



**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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9TH MEETING OF THE SIGNATORY STATES
Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania, 24-27 June 2024
Agenda Item 8.4

ILLEGAL TAKE AND TRADE

(Prepared by the Secretariat and the Chair of the Illegal Trade Working Group)

1. Take and trade remain key threats to marine turtles throughout much of the IOSEA region. A dedicated section of the MOU website (<https://www.cms.int/iosea-turtles/en/species/threats/illegal-take-trade>) provides an overview of the threat posed by illegal take and trade of turtles. It draws from previous work under the MOU, as well as outputs of other entities such as CITES, CMS and NGO partners. This webpage explains that illegal take can assume various forms, from poaching of animals and eggs on nesting beaches to illegal take of animals at sea. Typically, Green and Leatherback Turtles are hunted for their meat; the Hawksbill Turtle is hunted for its carapace as the raw material for craftwork; while the eggs of Loggerhead and Olive Ridley Turtles are considered a delicacy. Turtle meat consumption reportedly still occurs in 75 per cent of IOSEA Signatory States, while trade in shell products seems to be predominant in countries of East Asia.

Illegal Trade Working Group

2. At their Eighth Meeting in Da Nang, Vietnam, in October 2019 Signatory States decided to revive the MOU's Illegal Trade Working Group (ITWG). This decision was prompted by the findings of the CITES-led report "Status, scope and trends of the legal and illegal international trade in marine turtles, its conservation impacts, management options and mitigation priorities" which was prepared in cooperation with, inter alia, the IOSEA MOU and CMS. The study highlighted numerous examples of ongoing illegal activity and revealed that domestic illegal trade in marine turtles was greater in magnitude than international illegal trade.
3. A number of tasks were assigned to the ITWG in the Work Programme 2020-2024:
 - #58: Strengthen internal, bilateral and international cooperation in enforcement, collaborating with IGOs and NGOs, such as CITES, ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network (WEN), South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN), and TRAFFIC, to ensure the issue of marine turtle trade is on the agenda of future meetings. (Sigs, Sec, ITWG, IGO, NGO)
 - #59: Cooperate with CITES to ensure synergies and identify supply and demand areas and trade routes for the international trade in marine turtles and their products and develop targeted strategies to address these issues. (Sigs, ITWG, NGO)
 - #60: Extend an invitation to Signatories not present at MOS8, non-Signatory Range/consumer States, CITES, as well as relevant NGOs active in consumer

- states to join the Illegal Trade Working Group (ITWG). The ITWG will choose its chair and update its task list. (Sigs, Sec)
- #61: Take further steps to understand and reduce use and domestic trade and to develop awareness campaigns to target online illegal trade. (Sigs, ITWG)
4. Measures #58, 59 and 61 were included in the task list developed by the ITWG with help from the Secretariat, which was finalized in February 2021. The agreed Task List was made available on the website and is replicated in Annex 1 of this document.
 5. The current members of the working group are:
 - Signatory States: Australia, Islamic Republic of Iran (Chair), Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mozambique, Philippines, United Republic of Tanzania, United States
 - Advisory Committee members: Dr. Colin Limpus, Dr. Jeff Miller
 - International Organizations: Inter American Sea Turtle Convention ([IAC](#))
 - NGOs: TRAFFIC Vietnam and WWF Australia
 6. With a new Work Programme due to be adopted at MOS9 (see Doc.7.1 [Draft Work Programme 2024-2028](#)), Signatory States need to decide whether to maintain this working group, and if so, what tasks to assign to it. A number of proposals are already included in the draft Work Programme, including the proposal to request the ITWG to provide a report to AC meetings, giving the opportunity for closer collaboration beyond the involvement of individual AC Members.

Single Species Action Plan for the Hawksbill Turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) in South-East Asia and the Western Pacific Ocean Region

7. This Single Species Action Plan (SSAP), jointly developed with CMS, seeks to integrate the actions necessary to address trade and use at both the domestic and the international level. It is proposed for adoption at this meeting (see [Doc.8.5](#)). Related actions have been included in the Doc.7.1 [Draft Work Programme 2024-2028](#).

CMS Aquatic Wild Meat Working Group

8. [CMS Resolution 12.15 on Aquatic Wild Meat](#) was adopted in 2017. It defines aquatic wild meat as the products derived from marine mammals, sea turtles and crocodiles, which are used for food or other purposes. With this Resolution, CMS Parties aim to improve the understanding of the extent and impact of wild meat harvests, including illegal harvest, on migratory species and to ensure that legal harvest for subsistence is sustainable, through building capacity.
9. The Resolution also established a thematic Working Group dealing with aquatic wild meat, to provide expert advice to CMS Parties, and to recommend actions for Parties, non-Party Range States and other stakeholders, including intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. Two members of the Advisory Committee (Colin Limpus and Jarina Mohd Jani) are serving on this Working Group, to ensure synergies with the MOU.
10. The Working Group provided a detailed report on its activities to CMS COP14 (see UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.30.1.2/Rev.3 [Aquatic Wild Meat](#)), and received new mandates through CMS Decision 14.187:

The Scientific Council, through its Aquatic Wild Meat Working Group, is requested to:

- a) develop criteria for considering if some Appendix II-listed sharks and rays should be included within the scope of the Working Group;
- b) collect and present information about seabird harvests as aquatic wild meat in collaboration with the Task Forces on illegal take established by Resolution 11.16 (Rev.COP14);
- c) collaborate with the relevant IUCN Specialist Groups to present a case to the Scientific Council for the assessment of the migratory nature of crocodylians (Genera: *Gavialis*, *Crocodylus*, *Mecistops*, *Caiman*, *Melanosuchus*) and freshwater chelonians, and the relevance of CMS to their conservation and management, including whether or not they may fit the criteria for inclusion in the Appendices;
- d) support, as capacity allows:
 - i. studies of the human dimensions of aquatic wild meat use, which are critical for designing effective conservation and management programmes that favour sustainable over unsustainable uses, including:
 - contemporary and historical socio-cultural aspects of harvesting and consuming aquatic wild meat, including the role of taboo systems, to provide insights or management measures that can be respectful of the cultural practices of Indigenous Peoples, and local communities;
 - the drivers of the harvest and consumption of aquatic wild meat;
 - the nutritional roles aquatic wild meat provides, the strengths and weaknesses of alternatives, and the health risks from both;
 - food security and safety of aquatic wild meat use;
 - ii. increased quantitative assessments of consumption and trade in aquatic wild meat to better understand demand and trade pathways;
 - iii. increased efforts to assess the efficacy of existing legislation with regard to specific aquatic wild meat uses, and the degree to which enforcement capacity alone can address unsustainable aquatic wild meat harvests;
 - iv. implementation of environmental education programmes to raise awareness of the importance and benefits of migratory megafauna, and laws concerning them;
 - v. analysis of the extent of discard cases and their impact on the availability of aquatic wild meat;
- e) encourage the establishment of networks of appropriate experts to foster collaborative efforts to develop regional action plans for reducing unsustainable aquatic wild meat harvests; and
- f) ensure dissemination of information on its work on aquatic wild meat and the resulting recommendations by:
 - i. sharing information with the International Whaling Commission and participating in future Small Cetacean Subcommittee meetings with a focus on aquatic wild meat;
 - ii. continuing to provide advice to the CMS Secretariat to input to the Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management;
 - iii. extending collaboration to include COMFAUNA, CIMFAUNA, the Sustainable Wildlife Management (SWM) Programme, and the WILDMEAT Project;
 - iv. supporting efforts for coordination between CMS and CITES for improved regulation and sustainable management of trade in aquatic wild meat species;
 - v. publishing consolidated papers in their individual expert capacity about aquatic wild meat harvests, and drawing these to the attention of the Scientific Council.

11. Doc.7.1 [Draft Work Programme 2024-2028](#) contains a proposed action to encourage

the continued involvement of the Advisory Committee in this working group.

CMS Resolution on Illegal and Unsustainable Taking of Wildlife (Resolution 11.31 (Rev.COP14))

12. Given the magnitude of illegal and unsustainable taking of migratory species, CMS Parties agreed to address these issues in a more cross-cutting, comprehensive manner, while bearing in mind the continued need for some measures aimed specifically at different taxa or groups of species, including through existing initiatives under CMS such as the work stream on Aquatic Wild Meat. Taking in this context, in line with the Convention text, includes activities driven by a variety of motivations, including taking for subsistence, luxury meat, sale, sport, pest control, or religious and belief-based uses.
13. The Resolution and related Decision 14.182 outline numerous activities for Parties. Decision 14.184 directed to the Scientific Council among other things foresees the establishment of a Working Group on the taking of migratory species for various uses, taking into account ongoing work under the Convention, and considering the need to modify the terms of reference of any existing Working Groups to effectively address the issues of illegal and unsustainable taking of migratory species.

CITES

14. Details on developments and activities under CITES with respect to marine turtles are available in CMS/IOSEA/MOS9/Inf.9.3 [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora \(CITES\)](#).

Action requested of MOS9:

- Review the overview of work on illegal take and trade under the MOU and CMS and related recommendations, and decide how these should be reflected in the draft Work Programme 2024-2028 (Doc.7.1)

IOSEA Illegal Trade Working Group (ITWG) Task List 2020-2024

Background

The ITWG is an informal working group, which was established in 2015 and aims to increase the visibility of the issue of illegal take of and trade in marine turtles in the IOSEA region and beyond. At their 8th Meeting (MOS8) in 2019, Signatories to the IOSEA Marine Turtles MOU decided to revive the group, instructing the ITWG to update its membership and task list as well as elect its own chair ([IOSEA Work Programme 2020-2024](#) (WP), Measure 60). Supported by the IOSEA Secretariat, the group fulfilled this first task intersessionally.

The current members of the ITWG are:

- Signatory States: Australia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mozambique, Philippines, United Republic of Tanzania, United States, Viet Nam
- Advisory Committee Members: Dr. Colin Limpus, Dr. Jeff Miller
- IGOs: Inter-American Sea Turtle Convention (IAC)
- NGOs: WWF, TRAFFIC
- Chair: Mr. Asghar Mobaraki, Islamic Republic of Iran

The ITWG task list is based on the IOSEA WP and the [IOSEA Conservation and Management Plan](#) (CMP). It also takes into consideration CITES Decisions 18.210-18.217 in an attempt to enhance implementation of both the WP and the CITES Decisions and to avoid duplication of effort. The tasks of the ITWG mainly deal with, but are not limited to, strengthening communication, cooperation and outreach at all levels to tackle the issue of illegal take and trade.

IOSEA Illegal Trade Working Group Task List

Tasks	Reference
1. Elect ITWG chair to cover the period until the next MOS	WP 60
2. Adopt a task list and review it before each meeting of the Signatory States to the IOSEA MOU (MOS), or as instructed by the latest MOS.	WP60
3. Report on the implementation of the task list at each MOS.	Secretariat
4. Raise funds for implementing the activities of the Working Group, if needed.	ITWG task list 2015-2019
5. Consider inviting additional Signatory States, non-Signatory Consumer States, CITES, Ramsar and relevant NGOs to join the working group.	WP60
MOU internal communication and coordination	
6. Exchange and discuss information on monitoring, compliance and trade issues at regular intervals, particularly on illegal take and domestic illegal trade. Take into consideration or contribute to similar discussions at the CITES Animals Committee and Standing Committee, as applicable (see CITES Decision 18.211 d).	CMP 5.1 e
7. Based on 6, consider preparing written reports on illegal take and trade in the IOSEA region/sub-regions in cooperation with CITES with the view to	ITWG Members

addressing gaps and avoiding duplication of effort (See CITES Decision 18.211 e)	2020
8. Liaise with the IOSEA Site Network Working Group, with a view to giving more consideration to the issue of illegal take of and trade in marine turtles in the Site Network proposal evaluation process.	ITWG 2015-2019
9. Jointly prepare outreach materials to present any new findings, exemplary actions, legislation, projects to further understand and reduce illegal take of marine turtles, carried out in Signatory (and Consumer) States by various actors. Post these on the IOSEA Website and/or disseminate at relevant forums.	ITWG task list 2015-2019
10. Members of the Working Group to submit any relevant materials and present these at the meetings organized by CITES, TRAFFIC, ASEAN-WEN, SAWEN, CTI-CFF, Interpol, etc. or to encourage other MOU Members (Signatories, AC Members, partner organizations) to do so.	ITWG task list 2015-2019
Cooperation and outreach	
11. Cooperate with CMS in the joint development of a draft Single Species Action Plan (SSAP) for the conservation of the Hawksbill Turtle to address the trade, use and other threats to the conservation of Hawksbill Turtles in South-east Asia, and the adjacent western Pacific.	WP 62
12. Strengthen internal, bilateral and international cooperation in enforcement, collaborating with IGOs and NGOs, such as CITES, Ramsar, ICCWC, ASEAN WEN, SAWEN, CTI-CFF, and TRAFFIC, to ensure the issue of marine turtle trade is on the agenda of future meetings.	ITWG task list 2015-2019
13. Join mailing lists of TRAFFIC and other relevant partners to ensure receipt of illegal trade news and associated information, such as reports of court cases.	ITWG task list 2015-2019
14. Members of the ITWG and Secretariat to ensure communication and coordination with relevant partner organizations, such as Ramsar and CITES to avoid duplication of effort.	Secretariat
15. Enhance communication with neighbouring non-Signatory States and neighbouring non-Range States to raise awareness and address illegal trade in marine turtles (e.g. non-Range States: Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Fiji, Range States: Somalia, China, Republic of Korea, Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Japan).	ITWG members 2020
16. Exchange actionable intelligence regarding illegal take of and trade in marine turtles and encourage transboundary database use and analysis.	ITWG members 2020
Awareness campaigns	
17. Address consumptive use and domestic trade by raising awareness: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. work with local communities to reduce illegal take b. raise awareness of turtle consumers including subsistence users, highlight existing regulations, conservation and possibly health issues involved (e.g. tourists, vendors, egg consumers) c. consider using and promoting existing campaigns, such as UNEP's Wild for Life) d. engage religious leaders, as appropriate, in awareness campaigns to stop illegal take and consumption e. educate youth and women 	WP51

18. Investigate and develop campaigns to address online trade, where applicable.	WP61
Research	
19. Promote and, where applicable, support studies of take and trade, especially domestic illegal trade. Studies can include the topics of genetic traceability, socio-economic drivers of take and trade, sustainability of alternative livelihoods and/or address further research needs identified by the 2019 CITES report titled “Status, Scope and Trends of the Legal and Illegal International Trade in Marine Turtles, its Conservation Impacts, Management Options and Management Priorities”.	WP21
20. Assess the level and impact of traditional harvest on marine turtles and their eggs, suggest and negotiate limits of harvest accordingly	CMP1.5 c, e
21. Take into consideration CITES Decision 18.213 and the possibility of technical and financial support for research that is encouraged by this decision.	CITES Decision 18.213
22. Consider the use of community voice method and consider applying MIKE methodology for village-based monitoring of turtle harvest (see Solomon Islands example) and using community voice method to engage communities in policy-making processes and manage turtles more effectively.	WP28
23. In cooperation with CITES, continue to identify supply and demand areas and trade routes (including online trade) for the domestic and international illegal trade in marine turtles and their products (see CITES Decision 18.211 (i))	WP59