



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

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THIRD MEETING OF THE SIGNATORY STATES
Bangkok, 29-31 March 2005

PREPARATIONS FOR THE 2006 YEAR OF THE TURTLE CAMPAIGN

1. The Second Meeting of the Signatory States expressed enthusiastic support for the idea of organising a major Year of the Turtle (YoT) campaign in 2006 to raise awareness of turtle conservation throughout the IOSEA region. 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.

2. Over the past year, the Secretariat has observed that the YoT proposal has been positively received in many circles and it is aware of at least one Signatory State having requested a budgetary allocation for YoT activities. Recently the Secretariat has been approached by a number of organisations interested in promoting the conservation of marine turtles through film (e.g. making use of extensive film footage already in existence), which could dovetail perfectly with YoT activities. There will be opportunities to explore this exciting possibility during the meeting.

3. It was agreed at the Second Meeting of Signatory States 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 were expected to bring concrete ideas and budgets to the present meeting. The Secretariat emphasised then that if preliminary conceptual and budgetary planning had not been undertaken within each country by this time, it would be difficult to take decisions and move beyond the present state.

4. It remains to be seen how far planning has advanced within individual countries. The Secretariat did not have the capacity to devote time to this task in 2004, however it has made provisions for staff time to be allocated to this for the remainder of 2005 – notably, with the imminent arrival of the next Australian “Youth Ambassador” and possibly another person later in the year.

5. The Third Meeting of the Signatory States affords the last real opportunity to have a collective discussion on plans for the event. It is proposed that a working group be established during the meeting to consider all of the points raised in paragraph 1, as well as the crucial issue of funding (and fund-raising) that will be needed to organise a successful event. While new resources will certainly be required to support YoT activities at the national and secretariat level, many activities can be undertaken that make use of existing resources.

6. It would be helpful if the working group could consider also the basic organisational framework for the campaign, such as the appointment of national focal points for co-ordination of YoT activities within each country, the establishment of a steering committee, and the proposed launch date for the campaign (perhaps timed to coincide with the holding of the Fourth Meeting of the Signatory States). If time permits, consideration might also be given to selecting an overall theme and key messages for the event.

7. The annex to this paper, drafted by Dr. Colin Limpus and circulated at the last meeting, may help stimulate discussion of activities that could be organised at international/regional, national and local levels.

Action requested / Expected outcome:

All participants are invited to come prepared to share their ideas about how to go about organising the 2006 Year of the Turtle campaign, and to indicate what their Governments or organisations would be able to contribute (financially, in-kind, or logistically) to the event.

A more detailed planning framework is expected to emerge from working group discussions, which will identify specific activities, expected contributors and time frames. Participants should identify or undertake to identify after the meeting focal points in their respective countries/organisations who will be responsible for coordinating events at different levels. A steering committee, with well-defined responsibilities, should be formally established to coordinate the planning and execution of activities.

ACTIONS		
International & Regional	National	Local
Promote through regional websites	Promote through national websites	
IOSEA to initiate at least 1 new significant action	Each country to develop one new significant conservation action	Radio & TV promotions (Weekly time slots?)
Each international NGO / IGO to initiate 1 new <i>regional</i> action	Each country to undertake a national census of nesting populations	Introduce turtle biology and conservation into school teaching programs (Make school teaching aids available) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use available materials where possible. • Blank illustrative material can be prepared for regional electronic distribution that then has the local language text added for use in the local schools. • Colouring books • See below for other resources.
Encourage International Fisheries Agencies to initiate a project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bycatch reduction • Monitoring bycatch 	Tagging projects (flipper tags and satellite tags) to develop current information on migration and habitat usage and international sharing of populations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicise for the return of tags (“Tags-wanted” brochure). • T-shirt/cap reward & information for return of tags. • Use tag recoveries and telemetry results to publicise the theme messages of YOT • Display new migration data on IOSEA/ IMapS. 	Improvement of turtle habitat: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local community groups can clean up debris from nesting beaches. • Dive clubs and resorts can remove discarded fishing line, net and other debris from coral reefs and seagrass pastures. • Plant native trees behind nestings to protect them from light pollution from coastal development.
	Issue national marine turtle postage stamp(s) to celebrate YOT.	
Encourage bilateral cooperative projects	Official opening of YOT-2006 by national politicians	
Negotiate publications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marine Turtle Newsletter special issue • Chelonian Conservation & Biology special issue • Conservation journals • Fisheries journals 	Posters & brochures & publicity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poster emphasising national theme • Turtle identification brochure in national language • Fridge magnets • T-shirt or caps or drink holders • Post cards 	Public relations events at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turtle rehabilitation centres • Aquaria and turtle rearing sites. • Hatcheries • Nesting beaches
Hold regional workshop(s) to train for and facilitate conservation actions	Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Material distributed via website & CD/DVD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turtle biology • Turtle folk lore • Photos, maps. PowerPoint presentations etc 	Village acting groups to take messages into remote low-literacy areas.

Consider an overall **THEME MOTTO & LOGO**

For example: “Marine turtles: an inheritance for our grand-children”

Select a limited number of **THEME MESSAGES**

These theme messages then form the basis of the common messages that are developed into the various international, national and local actions.

For example, simplified versions of the following concepts:

- Marine turtles travel great distances on migration – they are a shared international resource.
 - Marine turtles have to survive for decades until they are old enough to breed. Even as adults, they don’t breed every year.
 - Too much harvesting of turtles or their eggs threatens their long-term survival.
 - The effects of over-harvesting will not be felt for many years. Future generations will pay the price for excesses committed today
 - Accidental capture and death in fishing gear threatens the survival of turtles. Fishers can help to reduce this mortality.
 - Marine turtles need dark, undisturbed beaches for successful laying of their eggs.
 - Healthy coral reefs and seagrass pastures are vital as turtle feeding areas.
 - At least 70% of egg clutches need to incubate successfully to maintain the turtle population.
 - Depleted turtle populations can be increased, but decades of protection of the turtles and their habitats will be needed to turn the situation around.
- Etc.