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

CMS/IOSEA/MOS8/Inf.9.1.e

19 September 2019

Original: English

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8<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE SIGNATORY STATES

Da Nang, Viet Nam, 21-25 October 2019

Agenda Item 9.1

**UPDATES ON THE STATUS OF IOSEA NETWORK SITES**

**BU TINAH SHOAL**

*(Prepared by the United Arab Emirates)*

**Update on the Status of the IOSEA Network Site**  
(Version: 21 August 2019)

**[Bu Tinah Shoal]**

**A. Date of submission (DD/MM/YYYY):**

*The date on which the questionnaire was completed.*

22-Aug-2019

**B. Name and address of compiler(s), if not the IOSEA Focal Point**

*Name and contact information (including affiliation) for the individual(s) who prepared this information.*

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**C. Country:** *The name of the country in which the site is located.*

United Arab Emirates

**D. Name of site:** *The name of the site (alternative names should be given in brackets).*

**1. Have there been changes in the management authority?**

Name, address and contact details of the body responsible for the direct local conservation and management of the site, if different than in original proposal.

No

**2. What are the current population numbers and trends for the marine turtle species present at the site?**

Please insert population numbers for each species present and the year when the population was estimated, as well as the population trend (e.g. stable, increasing, decreasing, unknown)

The two species found in Abu Dhabi waters are the green (*Chelonia mydas*) and hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) with only the hawksbill nesting. Aerial surveys has shown a stable estimated population of both species in Abu Dhabi waters is 6,000 with 67% green turtles. More specifically to the site, aerial survey of 2018 estimates a population of 920. Furthermore, there is an average of (13) hawksbill turtle nests on Bu Tinah since 2014 (range 9-24 nests).

**3. Have there been any changes in land/sea ownership, protected status, legislation and/or governance framework, which affect the site?**

Describe any changes to legislation / regulations relevant to the protection / conservation of marine turtles and their habitats at this site, and comment on their effectiveness.

Mention any changes in nationally relevant protected area status, international conservation designations and, in the case of transboundary sites, bilateral or multilateral conservation measures which pertain to all or part of the site since 2014. If a protected area or reserve has been established (at a national/regional level), give the date of its establishment and size. If only a part of the site is included within a protected area, the area of marine turtle habitat that is protected should be noted.

New International designations since 2014 may include sites listed under the UNESCO/World Heritage Convention, Man and Biosphere Reserve Network, Ramsar Convention, other site conservation networks, etc. Where appropriate, list the IUCN (1994) protected areas management category(ies) that apply to the site.

No

**4. What are currently the most important threats to marine turtles and their habitat at the site?**

Describe the human and natural factors negatively affecting the ecological character of the site, both within and in the vicinity of the site. These may include new or changing activities/uses, major development projects etc., which have had, are having, or may have a detrimental effect on the natural ecological character of the site. For example, describe in terms of the percentage of coastline (or other area) modified/affected by a particular threat; for egg collection, describe in terms of number of nests, per species, per year. Mention also data-deficient threats, where a threat is known to be present but is not quantified. Collectively, this information should provide a basis for monitoring of ecological character of the site.

**Sea turtle poaching**

Turtle poaching for meat and eggs has been witnessed during early years (1970s) but is no longer an issue as the Federal laws (23) & (24) of 1999 do not allow the hunting and collection of turtles and their eggs as well as harming their associated habitats.

## **Pollution**

### **Natural Hazards**

There is the occasional flooding due to natural weather conditions, during summer which turtle nests are inundated for more than 6 hours. This however, is not a regular issue and happens once or twice every nesting season.

### **Illegal fishing in the area: coral damage and bycatch**

As Bu Tinah Shoal is under UNESCO recognized core area in Marawah Marine Biosphere Reserve, fishing in the area is prohibited and regular patrols are in place.

### **Habitat destruction/modification**

Destruction or modification to the site is not an issue. The site is under a marine biosphere reserve and thus no activities that would lead to the habitat destruction or modification.

### **Socio economic factors**

Local citizen practice traditional fishing in nearby areas in territorial waters. The site considered as no-take zone, which plays an important role as a natural nursery for fisheries and a reference for scientific studies.

## 5. New conservation and management interventions taken since 2014 and measures planned for near future

Describe conservation and management interventions taken at the site to address threats since 2014. Any application of coastal and marine spatial planning, or integrated coastal/marine zone management planning, involving or affecting the site should be noted.

Describe any other new conservation measures taken at the site, such as restrictions on development, management practices beneficial to wildlife, closures of fishing, etc. (Note that information on any monitoring schemes and survey methods should be given under point 19, below.)

Where applicable, describe public outreach and communication activities. In addition, if applicable, describe any new developments in the involvement of local communities and indigenous people in the participatory management of the site, including co-management activities, surveillance and enforcement, and performance evaluation since 2014.

- National Plan of Action for Marine Turtles launched in 2019.
- National Plan for Action for Sharks and Rays launched in 2018.
- Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance of the wider area around the 200 sq. km Bu Tinah Shoal by radar system.

## 6. Current / proposed scientific research and monitoring since 2014

Name current and/or proposed scientific research projects and their start and end dates, relating to marine turtles and their habitats. Please describe monitoring activities (e.g., tagging, satellite tracking, genetic sampling, nesting and foraging ground surveys, ongoing beach monitoring, etc.). Cite relevant published papers in support of the submission.

- Annual monitoring of nesting and hatching on the beaches of Bu Tinah.
- 2016-19: Satellite tagging program for foraging green turtle in collaboration with EN-WWF.
- Annual monitoring of wildlife mortality
- Aerial survey of marine wildlife (2015 and 2018) covered the Bu Tinah Shoal.

## 7. Briefly describe current financial as well as capacity-building needs

Identify fundraising and capacity building needs for the site (e.g. in relation to monitoring, management interventions, surveillance and enforcement, and performance evaluation).

- Financial needs are not required as the site is managed by the government of Abu Dhabi
- Capacity building has been ongoing on an annual bases and includes:
  - Rangers training on turtle nest identification
  - Rangers training on wildlife monitoring and investigation of Mortality
  - Onsite training of researchers and rangers by visiting scientists / specialists on turtle tagging (Dr. Nicolas Pilcher, Dr. Brendan Godley)

## 8. References since 2014

List any new references relevant to marine turtle records and to the site, including management plans, major scientific reports, scientific articles and bibliographies. When a large body of published material on the site is available, only the most important references need be cited, with priority being given to recent literature containing extensive bibliographies. Reprints or copies of the most important literature should be appended whenever possible. Provide website addresses of references where available.

- Aerial Survey of Marine Wildlife, 2015 (Internal Report)
- Aerial Survey of Marine Wildlife, 2018 (Internal Report)
- Monitoring of nesting habitats of hawksbills, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 (Internal Reports)