



**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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Agenda item 6

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FIFTH MEETING OF THE SIGNATORY STATES  
Bali, Indonesia, 20-23 August 2008

**REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT**

**Recruitment of Signatory States**

1. Since the Signatories last met in March 2006, the Memorandum of Understanding has taken effect in another three States of the region: Bahrain (1 March 2007), United Arab Emirates (1 April 2007), and India (1 May 2007). This brings the total number of States participating in the MoU to 27. Five other Governments (France, Mozambique, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, and Yemen) have confirmed their willingness to sign the MoU, and at least one of these is expected to do so at the present meeting.

**Substantive activities undertaken**

2. The following sections briefly summarise some of the activities in which the Secretariat has been engaged over the past two years:

*Facilitating information exchange*

3. One of the key functions of the Secretariat is to facilitate the exchange of information about marine turtle conservation activities within and, to a lesser extent, beyond the IOSEA region. Given its limited capacity, the most cost-effective means of disseminating information is via the IOSEA website ([www.ioseaturtles.org](http://www.ioseaturtles.org)). After about three years of operation, the website received a major overhaul in the first half of 2008 to upgrade its functionality, add several new features and freshen its appearance. These include better archiving and document retrieval, improved search capability, and a new Genetics Directory and Discussion Forum. The 'behind the scenes' automation of the website simplifies the task of adding news stories, posting features and documents, and updating various databases. The time involved in maintaining the website has been significantly reduced, allowing more effort to be focussed on content and other issues.

4. The monthly 'e-News' service is sent out each month to a fixed subscriber list that now numbers close to 1,000 individuals. The monthly newsletter contains a number of features from the previous month, news from the Secretariat, and clickable links to headlines and other stories that readers may have missed if they were not frequent visitors to the website. This service continues to be well received, as evidenced by the increased number of website visits immediately after its circulation at the beginning of the month.

5. In the weeks leading up to the present meeting, considerable effort has gone into upgrading and preparing the Online Reporting Facility to generate the analyses that can be found in Document 6 (Overview of IOSEA MoU Implementation). At the same time, the Secretariat has begun to experiment with mapping the results of database queries with Google Maps and Google Earth. This work is progressing very well and the fruits of these efforts can be seen in Document 6.1 (Site-based Information on Species, Habitats, Threats and Mitigation Measures).

6. The Online Projects Database now contains detailed descriptions of more than 75 project activities in over 20 countries around the region. The Secretariat has made a concerted effort to solicit

and compile the information from a wide range of sources. Though there are likely many project activities still not included in the system, a very good start has already been made. Future attention should focus on requesting contributors to review and update their entries.

7. Some experimental work has been initiated, in collaboration with the UNEP/World Conservation Monitoring Centre, to transfer the existing IOSEA Interactive Mapping System (IMaPS) to a Google Earth platform. These successful trials demonstrated the benefits of this more versatile interface; and it is hoped that the full transfer of IMapS can be effected in the coming months. The Flipper Tag Series database, which displays information about the flipper tag series used in countries around the IOSEA region, has not been updated recently and needs review by all Signatory States.

8. A considerable effort was invested over the past year in the production of a well-received DVD titled “*Sea Turtles – Our Ocean Ambassadors*”. Translation and production of a French translation (including informative packaging) was sponsored by a French NGO based in French Polynesia. Coinciding with the present meeting, arrangements were made to have the DVD broadcast by over 20 networks in 13 countries through a service of the Asia-Pacific Broadcast Union.

#### *Sub-regional coordination and inter-agency cooperation*

9. Within the limits of the Secretariat’s capacity, progress was made to reach out to a number of other bodies with which IOSEA ought to be collaborating. The Secretariat successfully established the Western Indian Ocean – Marine Turtle Task Force in partnership with the Nairobi Convention, and convened its first meeting in February 2008 in cooperation with WWF-Tanzania. Other recent collaborations with WWF have included IOSEA contributions to a threat assessment workshop held in Australia in 2007 and, of course, the organisation of the present meeting with WWF-Indonesia.

10. The Secretariat continues to follow the work of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), and will be participating in its Working Party on Ecosystems and By-Catch, to be held in October 2008 in Bangkok, where it will present information on fisheries interactions contained in the IOSEA Online Reporting Facility.

11. The Secretariat has also sought to collaborate with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), particularly in the area of fisheries-turtle interactions. It contributed actively to a number of FAO workshops organised around the Indian Ocean. Early next year, when FAO’s Committee on Fisheries meets in Rome, there will be a unique opportunity for IOSEA to make a regional contribution towards monitoring implementation of the FAO Guidelines to Reduce Sea Turtle Mortality in Fishing Operations.

12. On a sub-regional level, the Secretariat continues to enjoy fruitful relations with the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC), having been invited to participate in its technical consultations on sea turtles. A senior SEAFDEC officer from the Information and Extension Division (Mr Bundit Chokesanguan) is currently serving on the IOSEA Advisory Committee; and SEAFDEC is expected to be represented by another officer at the Fifth Meeting.

13. With the assistance of IOSEA associates in Jordan, the Secretariat is working to establish direct contact with the Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (PERSGA). Although PERSGA was unable to take up the Secretariat’s invitation to attend the present meeting, it is hoped that a working relationship can be developed over the coming year.

14. The Secretariat has continued to have cordial contacts with the Secretariat of the Inter-American Sea Turtle Convention (IAC), based in Costa Rica. Although it has not been possible, until now, to consider a more formal working relationship with the IAC, the exchange of information to this point has been very positive. The secretariat of IOSEA’s sister MoU for marine turtles of the Atlantic Coast of Africa will be represented in Bali.

15. Finally, in the course of conducting the Year of the Turtle campaign, closer ties were forged with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), and will be renewed in 2009 when consultations are expected to take place on the development of an instrument to further enhance intergovernmental collaboration on sea turtle conservation in the Pacific.

### **Secretariat staffing**

16. The IOSEA Secretariat continues to be staffed by one professional officer, 20 percent of whose time is spent as Senior Advisor to the Convention on Migratory Species, the IOSEA Secretariat's parent organisation. In 2007, an arrangement was successfully negotiated with the United Nations Environment Programme, which administers CMS/IOSEA, whereby the overhead charges on contributions normally retained by UNEP headquarters have been used to create and finance a full-time post of Team Assistant. This special arrangement has greatly increased the Secretariat's capacity over the past year.

17. Selective consultancies have contributed to the redesign of the IOSEA website and programming of the Online Reporting Facility. Occasional inquiries have been received about internship opportunities advertised on the IOSEA and CMS websites, but none has materialised in recent times.

18. The Secretariat remains co-located with the UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (UNEP/ROAP) in the United Nations building in Bangkok. The administrative arrangements continue to run smoothly, and the support received from both UNEP/ROAP and ESCAP in relation to administrative issues has been conducive to a very productive work environment.

### **Work programme for the year ahead**

19. The work programme of the Secretariat will be shaped by the outcomes of the present meeting, and will depend on the decisions taken with respect to a number of agenda items. However, some core activities can already be identified which will continue to demand attention, notably:

- Promoting and facilitating the establishment of sub-regional co-ordination mechanisms where these do not already exist, through increased contact with selected intergovernmental bodies;
- Developing closer linkages with selected non-governmental and intergovernmental organisations, particularly those whose activities span several countries in the region;
- Reinforcing ties with regional fisheries bodies that have a critical role to play in managing marine turtle by-catch;
- Further development of the proposal to formally recognise sites of importance for marine turtles;
- More proactive awareness-raising among decision-makers not only in Signatory States, but also in non-Signatory Range States to encourage membership, as well as other States with an interest in the MoU;
- Ongoing maintenance of the IOSEA website and development of additional tools for analysing the national reports, particularly the information on sites and threats; and
- Overseeing timely implementation of a number of projects funded by CMS/IOSEA.

#### *Action requested / expected outcome:*

Signatory States are invited to note the report of the Secretariat, to seek any clarification that might be necessary, and to reflect on any additional activities that may warrant inclusion in the Secretariat's work programme over the coming year, subject to there being sufficient resources for implementation.