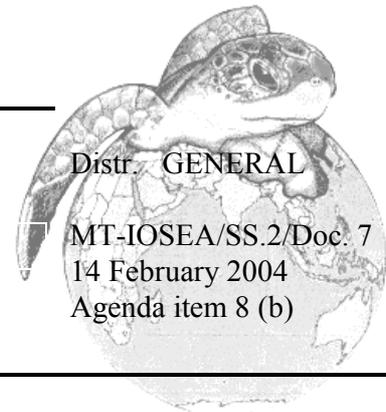

Memorandum of Understanding on the
Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and
their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia



SECOND MEETING OF THE SIGNATORY STATES
Bangkok, 16-19 March 2004

REVIEW AND FURTHER REFINEMENT OF THE
CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

1. Whereas the body of the Memorandum of Understanding sets out the basic principles and collective actions that guide efforts to conserve and manage the region's marine turtles and their habitats, it is the Conservation and Management Plan (CMP) that provides the detailed prescriptions that seek to accomplish the MoU's goals. The CMP has six objectives that give rise to 24 programmes of work, which in turn are constituted by 105 separate activities.

2. The First Meeting of Signatory States made a good start in documenting progress towards implementation of the CMP's specific activities, by most of the Signatory States and a number of observer countries. The resulting product is the Annotated Conservation and Management Plan, which was circulated after the meeting (reproduced in Annexes 2 to 4 of this paper). Ideally, Signatory States will have submitted their national reports far enough in advance of the present meeting to allow new or updated information to be incorporated in a revised version. In the event that reports are submitted just before or at the meeting itself, these further inputs will be incorporated at a later stage.

3. The detail already provided in the Annotated CMP nevertheless allows one to make some general observations -- for example, about the availability of information needed to assess progress and, indeed, the extent to which implementation is being achieved. To get a true reflection of what is happening on the ground, the Annotated CMP should strive to include not only governmental inputs, but also the very considerable range of activities carried out by non-governmental organisations. To some extent, this is happening already; and the new reporting template advocates contributions from all relevant organisations. Where this is not being done, Signatory States are strongly encouraged to solicit information from other organisations so that the national report can be characterised as a collective representation of the current situation.

4. To provide an overview of implementation progress to date, the Secretariat has prepared a matrix listing each of the 24 programmes of the CMP on one axis and the 16 Signatory States on the other. A colour-coded rating system has been devised to assess the information provided in the Annotated CMP (and, in some cases, from other sources). Six categories have been drawn up to characterise the information provided, as follows:

- No information available or no progress reported
- Insufficient information to assess extent of progress reported
- Some progress, but limited in scope
- Partial implementation, good progress
- Active intervention, very substantial progress
- Not applicable or not directly relevant to IOSEA

5. In the analysis that follows a number of caveats must be borne in mind:
 - i. The information on which most of these observations are based will certainly have been superseded by more recent developments.
 - ii. Where information has not been provided in relation to a given programme, this does not necessarily mean that activities have not taken place in a given country; rather this is indicative that reporting systems need to be improved.
 - iii. For some countries, it is known that the information submitted is not comprehensive, particularly where NGO activities have not been reported; therefore, a rating of “limited progress” may understate the extent of actual implementation.
 - iv. The ratings are subjective and are open to differing interpretation, particularly where limited detail has been provided.

In view of the above, and the fact the data are very preliminary, caution should be exercised to avoid reading too much into the assessment for any particular country. Rather, what this exercise strives to demonstrate is that the structured CMP provides a useful tool for monitoring progress in implementation over time. As the quality of information improves, it will be possible to pinpoint gaps in implementation more accurately and to prioritise necessary interventions more effectively.

Conclusions:

1. The quality of reporting varies considerably across the Signatory States, with a handful of countries reporting extensively and in considerable detail, whereas a few countries have so far provided only limited information. The majority of countries fall between the two extremes; and at least some information is available for all Signatory States.
2. The predominant picture that emerges is that of some progress, albeit limited, reported across the spectrum of CMP programmes. Good to very substantial progress has been made in the areas of threat identification; targeted research; and the establishment of education, awareness and information programmes.
3. Substantial gaps remain for several countries and programmes. Either no information on implementation is available or that which has been provided is insufficient to assess progress. In such case, the deficiency can be addressed through better reporting. Alternatively, and of more concern, in some instances there may in fact be no progress to report. In such case, the Signatory State is encouraged examine what possibilities exist for taking corrective action.
4. Most Signatory States have begun to make at least limited progress towards reducing direct and indirect causes of turtle mortality. Virtually all have identified and documented the major threats to marine turtles within their territory. Prohibitions against direct harvest and domestic trade are in place in most countries, though enforcement remains a concern. More could be done to identify, adapt, and apply best practice approaches to minimising threats. Efforts to correct adverse economic incentives that threaten turtle populations, beginning with basic socio-economic studies, remain at a nascent level. Perhaps unexpectedly, only a few Signatory States report good progress in developing nesting beach management programmes.
5. A handful of countries have made good or very substantial progress towards habitat conservation and management, and most have initiated steps in this area. Fewer have actually

begun the process of attempting to rehabilitate degraded marine turtle habitats, including re-vegetation of frontal dunes, and promoting the recovery of degraded coral reef, mangrove and seagrass habitat.

6. Most Signatory States have at least initiated research and monitoring programmes targeting marine turtles and their habitats. However, not many appear to have been involved in *international* collaborative studies, including standardisation of data collection methods, or to have exchanged scientific and technical information on a regular basis.
7. With the exception of a few countries that have not provided details, most Signatory States have begun to establish public education, awareness and information programmes; and many report having made good progress in involving stakeholders in conservation and management measures. However, the development of alternative livelihood opportunities for communities affected or potentially affected by regulatory measures – and whose involvement is crucial to the success of conservation efforts – appears not to have advanced measurably in any of the Signatory States.
8. Reporting on national, regional and international cooperation lags behind most of the other programmes and, with a few notable exceptions, is probably a reflection of less activity in this area. This particular programme – with over 25 discrete activities to be undertaken by Signatory States – merits closer attention, especially in the areas of information exchange, capacity-building and legislative review.
9. Finally, there is a paucity of information, and probably of real progress, in the last of the six major programmes, which concerns promoting implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding. A crucial section of the CMP, related to securing resources for implementation of the MoU, appears to have been overlooked by most Signatory States, if their reporting (or lack thereof) is an accurate reflection of activity in this domain. On a more positive note, several Signatory States report good progress in enhancing coordination and cooperation both within the agencies responsible for marine turtle conservation and management, and, equally important, with non-governmental partners.

Action requested / Expected outcome:

1. Signatory States are invited to review the summary table and to provide, through their national reports, more detailed information in order to fill in gaps and to correct any misinterpretation if the table does not accurately reflect the present situation.
2. Signatory States are requested to review their programmes and, where shortcomings are identified, to indicate their priorities for intervention over the coming year.