

# REPORT OF THE 10<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Pattaya, Thailand / *Online*  
31 March-3 April 2024



**IOSEA**  
Marine Turtle MOU

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



## Contents

Contents.....	1
1. Welcoming Remarks.....	2
2. Adoption of Agenda and Schedule.....	2
3. Review of Implementation of the Conservation and Management Plan.....	2
3.1. Implementation of the Work Programme 2020-2024.....	2
3.2. Reports of the Chairs of the Marine Turtle Task Forces and of Sub-regional Focal Points.....	3
3.3. Preliminary Analysis of National Reports.....	4
4. Further Implementation of the Conservation and Management Plan.....	5
4.1. Draft Work Programme 2024-2028.....	5
4.2. Capacity-Building Strategy.....	6
5. Conservation of Marine Turtles and their Habitats.....	7
5.1. Network of Sites of Importance for Marine Turtles in the Indian Ocean - South-East Asia Region.....	7
5.2. Beach Management and Hatching Success.....	8
5.3. Critical Habitat.....	9
5.4. Marine Turtle Regional Management Units 2.0.....	10
5.5. Marine Turtle Legislative Review in the Asia-Pacific Region.....	10
6. Partnerships and Collaboration.....	11
6.1. Convention on Migratory Species and Related Agreements.....	11
6.2. Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) and other RFMOs.....	12
7. Institutional Matters.....	12
7.1. Terms of Reference for the Advisory Committee.....	12
7.2. Advisory Committee Membership.....	13
7.3. Next Meeting of the Advisory Committee (AC11).....	13
8. Any Other Business.....	13
9. Closure of the Meeting.....	13
List of Participants.....	15
Agenda.....	17

## Report of the 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Advisory Committee

### 1. Welcoming Remarks

1. Heidrun Frisch-Nwakanma (Secretariat) welcomed everyone to the meeting, including the remote participants. She explained that regrettably, the Advisory Committee (AC) Chair, Jack Frazier, had been unable to travel to Thailand. He had requested AC Member Colin Limpus to chair this meeting on his behalf.
2. Colin Limpus, acting as Chair, welcomed all participants and thanked the AC Members for their trust. He gave opportunity for a brief tour-de-table, in which AC Members, Sub-Regional Focal Points, the Vice-Chairs of both Marine Turtle Task Forces, the two Invited Experts and the two members of the Secretariat all introduced themselves. A list of participants is contained in Annex 1.

### 2. Adoption of Agenda and Schedule

3. The Chair asked whether there were any amendments to Doc.2.1 Rev.1 [Provisional Agenda and Documents](#) and Doc.2.2 [Provisional Annotated Agenda and Schedule](#). There were no interventions, so the agenda was adopted as presented. The final agenda is contained in Annex 2.

### 3. Review of Implementation of the Conservation and Management Plan

#### 3.1. Implementation of the Work Programme 2020-2024

4. Heidrun Frisch-Nwakanma introduced Doc.3.1 [Implementation of the Work Programme 2020-2024](#), which contains the Work Programme (WP) as adopted by 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Signatory States (MOS8) and an additional column to indicate progress made by the AC and the Secretariat in the implementation of their respective tasks. She noted that an updated version of the document would be made available to MOS9.
5. Participants reviewed the progress report. Discussions related to, among others:
  - using blue shading to denote tasks that remain ongoing, in addition to the traffic light colour scheme that indicates levels of progress for more time-bound actions;
  - the process for defining priorities, with the Secretariat clarifying that these were the average of the priority scores assigned by sub-regional working groups and agreed by MOS8;
  - possibly using key performance indicators to assess progress on the different tasks;
  - the role of Signatory States and Sub-Regional Focal Points in recruiting additional Signatory States; and
  - the contribution of AC members in sharing information on available funding to inform the Secretariat's compilation thereof in a "living document."

### 3.2. Reports of the Chairs of the Marine Turtle Task Forces and of Sub-regional Focal Points

6. Cristina Louro (Vice-Chair, Western Indian Ocean Marine Turtle Task Force, Mozambique) noted that the region's 10<sup>th</sup> Marine Turtle Task Force meeting ([WIO-MTTF-10](#), October 2022) had highlighted as priorities the systematic monitoring of debris and regional assessment on specific sites of plastic pollution and entanglements. She also presented updates from Signatory States, such as on:
  - reducing the use of plastic bottles
  - using satellite tracking to identify important foraging areas in the Chagos Archipelago;
  - strengthening law enforcement and improving communication between law enforcement and fishers in Madagascar;
  - assessing threats related to interactions between sea turtles and snorkelers and implementing compensatory measures for nesting beaches being affected by road construction projects in La Réunion;
  - long-term nest monitoring at 19 sites in the Seychelles;
  - addressing illegal take in the context of traditional medicine and establishing 21 new marine protected areas in South Africa;
  - addressing threats related to deep-water port development and oil and gas prospection in Mozambique; and
  - assessing the human dimension of marine turtle conservation and establishing collaborative fisheries management areas in Tanzania.
7. Participants reflected on engagement with Somalia and, noting most monitoring focused on beach nesting, highlighted the need to strengthen in-water monitoring.
8. Mohamed Mohamed (Sub-Regional Focal Point Western Indian Ocean, Kenya) said that it might at times be easier to designate an area as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention or as an UNESCO Biosphere Reserve than to seek conservation status under national legislation. He noted turtle consumption, which was a culturally deeply rooted practice in many areas, remained a challenge. To address this, he emphasized showcasing the benefits of conservation efforts for local communities and strengthening forensic sciences to support prosecution. He also highlighted that infrastructure development pursued under a blue economy agenda was threatening important habitats, underscoring the need to develop a strong wildlife economy to provide alternative livelihood opportunities and support conservation.
9. Thuraiya Al Sariri (Sub-Regional Focal Point North-Western Indian Ocean, Oman) presented an update from some countries in the sub-region. With regard to Bahrain, she highlighted, among others: the designation of protected zones in the Hawar Islands; awareness raising campaigns about the ecological importance of marine turtles; and engagement with fishers to discuss bycatch risks. With regard to Oman, she highlighted, among others: research on marine turtle ecology and monitoring of heavy metal and chemical pollution threats; efforts to reduce bycatch; and the promotion of light pollution guidelines. She underscored the difficult situation in Yemen, but highlighted that the country declared two natural sea turtle reserves. In terms of challenges, she pointed to: limited dedicated funding, light pollution, and lack of enforcement. Noting lack of responsiveness by some countries, she also highlighted the need to strengthen communication between national focal points.
10. Participants reflected on opportunities for fostering data sharing and better capturing information in national reports, including on community efforts.

11. Muralidharan Manoharakrishnan (Vice-Chair, Northern Indian Ocean Marine Turtle Taskforce, India) reported on the priorities identified by the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Task Force ([NIO-MTTF-4](#), March 2023): reducing bycatch from trawls and gills; mitigating threats from port development; enhancing understanding of foraging regions and populations of green turtles and olive ridleys; and expanding in-water research, including through aerial surveys. In terms of future work, he highlighted, among others: enhancing consideration of the human dimensions of marine turtle conservation; developing a regional photo ID repository for citizen science reporting; and pathways for reducing “parachute science” and channelling private conservation activities. Capacity-building needs related to: reducing bycatch; reducing threats from excessive tourism; sea turtle health and rehabilitation after injuries; and regional knowledge sharing.
12. Discussions highlighted the effects of the decline in large predators on turtle populations and challenges related to monitoring foraging areas.
13. Chalutip Junchompoo (Sub-Regional Focal Point South-East Asia, Thailand) presented an update from some countries in the sub-region, noting lack of responses by others. With regard to Thailand, she highlighted, among others: the development of a roadmap on plastic waste management and a decree on fisheries’ gear control; analysis of stranding data; and the need to train the next generation of researchers and enhance stranding networks’ capacity. With regard to Australia, she pointed to: the creation of a turtle stranding database; a programme on marine turtle resilience to climate change; and the training of First Nation rangers. With regard to the US, she pointed to long-term nesting beach monitoring and satellite telemetry studies to assess habitat use and migratory movement. Common priorities identified by the countries were: bycatch mitigation, habitat restoration, reducing marine debris, conducting population assessments, and regular nesting beach monitoring.
14. Participants emphasized the need to keep information, including contact information, on National Focal Points and Sub-Regional Focal Points up-to-date.
15. In terms of overarching issues to consider in the development of the new work programme, participants highlighted among others: conducting task force meetings virtually, which allowed for broader engagement and was cost-efficient; training Focal Points about their responsibilities; and enhancing communication between National Focal Points, Task Forces, and the AC.

### 3.3. Preliminary Analysis of National Reports

16. Manjula Tiwari (Consultant to the Secretariat/Advisory Committee Member) noted the following countries had submitted national reports by 28 March 2024:
  - South-East Asia+: Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, Australia, and the US;
  - North-Western Indian Ocean: Jordan, Oman, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Yemen;
  - Northern Indian Ocean: Bangladesh and Pakistan; and
  - Western Indian Ocean: Kenya.
17. She said the objective of the analysis of these national reports was to identify progress and gaps in the implementation of the MOU. At this point, she was interested in getting the Committee’s feedback on her plans for the analysis. She suggested using the Conservation and Management Plan (CMP) of the MOU as well as the WP 2020-2024 as a basis for estimating progress made on the different activities in each sub-region. She noted additional reports were expected to be submitted by the end of April 2024.

18. Participants reflected on: how to go about drawing conclusions at sub-regional level when only few countries submitted reports; whether and how to incorporate information beyond that contained in the national reports; reaching out to countries that had yet to submit their reports; and the role of the national reports in identifying emerging issues and informing the development of the new work programme.

#### 4. Further Implementation of the Conservation and Management Plan

##### 4.1. Draft Work Programme 2024-2028

19. Heidrun Frisch-Nwakanma (Secretariat) introduced Doc.4.1 [Draft Work Programme 2024-2028](#). She recalled that the Secretariat had asked for feedback on the current Work Programme and invited the AC's views on the Secretariat's proposals for addressing the submitted suggestions. Some of these had already been included in the draft, others needed guidance from the AC, as outlined in the document. She clarified that the draft Work Programme 2024-2028 consisted of uncompleted tasks from the current Work Programme.
20. With regard to the structure of the new Work Programme, comments related to: facilitating the filtering of activities according to priority level; how to define priorities; and how best to delineate which activities are to be carried out by the Secretariat, the AC, Signatory States, and other actors. Participants emphasized the need to phrase the activities as clearly and specifically as possible to inform work over the next four years, while being mindful of different national contexts. They also discussed the possibility to identify indicators to measure progress, debating at which level this could be done, and to specify the anticipated timeline of the activities, possibly using labels such as "immediate" and "ongoing".
21. Participants reflected on the value of the Work Programme. Comments related to, among others, whether:
  - Signatory States use it to develop their own national plans;
  - Task Forces, and other actors take it into account;
  - National Focal Points and researchers using it to leverage governmental support and raise funding; and
  - it has a role in supporting communication work.
22. They also reflected on differences and interlinkages between the IOSEA Conservation and Management Plan (CMP) and the Work Programme. The Secretariat highlighted that the draft Work Programme 2024-2028 captured all elements of the CMP (marked in blue in Doc.4.1), with the aim to define actions to address each of them. Accordingly, rows in blue should not be changed, while rows in white could be modified, removed, or added to in any way the AC wanted.
23. Upon discussing the suggestion by a Signatory State to start afresh based on the CMP, rather than carrying forward the activities from the previous WP, the AC concluded that the work of the last twenty years resulting in more specific guidance and nuanced action points should not be disregarded. Accordingly, they took as starting point for their discussions the draft as before them. They would, however, consider for each Programme of the CMP whether important aspects were missing, and add additional activities if needed.
24. Other comments related to, among others: assessing the socio-economic value of marine turtles; better understanding sea turtle consumption, including traditional uses; being mindful that there were different effective approaches to conservation;

strengthening in-water monitoring; and facilitating access to up-to-date, curated data in a “one-stop-shop” database such as TurtleNet to avoid duplication of efforts.

25. Over the next days, the structure of the draft Work Programme was adjusted and participants exchanged views on the draft, discussing each proposed action to refine the wording where needed and suggesting additional actions. They also identified Work Programme actions that responded to several elements of the CMP, for example with regards to collaborative research.
26. Participants did not have sufficient time to consider all actions in the draft Work Programme. The AC therefore agreed to hold a virtual meeting to finalize its consideration of the matter in time for MOS9.

#### **4.2. Capacity-Building Strategy**

27. Scott Whiting (AC Member) recalled that this item had been under repeated discussion in calls of the AC over the past months and years. At this meeting, he wanted to seek feedback on the idea to develop a capacity-building framework structure that could be presented to MOS9. He noted that the Work Programme already contained a number of actions relating to capacity building.
28. Manjula Tiwari (AC Member) outlined ideas for conducting a needs assessment survey to gather feedback on what elements in the Work Programme different actors needed training on. As pending questions, she pointed to, among others: how the survey would be distributed; how to identify existing training initiatives in the region; whether capacity-building trainings would be delivered in-person or online; how capacity-building measures would be funded; and how to monitor the effectiveness of the capacity building.
29. Mr Whiting added that capacity-building needs could be addressed in various ways, building on, among others, the preparation of manuals, sharing of information by email, and conducting workshops. He emphasized that a number of activities could be carried out immediately, with little to no additional funding needed. He for example suggested that organizations and individuals (AC, governments, NGOs) inform the Secretariat about what kind of support they could provide with regard to the implementation of the Work Programme/capacity-building framework. He also suggested creating a database for countries and other stakeholders to register their needs and facilitate matching available support. More broadly, he called for a mind-set shift towards recognizing that capacity building was everyone’s responsibility, with all actors being able to offer some form of support to others.
30. Participants welcomed both the conduct of a needs assessment survey and ideas to foster quick progress on capacity building. With regards to the survey, they called for collecting information on existing online training opportunities and feedback as to what language the trainings should be provided in.
31. Participants agreed that capacity building was a two-way street and took place at all governance levels. They highlighted the value of engaging more stakeholders in providing capacity building, including by fostering transnational cooperation with academic institutions and facilitating targeted exchanges between local communities. They supported the creation of an “online notice board” for matching capacity-building needs and opportunities. The Secretariat took note of the suggestion and indicated it would reflect with the IT team on how this could be operationalized if the proposal was endorsed by the MOS.

32. Discussions also emphasized: capacity-building challenges related to turnover among Focal Points; the need to build Task Force members' capacity; and delivering trainings back-to-back with other meetings, such as MOS9 or Task Force meetings.
33. Members agreed to present the AC's reflections on capacity building to MOS9.

## **5. Conservation of Marine Turtles and their Habitats**

### **5.1. Network of Sites of Importance for Marine Turtles in the Indian Ocean - South-East Asia Region**

34. Heidrun Frisch-Nwakanma (Secretariat) pointed to intersessional work in relation to the Network of Sites, notably revisions to the template for submitting information on a nominated site and to the evaluation criteria. She said that there currently were 11 recognized sites in the Network and invited participants to reflect on the added value of the Network and the anticipated benefits for participating sites, with a view to inform discussions at MOS9.
35. In discussions, participants underscored that the life history of turtles was oftentimes not limited to a single country and that the rationale for the creation of the Network of Sites was to foster collaboration between countries and derive enhanced conservation compared to what would be achieved through managing sites in isolation. However, they considered that so far the value of having a site listed on the Network was mostly promotional in nature. It helped Signatory States to promote the sites within their country and building support for their protection. It also helped stakeholders to hold governments accountable for protecting sites against development pressures. Participants highlighted that, in the future, the focus could shift from site recognition to fostering a network perspective that enhances transboundary cooperation.
36. In terms of site recognition within the Network, participants reflected on the possibility for a fast-track recognition of sites already recognized under other processes, such as Ramsar sites or UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Some cautioned that criteria are different under each process. They noted that after the revision, the nomination template for recognition within the Network was more straightforward, which should increase the number of nominations. They also reflected on the possibility for the AC to suggest sites, for example by creating an AC-endorsed list of candidate sites that were important for conservation within the region. They, however, cautioned that the point of the Network was not to identify important areas, but to recognize sites that were under conservation management.
37. Participants highlighted that the Network could help deliver on the Global Biodiversity Framework and that emphasizing this in communication work could bring about new momentum. They agreed it would be useful to revise the fact sheet on the Network, including to underscore Signatory States' collective responsibility for conserving marine turtles across their life history.
38. They also suggested asking Signatory States to articulate what challenges and weaknesses they saw with regard to the Network, and called for reviving the group of site managers.
39. Mark Hamann (AC Member) agreed to continue leading the AC's work on the Site Network, including considering whether there was a need for rewording of the resolution,

and developing recommendations towards making the Network more dynamic in collaboration with Signatory States.

## 5.2. Beach Management and Hatching Success

40. Ronel Nel (AC Member) recalled that the [2012 update of the IOSEA assessment of the status of leatherback turtles](#) emphasized the need to estimate the impacts of egg relocation and hatchery practices on critically low populations of leatherback turtles in the region, and the [2013 loggerhead assessment](#) showed the need for a more coherent approach to beach management, particularly as it relates to hatchling production. She also noted that the IUCN was revising its manual on beach characteristics. She and Andrea Phillott (Invited Expert) had worked on addressing these points in concert, with Ms Phillott focusing on hatchery practices and related decision making, and herself on beach management.
41. Ms Phillott presented insights from a research project on the evidence-based assessment of threats and protection of sea turtle eggs and hatchlings. She said that common threats to turtle nesting included: nest depredation, flooding of nests, illegal take, high nest temperature, dry nest substrate, and hatchling disorientation due to artificial light at night. Common actions to address these threats were: protecting eggs in situ, on-beach clutch relocation, and clutch relocation into hatcheries. Risks associated with mitigation actions included: movement-induced embryo mortality and altered hatchling sex ratios due to changes in nest microclimates. She highlighted a decision framework which would help practitioners decide whether any actions were needed, and if so, which actions were likely going to be most effective at specific locations depending on the specific threats thereat.
42. Participants reflected on how to define thresholds for nesting success, especially whether to look at the percentage of clutches or nests producing hatchlings or the egg/hatchling ratio, with some participants cautioning against defining quantitative thresholds rather than aiming to maximize hatchling production. They also reflected on the desirability of balancing sex ratios through nest relocations to mitigate climate change impacts, with participants advising caution. They agreed that hatcheries should be considered as a last resort, temporary measure for turtle protection, as hatcheries did not mitigate threats but rather circumvented them. They highlighted the importance of beach habitat conservation.
43. Ms Nel shared insights on beach ecosystem management for successful hatchling production. She highlighted that beaches were an overlooked ecosystem in coastal management. At most they were considered in terms of tourism and recreation, whereas they actually provided various ecosystem services, including for turtles. She delineated existing forms of beach management, such as nourishment to combat erosion, and emphasized the magnitude of the global sand trade, which fuelled construction projects worldwide. She noted that human activities altered sand input and wave action in many locations, and underscored that these changes, together with disturbances such as light and sound pollution, affected nest site selection and nesting success. She advocated for thinking about beaches differently, to consider the whole seascape, understand broad scale disruptions to beachscapes, and assess microhabitat effects.
44. Participants suggested Ronel present these insights at MOS9 with a view to inspire more holistic approaches to beach management. Comments related to: considering small-scale beach constructions and the situation of remote beaches; identifying areas where land management could still achieve meaningful sea turtle conservation; clearly outlining that while hatcheries were only a last resort measure, they were nevertheless much

needed in some regions; highlighting climate change impacts; pointing to the role of vegetation; considering habitat conservation across turtles' life history, not only the nesting beaches; and the long distance over which artificial light impacts sea turtles. They suggested getting a mandate for the AC to further develop these beach management guidelines, also to address the related requests the CMS Conference of the Parties had made and suggested as joint work between the Convention and the MOU.

### 5.3. Critical Habitat

45. Scott Whiting (AC Member) presented Doc.5.3 [Critical Habitat](#), recalling the mandate for the AC to define criteria for identifying habitats critical for marine turtles and thanking all those who had contributed to this work stream during the intersessional period. He noted there were various definitions of critical habitat, with the definition proposed for the MOU being “recognizable areas that are essential for the maintenance and recovery of sea turtle management units, with consideration of ecological function, evolutionary processes, and scientific, social, or cultural values.”
46. He invited views on whether “populations” should be mentioned in addition to management units, to account for the fact that smaller nations might wish to define critical habitats in their jurisdiction that might not be essential for the maintenance and recovery of the management unit as such. He noted another approach could be to keep the existing definition, but make the guidance criteria broad.
47. Participants did not see the need to add the term “populations,” noting that for countries with small coastlines turtle nesting sites would likely be of important scientific, social, or cultural value regardless of their role for the genetic stock as such.
48. In response to questions, Mr Whiting clarified that the term “management units” was used as a synonym for “genetic stocks” and did not mean regional management units (RMUs).
49. He also invited views on how the notion of critical habitat could be used within the MOU, notably pointing to:
  - Signatory States providing the Secretariat a list of the areas they define as critical habitat for each management unit or species in their jurisdiction; and
  - critical habitat being one of 18 criteria for recognition within the IOSEA site Network and one criterion for the IUCN Important Marine Turtle Areas (IMTAs), which means that Network sites and IMTAs will be critical habitats but not all critical habitats will be necessarily be recognized within the network or as IMTA.
50. During the discussion, participants among others:
  - suggested using [TurtleNet](#) to display information on critical habitats;
  - clarified that identification as critical habitat did not necessarily mean that Signatory States would put in place specific management plans for the area;
  - welcomed that the draft guidance specified that critical habitats were not only beaches;
  - called for ensuring consistent terminology use across the MoU, especially with regard to the term management unit; and
  - questioned what is to be deemed “essential” for the maintenance and recovery of management units.

51. Mr Whiting emphasized the need to further develop the draft guidance for determining critical habitats for each life stage and species.

#### 5.4. Marine Turtle Regional Management Units 2.0

52. Colin Limpus (AC Member) drew attention to the recent publication of Wallace et al. (2023) [Marine turtle regional management units 2.0: an updated framework for conservation and research of wide-ranging megafauna species](#), which refined an approach for defining regional management units at global scale.
53. He questioned the “lumping together” of species within such regional management units and invited participants’ views.
54. Participants acknowledged the usefulness of regional management units as a first level of dividing up globally distributed species into more meaningful groupings, but found the MOU’s more fine-scale focus on genetic stocks as management units to be more fitting for providing solid management advice.

#### 5.5. Marine Turtle Legislative Review in the Asia-Pacific Region

55. Christine Madden (Invited Expert) presented various WWF projects that contributed to addressing objectives identified by the IOSEA, CMS, CITES, and others. One of them was the Marine Turtle Legislative Review for the Asia-Pacific region ([UNEP/CMS/COP14/Inf.27.6.1](#)), which amongst other things helped to implement the Single Species Action Plan for Hawksbill Turtles that would be presented to MOS9 for adoption.
56. This review of marine turtle protection measures regulated by national legislation in 51 countries and territories in the Asia-Pacific region aimed to assess whether elements such as direct take, bycatch prevention, habitat protection, and trade were covered by legislation or not. Desktop research and correspondence with authorities and stakeholders served to build individual country profiles, with the results currently being analysed. There was still opportunity for countries to contribute.
57. She further presented [ShellBank](#), a global marine turtle traceability toolkit and DNA database, which aimed to serve both law enforcement and conservation research. It for example helped pinpointing the origin of confiscated turtles and developing conservation strategies for turtles across their life cycle. She noted the online DNA database should go live in June 2024 and that ShellBank already conducted capacity building workshops.
58. The Turtle Use Project, she noted, was an implementation guide for rolling out surveys to understand the drivers of turtle use and also looked at the types of catch and the number of harvested turtles. She highlighted that the survey had ready been used in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, and Sumatra. Preliminary results from PNG showed that turtles were primarily caught in their foraging grounds rather than the nesting beaches, and that they were mostly caught to be sold rather than consumed. In Fiji, the main motivator of turtle harvest was found to be cultural tradition and celebration, followed by consumption. In both countries most turtles were caught on purpose. An upcoming report would focus on the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. In response to questions, she clarified that the surveys were run by community members, with a view to enhance trust and reduce bias in the responses, and that all communities provided prior, informed consent. She noted that results would be fed back to the communities, including results of DNA testing of the turtles.

59. She further pointed to a project on “turtle cooling” which aimed to provide solutions to reverse the turtle feminization trend wherever it occurs, for example through shading; and a potential future project on mapping blue corridors for turtles, which aimed to inform the establishment of marine protected areas.
60. Participants underscored the difference between legislation being in place on paper, and its actual level of enforcement and the effectively resulting protection. They suggested comparing insights from the legal review and the turtle use surveys. With regard to turtle use, they also underscored the relevance of specifying at which life stage the turtles were taken, since the impact on the population would be different depending on whether they were juveniles or mature adults.

## 6. Partnerships and Collaboration

### 6.1. Convention on Migratory Species and Related Agreements

61. Heidrun Frisch-Nwakanma (Secretariat) introduced Doc.6.1 [Convention on Migratory Species and Related Agreements](#), noting that CMS COP14 had adopted a number of decisions relevant for IOSEA. She invited the AC to reflect on how to respond to these, noting that related mandates were included in the draft work programme.
62. Among others, she highlighted that Decisions on bycatch and other fisheries-induced mortality included turtle-related mandates. Participants reflected on who would conduct the work, emphasizing the need for expertise on artisanal fisheries. They agreed to incorporate these mandates in the draft Work Programme and refined the proposal on how to address them, noting that national reports could also provide important information
63. Other Decisions related to the work on beach management, and participants agreed to incorporate a review of information on vulnerability to climate change and plastic and light pollution into the draft Work Programme. They emphasized the challenge to find a balance between the global and local scale and underscored the need to not only consider impacts on nesting beaches but also foraging grounds. They noted consideration of noise pollution would also have been relevant.
64. Ms Frisch-Nwakanma recalled the need for an AC Member to volunteer to participate on the Dugong Technical Advisory Group to promote synergies between IOSEA and the Dugong MOU. Participants reflected on the Group’s meeting frequency and the possibility to have this role filled on a yearly rotational basis, noting this would give members exposure to other processes. It was agreed to revisit this item when the new AC was in place following MOS9.
65. Participants further:
  - took note of the adoption of Guidelines for Recreational In-water Interactions with Marine Wildlife, which built on previous work on wildlife watching and were meant to help countries develop national guidelines;
  - took note of the adoption of the Single Species Action Plan for the Hawksbill Turtle in South-East Asia and the Western Pacific Ocean Region, which would also be presented to MOS9 for adoption; and
  - took note that the Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation Measures for Marine Turtles of the Atlantic Coast of Africa met for the first time since 2008 and revised its conservation and management plan.

## 6.2. Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) and other RFMOs

66. Heidrun Frisch-Nwakanma (Secretariat) introduced Doc.6.2 [Indian Ocean Tuna Commission \(IOTC\) and other RFMOs](#).
67. She highlighted that IOSEA and IOTC concluded a cooperation agreement and invited views on the suggested priorities and next steps for its implementation. Participants considered consistent representation by turtle experts in the IOTC to be important. They hoped someone with fisheries experience would be appointed to the AC.
68. She also drew attention to the recommendations of an IOTC workshop on multi-taxa gillnet bycatch mitigation. Participants agreed it would be useful to have Signatory States compile information on the use of sub-surface set gillnets, the use of bottom-set nets, and their respective mesh size. However, they noted concerns related to the recommended roll out of trials with LED lights on gillnets, pointing to potential unintended effects related to light pollution and battery waste, and regarding the recommendation to transition away from gillnets to lower impact gears, such as longlines.
69. It was agreed that the Steering Group on Bycatch, if endorsed by Signatory States, would be well placed to consider these matters in more detail. They could also advise on the Secretariat's proposal to investigate potential overlaps with the work of the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement, the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna, and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.

## 7. Institutional Matters

### 7.1. Terms of Reference for the Advisory Committee

70. Heidrun Frisch-Nwakanma (Secretariat) introduced Doc.7.1 [Revised Draft Terms of Reference for the Advisory Committee](#) and recalled that the Secretariat had been mandated to produce revised draft ToR for consideration at MOS9. This was following a proposal for changes that had been discussed but not agreed at MOS8, and the option presented sought to take into account the views expressed during that meeting.
71. She said that most of the content of the current ToR had been retained but reordered. The key proposed changes were that:
  - the terms of AC members should generally be limited to two consecutive terms (each consisting of two regular meetings of Signatory States), with a third term possible on an exceptional basis;
  - nominations could come from Signatory States, the Advisory Committee, and the IUCN Marine Turtle Specialist Group, whereby existing AC members could self-nominate themselves for a second term; and the AC would review all new nominations and make recommendations to the MOS;
  - the AC would select both a Chair and Vice-Chair, each limited to two consecutive terms;
  - two intersessional AC meetings and quarterly conference calls should be held; and
  - Sub-Regional Focal Points, MTTF Chairs, and experts identified by the AC in consultation with the Secretariat should be invited as observers to AC meetings, with additional observers requiring approval by the Secretariat in consultation with the AC Chair and Vice-Chair.
72. Discussions among AC Members and the Secretariat highlighted the importance of capacity building to empower the next generation of AC Members. They emphasized the

importance of striving for balance of expertise in filling gaps in membership, noting the Secretariat and AC could highlight gaps to inform decision making by Signatory States.

73. AC members reflected on questions raised by the Secretariat and the draft ToR were agreed to be forwarded to MOS9 with minor modifications.
74. AC members also suggested that:
  - the AC may invite specialists to attend meetings to supplement known gaps in diversity; and
  - if funding permitted, one or two days prior to the second intersessional AC meeting should be dedicated to AC-only working groups to help finalize intersessional work for discussion.

## **7.2. Advisory Committee Membership**

75. Heidrun Frisch-Nwakanma (Secretariat) noted that seven of the AC's ten positions needed to be refilled, as these members' terms were coming to an end. Two current members had indicated they would step down at the end of their term, one had not responded despite numerous reminders, and four members expressed willingness to serve for another term.
76. Participants also reflected on the implications of the revised ToRs, should they be adopted at MOS9. If the term limit were to be implemented, one member who was willing to continue would no longer be eligible for membership, with a second one being only eligible for an exceptional third term.
77. The Secretariat highlighted that Signatory States could make nominations until 21 April 2024. She encouraged AC Members to reach out to experts who could fill strengthen the AC's expertise in important fields, such as the mitigation of bycatch in both industrial and artisanal fisheries or the sustainable take of turtles and eggs. Participants also reflected on the relevance of nominating experts on turtle health.
78. Participants had an informal discussion on possible nominees. The Secretariat highlighted that individuals that had been nominated in the past could be nominated again. She also reminded everyone that this time, the old Terms of Reference would still apply to the nomination process, meaning that only Signatory States could submit them.

## **7.3. Next Meeting of the Advisory Committee (AC11)**

79. The Secretariat noted that that under the new ToR the next regular AC meeting should take place within twelve months of MOS9, so before July 2025. She invited offers for hosting the meeting, which will otherwise take place in Bonn, Germany.

## **8. Any Other Business**

80. No other business was raised.

## **9. Closure of the Meeting**

81. Those who participated in the meeting remotely underscored the value of the virtual participation opportunity and thanked the Secretariat for making this possible. The all-in-

one audio-video system had worked well, even though it unfortunately also captured a lot of background noise.

82. Participants thanked long-time AC member Colin Limpus for his engagement, hoping he would continue to provide his expertise as an emeritus member.
83. After the customary expressions of thanks to all AC Members, the Sub-Regional Focal Points, the two MTTTF representatives, the Invited Experts, the Secretariat, and all that had contributed to the success of the meeting, the Chair declared proceedings closed.

Annex 1

**List of Participants**

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**Annex 2**

**Agenda**

Agenda Item	Document Number
1. Welcoming Remarks	<i>no document</i>
2. Adoption of the Agenda and Schedule	<a href="#">CMS/IOSEA/AC10/Doc.2.1/Rev.1</a> <a href="#">CMS/IOSEA/AC10/Doc.2.2</a>
3. Review of Implementation of the Conservation and Management Plan	<i>no document</i>
3.1 Implementation of the Work Programme 2020-2024	<a href="#">CMS/IOSEA/AC10/Doc.3.1</a>
3.2 Reports of the Chairs of the Marine Turtle Task Forces and of Sub-regional Focal Points	<i>no document</i>
3.3 Preliminary Analysis of National Reports	<i>no document</i>
4. Further Implementation of the Conservation and Management Plan	<i>no document</i>
4.1. Draft Work Programme 2024-2028	<a href="#">CMS/IOSEA/AC10/Doc.4.1</a>
4.2. Capacity-Building Strategy	<i>no document</i>
5. Conservation of Marine Turtles and their Habitats	<i>no document</i>
5.1. Network of Sites of Importance for Marine Turtles in the Indian Ocean - South-East Asia Region	<i>no document</i>
5.2. Beach Management and Hatching Success	<i>no document</i>
5.3. Critical Habitat	<a href="#">CMS/IOSEA/AC10/Doc.5.3</a>
5.4. Marine Turtle Regional Management Units 2.0	Ref.: <a href="https://www.int-res.com/articles/esr2023/52/n052p209.pdf">https://www.int-res.com/articles/esr2023/52/n052p209.pdf</a>
5.5. Marine Turtle Legislative Review in the Asia-Pacific Region	Ref.: <a href="#">UNEP/CMS/COP14/Inf.27.6.1</a>
6. Partnerships and Collaboration	<i>no document</i>
6.1. Convention on Migratory Species and Related Agreements	<a href="#">CMS/IOSEA/MOS9/Doc.6.1</a>
6.2. Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) and other RFMOs	<a href="#">CMS/IOSEA/MOS9/Doc.6.2</a>

Agenda Item	Document Number
7. Institutional Matters	<i>no document</i>
7.1. Terms of Reference for the Advisory Committee	<a href="#">CMS/IOSEA/AC10/Doc.7.1</a>
7.2. Advisory Committee Membership	<i>no document</i>
7.3. Next Meeting of the Advisory Committee (AC11)	<i>no document</i>
8. Any Other Business	<i>no document</i>
9. Closure of the Meeting	<i>no document</i>



# IOSEA

Marine Turtle MOU

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

