



**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
ON THE CONSERVATION AND
MANAGEMENT OF MARINE TURTLES
AND THEIR HABITATS OF THE INDIAN
OCEAN AND SOUTH-EAST ASIA**

CMS/IOSEA/AC10/Doc.6.1
14 March 2024

10TH MEETING OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Pattaya, Thailand, 31 March-3 April 2024
Agenda Item 6.1

CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES AND RELATED AGREEMENTS

(Prepared by the Secretariat)

1. This document provides an update of relevant developments and upcoming events of the 'CMS Family', focusing in particular on the outcomes of the 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Dugongs (*Dugong dugon*) and their Habitats throughout their Range ([Dugong MOU](#)) and the Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation Measures for Marine Turtles of the Atlantic Coast of Africa ([Atlantic Turtle MOU](#)).

CMS COP14

2. The 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals ([CMS COP14](#)) was held from 12-17 February 2024 in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. Resolutions, Decisions and Concerted Actions were adopted on over 100 distinct topics by representatives of the 133 Parties globally. Despite COP14 being held in a double-landlocked country, many of the outcomes address conservation priorities for aquatic species, including marine turtles.
3. Specific mandates related to marine turtles are included in the following outcomes:

- a) Decisions on **Bycatch and Other Fisheries-induced Mortality** include, besides provisions on sharks and rays, cetaceans and seabirds, the following turtle-related mandates:

The Scientific Council is requested to, subject to the availability of external resources:

- a) *identify regions where reviews of relative levels of bycatch of CMS-listed marine mammals and marine turtles in commercial and artisanal fisheries would be a priority and/or beneficial; collaborate with all relevant organizations including fisheries management bodies to develop regional reviews with a view to reducing the levels of bycatch of all CMS-listed marine mammals and turtles in commercial and artisanal fisheries; identify and prioritize fisheries and areas in which adverse impacts of bycatch are highest for CMS-listed marine mammals and turtles cooperate with the relevant organizations, including fisheries bodies to develop the most appropriate bycatch mitigation measures for fisheries of highest priority;*

and develop appropriate bycatch mitigation measures with associated timebound action plans;

- b) *in collaboration with the IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU and, if possible, the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles and the Caribbean Environment Programme, review current knowledge about existing measures to reduce and mitigate bycatch of marine turtles for both commercial fisheries and artisanal fisheries, and make recommendations to Parties and the Signatory States of the IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU on the most effective and appropriate measures to reduce and mitigate bycatch, while ensuring that recommended measures do not act to the disadvantage of other CMS-listed marine species;*

➤ The AC's advice is needed on how to address these mandates and reflect them in the next Work Programme for the MOU.

- b) **Guidelines for Recreational In-water Interactions with Marine Wildlife** were adopted through a Resolution with associated Decisions. The Guidelines present considerations and guidelines to assist countries in adopting appropriate measures to regulate in-water recreational interactions with marine mammals, marine turtles, large fish and seabirds in their area of jurisdiction. They aim to avoid and mitigate disturbance and adverse effects from in-water interactions on the target species and associated habitats, including both long-term detrimental effects on population demographics (e.g., survival, reproduction) and shorter-term impacts on individual behaviour and welfare. The Guidelines provide examples, considerations and suggestions to develop, adjust or validate decisions and regulations governing recreational in-water interactions, helping governments to identify how to manage these activities effectively in the specific local contexts.

- c) Specific Decisions on **Marine Turtles** were adopted:

The Scientific Council is requested to, subject to the availability of external resources:

- a) *review, as far as feasible in collaboration with the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia (IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU) and the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles, relevant scientific information on conservation and threats to marine turtles in a region- and species-specific context, including their vulnerability to climate change, the threats of plastic pollution and light pollution on post-hatchlings, and the identification of habitats resilient to climate change as these habitats may require increased conservation effort over time; and*
- b) *based on this review, develop new recommendations for the conservation of all species of marine turtle included in Appendix I or II of the Convention including on the preservation of the current nesting beaches and the identification of new nesting beaches, and collate current and innovative management options to mitigate the effects of climate change on nesting beaches, such as beach cooling and beach restoration projects, for presentation at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*

➤ The AC's advice is needed on how to address these mandates and reflect them in the next Work Programme for the MOU.

- d) The **Single Species Action Plan for the Hawksbill Turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) in South-East Asia and the Western Pacific Ocean Region** was adopted, with associated Decisions that foresee the set-up of a governance structure by countries, with each Range State of the SSAP to nominate one national government representative (Focal Point) and one national expert to serve on a Steering Group, to establish National Working Groups consisting of National Focal Points, local stakeholders and scientists, and to develop a national work plan focusing on priority actions relevant to their country or territory. The SSAP and corresponding recommendations will be presented to MOS9 for adoption, too.
4. Other outcomes with high relevance to marine turtles address the following topics:
 - a) Fish Aggregating Devices
 - b) Marine Pollution
 - c) Marine Noise
 - d) Vessel Strikes
 - e) Deep-seabed Mineral Exploitation Activities
 - f) Seagrass Ecosystems
 - g) Illegal and Unsustainable Taking of Migratory Species
 - h) Aquatic Wild Meat
 5. The final Resolutions and Decisions of COP14 are still being processed, and will appear shortly on the meeting page ([CMS COP14](#)) as well as the following pages:
 - [Resolutions in Effect](#)
 - [Decisions in Effect](#)

In the meantime, unformatted versions can be accessed as In-session Documents on the meeting page.

Dugong MOU

6. The Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Dugongs (*Dugong dugon*) and their Habitats throughout their Range (Dugong MOU) has a very similar range to the IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU, and of course dugongs inhabit some of the same habitats.
7. Under the Dugong MOU, a Dugong Technical Advisory Group (DTAG) has been established, consisting of specialists in dugong biology, seagrass assessment and monitoring, evaluation of seagrass ecosystem services, community-based marine resource management, bycatch, sustainable development and social sciences, and business development and social enterprise. The role of the DTAG is to provide technical and scientific support to Signatories and the Dugong MOU Secretariat, for the effective implementation of the Dugong MOU and its Conservation and Management Plan (CMP).
8. The Terms of Reference (available [here](#)) foresee that a member of the IOSEA Turtle MOU Advisory Committee should be part of the DTAG to promote synergies and cooperation in the region.
9. To date, no AC Member has volunteered for this role, leaving the position vacant. Given the significant potential for synergies between the two MOUs, it is hoped that a volunteer can be found.

Atlantic Turtle MOU

10. The [3rd Meeting of Signatories](#) of the Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation Measures for Marine Turtles of the Atlantic Coast of Africa (Atlantic Turtle MOU) was held in Senegal on 4-5 September 2023 as part of the [CMS Marine Megafauna Week: Atlantic Coast of Africa](#). Participants reviewed the latest information on the conservation status of marine turtles across the region, discussed the challenges and opportunities for regional collaboration, and agreed an updated Conservation and Management Plan. The Atlantic Turtle MOU covers the coastal areas of 26 countries, extending 14,000 km from Morocco to South Africa, including important nesting sites, feeding areas and migration corridors.
11. The [Revised Conservation and Management Plan \(2023\)](#) is available in English and French. The report of the meeting is still under preparation and will be made available on the meeting page linked to above in due course.

Action requested of AC10:

- Review the outcomes of CMS COP14, discuss how turtle-related mandates could be addressed and how they could be reflected in the Work Programme 2024-2028, and on recommendations to be made to MOS9
- Decide on Advisory Committee representation on the Dugong Technical Advisory Group