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



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

Agenda Item 1: Welcoming Remarks

1. The IOSEA MoU Co-ordinator, Mr. Douglas Hykle, welcomed the participants and expressed satisfaction at the level of attendance, with nearly 25 countries represented, including nine non-Signatory States and an impressive number of non-governmental organisations from across the region. The list of participants appears at Annex 1. He drew attention to the substantively rich agenda that the meeting would address, and outlined the context within which the Memorandum of Understanding had evolved over the previous year. In introducing the Director of the UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (UNEP/ROAP), Mr. Surendra Shrestha, the Co-ordinator expressed appreciation for the smooth integration with the regional office and the support given to the Secretariat since its establishment in April 2003.

2. Mr. Shrestha noted that the geographic coverage of the UNEP Regional Office overlapped to a large extent with that of the IOSEA MoU, and that both benefited from a cross-fertilisation of ideas and sharing of experience from the constituent parts. UNEP also recognised the value of working at the sub-regional level, with partners such as SACEP. He encouraged use of the new Marine Turtle Interactive Mapping System (IMapS) developed by UNEP-WCMC, which fit well with UNEP/ROAP's particular interest in assessment and monitoring.

Agenda Item 2: Signature of the Memorandum of Understanding by additional States

3. The Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman, H.E. Mohammed Yousuf Shalwani, signed the Memorandum of Understanding on 16 March 2004, and the Ambassador of Jordan to Malaysia, H.E. Mazen M. Juma, signed the MoU on 18 March 2004, bringing to 18 the number of Signatory States.

Agenda Item 3: Election of officers

4. The meeting elected Mr. David Hogan, United States of America, as Chair and Mr. Ing Try, Cambodia, as Vice-Chair. Australia volunteered to serve as Rapporteur, assisted by Ms. Steph Cox.

Agenda Item 4: Adoption of the agenda and schedule

5. The agenda (reproduced at Annex 2) and schedule were adopted without amendment.

Agenda Item 5: Opening Statements

6. The Chair invited non-Signatory States to indicate their Governments' intentions regarding signature of the Memorandum of Understanding.

7. The observer for India stated that progress was under way to secure Ministry and Cabinet agreement, which was likely to be achieved within three months following the national elections in May 2004. He noted that India had already made significant progress in implementing the Conservation and Management Plan.

8. The observer for Indonesia gave an overview of the significance of that country's marine turtles and of the issues affecting their survival. He explained that the Directorate General of Forest Protection and Nature Conservation had undertaken a cross-sectorial analysis and consultation with a view to enabling the Government to sign the MoU in the near future. A formal statement of the Director General, to that effect, was circulated to the meeting as Information Document MT-IOSEA/SS.2/Inf. 9.
9. The observer for Malaysia stated that his Government looked positively toward signing the MoU in the near future, noting that it would assist Malaysia to better conserve and manage marine turtles.
10. The observer for Mozambique explained that it still had much basic conservation work to accomplish. The Government was seeking clarification of the advantages of signing the Memorandum of Understanding and ensuring that its provisions did not conflict with national legislation.
11. The observer for Papua New Guinea reported on work being conducted on Leatherback turtles in that country in collaboration with the US National Marine Fisheries Service, and affirmed its intention to sign the MoU in the near future.
12. The observer for South Africa referred to that country's long history of turtle conservation, and plans to expand contacts with regional neighbours, Mozambique and Réunion, in particular. She indicated that advice was being sought from Government legal advisors to determine whether the MoU would conflict with national legislation, but that South Africa would probably sign the MoU within the next three months.
13. The observer for Thailand announced that the Cabinet had already agreed in principle to be a signatory to the MoU. The Minister of Natural Resources and Environment had been authorised to sign the MoU and it was hoped that arrangements could be finalised to allow that to happen during the present meeting. (*Note from the Secretariat: the newly appointed Minister of Natural Resources and Environment signed the MoU on 12 May 2004.*)
14. The observer for Pakistan stated that signature of the Memorandum of Understanding required the personal endorsement of the Prime Minister, which was expected to be secured by mid-April 2004.

Agenda Item 6: Report of the Secretariat

15. The Co-ordinator introduced the Report of the Secretariat (Document MT-IOSEA/SS.2/Doc. 5), noting that there had been a smooth transition from interim to full Secretariat, upon its formal establishment in Bangkok in April 2003. He again extended his appreciation to the UNEP Regional Office, with which the Secretariat is co-located, and to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) for having facilitated this process. The Co-ordinator also recognised the programme's major sponsors, namely: the Governments of Australia, France, United Kingdom and the United States, as well as the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and the UNEP Division of Conventions. Additionally, the Western Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Council had generously provided funding to cover a portion of costs of organising the present meeting.
16. The Co-ordinator reported that since the last meeting of Signatory States, the Memorandum of Understanding had taken effect in a further four States (Bangladesh, Cambodia, Madagascar, and Seychelles), and that more signatures were expected during the present meeting. He drew attention to activities that had focussed on the informative IOSEA website (www.ioseaturtles.org) and he extended thanks to the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for having financed the development costs. He highlighted the new Marine Turtle Interactive Mapping System (IMapS) on the website, which was an innovative tool for looking at marine turtle nesting and migration. The Secretariat noted the instrumental collaboration between the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre in Cambridge and Dr Colin Limpus, who had compiled his data and that of other colleagues from around the region.

17. The Co-ordinator mentioned a number of the activities unrelated to marine turtle conservation in which he was engaged on behalf of CMS. Another priority had been to strengthen the Secretariat's capacity. To that end, an assistant had been engaged to facilitate the organisation of the present meeting, and the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) had been approached to provide an Australian Youth Ambassador to assist with the IOSEA Secretariat's work for one year. Ms. Louisa Perrin would take up her functions in the week following the meeting of Signatory States. Possibilities of securing interns would also be explored in the coming year.

18. The Co-ordinator reviewed the status of the official MoU texts that had been circulated in Arabic, English and French, as well as unofficial translations that had been prepared in Farsi, Khmer, and Vietnamese. A Thai language version would be made available shortly. A minor discrepancy had been discovered in the Conservation and Management Plan. The preparatory documents that had led to the finalisation of the CMP revealed that, in the English text of Programme 3.3, the word 'politics' ought to have been 'practices'. The Secretariat sought and received the meeting's approval to correct this typographical error in all of the language versions circulated in the future.

19. Concluding his remarks and referring to Information Document MT-IOSEA/SS.2/Inf.4, the Secretariat drew attention to the fact that several Signatory States had yet to communicate the name of a focal point for purposes of the MoU. Signatory (and non-Signatory States) were invited to do so as soon as possible, in writing.

Agenda Item 7: Presentation and discussion of complementary initiatives

20. Representatives and observers gave details of complementary initiatives going on within the wider Indian Ocean – South-East Asian region, with which linkages might be explored. The Secretariat proposed that this exchange of information be formalised in future by appointing rapporteurs for each of the complementary initiatives to give a brief report of ongoing activities.

(a) Regional / sub-regional

21. **IAC:** Dr. Frazier, Advisory Committee member, introduced the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles, a binding agreement that entered into force in 2001. The Parties last met in August 2003 and dealt with a number of institutional issues. He acknowledged that the IOSEA MoU was more inclusive than the IAC, as it acknowledged the role of NGOs in implementation of various activities, through their technical and funding support.

22. **CMS African Marine Turtle MoU:** The Co-ordinator spoke of the African Turtle MoU as a sister arrangement that was a precursor of the IOSEA MoU. He noted that the IOSEA MoU was now further advanced, having benefited from experience gained in that forum. There was potential for constructive exchange of ideas, and a few countries had interest in participating in both the IOSEA and African MoUs. It was hoped that a meeting of the African MoU Signatories, numbering about 20, would be organised by CMS later in 2004.

23. **SPREP:** Dr. Limpus, Advisory Committee Chairman, explained that the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, an intergovernmental organisation, had established a Regional Marine Turtle Conservation Programme in 1989, and had held a successful Year of the Turtle campaign in 1995 that had increased conservation activities through the Pacific region. The programme had recently appointed an officer to manage a turtle database and to respond to requests from more than 20 countries in the network.

24. **Sulu-Sulawesi Project:** Mr. Romy Trono, in his Conservation International capacity, described the collaborative programme among Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines which had established a large corridor covering 8 million hectares that would benefit sea turtle conservation. He mentioned also bilateral meetings of the respective Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, Indonesia and Viet Nam, on whose agenda some activities related to implementation of the IOSEA MoU might be inserted.

25. **FAO:** The Chair explained that the Food and Agriculture Organisation's Committee on Fisheries

(FAO/COFI) had agreed in 2003 to convene a technical consultation on interactions between fisheries and turtles by the end of 2004. The FAO had recently organised, in Rome in early March 2004, a preparatory meeting of experts from different disciplines to offer recommendations to Governments regarding threats from fisheries and other sources, as well as management measures. The recommendations, contained in a report that was due to be published within two weeks, would address methodologies to promote coordination between and among Governments and NGOs, and offer suggestions incorporating economic aspects relating to fisheries interactions.

26. **ROPME:** There was no observer present for the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment and there was no information about its possible involvement in marine turtle conservation. The Secretariat undertook to send a formal invitation to ROPME in advance of the Third Meeting and proposed that, in the event it were unable to attend, the delegations of Iran and/or Oman seek information to convey to the meeting.

27. **SACEP:** The representative of the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme, an intergovernmental organisation, described its conservation programmes in South Asia, including its role as host of the UNEP South Asian Seas Programme. It was developing, in consultation with the IOSEA MoU Secretariat, a project on integrated management and conservation on marine turtles, which it hoped to discuss with delegations attending the present meeting. It was proposed that, in the first phase, an information-gathering programme be conducted to increase the regional knowledge base (local, national and regional). The Secretariat noted that this collaboration with SACEP was seen as the first step in sub-regional coordination for implementing the MoU.

28. **IATTC:** The Chair explained that the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission was conserving and managing tuna and tuna-like species in the Eastern Pacific, and concerned those coastal States and several distant water fishing nations. The IATTC had adopted a resolution on by-catch, dealing initially with purse seine fisheries, however in January 2004 the by-catch working group recommended that the resolution include by-catch reduction in longline fisheries, through gear modification. The recommendations would be taken up at a meeting in June 2004. The Secretariat commented that it would be important to interact with fisheries management organisations such as these, since there might be scope for applying their recommendations to the IOSEA region.

29. **IOTC:** The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission had been invited to attend the present meeting, but no observer was in attendance. The Secretariat undertook to extend an invitation to the Third Meeting, and requested that the delegations of Mauritius and Seychelles be prepared to give a brief report on any relevant IOTC activities if a representative were not in a position to attend.

30. **CIO:** The *Commission de l'Océan indien* was not represented at the meeting, however the representative of Seychelles commented on a regional coral monitoring project undertaken in COI member States known as the International Coral Reef Network. An annual report was expected to be released in May 2004. The GEF and European Union-funded project was reaching its end, and additional funding was being sought.

31. **SEAFDEC:** The Co-ordinator reported that a regional SEAFDEC meeting on marine turtles had been held in Kuala Lumpur in September 2003. No additional information was available from any of the delegates. The Secretariat said that it would approach SEAFDEC, either in Bangkok or Malaysia, for a representative to attend in future. In response to a suggestion from Malaysia that an ASEAN representative also be invited to attend the MoU Meeting, the Secretariat confirmed that an invitation had already been sent.

32. **KESCOM, WIOMSA:** The representative of Kenya introduced the Kenya Sea Turtle Conservation Committee, which included representatives from Government, NGOs and the private sector, and carried out activities on research, monitoring, education and awareness and habitat regeneration. It had sought CMS funding for some of its work. The Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association, based in Zanzibar, Tanzania, was also very active in the region.

33. **Bay of Bengal LME Project:** The representative of Bangladesh reported that the first workshop for the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem Project had been held in Thailand, and the second meeting would take place in Penang, Malaysia.

(b) National – Governmental

34. Most delegations with national complementary initiatives to report on did so in the course of working group discussions to review implementation of the Conservation and Management Plan. Among the points raised at this juncture:

- Bangladesh: special attention was given to protection of St. Martin's Island, as an ecologically critical area for Olive ridley and Green turtles;
- India: the Indian coastguard had been protecting marine turtles for a decade;
- Islamic Republic of Iran: called for increased participation in the Memorandum of Understanding of countries from the Arabian Gulf;
- Madagascar: cited lack of enforcement of a 1923 law protecting marine turtles; need for awareness-raising and integration of turtle conservation into other conservation programmes that are more active;
- Philippines: provided an update on the initiative to conclude a tri-lateral agreement among Indonesia, Malaysia and Philippines with respect to the Turtle Islands.

Additionally, the delegations of Australia and Cambodia circulated more detailed accounts as Information Documents MT-IOSEA/SS.2/Inf.7 and Inf. 8, respectively.

(c) Nongovernmental

35. The observer for WWF highlighted that organisation's turtle projects in 44 countries, focussing on six themes: reduction of over-exploitation, working with fishers to reduce by-catch and incidental capture, establishment and strengthening of protected areas, involvement of local communities, promotion of international agreements, and enhancing science. In its Asia-Pacific programme, WWF activities correlated with 76 of the 105 action points contained the Memorandum's CMP. WWF looked forward to exploring further synergies with the IOSEA MoU, particularly in relation to development of action plans and projects.

36. The observer for TRAFFIC gave a presentation to describe relevant activities undertaken in South-East Asia, notably turtle shell trade surveys in Indonesia and Viet Nam. Two reports had been recently been published. TRAFFIC had also provided input to Viet Nam's National Action Plan on Marine Turtles, and would be assisting with its implementation.

37. Observers for IUCN reported on regular contacts with the IOSEA Secretariat, joint initiatives with SACEP, and on activities of the marine programme. Within the region, IUCN was working closely at a national level with Sri Lanka and Viet Nam, where the establishment of about 15 Marine Protected Areas, with support from international donors, was a high priority.

38. The meeting was informed of the SEASTAR (South East Asia Sea Turtle Associative Research) programme supported by the Japanese Government and Kyoto University. The programme began in 2000 and it was hoped that it would extended after its planned end in 2003. In Thailand, where SEASTAR organised a regional scientific workshop in December 2003, much of its work focused on migration of turtles in the Gulf of Thailand.

Agenda Item 8: Review and further refinement of the Conservation and Management Plan

(a) National reporting

39. By the end of the meeting, all but one of the Signatory States present had submitted a national report using the agreed format. Two new Signatories – Oman and Thailand – also submitted reports, as did five non-Signatories. The availability of reports is summarized in Annex 3, together with an indication of further action requested. The Secretariat expressed thanks to all those having submitted a report, and in particular for having used the electronic template in its trial phase.

40. The Secretariat advised that work was still underway to develop the full suite of modules for the electronic template. Although the printing module had yet to be finalised, printed copies of all reports were made available to the meeting. In the next phase of development, the national reports would be made available for querying and editing on-line, through password access. The fact that they could be continuously amended, without having to start from scratch, would remove a bottleneck prior to the Meeting of Signatory States, and would give users ready access to the most up-to-date information. Signatories were asked to provide feedback on their experience to date in completing the template.

41. The reaction was generally favourable, though a number of Signatories noted that preparing the report for the first time was a lengthy process, requiring coordination and consultation across many government agencies, jurisdictions, NGOs and research institutions. Sharing the report, in its current format, had been problematic. Also, some of the questions were considered to be duplicative or in need of clarification. The Secretariat welcomed and encouraged involvement of nongovernmental organisations in the national reporting process, which was meant to be as inclusive as possible in order to provide a comprehensive picture of what was happening in a given country. The reporting template was closely linked to the Conservation and Management Plan, to allow for monitoring of progress in implementation. Some of the ambiguity or duplication may have arisen from the CMP itself.

42. A working group was established to review the template that the Signatory States had adopted at their first meeting, and to make specific recommendations aimed at streamlining the report, clarifying any ambiguous questions, and removing any duplication.

43. In addition to the points already mentioned above, the Working Group made the following observations and recommendations:

- Signatory States should be encouraged to identify areas where additional work may be needed to assist in the conservation and management of turtles (i.e. identify any gaps).
- There may be some areas where the number of questions could be streamlined, such as questions on information exchange, and a clearer definition given of the term “site”, which was considered to have various interpretations.
- Reference to a model report would help Signatory States to understand the level of detail required.
- The criteria for ranking progress in the assessment matrix should be documented and made transparent. Concern was expressed that assessment only on the basis of the programmes did not provide an adequate level of detail. It was suggested that the Secretariat, with the assistance of the Advisory Committee, draft criteria in a similar form to that used in the WWF/World Bank report on progress at protected areas sites. This should be finalized at the next IOSEA meeting with input from Signatory States. It was considered important also to link the questionnaire with the assessment criteria.
- It was suggested that the Secretariat seek further input on possible amendments to the questionnaire before completing a final version and that Signatory States work on a revised format in time for the next IOSEA meeting.

- It was suggested that the questionnaire be translated and include a section on the time taken to complete the document and problems that may have been experienced when completing the report, for example, the depth and length of the consultation phase.
- Finally, the Working Group considered it preferable that the country reports not be made publicly available until all countries had the opportunity to seek input from stakeholders.

44. Additional specific recommendations for changes were forwarded to the Secretariat, with a request to incorporate them in a revised format, which would be circulated for final comment prior to its distribution ahead of the Third Meeting.

(b) Review of implementation progress

45. The Co-ordinator introduced document MT-IOSEA/SS.2/Doc. 7, which represented a first attempt to make some general conclusions about the extent of progress towards implementation, based on information compiled during the First Meeting of Signatory States. The matrix that had been prepared necessarily did not reflect activities that had been reported shortly before or during the present meeting. A colour-coded rating system had been devised to depict progress towards implementation of the CMP.

46. There was considerable variation in the quality of reporting. As noted in the overview paper, progress was more advanced in some areas than others. However, caution was advised in reading too much into these preliminary ratings, since a presumed lack of implementation might actually be a reflection of inadequate reporting, rather than inaction. The purpose of the matrix was, instead, to demonstrate the potential of this approach to highlight gaps and identify priorities, based on sound reporting. An even more sophisticated presentation of the data was envisaged in the future.

47. The Secretariat called on Signatory States to provide additional information to close the information gaps, and then make their own interpretation as to the extent of progress towards implementation. The meeting broke into three working groups: (1) South-East Asia, Australia and United States; (2) Western Indian Ocean; and (3) Northern Indian Ocean (plus Islamic Republic of Iran, and Oman, provisionally) to complete the national report template as fully and as accurately as possible; and to review, validate and update the matrix. A revised composite matrix appears at Annex 4. Based on information supplied by the working group facilitators, it is subject to further revision after closer scrutiny of the national reports.

48. A number of delegations thanked the Secretariat for having conducted the analysis, and proposed that the criteria on which the rating system is based be further elaborated and made more transparent, with a view to minimizing subjectivity.

(c) Identification of thematic priorities for concerted intervention; (d) Priority site-specific interventions

49. These related agenda items were intended to stimulate discussion of a number of serious challenges for marine turtle conservation within the region. To that end, the Meeting was privileged to receive comprehensive and balanced presentations from three invited experts:

- The role of marine turtle hatcheries in conservation (Thushan Kapurusinghe)
- Turtle trade in Bali, Indonesia (Dr. Windia Adnyana)
- Olive Ridelys in Orissa, India (Dr. Kartik Shankar)

50. Following each presentation, there was a thorough discussion of the issues surrounding each case. The Meeting requested the Advisory Committee to capture the main points in a series of recommendations aimed at reconciling different needs and approaches. The Advisory Committee's findings, endorsed by the Meeting of Signatory States, were as follows:

(i) Hatchery management

- The expert presentation identified that marine turtle nesting beaches in Sri Lanka needed significant conservation action to ensure the successful management of the turtle eggs, preferably *in situ*, and the production of healthy hatchlings into the ocean.
- Currently, a wide spectrum of management actions involving marine turtle nesting beaches, eggs and hatchlings were being applied in Sri Lanka, some of which were compatible with good conservation practice, while other actions were detrimental.
- Members of the Advisory committee were aware that, in parallel to the situation in Sri Lanka, a similar range of hatchery practices were being used in other countries within the IOSEA region, some of which were appropriate and some of which were not.
- The Advisory Committee concluded that conservation practices of diverse organisations in many of these countries could benefit from a policy statement that provided guidance in what constituted sound management of marine turtle nesting beaches and hatcheries.

51. Accordingly, the Meeting of Signatory States requested the Advisory Committee to develop a proposal for a policy paper on “hatchery management” to be considered by the Signatory States for subsequent adoption at their next meeting.

(ii) Bali, Indonesia

- The Meeting recognised that the long-standing and large-scale killing of turtles to supply the market in Bali had, and continued to have, a significant negative impact on many turtle populations in Indonesia and neighbouring countries. This activity was in contravention of some regional, national and international laws and agreements.
- The Meeting expressed deep concern that the numbers involved, the life stages affected and the persistence of this activity had had significant negative impacts on numerous populations of marine turtles throughout Indonesian waters, and that this decimation of turtle stocks had significant impacts on communities from various parts of Indonesia, resulting in social conflicts and threats to the livelihoods of some people.
- The Meeting noted, however, that progress had been made in recent years to begin to address these resource use conflicts, and it congratulated the Indonesian Government, the Government of Bali, nongovernmental agencies and other stakeholders who had contributed to reducing marine turtle mortality in Bali in recent years.
- The Meeting further encouraged the on-going process of resolution of conservation and social problems through a process of stakeholder involvement directed towards the major reduction of mortality of marine turtles at Bali, including the reduction in capture and transport of turtles from their distant feeding and nesting areas in Indonesia.

52. The presentation highlighted the need to examine the complex issue of traditional and cultural use of marine turtles within the context of conservation actions, as it was apparent that this issue underlay conservation management problems in a number of countries. Accordingly, the Advisory Committee was requested to examine this issue as a thematic task and to report its findings to the next meeting of Signatory States.

(iii) Orissa, India

- The Meeting received a comprehensive and informative presentation of the breadth and complexity of the problems that needed to be addressed in delivering effective conservation management of the world's largest breeding aggregation of Olive ridley turtles, *Lepidochelys olivacea*, which breeds at three sites on the Orissa coast. The conservation status of this internationally significant breeding population was at risk from a wide range of threats.
- The Meeting recognised that this large breeding aggregation was critical for maintaining a significant part of our natural heritage within the waters of India and neighbouring countries and in the international waters of the region.
- The Advisory Committee was aware that the analysis done by Indian scientists indicated that the intense level of incidental capture and mortality had affected the number of turtles nesting yearly, as well as the average size of the adult turtles, parameters that clearly showed that the population was under unsustainable pressure.
- The Committee recognized also that the activities that posed serious threats to the Olive ridley turtle nesting population in Orissa also caused hardship to certain sectors within the fishing community in Orissa.

53. The Meeting urged that immediate, concerted, collaborative action be taken across the full spectrum of national, state and local Government agencies and in partnership with nongovernmental agencies and members of the coastal communities to:

- reduce the mortality of the breeding turtles in waters adjacent to the nesting beaches;
- guarantee the long term security of the nesting habitat for these turtles; and
- improve the management of land and coastal waters of at least the three principal nesting areas (Gahirmatha, Devi and Rushikulya) to ensure:
 - i. continued high nesting success for the breeding females within and across multiple breeding seasons;
 - ii. high incubation success of the eggs laid on these beaches, resulting in the production of healthy hatchlings of both sexes; and
 - iii. successful dispersal of correctly imprinted hatchlings into adjacent coastal waters and beyond into the open ocean.

54. In addition to the three presentations above, two experts were invited to provide information on innovative research and analytical tools of importance to efforts to conserve marine turtles, as follows:

- Modelling human threats to sea turtle population viability (Dr. Milani Chaloupka);
- Research and Management of Sea Turtles along the Indigenous Coast of Northern Australia, with particular reference to the problem of marine debris (Dr. Scott Whiting).

55. For ease of reference, all of these illuminating presentations have been reproduced as PowerPoint handouts, attached at Annex 5.

Agenda Item 9: Further Development of implementation tools

56. The Co-ordinator introduced document MT-IOSEA/SS.2/Doc.8, which highlighted various tools the Secretariat had developed over the previous year to facilitate the MoU's implementation, many of which were accessible through the IOSEA MoU website (www.ioseaturtle.org). These included an electronic library of useful reference material and presentations, a list of useful contacts, a projects database, news and profiles, and the Marine Turtle Interactive Mapping System (IMapS). Participants were encouraged to consult it frequently and to make their own contributions.

57. Delegates acknowledged the considerable progress that had been made in this regard. Noting the problem of easy internet access in some countries and its associated cost, it was proposed that the Secretariat circulate the proceedings and documents from the present meeting on CD-ROM, in addition to making them available on the website.

Agenda Item 10: Advisory Committee

58. Dr. Limpus, Advisory Committee Chairman, gave an overview of the Committee's activities over the past year, noting that the Committee would welcome requests from Signatory States to provide assistance in solving problems or reviewing outputs. He explained that the meeting needed to deal with two issues in relation to the Advisory Committee: (1) incorporation, in the Committee's terms of reference, of a provision for replacing members who were unable or chose not to continue their functions; and (2) nomination of new members with suitable expertise, with the effect of extending membership of the Advisory Committee to eight (from its current six, when at full strength).

59. With regard to the first issue, it was agreed that the following paragraph would be inserted in the existing Terms of Reference, at the end of the first section:

“Should a vacancy arise intersessionally, the Advisory Committee may propose a replacement for consideration by the Signatory States. The proposal shall be communicated to Signatory States via the Secretariat, and shall be accompanied by the same supporting documents as would be required for a regular nomination. In the absence of an objection of any Signatory State, received within 30 days of the communication from the Secretariat, the interim appointment will be considered as having been accepted, and will become effective immediately. If an objection is raised by a Signatory State, the procedure may be repeated, as appropriate, until an acceptable nominee is identified. The term of appointment of the provisional nominee shall expire at the end of the next meeting of Signatory States. The provisional nominee should be eligible for nomination and appointment to the Advisory Committee, as a full member, at that meeting.”

The amended Terms of Reference for the Advisory Committee appear at Annex 6.

60. With regard to the second issue, it was noted that the Advisory Committee would benefit from additional expertise in a number of areas, such as socio-economics, fisheries, and legal/policy matters, and take into account regional geographic balance. The names of a number of candidates were suggested, but it was agreed that more time was needed to allow Signatory States to propose additional names, accompanied by CV's.

61. The meeting agreed on the following procedure to fill the existing Advisory Committee vacancy and to appoint two additional members. By the end of April 2004, the Advisory Committee would be called upon to provide its recommendations to the Signatory States with regard to filling the inter-sessional vacancy and, exceptionally, with regard to the appointment of two additional members. The latter would take into account any proposals received from Signatory States up to that point. The candidates put forward need not necessarily come from a Signatory State.

62. The Secretariat would then communicate the recommendations to the Signatory States, giving a 30-

day deadline for receipt of comments. In the absence of any comments from Signatory States objecting to the Advisory Committee's recommendations, the Secretariat would announce the composition of the enlarged Advisory Committee in June 2004.

Agenda Item 11: Financial and administrative matters

63. The Secretariat introduced document MT-IOSEA/SS.2/Doc.10 on financial and administrative matters, acknowledging the financial and in-kind support totalling about USD500,000 that had been received from the Governments of Australia, France, the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as CMS, the UNEP Division of Environmental Conventions, and the UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.

64. The Secretariat spoke to the budget papers and noted there was a small surplus in Year 1, owing to the fact the office had only been established in April 2003, and an anticipated deficit by the end of Year 2 (2004) of approximately USD15,000. The Secretariat hoped this would be met by additional contributions, interest income not reflected in the table, or by reducing discretionary expenditure. As a last resort, the Secretariat suggested using some of the funds already pledged for Year 3 to cover the deficit.

65. The budget estimates for 2004-05 provided for the recruitment of a secretary and included the costs of organising meetings of the Signatory States and Advisory Committee. Minimal amounts had been budgeted for travel, consultancies and basic operating expenses, in line with the limited funds available. Additional funds were needed to provide support for implementation activities and to sustain the secretariat operations through 2005. Signatory States were requested to make the necessary budgetary provisions in advance; those that were not able to contribute financially might consider alternative in-kind support. It was suggested that nongovernmental organisations with expertise in raising funds might also be in a position to contribute. The representative of Australia reminded the meeting of its additional contribution to the Secretariat of a Youth Ambassador volunteer, who would be starting the following week, and its support for the attendance of the Advisory Committee Chair.

66. There being no further requests for clarification, the Chair closed the discussion and requested the Meeting to note the report and to be cognizant of the need for continuity in financial support.

Agenda Item 12: General considerations pertaining to the Memorandum of Understanding

(a) Interpretation/possible extension of the MoU's geographic scope

67. The Co-ordinator introduced document MT-IOSEA/SS.2/Doc.11.1 on interpretation and possible extension of the MoU's geographic scope, making a correction to the document's use of the term "Range State". Research data had indicated that turtle populations in North-East Asian waters were shared with countries of the IOSEA region. There was strong support for the proposal to include China, Japan and Republic of Korea in the area covered by the Memorandum of Understanding, and to formally invite them to sign the MoU or to attend Meetings of the Signatory States as observers.

68. The Secretariat outlined a separate proposal to examine the possibility of extending the geographic scope of the Memorandum of Understanding to include Pacific Island countries, in line with deliberations that had taken place in the framework of CMS and the conclusions of an expert think tank, known as the "Bellagio Blueprint". A number of basic questions would need to be addressed before putting together a substantial proposal in this regard. Several delegations supported the United Kingdom's view that, for various reasons, it would be premature to extend the geographical scope of the MoU to encompass Pacific Ocean Island States at this stage; and that a paper should be elaborated first to look into the advantages and disadvantages of such a proposal. Summing up the discussion, the Chairman concluded that the Meeting had reacted positively to this cautious approach. It was agreed that the Secretariat should develop an exploratory paper that would examine the possible advantages and disadvantages of, and support for, extending the geographic scope of the MoU to the Pacific for consideration by Signatory States. Reference was made to CMS COP Resolution 7(e) which had endorsed the CMS Secretariat's proposal "to

explore ... the possible development of an instrument for marine turtles in the Pacific Ocean...and *to allocate sufficient resources for this purpose.*" (emphasis added). The Meeting agreed that the IOSEA Secretariat should seek additional resources/funds to undertake the proposed analysis so that existing resources/funds were not taken away from committed MoU activities.

(b) Proposal for a site network linked to the MoU

69. The Co-ordinator introduced document MT-IOSEA/SS.2/Doc.11.2 which concerned a proposal to develop a network of sites of special importance for marine turtles, based on a model that had been used successfully for migratory birds. In addition to creating more awareness and recognition of the individual sites, selected according to agreed criteria, the network would promote joint research, training and educational activities. An important element of the proposal would be to assess management effectiveness and monitor progress over time using appropriately adapted tracking tools. There was general agreement to proceed with the concept which, it was felt, ought to consider foraging grounds in addition to nesting sites. The Meeting recommended that the Secretariat and the Advisory Committee further develop the proposal, as outlined in the paper, before the next meeting.

(c) Proposal for recognition of projects contributing to IOSEA implementation

70. Mr. Trono, Advisory Committee member, introduced a proposal (document MT-IOSEA/SS.2/Doc.11.3) to recognize the contributions of nongovernmental organisations towards implementation of the MoU, according to certain defined criteria. Through lengthy discussion of the proposal and of the criteria that had been suggested, it was clear that consensus would not be easily reached on its purpose or practical application. The Chair concluded that while there was some interest in the issue, the time was not right for its adoption at this meeting. He proposed instead that the matter be left open, with a view to revisiting it at the next meeting of Signatory States, if there were interest.

(d) Timetable for possible amendment of the legal character of the MoU

71. A number of delegations expressed the view that there was no need, at the present time, to reconsider the present non-binding status of the Memorandum of Understanding. The Meeting agreed to maintain its current status and to keep the issue on the agenda for future discussion. The Meeting acknowledged that, should the Signatory States contemplate a change in the status in the future, it would be useful for the Advisory Committee to have expertise in legal and policy matters.

(e) Proposal for standardisation of flipper tag codes

72. Dr. Mortimer, Advisory Committee member, introduced document MT-IOSEA/SS.2/Doc.11.4, noting that there had been confusion over the use of inconsistent tag codes. The proposal sought to identify tag series already in existence, to eliminate duplication where confusion might arise, and to introduce a degree of standardisation in future tag series through a system that would be monitored by a stable institution, such as the IOSEA MoU Secretariat.

73. It was recommended that, as a minimum, Governments should coordinate the tags used in each country and that a standard two-letter ISO code be used to represent each country, followed by a series of four to five digits. The Meeting agreed that the Advisory Committee should develop a detailed proposal on how to proceed, which would be circulated via the Secretariat.

Agenda Item 13: Organisation and provisional schedule of future activities

(a) Year of the Turtle

74. The Advisory Committee had been requested to prepare a paper on the feasibility of organising a Year of the Turtle campaign. While this had not been possible, the Committee had reflected on what such an event might entail taking into account experience gained from a similar campaign organised in the

Pacific in 1995. The Meeting expressed enthusiastic support for the idea, and a number of valuable points emerged in the discussion:

- the need for clear, realistic, and measurable objectives which one could refer back on to assess what had been achieved;
- the need to involve specialists in communications (eg. social scientists, educators) and not only turtle biologists;
- the need to be sensitive to different realities, in many spheres, in each country;
- the importance of each country taking responsibility for its own, tailored activities;
- the desirability for each country to implement at least one significant conservation action for the year, that would make a difference, and to undertake a census of turtle resources that could be repeated at regular intervals;
- recognition that while there should be a number of central, unifying themes, with a degree of coordination through the Secretariat, the latter would not have the capacity to “run the whole show”;
- the need to identify appropriate levels on which to organise activities (eg international, national, local) and to engage the key actors; and
- the potential to take advantage of activities that would happen in any case and link them to the Year of the Turtle campaign.

75. In view of the lead time needed for Governments to make the necessary budgetary provisions, 2005 was considered too early to adequately finance and organise a Year of the Turtle event. Instead, it was agreed that Government agencies and nongovernmental organisations should consult in 2004 and anticipate already the budgetary allocations that would be needed to contribute to events in 2006. Signatory States and NGOs would be expected to bring concrete ideas and budgets to the Third Meeting of Signatory States in early 2005. The Secretariat emphasised that if preliminary conceptual and budgetary planning had not been undertaken within each country by that time, it would be difficult to take decisions and move beyond the present state.

(b) Forthcoming meetings and events

76. The Co-ordinator proposed that the Third Meeting of Signatory States be held around the same time of year (March) in 2005, provided this timing did not clash with other meetings. In view of the ideal facilities in Bangkok and proximity of the Secretariat, the meeting would likely be held once again at the UN Conference Centre. However, an offer from one of the Signatory States to host the meeting would also be welcomed, in keeping with the original wording of the Memorandum.

77. The Chair sought comment on the timing of the next meeting of the Advisory Committee, suggesting that it meet one or two months prior to the Signatory State meeting. Conscious of the fact that voluntary funding needed to be sought in any case, to enable the Committee to meet, it was agreed to leave the timing open, to explore opportunities of linking a meeting to other gatherings, and to continue to communicate electronically as far as possible.

Agenda Item 14: Any other business

78. The representative of the Western Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Council, which had contributed funds for the organisation of the present meeting, expressed thanks for the excellent meeting and indicated the Council’s intention to continue supporting the IOSEA MoU’s work.

Agenda Item 15: Closure of the meeting

79. There being no other business, the Chair thanked all of the participants for their contributions and the Secretariat for the logistical and substantive preparations, and declared the meeting closed.