



**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 9.1

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. The final Resolutions and Decisions of COP14 are still being processed in English, French and Spanish, and will appear shortly the following pages:
 - [Resolutions in Effect](#)
 - [Decisions in Effect](#)

They can also be found on the [COP14 meeting page](#).

4. Specific mandates related to marine turtles are included in the following outcomes.

Bycatch and Other Fisheries-induced Mortality

5. Besides provisions on sharks and rays, cetaceans and seabirds, the following turtle-related mandates are contained in Decisions 14.31-34, including these mandates directed to the Scientific Council (Dec.14.33):

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;*
6. AC10 discussed these mandates in detail and agreed that they are highly relevant for the MOU and would require input from a wide range of experts for successful implementation. Accordingly, the AC proposed that it takes the lead in establishing a Steering Group on Bycatch to
- a) develop an implementation approach and recommendations, and
 - b) draft Terms of Reference for identified potential implementing agencies/individuals.

This proposal is reflected in the draft Work Programme 2024-2028 (see measure #7 in Doc.7.1).

Guidelines for Recreational In-water Interactions with Marine Wildlife

7. Guidelines for Recreational In-water Interactions with Marine Wildlife were adopted through Resolution 12.16 (Rev.COP14) [Recreational in-water interaction with aquatic wildlife](#) with associated Decisions 14.54-56.
8. 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.
9. Reference to the Guidelines has been included in the [Draft Work Programme 2024-2028](#) to encourage their uptake.

Marine Turtles

10. Specific Decisions on Marine Turtles were adopted as Decisions 14.93-95, including these mandates directed to the Scientific Council (Dec.14.94):

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.*
11. AC10 discussed these mandates in detail and agreed that they are closely related to the work ongoing to develop guidance on management of beaches to maximize hatchling production (see Doc.8.2 [Beach Management and Hatching Success](#)). It was agreed that a mandate should be sought at MOS9 to build on the work presented there and include the additional aspects foreseen in the CMS Decision. It was also felt that this activity would require input from a wide range of experts for successful implementation. Accordingly, the AC proposed that it takes the lead in establishing a Steering Group to advise on implementation of these mandates and that, subject to the availability of external resources, the Secretariat should organize an expert workshop to address this highly relevant activity jointly. This proposal is reflected in the draft Work Programme 2024-2028 (see measure #11 in Doc.7.1).

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

12. The Single Species Action Plan (SSAP) was adopted through [Resolution 14.11](#), with associated Decisions 14.96-100 that foresee the set-up of a governance structure by countries. Each Range State of the SSAP is to nominate one national government representative (Focal Point) and one national expert to serve on a Steering Group. They should also establish National Working Groups consisting of National Focal Points, local stakeholders and scientists, and develop a national work plan focusing on priority actions relevant to their country or territory. The SSAP and corresponding recommendations is being presented to MOS9 for adoption, too (MOS9/Doc.8.5 [Single Species Action Plan for the Hawksbill Turtle \(*Eretmochelys imbricata*\) in South-East Asia and the Western Pacific Ocean Region](#)).

Other Relevant Resolutions and Decisions

13. Other outcomes with high relevance to marine turtles address the following topics:
 - a) Fish Aggregating Devices (Decisions 14.35-37)
 - b) Marine Pollution (Decisions 14.41-43)
 - c) Marine Noise (Decisions 14.44-47)
 - d) Vessel Strikes (Resolution 14.5 [Reducing the risk of vessel strikes for marine megafauna](#) and Decisions 14.48-50)
 - e) Deep-seabed Mineral Exploitation Activities (Resolution 14.6 [Deep-seabed mineral exploitation activities and migratory species](#) and Decisions 14.51-53)
 - f) Seagrass Ecosystems (Resolution 14.8 [Conservation and sustainable management of seagrass ecosystems](#) and Decisions 14.65-68)
 - g) Illegal and Unsustainable Taking of Migratory Species (Resolution 11.31 (Rev.COP14) [Illegal and unsustainable taking of wildlife](#) and Decisions 14.182-185)
 - h) Aquatic Wild Meat (Decisions 14.186-189)

Samarkand Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2024 - 2032

14. Resolution 14.1 [Samarkand Strategic Plan for migratory species 2024 - 2032](#) sets forth the key strategic priorities for migratory species, while providing important linkages and responding to wider global priorities, notably the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). It also provides an important basis for setting priorities that address the findings of recent scientific reports, including the [2019 Global Assessment Report of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services](#) published by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the [Global Biodiversity Outlook 5](#) published by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and many other scientific documents, including those prepared under CMS itself. It also builds on the [UN General Assembly Resolution 75/271 Nature knows no borders: transboundary cooperation – a key factor for biodiversity conservation, restoration and sustainable use](#). This landmark Resolution, which references a range of multilateral frameworks and initiatives, recognizes the importance of ecological connectivity for the conservation and restoration of biodiversity, as well as the linkages with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
15. The Strategic Plan for Migratory Species (SPMS) is built around a theory of change designed to achieve an improved conservation status for migratory species and their habitats, and reduce and/or eliminate the threats that currently affect them. The time frame for the SPMS covers the period 2024-2032.
16. The SPMS has the following vision: “By 2032, migratory species are thriving and live in fully restored and connected habitats.” Within the context of the SPMS, the term ‘species’ is interpreted as applying to lower taxonomic levels when the context so requires.
17. To achieve this vision, the work of the Convention is organized around six strategic goals for the period 2024-2032:
 1. The conservation status of migratory species is improved.
 2. The habitats and ranges of migratory species are maintained and restored, supporting their connectivity.
 3. Threats affecting migratory species are eliminated or significantly reduced.
 4. Implementation of CMS is supported by adequate knowledge, capacity and resources.
 5. Implementation of CMS is supported by effective governance, including use of best

- available science and information, and collaborative working.
6. The profile of CMS and synergies with other relevant international frameworks are enhanced.
 18. Each of the strategic goals contains specific targets supported by brief explanation notes. Further work, in particular to develop indicators and define actions necessary, will be undertaken under the guidance of the CMS Standing Committee.
 19. Resolution 14.1 invites the decision-making bodies of CMS instruments to reflect the SPMS in appropriate Decisions and Resolutions at their next meetings. The guidance of the MOS is sought on whether and how to reflect the Samarkand Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2024 – 2032 in the Work Programme.

Dugong MOU

20. 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.
21. 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).
22. 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. Given the turnover of membership to be decided at MOS9, this matter has been included in the Draft Work Programme 2024-2028.

Atlantic Turtle MOU

23. 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.
24. 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 MOS9:

- Review the outcomes of CMS COP14 and consider the AC's proposals on how the turtle-related mandates could be reflected in the Work Programme 2024-2028 (see Doc.7.1)
- Review the Samarkand Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2024-2032 and decide on whether and how it should be reflected in the Work Programme 2024-2028