



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

Distr. GENERAL

MT-IOSEA/SS.5/Doc. 7  
Agenda Item 8c

14 August 2008

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

## UPDATE ON PREPARATION OF SPECIES STATUS REPORTS

*Overview prepared by Dr. Mark Hamann<sup>1</sup>*

### Background

At the Fourth Meeting of the Signatory States in March 2006, it was agreed to follow up the IOSEA Leatherback turtle assessment with one new species assessment per year. The Signatory States, along with the Advisory Committee, decided that the next species to be assessed should be the Loggerhead turtle (estimated to require 12 months), with a Green turtle assessment to begin simultaneously and take 18 months to complete. Accordingly, the Meeting requested that the Advisory Committee provide an assessment of the conservation status of Loggerhead turtles for presentation prior to the Fifth Meeting of the Signatory States.

### Process

To facilitate the assessment, a Loggerhead turtle survey form was developed and distributed to each of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asian nations (including non-Signatory States). However, unlike the successful Leatherback assessment, the response rate was poor with only a handful of completed forms being submitted. In some cases reasons were offered: such as preference to publish data first, or mention of data that existed but that had not been exposed to even basic analysis. In most cases, however, no reasons were offered for non-participation.

### Issues to be resolved

- Lack of response by country representatives – this could be due to the survey design, language barriers, recipients being “over surveyed”, and/or inability to contribute (eg for lack of available data or in-depth knowledge of the species etc.)
- Mixed messages, or limited contribution from the Advisory Committee itself about the proposed assessment methods and objectives – stemming perhaps from different opinions within the Committee of what the assessment would be used for.

### Solutions (*assuming willingness of the Signatory States and Advisory Committee to pursue the project*)

Agreement is needed on the scope and objectives for the assessments. Two possible approaches are suggested:

1. Attempt again to conduct surveys similar to the Leatherback and as was tried unsuccessfully for the Loggerhead turtle (however this carries the risk of non-response and has a large workload);

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<sup>1</sup> The Secretariat requested Dr. Hamann ([mark.hamann@jcu.edu.au](mailto:mark.hamann@jcu.edu.au)), who coordinated the successful Leatherback Assessment, to put together this note. While the paper is directed in the first instance to the Advisory Committee, which will have the first opportunity to review it collectively on 18-19 August, the Secretariat considers it useful to circulate the paper to all Signatory States so that everyone is familiar with the relevant issues when the item is discussed under Agenda point 8c, initially on 20 August.

2. Begin instead by reviewing information on Loggerhead turtles contained in the Site Data Sheets in the IOSEA Online Reporting Facility and conduct a simple "gap analysis" to identify countries and/or sites that have missing data. (Gaps would be relatively easy to identify by speaking with a few key people in the region). And as a final step, seek the in-country support to clarify information, expand with any new data, or confirm that no data/patchy data exist.

#### Questions for further discussion

- 1) Do we create a similar assessment to the Leatherback document, including detailed country reports?
- 2) Do we create an assessment with more of a focus on populations/stocks rather than countries?
- 3) Do we wait for the perfect data analysis to be done or use what is available?
- 4) If it is decided to use surveys, how to increase response rates? (eg arrange for language translation, conduct phone or face-to-face surveys?)
- 5) What will the assessment be used for: for countries to focus research and management, as a basis for regional red lists, regional/country/population baselines etc.?
- 6) What level of scrutiny of data do we need? (the SWOT group have been discussing this)
- 7) How much "editorial power" in relation to IOSEA reports do we have?
- 8) Given recent advances in the climate debate, do we try to incorporate a climate risk assessment?

#### Final remarks

A very useful exercise would be to use the IOSEA database and create spatial assessments in GIS for threats – then assess the risks to populations based on size of population and both the number and scale of threat. This, coupled with some climate prediction models, could actually be done as a MSc project.