

Report of the Secretariat of the IOSEA Marine Turtle MoU (Bangkok) to the 32nd Meeting of the CMS Standing Committee, 8-9 November 2007

Highlights of the CMS/IOSEA work programme over the past year have included the following:

A major preoccupation for IOSEA in 2006 was the organization of a highly successful, region-wide Year of the Turtle campaign, which was conducted in more than 30 countries across the Indian Ocean – South-East Asia region. The campaign is well-documented on the IOSEA website. Additionally, some 20 projects in 15 countries were supported with small grants, some of which continued into 2007.

Collaboration with FAO intensified to focus attention on fisheries by-catch issues, in particular through cooperation in the organisation of two regional workshops (in Zanzibar and Thailand).

Extensive improvements to the IOSEA Online Reporting Facility are ongoing (with funding from UNEP/DELC) and are expected to be completed in the 3rd quarter of 2007, making it one of the most advanced MEA reporting systems in existence. Most Signatories have now contributed and/or updated their national reports through a continuous feedback process, which is ongoing. More resources need to be allocated towards explaining the functionality and information value of the Online Reporting System, perhaps through hands-on training exercises.

Thanks to a solid original design, there was no pressing need to revise the structure of the main IOSEA website (www.ioseaturtles.org) during the reporting period; content was continually updated and readership continued to grow, as evidenced by increased absolute numbers of visitors to the site. More sophisticated tools to monitor and analyse web traffic have been installed.

Profiles of the Month and feature articles continued to be published on a regular basis. The monthly e-News service has been well-received, as evidenced by a direct correlation in increased readership. Additions to the project database have continued at a good pace, coming within 5% of the target of 75 entries. Subject to enhanced capacity, further work in this area should concentrate on encouraging partners to update their existing entries. Production of an educational DVD began and, after extensive comment and revision, is expected to be completed in the last quarter of 2007.

Work to establish a Western Indian Ocean – Marine Turtle Task Force, in partnership with the Nairobi Convention, continued throughout 2007. Arrangements were made to secure nominations from relevant Governments, which were subsequently processed for consideration of the IOSEA Advisory Committee. The Task Force is expected to be formally established at the re-scheduled Nairobi Convention COP in November 2007.

It was decided to postpone the organisation of the Fifth Meeting of IOSEA Signatory States until the first half of 2008, dictated partly by the availability of funding, and in deference to the preference of some Signatory States to hold the SS meeting at two-year intervals. A new proposal for funding from the United States Marine Turtle Conservation Act was prepared during the reporting period, and was awaiting submission and decision of the funding agency.

Signatures of two of the six priority countries for IOSEA recruitment (India and U.A.E.) were secured during the reporting period; concerted efforts were made in respect of Mozambique (including a mission to Maputo) and Papua New Guinea. Informal contacts with France and Yemen have not yielded any positive result. Contacts in other key non-Signatories continue to be pursued.

In terms of staffing, a proposal to UNEP for a full-time support staff member to be financed from overhead charges yielded a successful result, and recruitment formalities were finalised in September 2007. Prior to this, the office was supported by a part-time volunteer and a consultant software programmer.

The IOSEA Coordinator (former CMS Deputy Executive Secretary) serves also as Senior Advisor to CMS for about 20 percent of his time. In this capacity, the Senior Advisor:

Promoted CMS interests with regard to future presentation of results of the UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane/Wetland project, as well as project transition issues; assisted with the establishment of a new Western/Central Asian site network for migratory birds; contributed actively in deliberations to launch the East Asian Australasian Flyway partnership; and intervened intensively on behalf of CMS at FAO's 27th session of the Committee on Fisheries, primarily in relation to the CMS shark initiative.

Pursued opportunities to support CMS recruitment efforts whenever they arose (eg Bahrain, Iran, Mozambique, Russian Federation, Turkmenistan, UAE); and advised the Executive Secretary and consultant on strategic approaches with regard to China's accession. (Confidence-building among the dozen IOSEA Signatory States not parties to CMS also indirectly promotes awareness of what the parent Convention has to offer.)

- Regularly assisted and advised CMS professional staff with their queries on substantive and protocol issues; represented CMS interests in the negotiations that culminated in the satisfactory conclusion of an instrument for Dugong conservation (April 2006); and provided visibility for CMS through regular inter-agency meetings in Bangkok on Avian Influenza, as well as feedback on regional AI developments.

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