



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.6/Doc. 12
Agenda item 7c
10 January 2012

SIXTH MEETING OF THE SIGNATORY STATES
Bangkok, Thailand, 23-27 January 2012

NATIONAL NETWORKS / COMMITTEES

1. The IOSEA Conservation and Management Plan, in its Objective 6.4, calls upon Signatory States to “improve coordination among government and non-government sectors in the conservation of marine turtles and their habitat” and, in particular, to “encourage cooperation within and among government and non-government sectors, including through the development and/or strengthening of national networks”.
2. The rationale for improving communication and coordination among different sectors is self-evident. Government agencies need to be aware of each other’s policies and actions on the ground, especially if they may inadvertently be at cross-purposes. In many countries, non-governmental organisations are also carrying out important field activities to conserve marine turtles which counterparts in government ought to be aware of. One way of facilitating a more coordinated approach within a country is to establish a national committee that periodically brings together the relevant actors.
3. The reporting template designed for the IOSEA Online Reporting Facility requests Signatory States to report on their efforts to develop or strengthen such networks. Under Activity 4.3.2, Signatories are requested to “describe initiatives already undertaken or planned to involve and encourage the cooperation of Government institutions, NGOs and the private sector in marine turtle conservation programmes ... [including] development of national networks, formation of steering committees, involvement in workshops, sponsorship of events etc.”
4. Recognising the importance of this issue, the Advisory Committee and Secretariat developed a short questionnaire to encourage Signatory States to report in more depth on the initiatives undertaken to date. The questionnaire was made available prior to the Fifth Meeting of the Signatory States (Bali, 2008), and numerous responses were received before and during that meeting. Completed questionnaires were received from 17 of the then 27 Signatory States, as follows: Australia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Comoros, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Myanmar, Philippines, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, and United States of America.
5. A similar exercise was repeated prior to the present meeting (see attachment). This generated two new questionnaire responses (from Papua New Guinea and United Kingdom), and updates of three existing questionnaires (for Myanmar, Philippines, and United States).
6. The following conclusions are drawn from the roughly two-thirds of the IOSEA membership for which information is available. About two-thirds of those reporting appear to have some form of coordination mechanism in place, ranging from formally constituted groups that have met periodically (e.g. Australia, Kenya, Mauritius, Papua New Guinea, Seychelles, United Republic of Tanzania) to *ad hoc* assemblages that serve a similar purpose even if a more formal status is still awaited (e.g. Indonesia, Madagascar, Thailand). The United States, though without a formal committee *per se*, nonetheless regularly undertakes wide-reaching consultations with concerned stakeholders. Comoros’ national committee appears to have a much wider remit than marine turtle conservation, which may or may not be disadvantageous in terms of its capacity to focus on pressing turtle issues.

7. For the handful of countries that appear to have fully-constituted networks or committees in place, it is worth pointing out a few qualifications. Based on the information currently available to the Secretariat, Australia's National Turtle Recovery Group has not been convened for several years. Tanzania's committee has faced difficulties holding meetings in recent years on account of financial constraints, but its function has apparently improved since broadening its remit to include dugong conservation issues. Although Bangladesh has – at least on paper – a well-thought out committee structure dating back to 2004, apparently this mechanism is not currently functional.

8. It would be helpful to receive updates from Kenya, Mauritius, and Seychelles whose committees were rather new or in a state of transition at the time of the last meeting. Bahrain, Cambodia, and United Arab Emirates indicated in 2008 that they had no such national arrangements in place; however the latter was said to be giving serious consideration to the creation of a national committee.

9. As for the 14 existing Signatories that have yet to return a questionnaire (Eritrea, France, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Maldives, Malaysia, Mozambique, Oman, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Viet Nam, Yemen), at least a few of these are thought to have committees in place, but few details about their practical functioning are known to the Secretariat.

10. Some positive conclusions and other observations arise from this cursory survey:

- Where committees have been set up, either formally or as ad hoc arrangements, they seem to have done a good job at identifying the relevant actors within and outside traditional government structures. Initiatives to involve non-governmental organisations and indigenous/local community representatives are noteworthy.
- Such committees/networks have served as important vehicles for progressing the development and further implementation of national action plans; and in some cases stimulating discussion of data sharing and critical conservation issues, such as bycatch mitigation. However tangible outcomes of these efforts are not readily apparent from the information provided to date.
- Financial constraints – limiting both the frequency of meetings and potential for concrete follow-up actions – appear to have impeded the effectiveness of some national committees.
- Active engagement of members which may have only a peripheral interest in the subject matter may be a challenge in some countries.

11. In general, while one can point to a number of positive attributes in many countries, it is difficult to cite any particular IOSEA Signatory State as having an exemplary, fully functional national committee or network that others might look to as a 'model' arrangement. It is hoped that this brief survey will encourage Signatory States to examine their own situation, with a view to establishing some form of representative committee where none exists thus far, or trying to improve upon or formalise existing arrangements.

12. All of the completed questionnaires received by the Secretariat (19 so far) have been or will be posted in the 'Membership' section of the IOSEA website:

http://www.ioseaturtles.org/content.php?page=National_Network_Committee

Action requested:

Signatory States that have yet to provide any information on the status of national committees/networks are requested to complete the attached questionnaire and return it to the Secretariat by email (before the meeting), or hand it over to the Secretariat at registration in Bangkok. The same applies to Signatories whose questionnaires are in need of updating.

IOSEA QUESTIONNAIRE – 2011 *

NATIONAL NETWORKS / COMMITTEES FOR MARINE TURTLE CONSERVATION (Pursuant to Objective 6.4 of the IOSEA CMP)

Signatory State:

IOSEA Focal Point (or name
of person completing this
form)

National network or Committee (give the name, if applicable):

Brief Description / Status / Terms of Reference: (Is the network/committee formally designated by legislation, ministerial accord, MoU or some other administrative formality? Or is it an *ad hoc* organisation?)

Lead agency / organisation / institution:

Representation in the national network / committee (*list all members*):

▪ Government agencies:

—

▪ Academic and research organizations:

—

▪ Environmental NGOs:

—

▪ Development and human rights NGOs:

—

▪ Fisheries sector:

—

▪ Tourism sector:

—

▪ **Other private sector:**

—

▪ **Others:**

—

Specific resources for developing and maintaining the network / committee:

Means of communication (e.g. meetings, conference calls, email etc.)

Email.

Number of meetings / conference calls held each year:

- **2006:**
- **2007:**
- **2008:**
- **2009:**
- **2010:**
- **2011:**

Most important topics of discussion (past / current):

Most important advances and contributions resulting from the work of the network / committee:

Most important challenges and difficulties encountered by network / committee:

Plans for the future functioning and development of the network / committee:

Other comments:

The information in this form was last updated: (*month / year*):

.

*** PLEASE REFER TO PREVIOUS QUESTIONNAIRE (2008), AS APPROPRIATE**