March 2006. The opening ceremony will commence at 0900 in the main conference room, including events to mark the sub-regional launch of the '2006 Year of the Turtle' campaign.
2. All subsequent plenary sessions will take place from 0900 to 1200, and from 1330 to 1700 in the afternoon (subject to adjustment, as necessary). Dinner will be hosted by the Ministry of Regional Municipalities, Environment and Water Resources on the second day of the conference.
3. For delegates accommodated closer to town, at the Ramada Hotel or at the Best Western Hotel, both a 10-minute drive away from the meeting venue, a free shuttle service will be provided in the morning and evening. Non-sponsored delegates may wish to reserve accommodation directly at the Crowne Plaza Hotel or at either of these hotels, details of which are given below. Sponsored delegates will be accommodated at the Holiday Villa, which is within walking distance of the Crowne Plaza.
4. The final day of the meeting will include an optional overnight field trip to Ras al-Jinz, which has one of the largest nesting populations of Green and Loggerhead turtles in the Indian Ocean. After the close of the conference at noon on Wednesday, 14 March, interested delegates will travel by bus to the coast. This interesting journey of about 400 km will take about 6 hours, including refreshment stops en route. After arriving at Ras al-Jinz in the early evening, guests will be taken to observe turtles nesting on the remote beach. Overnight accommodation will be arranged in the vicinity of the nesting beach or at a nearby hotel. Time permitting there may be an opportunity to visit the beach again briefly at the break of dawn, before returning to Muscat on the morning of 15 March. More information about the excursion will be provided later, in a separate note.
5. Responsibility for the organisation of the meeting is shared between the IOSEA Secretariat and Oman's Ministry of Regional Municipalities, Environment and Water Resources. All visa, travel and accommodation arrangements are being organised by the Ministry, while the meeting agenda, documentation and general meeting arrangements are being handled by the IOSEA Secretariat. When requesting further information please direct your query to the appropriate organisation. Contact details are provided below.

Registration and identification badges

6. Participants are requested to register and obtain meeting badges at the Crowne Plaza Hotel from 1900 to 2000 on Friday, 10 March, or from 0800 and 0900 on Saturday, 11 March 2006. Participants who are not able to register on the opening day are requested to do so as soon as possible, to ensure that their names appear in the list of participants.

Credentials

7. Official representatives of Signatory States and potential Signatory States are reminded of the need to present their credentials, preferably prior to the meeting, or at the latest upon registration. This is particularly important for those countries intending to sign the Memorandum of Understanding in Muscat. In such case, a copy of the Letter of Credentials should be sent to the IOSEA MoU Secretariat by fax (+66 2 280 3829 or +66 2 288 1057) for review *at least 10 working days prior to the meeting*, and the original brought to Muscat. A sample letter of credentials and explanation of arrangements for signing the Memorandum of Understanding were enclosed with the original letter of invitation.

Immigration requirements:

8. The Ministry has undertaken to make special provision for delegates attending the meeting to be issued with a visa on arrival at Muscat International Airport, provided that the following information is sent in advance (by fax or e-mail), to Mr. Ali Bin Amout Al-Kiyumi, **no later than 10 February 2006**:

Please send the following information to:

Fax number: (+968) 24 602 283; E-mail: alialkiyumi@gmail.com

- Two photocopies of the front pages of your current passport, showing passport number, date of issue, expiration, place of issue, country of citizenship. Please ensure that your passport will not expire before 30 August 2006.
- Please also provide on a separate sheet your mother's maiden name.
- Your full contact details – including postal address, telephone/fax number, e-mail address.
- If known at the time of submission: flight number and arrival time.

9. Holders of valid official Diplomatic passports or of a United Nations Laissez-passer are exempted from visa requirements not exceeding 30 days.

10. After processing your visa request, the Ministry will issue an official receipt which will serve as evidence that a visa will be issued on arrival (which might be necessary upon departure for the authorities in the country of origin) and which will need to be presented at the immigration desk upon arrival at Muscat airport. Should there be any delay in receiving the official receipt or for any other visa-related questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Ministry at the address provided below.

Health requirements

12. Participants will need a yellow fever vaccination certificate if they are travelling from an infected area.

Weather and Dress

13. The weather in Muscat during March is expected to be pleasant (during day time average temperature is 25°C and during night time is 17°C). Light tropical clothing will be appropriate. As the conference room where the meeting is to be held is air-conditioned, you might consider bringing appropriate clothing to keep comfortable.

14. The dress code is fairly liberal in Muscat, however decency is still expected. Women should wear, for example, tops with sleeves covering their shoulders, and long skirts or trousers covering their knees. Men are required to wear trousers and shirts with sleeves. Swimwear should be restricted to the beach or pools.

Cultural aspects

15. The Omani people are friendly in nature, welcoming to visitors and always offering incomparable hospitality. They have preserved and restored their valuable heritage, imbued with a rich culture of creative achievements. The Omanis are very polite and, even when offended, will rarely mention it to their guests. Visitors thus are expected to respect their hosts and be careful not to cause unnecessary offense. Women in Oman take a full part in national life. They are free to drive and pursue careers in the government and commercial sector on a par with their male colleagues.

16. A commitment to friendship, hospitality and family solidarity is the solid foundation of Omani's lifestyle. Shaking hands is the usual form of greeting in the Sultanate. Although Arabic is the main language, English is frequently spoken and is often used as the *lingua franca*. Despite their relaxed air, the Omanis are quite conservative people. Respect for their privacy and their religion, in particular, should always be observed. Consequently, visitors should ask permission before attempting to photograph people or their property.

Working/business hours

17. The average working week runs from Saturday to Wednesday. Government operates from 7:30 – 14:30. General business opening hours: 10:00 –13:00 and from 16:00 – 19:00. However, banks operate from 9:00 – 13:00.

Foreign exchange

18. The Oman currency is the Omani Rial. At the time of writing this fact sheet the Rial was valued at US\$1.00 = 0.38 OmR

19. Participants may bring with them into Oman unrestricted sums of foreign currency in the form of traveller's cheques, drafts, letter of credit or other banking instruments which may be exchanged for Oman currency at the prevailing exchange rates. Participants may be required to declare the amount of traveller's cheques or currency in their possession on arrival at Muscat International Airport.

20. Exchange facilities are available at the Muscat Airport, at major hotels and at bank branches in Muscat. For instance, Bank Muscat is in Shatti Al-Qurum, near the Best Western Hotel. Contact the Ministry's personnel for assistance.

Hotel Accommodation

21. Delegates whose participation is not being sponsored by CMS/IOSEA are requested to make their own arrangements directly with a hotel of their choice and to inform the Ministry of the booking so that ground transport can be arranged upon arrival. It is recommended that participants reserve early to ensure availability of their preferred hotel. The Ministry is also willing to assist with hotel bookings, if requested.

Reservation arrangements for other *sponsored* delegates will be communicated separately.

The following hotels are suggested:

Name of Hotel	Distance to conference site (Crowne Plaza)	Approximate daily room rate as at 16 January 2006, including breakfast*, except where otherwise noted	
		Single	Double
Crowne Plaza Muscat Tel + 968 24 560 100 Fax + 968 24 574 449 Email: cpmuscat@cpmuscat.com Web: www.cpmuscat.com	N/A	60 O.R, excluding breakfast, excluding taxes	
Ramada Hotel, Muscat *(20 rooms available) Tel + 968 24 603 555 Fax + 968 24 694 500 Email: ramada@omantel.net.om Web: www.ramadamuscat.com	10 minutes drive by shuttle	47 O.R. B.B. including taxes	55 O.R. B.B. plus 17% taxes
Best Western, Muscat *(only 10 rooms available) Tel + 968 24 692 121 Fax + 968 24 694 404 Email: bwmuscat@omantel.net.om Web: www.bestwestern.com	10 minutes drive by shuttle	47 O.R. B.B. including taxes	55 O.R. B.B. plus 17% taxes
Holiday Villa (walking distance from the Crowne Plaza) +968 2456 4443 Fax : +968 2456 2464 Tel + 968 24 564 443 Fax : + 968 24 562 464 Email: hvllamct@omantel.net.om Web: http://www.holidayvillahotels.com/	5-10 minutes walking	40 O.R. B.B. including taxes	45 O.R. B.B. including taxes

Arrival at Muscat Seeb International Airport

22. All sponsored delegates and all other delegates who have communicated their **flight number, arrival time and hotel booking** to the Omani authorities at least two days prior to travel, will be met at the airport and transported to one of the hotels designated above.

Sponsored delegates who wish to make use of this transport service on arrival should send their flight and hotel details (and any subsequent changes or cancellations) to: alialkiyumi@gmail.com

Internet facilities

23. Internet facilities will be available for a charge through the business centre of the Crown Plaza Hotel, or contact the Ministry's personnel for assistance.

Catering services

24. The Crowne Plaza provides a buffet service on the ground level where delegates are recommended to take their lunches. Complimentary coffee/tea breaks will be offered each morning and afternoon. A list of other restaurants in Muscat for evening meals will be provided on arrival.

Daily subsistence allowance

Sponsored delegates will have their accommodation and transport to/from the airport and meeting venue covered by the organisers. An additional daily allowance will be provided for meals and miscellaneous expenses. Sponsored delegates will be personally responsible for payment of any other incidental charges (such as telephone calls, faxes, mini-bar, room service etc.).

The organisers will not assume responsibility for any other expenditures, including the following:

- (i) All expenses in the home country incidental to travel abroad, including expenditure for visa, medical examination, inoculations and other such miscellaneous items, and internal travel to and from the airport of arrival and departure in the home country;
- (ii) Salary and related allowances for the participants during the period of the meeting;
- (iii) Costs incurred by participants in respect of travel insurance, accident insurance, medical bills or hospitalization fees in connection with attending the meeting;
- (iv) Compensation in the event of death or disability of participants in connection with attending the meeting;
- (v) Any loss of or damage to personal property of participants while attending the meeting or losses or damages claimed by third parties as a result of any negligence on the part of the participants;
- (vi) Any other expenses of a personal nature, not directly related to the purpose of the meeting.

Contact details for the Ministry (for matters relating to visa issuance, travel, accommodation etc):

Mr. Ali Bin Amour Al-Kiyumi, Director General of Nature Conservation.

Tel.: (+968) 24 602 285; Fax: (+968) 24 602 283, email: alialkiyumi@gmail.com

Mobile: (+968) 99444858

Contact details for IOSEA Secretariat (for general questions and matters relating to meeting documentation)

Ms. Stephanie Dunstan
IOSEA MoU Secretariat
c/o UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
United Nations Building, Rajdamnern Nok Ave.
Bangkok 10200, Thailand

Tel: +662 288 2440; Fax: +662 280 3829

Email: yot2006@un.org

General tourist information about Oman:

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/destinations/middle-east/oman/>