

Executive Summary

The Fifth Meeting of the Signatory States was held in Bali, Indonesia, from 20-23 August 2008, preceded by a two-day session of the IOSEA Advisory Committee. The meeting was hosted by the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, with logistical support from WWF-Indonesia and Udayana University.

Twenty-six Signatory States – almost the entire IOSEA membership – were officially represented. Advisory Committee members, invited experts and observers from non-Signatory States, as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations, rounded out the attendance. The gathering of 100 delegates was the largest IOSEA conference held so far, and it marked the second time the meeting was organised in one of the four IOSEA sub-regions, outside of the secretariat's Bangkok headquarters.

The practice of allowing for sub-regional discussions in smaller groups was continued in Bali, with some lively exchanges and fruitful results. A structured outline helped to focus the discussions and produce comparable outputs across the sub-regions. Consideration might be given in future to providing even more time to conduct some of the business of the meeting in this setting, which allows for more dynamic exchange of information among countries with geographic/ecological affinities.

The conference incorporated two 3/4 day-long workshops into its programme: one focussing on coastal development issues and the other on fisheries-turtle interactions and mitigation options. The main address of the coastal development workshop was followed by case-studies from different parts of the IOSEA region illustrating the complexity of reconciling development priorities with conservation. A synthesis of the main points and recommendations has been included as an annex to the full report of the meeting.

The second workshop on fisheries-turtle interactions began with a presentation emphasising the importance of collaborative approaches with the fishing industry, followed by an informative overview of by-catch mitigation efforts conducted by the United States. Other presentations included an account of Indonesian successes and challenges of working with its domestic longline industry; and the problem of marine debris and approaches for tackling the problem of ghost nets.

The fisheries interactions workshop provided an incentive for the Meeting to consider a “Resolution to promote the use of marine turtle bycatch reduction measures by IOSEA Signatory States”, which was adopted on the final day of the meeting. The Meeting also agreed guidelines on the future submission of resolutions for consideration by the Signatory States.

The Secretariat presented its review of IOSEA implementation progress, a major undertaking prepared on the basis of information contained in the online national reports submitted by Signatory States. Implementation and/or reporting of actions undertaken within the framework of the IOSEA MoU has improved markedly since 2006, but there is still plenty of scope for improvement. A short paper highlighting the key issues was introduced, together with colour-coded matrices illustrating strengths and weaknesses in implementation and revealing some interesting sub-regional variations.

The analytical tools to underpin a more in-depth discussion of priorities for further actions under the MoU already exist, in the form of synthetic reports generated from the Online Reporting System. However, more direction is needed for the Signatory States to make the best use of the outputs. Consideration may be given to setting the deadline for submission of national reports and preparation of the implementation review much earlier, and using the findings to generate recommendations that could be discussed and debated in correspondence in advance of the meeting.

There was substantial discussion of the proposed ‘Network of Sites of Importance for Marine Turtles’, both in the Advisory Committee meeting that preceded the conference and in the plenary. The Advisory Committee made good progress in drawing up a basic list of criteria for site selection, but

lingering questions about the fundamental nature of the “network” or “list” of sites remained. In the end, the Meeting agreed that an IOSEA List of Sites should be developed to give recognition to a limited number of sites of critical ecological importance to marine turtles. An inter-sessional working group will be established to finalise the selection criteria, to enable Signatories to nominate sites to an initial list to be agreed at the next meeting of the Signatory States.

The Meeting agreed a way forward for the compilation of species assessments for Loggerhead and Green turtles which will make use of information contained in the IOSEA Online Reporting System and will result in a more compact assessment to table before the next Meeting.

The value of national networks or committees was emphasised and examples from around the region were introduced. Feedback from a questionnaire on this topic that was circulated prior to the meeting will be analysed, with a view to presenting an overall picture of progress in this area.

IOSEA’s longer-term financial situation was the subject of lengthy discussion, which sought to encourage a broader base of voluntary contributions from IOSEA Signatory States, particularly those considered to be in a position to offer modest support. While recognising that all contributions to the MoU have always been and remain strictly voluntary, without linkage to any obligatory scale of assessment, the Meeting agreed on the principle that the Secretariat should actively solicit additional voluntary contributions from the IOSEA membership.

The IOSEA Advisory Committee was reconstituted with the inclusion of four new members, alongside four existing members who continue to serve in a voluntary capacity. The following Signatory States were confirmed as sub-regional observers to the Advisory Committee: Comoros (for Western Indian Ocean), India (for Northern Indian Ocean), Indonesia (for South-East Asia +) and United Arab Emirates (for Northwestern Indian Ocean).

Apart from the formal discussions that took place within the meeting proper, there were many opportunities for delegates to share information and experiences informally. While these exchanges do not figure in any report of the meeting, they have immense value in enriching knowledge and creating bonds between countries.

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