



**FOURTH MEETING OF SIGNATORY STATES TO THE MEMORANDUM OF  
UNDERSTANDING ON THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF DUGONGS  
(*DUGONG DUGON*) AND THEIR HABITATS THROUGHOUT THEIR RANGE**

*(Riyadh, 6-7 May 2024)*

UNEP/CMS/DUGONG/MOS4/Doc.9

**REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT OF THE DUGONG MOU**

*(Prepared by Secretariat of the Dugong MOU)*

**Summary:** This document summarizes the activities of the Secretariat of the Dugong MOU since MOS3.

The Meeting is invited to: (a) note those activities and seek clarifications; (b) inform the Secretariat of changes to NFPs where necessary; (c) encourage Range States to join the Dugong MOU; and (d) encourage sharing of information via the Dugong & Seagrass Hub.

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## Introduction

1. The Secretariat of the Dugong MOU has its seat at the CMS Office - Abu Dhabi, which is hosted by the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi (EAD) on behalf of the Government of the United Arab Emirates.
2. Since the Third Meeting of Signatory States to the Dugong MOU (MOS3, Abu Dhabi, March 2017), the Secretariat has actively assisted Signatory States in implementing the provisions of the Dugong MOU. This report provides a summary of the key activities and accomplishments undertaken by the Secretariat since April 2017.

## Personnel

3. Throughout the reporting period, the following changes in personnel have taken place:
  - (a) The Programme Management Officer leading the Secretariat is expected to assume his functions in May 2024, bringing a wealth of experience and expertise to further advance the mission of the Secretariat. His appointment followed the departure of his predecessor in July 2023. The latter was recruited in March 2022, following the retirement of the previous Programme Management Officer in December 2021. During the transition period from December 2021 to March 2022 and from August 2023 to May 2024, the Secretariat received support from the Executive Coordinator of the CMS Office – Abu Dhabi and a recruited Individual Contractor.
  - (b) The current Associate Programme Management Officer supporting the Secretariat assumed her functions in April 2022, bringing valuable skills and dedication to her role. Her appointment followed the resignation of her predecessor in December 2021. The former Associate Programme Management Officer was recruited in February 2020, after her predecessor transitioned to CMS HQ in Bonn in December 2018. During the interim period from December

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2021 to April 2022, the Secretariat received support from a recruited Individual Contractor, ensuring continuity and efficient operations.

4. Ten separate Consultants/Individual Contractors have been recruited as temporary assistants for varying periods during the inter-sessional period between MOS3 and MOS4 (refer to document [UNEP/CMS/Dugong/MOS4/Doc.15.1](#)).
5. Notwithstanding these staffing changes, the Secretariat has consistently delivered on its functions of supporting the implementation of the Dugong MOU, assisting Signatory States, the Dugong Technical Group (DTG), and engaging in dugong and seagrass conservation initiatives.

### **Status of Signatory States**

6. During the reporting period, Timor-Leste became a Signatory State to the Dugong MOU in September 2018. As of April 2024, the total number of Signatory States to the MOU was 27, from a coverage area that encompasses 46 Range States.
7. During the reporting period, the Secretariat has actively engaged with several countries, including Indonesia, Malaysia and Qatar, inviting them to join the Dugong MOU. The result of these efforts has been encouraging, with expressions of interest to sign the MOU received from Indonesia and Qatar.

### **National Focal Points**

8. Paragraph 8 of the MOU Text states that each Signatory State will designate a National Focal Point (NFP) for all matters relating to the implementation of the MOU and communicate the complete contact details of this authority (and any changes thereto) to the Secretariat.
9. The Secretariat has maintained an updated database containing the names and contact details of all National Focal Points. In preparation for the present meeting, the Secretariat proactively contacted all Signatory States through their respective NFPs and, when necessary, through their CMS National Focal Points, to verify and update its contact records. The information received from Signatory States is regularly updated on a dedicated [webpage](#) of the Dugong MOU website. Signatory States are kindly reminded to promptly notify the Secretariat of any changes or updates on their NFPs to ensure effective communication.
10. Annex 1 to this report reproduces the list of current NFPs designated by Signatory States which is accessible on the Dugong MOU [webpage](#). Signatory States with provisional NFPs - India, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vanuatu - are strongly urged to formally designate a NFP and to provide details of the nominated individuals at their earliest convenience. In the interim, the Secretariat will continue to maintain communication with individuals whose details are held in its database.
11. Signatory States are kindly requested to utilize the National Focal Point Designation Form, available on the dedicated [webpage](#) of the Dugong MOU website, when communicating any changes in their NFP to the Secretariat.
12. The Secretariat strongly encourages NFPs to utilize the [Guidance for National Focal Points](#) document, which outlines the functions of NFPs and provides insights into the role of the Dugong MOU Secretariat.

### **Dugong Technical Group**

13. Since MOS3, the Secretariat has continued to work closely with the Dugong Technical Group

(DTG) to support Signatory States in implementing the Dugong MOU, including the Conservation and Management Plan for the Dugong MOU (CMP). In 2022, the Secretariat conducted a review of the DTG Terms of Reference (TOR) and membership, prompted by a period of inactivity from 2019 - 2021.

14. A comprehensive report detailing the DTG's activities is provided in the Report of the Dugong Technical Group (document [UNEP/CMS/Dugong/MOS4/Doc10](#)).

### **Review of the Conservation and Management Plan for the Dugong MOU**

15. MOS3 endorsed the need to review the CMP and the process to undertake this (document [CMS/Dugong/MOS3/Report](#), paragraph 128-131).
16. In December 2020, the Secretariat contracted a consultant to review the CMP, with the final report submitted to the Secretariat in March 2022 (document [UNEP/CMS/Dugong/MOS4/Inf.1](#)).
17. The proposed amendments were circulated for comment to the Signatory States in December 2023 and the received comments were incorporated. A final draft is proposed for endorsement by MOS4 as presented in document [UNEP/CMS/Dugong/MOS4/Doc.13.1](#).

### **Policy**

18. The Fourteenth Meeting of the Conference to the Parties to CMS (COP14, Samarkand, February 2024) resulted in the adoption of several Resolutions and Decisions relevant to the conservation and management of dugongs and their habitats. Relevant activities resulting from these Resolutions and Decisions are included in the draft Programme of Work 2024-2027 for the Secretariat presented in Annex 2 to document [UNEP/CMS/Dugong/MOS4/Doc.14](#).
19. Of particular relevance, a Resolution on Conservation and Sustainable Management of Seagrass Ecosystems and Decisions on Seagrass Ecosystems were adopted at COP14, among others, calling for strengthened cooperation and collaboration on the conservation of seagrass ecosystems (refer to document [UNEP/CMS/COP14/CRP27.4.3/Rev.1](#)). The Resolution, in particular, makes reference to the 2030 Seagrass Breakthrough, welcoming its ambition. These COP14 outcomes reinforce the Secretariat's mandate to work towards seagrass conservation and develop the 2030 Seagrass Breakthrough (more information on this initiative is available in document [UNEP/CMS/Dugong/MOS4/Doc.12.1](#)).
20. Since September 2023, the CMS Office - Abu Dhabi has been working in collaboration with UN Environment Programme's West Asia Office (UNEP/ROWA) to develop a joint policy brief on regional seagrass conservation (more information on this initiative is available in document [UNEP/CMS/Dugong/MOS4/Doc.12.1](#)).

### **Communications**

21. Since MOS3, the Secretariat has maintained communication with Signatory States, Range States, project partners, stakeholders, and other interested parties primarily via email. Additionally, the Secretariat has engaged in numerous bilateral communications concerning the Dugong MOU and its implementation. On a sub-regional level, the Secretariat maintains direct contacts with regional organizations across the Range States including the Gulf Cooperation Council Secretariat (GCC), the Regional Organisation for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME), the Regional Clean Sea Organization (RECSO) and the Secretariat for the Regional Pacific Environment Programme (SPREP).

22. The Dugong MOU [website](#) is actively maintained and updated, with news items regularly published on a dedicated [news page](#). Since MOS3, the Secretariat has published a total of 61 news items.
23. On 1 March 2021 (World Seagrass Day), the Secretariat launched the [Dugong & Seagrass Hub](#). This online platform serves as a space for conservation practitioners, researchers and coastal communities to share tools, experiences and lessons learned from seagrass and dugong conservation efforts, with the aim of establishing an online community and repository. The Dugong & Seagrass Hub was developed as an output of the IKI Seagrass Ecosystem Services Project (2019-2024), with annual costs supported by the International Climate Initiative (IKI) up to the end of 2024. The future sustainability of the Dugong & Seagrass Hub is outlined in the draft Programme of Work 2024-2027 (refer to document [UNEP/CMS/Dugong/MOS4/Doc.14](#)).
24. Since its establishment, the social media presence of the Dugong & Seagrass Hub has steadily grown. As of March 2024, the Hub's Twitter/X account ([@DugongHub](#)) has garnered 501 followers and shared 1,296 posts, engaging with a diverse audience interested in seagrass and dugong conservation. Similarly, on Facebook ([@dugonghub](#)) and Instagram ([@dugonghub](#)), the Hub has gained traction with 1K and 253 followers, respectively. These platforms serve as vital communication channels, facilitating the dissemination of knowledge, updates, and community engagement initiatives related to seagrass and dugong conservation efforts.
25. The GEF-5 Dugong and Seagrass Conservation Project [website](#), established in 2016 to consolidate project activities and results, remains accessible, serving as a legacy to the project. The Secretariat continues to collaborate with the GEF-5 Project Coordination Team (PCT) to ensure seamless linkage and accessibility of all information via the Dugong & Seagrass Hub.
26. The Secretariat contributes articles and notifications of upcoming events to the CMS Office-Abu Dhabi Newsletter. Launched in early 2023, the newsletter aims to be distributed bi-annually online across the Dugong MOU network.
27. The Secretariat has developed a range of outreach material promoting the Dugong MOU. These materials include a poster for the 2022 World Seagrass Conference and 14<sup>th</sup> International Seagrass Biology Workshop (August 2022) and the WIOMSA 12th Scientific Symposium (October 2022), an [information leaflet](#) on the 2030 Seagrass Breakthrough (December 2023), two [infographics](#), a banner and a [project logo](#) for the Seagrass Ecosystem Services Project (November 2022). The Secretariat extends its thanks to the photographers who generously provided their photos free of charge, particularly Abdelqader Khamis, Ben Jones, Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi (EAD), Florian Kriechbaumer, Mandy Etpison, Matteo Santon, Nicolas Pilcher, Ocean Agency Image Bank and Sebastian Gerhard.
28. Furthermore, the Secretariat has maintained its outreach efforts by communicating its activities through various journals and magazines. Additionally, several international news and documentary producers, such as BBC Natural History Unit, BBC Radio 4, Wildlife Australia, Nigel Marven Productions Ltd. and Frontier Films, and an increasing number of schools, particularly in Australia, have reached out to the Secretariat for information on dugong and seagrass. The Secretariat responds to all of these requests as efficiently as possible.

### **Meetings, representation and outreach**

29. Since MOS3, the Dugong MOU Secretariat has organized, co-organized and/or contributed to the following official meetings (listed in chronological order):
- (a) GEF-5 Dugong and Seagrass Conservation Project Third Executive Project Steering

Committee, Trang, Thailand (November 2017).

- (b) GEF-5 Dugong and Seagrass Conservation Project: Pacific Islands Regional Dugong and Seagrass Workshop, Munda, Solomon Islands (March 2018).
- (c) Integrating Cultural Values in Dugong Conservation Symposium, 5<sup>th</sup> International Marine Conservation Congress, Kuching, Malaysia (June 2018).
- (d) GEF-5 Dugong and Seagrass Conservation Project: Drone Surveys and By-catch Questionnaire Training Workshop, Dili, Timor-Leste (January 2019).
- (e) GEF-5 [Dugong and Seagrass Conservation Project Closing Workshop](#), Bali, Indonesia (February 2019).
- (f) Okinawa Dugong Workshop, Toba Aquarium, Toba, Japan (September 2019).
- (g) International Climate Initiative (IKI) Seagrass Ecosystem Services Project Launch Meeting, Manado, Indonesia (January 2020).
- (h) 2022 World Seagrass Conference and 14<sup>th</sup> International Seagrass Biology Workshop, Annapolis, USA (August 2022).
- (i) [WIOMSA 12<sup>th</sup> Scientific Symposium: Progressing Dugong & Seagrass Conservation in the Western Indian Ocean](#), Port Elizabeth, South Africa (October 2022).
- (j) IKI Seagrass Ecosystem Services Project: Project Coordination Meeting (Online. January 2023)
- (k) Dugong MOU [Regional Workshop on Dugongs in the Arabian Gulf](#), Abu Dhabi, UAE (May 2023).
- (l) Blue Carbon: The Potential of Marine Ecosystems as Natural Carbon Sinks, MENA Oceans Summit, Dubai, UAE (June 2023).
- (m) IKI Seagrass Ecosystem Services Project: National Partners Training Workshop, Bogor, Indonesia (September 2023)
- (n) [Preserving the World's Biodiversity Heritage](#), UNFCCC COP28, Dubai, UAE (December 2023).
- (o) 2030 Seagrass Breakthrough: High-level dialogue, UNFCCC COP28 in Dubai, UAE (December 2023).
- (p) 2030 Seagrass Breakthrough Workshop (Online, March 2024).

30. In addition, the Secretariat has hosted frequent teleconferences, sometimes several per week, with active members of the DTG, project partners, consultants and other stakeholders to foster discussions on furthering the implementation of the MOU.

31. The Secretariat has established formal and informal partnerships with a variety of stakeholders to advance the implementation of the MOU, through cooperation, conservation activities and other projects and initiatives.

32. Since MOS3, the Secretariat has actively presented at, participated in and/or promoted the Dugong MOU at more than 40 international and local meetings and events, as detailed in Annex 2 to this document.
33. The Secretariat has expended significant effort seeking to mobilize resources to support activities that complement the implementation of the CMP and Programme of Work by preparing project proposals and applications to potential donors. These efforts are detailed in document [UNEP/CMS/Dugong/MOS4/Doc.15.1](#).

### **On-going and core activities**

34. The key conservation initiatives that the Secretariat has led or actively engaged in since MOS3, are detailed in document [UNEP/CMS/Dugong/MOS4/Doc.12.1](#).
35. Looking ahead, the Secretariat has developed a draft Programme of Work 2024-2027 to guide its work for presentation at this Meeting (document [UNEP/CMS/Dugong/MOS4/Doc.14](#)).

### **Action requested**

The Meeting is invited to:

- (a) Note the contents of this report and seek any clarifications, as needed.
- (b) Urge Signatory States to inform the Secretariat of any updates in their NFPs by filling out the National Focal Point Designation Form and returning it to the Secretariat.
- (c) Urge India, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vanuatu to supply details of the nominated National Focal Points to the Secretariat by 1 July 2024.
- (d) Encourage Signatory States, Range States and other stakeholders to work collaboratively to mobilize resources, including through voluntary financial contributions, to enable continuing implementation of the key initiatives highlighted in this report.
- (e) Encourage Signatory States and other relevant stakeholders to invite dugong Range States to join the Dugong MOU.
- (f) Encourage Signatory States, Range States and other stakeholders to utilize the Dugong & Seagrass Hub by sharing news and initiatives with the Secretariat for circulation and/or promotion.

## ANNEX 1

### National Focal Points of the Dugong MOU designated by the 27 Signatory States

(as at March 2024)

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\* Provisional Focal Point.

## ANNEX 2

### Dugong MOU Secretariat Representation and Outreach

#### GEF-5 Dugong and Seagrass Conservation Project Meetings

- 1) Third Executive Project Steering Committee, Trang, Thailand (November 2017).
- 2) Pacific Islands Regional Dugong Seagrass Workshop, Munda, Solomon Islands (March 2018).
- 3) Symposium on Integrating Cultural Values in Dugong Conservation, 5<sup>th</sup> International Marine Conservation Congress, Kuching, Malaysia (June 2018).
- 4) Drone surveys and by-catch questionnaire training workshop, Dili, Timor-Leste (January 2019).
- 5) Project Closing Workshop, Bali, Indonesia (February 2019).

#### IKI Seagrass Services Project Meetings

- 6) Meeting with Directorate General of Marine Space Management, Ministry of Marine and Fisheries Affairs (MAFF), to introduce IKI Seagrass Ecosystem Services Project, Jakarta, Indonesia (August 2019).
- 7) Pre-planning meeting with national partners, Yapeka and EnerGaia, Jakarta, (August 2019).
- 8) Launch Meeting, Manado, Indonesia (January 2020).
- 9) Indonesia National-Level Project Planning Meeting, Bahoi, Indonesia (January 2020).
- 10) Remote Training Workshop on CMS Dugong Catch and Bycatch Questionnaire (Online, October 2020).
- 11) Establishing Sustainable Community-Based Income Alternatives in Timor-Leste and the Philippines (Online, March 2021).
- 12) Raising Awareness Through Community-based Events in Thailand and Malaysia (Online, May 2021).
- 13) Project Coordination Meeting (Online, January 2023).
- 14) National Partners Training Workshop, held in Bogor, Indonesia (September 2023).

#### Key International and Regional Meetings, Conferences and Workshops

- 15) World Marine Mammal Conference, held in Barcelona, Spain (December 2019).
- 16) World Seagrass Conference and 14<sup>th</sup> International Seagrass Biology Workshop, Annapolis, USA (August 2022).
- 17) WIOMSA 12<sup>th</sup> Scientific Symposium: *Progressing Dugong & Seagrass Conservation in the*

- 18) Preserving the World's Biodiversity Heritage, UNFCCC COP28, Dubai, UAE (December 2023).
- 19) Catalyzing Coordinated Action to Address Selected Human Impacts on the Coastal and Marine Ecosystems of The Arabian Gulf, workshop organized jointly by the Environment Agency- Abu Dhabi (EAD), the Abu Dhabi Global Environmental Data Initiative (AGEDI) and the UK Science and Innovation Network. The workshop focused on sharing and discussing the results of research conducted with the Centre for Environment Fisheries & Aquaculture Science (CEFAS) on three key marine issues (invasive species, marine litter, desalination) in the Arabian Gulf.
- 20) Dugong MOU Regional Workshop on Dugongs in the Arabian Gulf, Abu Dhabi, UAE (May 2023).
- 21) Blue Carbon: The potential of marine ecosystems as natural carbon sinks, MENA Oceans Summit, Dubai, UAE (June 2023).
- 22) Marrakesh Partnership for Global Climate Action, *Investing in Nature for People and the Planet*, with WWF International, Emirates Nature-WWF and UN High Level Climate Champion Ocean and Climate Platform, Dubai, UAE (June 2023).
- 23) Blueprints for Local and Global Responses to Worldwide Challenges: Understanding the Role of the United Nations in Capacity Building workshop organized by the United Nations System (ACUNS-UN), New Delhi, India (July 2023).
- 24) Preserving the World's Biodiversity Heritage, UNFCCC COP28, Dubai, UAE (December 2023).
- 25) 2030 Seagrass Breakthrough Dialogue, UNFCCC COP28, Dubai, UAE (December 2023).
- 26) Climate-Forward Ocean Conservation Strategies to Deliver on Global Targets, UNFCCC COP28, Dubai, UAE (December 2023).
- 27) From Agreement to Action: Harnessing 30x30 to Tackle Climate Change, UNFCCC COP28, Dubai, UAE (December 2023).
- 28) 2030 Seagrass Breakthrough presented at the Regional Dialogue on Biodiversity Beyond Borders in West Asia, organized by the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for West Asia (ROWA) and UAE Ministry of Climate Change and Environment (MOCCA), Dubai, UAE (December 2023).
- 29) CMS COP14, Samarkand, Uzbekistan (February 2024).
- 30) 2030 Seagrass Breakthrough: World Seagrass Day Workshop, Online (March 2024).

#### **Other Meetings and Workshops**

- 31) *Dugong* Technical Group Meeting – Bali, Indonesia (February 2019).
- 32) Meeting with Thailand Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR) and Thailand Dugong MOU Focal Point to plan for Fourth Meeting of Signatory States and Global Dugong

- and Seagrass Conference, Bangkok, Thailand (August 2019).
- 33) Meeting with Phuket Marine Biological Centre (PMBC) to visit rehabilitation of rescued dugong calf, Phuket, Thailand (August 2019).
  - 34) Okinawa Dugong Workshop, held at Toba Aquarium, Toba, Japan (September 2019).
  - 35) Participated in an expert visit with the IUCN Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force demonstrate implementation of Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs), Bazaruto, Mozambique (November 2019).
  - 36) Presented the CMS Concerted Action for Humpback Whales of the Arabian Sea, as adopted by the 12th CMS COP in the Philippines in 2017 at the workshop, 'Complementing Development with Conservation in Oman: The Arabian Sea Humpback Whale Network Workshop', Muscat, Oman (November 2022).
  - 37) Meeting with Dr. Salah Khaled, Regional Director, UNESCO Doha Office for Gulf States and Yemen to explore collaboration opportunities, Doha, Qatar (October 2023).
  - 38) Meeting with Dr. Ibrahim Al Maslamani, Under-secretary of Ministry of Environment and Climate Change and Sara Al Malki, Director, International Cooperation Department to discuss Qatar's accession to CMS and readiness to sign the Dugong, Raptors and Shark MOU's, Doha, Qatar (October 2023).
  - 39) Meetings with the Global Mangrove Alliance, Ms Jennifer Howard (Conservation International and Mangrove Breakthrough), to enhance linkages between mangrove and seagrass ecosystems, UNFCCC COP28, Dubai, UAE (December 2023).
  - 40) Meeting with Jennifer Topping, Executive Coordinator, UN Multi-partner Trust Fund, and Assia Sidibe to discuss procedures and requirements for establishing a UN Multi-trust fund to support the 2030 Seagrass Breakthrough, UNFCCC COP28, Dubai, UAE (December 2023).
  - 41) Meeting with Dr. Shaikha Salem Al Dhaheri, Secretary General of the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi (EAD), attended by Ahmed Al Hashmi, Huda Almazrouei, and Amy Fraenkel to discuss the 2030 Seagrass Breakthrough, UNFCCC COP28, Dubai, UAE (December 2023).
  - 42) Meeting with Barkha Mossae, Regenerative Blue Economy Manager, IUCN to discuss the 2030 Seagrass Breakthrough and gauge interest in collaboration, held at the 2030 Seagrass Breakthrough, UNFCCC COP28, Dubai, UAE (December 2023).
  - 43) Meeting with HE Dr. Mohammad Qurban, CEO and Abdulmohsen AlShenaif, Head of International Cooperation, National Center for Wildlife (NCW), Saudi Arabia, to discuss Fourth Meeting of Signatory States and Technical Workshop and 2030 Seagrass Breakthrough, UNFCCC COP28, Dubai, UAE (December 2023).
  - 44) Meeting with the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), Mr. Frederic de Dinechin, Sr. Policy Advisor to discuss the 2030 Seagrass Breakthrough, UNFCCC COP28, Dubai, UAE (December 2023).
  - 45) Meeting with delegation of the Ministry of Environment of Qatar to discuss Qatar's signing of the Dugong MOU, UNFCCC COP28, Dubai, UAE (December 2023).