



SECRETARIAT OF THE PACIFIC REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

Eighteenth SPREP Meeting

Apia, Samoa
11-14 September 2007

Agenda Item 8.1.1 : Regional Marine Species Programme Framework and Regional Arrangements for the Conservation of Marine Species of Special Interest

Purpose of Paper

1. To table the revised Regional Marine Species Programme Framework for the next five years, 2008-2012, and seek the Meeting's approval of it. The paper also proposes the inclusion of sharks as one of the marine species of special interest in the Framework and provides an update on the progress of regional arrangements for the conservation of Cetaceans, Dugongs and Marine Turtles under the auspices of the Convention for the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) in the Pacific islands region.

Background

2. As a result of a working paper presented by the Secretariat to the 17th SPREP Meeting (17SM) last year seeking endorsement of the Meeting for the review of Regional Marine Species Programme Framework 2003-2007, the Meeting:

- **Endorsed** the review process of the Marine Species Programme Framework 2003-2007 for the next five years, 2008-2012 and to consider inclusion of other marine species of special interest to the region.
- **Directed** the Secretariat to submit the revised Marine Species Programme Framework for 2008-2012 in the 2007 SPREP Meeting for endorsement by members.
- **Encouraged** participating PICTs to sign the Memorandum of Understanding for the Conservation of Cetaceans and their Habitats in the Pacific Islands region under the auspices of CMS.
- **Noted** the development and progress of the MoU for the Conservation of Marine Turtles in the Pacific under the auspices of CMS;
- **Urged** members who are parties to CMS, and partners, to support the timely development and finalization of the MoU on the conservation of marine turtles;
- **Encouraged** dugong range states and territories to be fully involved in the development of the MoU for conservation and management of dugongs in the South-east Asian region under the auspices of CMS.

Regional Marine Species Programme Framework

Review of the Framework 2003-2007

3. The Framework encompasses 5-year Action Plans for three groups of marine species of special interest in the Pacific. The three groups of marine species are Dugongs, Marine Turtles, and Whales & Dolphins. Species within these groups continue to be in various states of conservation concern globally. Certain species from these groups continue to be listed in Appendix I¹ of the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), Appendices I² and II³ of the Convention for the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and the IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals.

4. In preparation for the region-wide review of the Framework, a technical meeting to update available information on whales and dolphins in the region took place in Apia, in August 2006. Due to financial constraints, it was not possible to conduct similar technical meetings for marine turtles and dugongs.

5. During March 2007, a series of regional meetings on marine species was held in Apia, Samoa, to which all SPREP members were invited. The series of meetings included the CMS Outreach Workshop and First Meeting of Signatories to the MoU for the Conservation of Cetaceans and their Habitats in the Pacific Islands Region, the Department of Environment and Water Resources (Australia) workshop on cetacean/fisheries interaction, and the reviews of the regional Marine Species Programme Framework Action Plans. During the review meetings, revised focus areas and sets of priority actions were developed and identified by member country/territory participants, and collaborating partners. This series of meetings was made possible with financial assistance from the CMS Secretariat, Government of Australia (Department of Environment and Water Resources) and the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (NOAA, USA). The revised draft Marine Species Framework for 2008-2012 is presented as Attachment 1.

Consideration for inclusion of other marine species in the Framework 2008-2012

6. As endorsed in 17SM in 2006, discussion on an additional priority marine species of special interest to be included in the Framework was conducted during the review of the Action Plans discussed above. The initial results were subsequently validated with participants after the meeting as well as with members who did not attend the meetings. The list was subsequently ranked according to the most listed species. The results are summarised in Table 1, starting with the species most listed. The top four most listed species were sharks, giant clams, seabirds and the hump-head wrasse. A total of 16 (64%) of SPREP member States and Territories participated. Fifteen (71%) of the 21 Island States and Territories participated.

¹ Appendix I lists species that are the most endangered among CITES-listed animals and plants of the Convention. These are threatened with extinction and CITES generally prohibits commercial international trade in specimens of these species. However trade may be allowed under exceptional circumstances, e.g. for scientific research. In these cases, trade may be authorized by the granting of both an export permit (or re-export certificate) and an import permit.

² Appendix I lists species that are endangered and Parties that are Range States shall prohibit the taking of these animals except for scientific purposes, enhancing propagation or survival and traditional subsistence use.

³ Appendix II lists migratory species which have an unfavourable conservation status and which require international agreements for their conservation and management, as well as those which have a conservation status which would significantly benefit from the international cooperation that could be achieved by an international agreement

Regional arrangements for Cetaceans, Marine Turtles and Dugongs under the auspices of CMS

MoU for the Conservation of Cetaceans and their Habitats in the Pacific Islands Region

7. SPREP has been collaborating with CMS in developing the MoU for the Conservation of Cetaceans and their Habitats in the Pacific Islands Region since 2003. This included 3 regional meetings involving SPREP members and partners and which eventually resulted in a finalized MoU in 2006. The MoU was opened for signing during the 17SM in Noumea, Caledonia, 2006. Nine (9) SPREP members and four collaborating organizations signed the MoU when it was opened for signature. The MoU became effective on that date as it only requires four signatures to be effective.

8. The First Meeting of Signatories to the CMS Cetacean MoU was held on 6 March 2007, Apia, Samoa. During that meeting, two additional SPREP members (Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands) and 1 collaborating organization (WWF South Pacific) also signed the MoU. The current listing of signatories to the MoU is recorded on Table 2.

MoU for the Conservation of Marine Turtles in the Pacific

9. A meeting to develop and negotiate an MoU for the conservation of marine turtles in the Pacific under CMS has not taken place yet. SPREP continues to negotiate with the CMS Secretariat and the Oceania CMS lead party to initiate this first meeting. Due to the migratory nature of turtles in different phases of their life cycle, this meeting is envisaged to include Pacific rim countries and distant water fishing nations that potentially impact on turtle populations in the region. It has been envisaged that the first meeting will provide an opportunity for members to decide whether a Pacific-wide MoU would be warranted.

10. The 16SM in 2005 directed the Secretariat to progress regional arrangements for dugongs and marine turtles including under the auspices of the CMS. In line with that decision, a proposal was submitted by Australia during the 8th CMS Conference of Parties in November 2005, encouraging Parties and range states in the Pacific to cooperate to develop and conclude an MoU and associated conservation plan for the conservation and management of marine turtles under the CMS.

Dugong Conservation and Management

11. As reported earlier, dugongs only occur in six countries and territories in the SPREP region. These include, Australia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Palau, Vanuatu and New Caledonia. Given the limited number of SPREP dugong range members, a separate MoU for the Pacific Islands region under CMS is not warranted and the SPREP dugong range states have been encouraged to participate in the CMS Dugong Conservation and Management MoU being negotiated for the south-east Asian region.

12. The second intergovernmental meeting on the above MoU was held in Thailand, 25-28 April 2006. SPREP communicated with organizers of this meeting to ensure participation of all SPREP dugong range members. SPREP was also represented in this meeting, working with SPREP dugong range members. SPREP and IFAW circulated a joint briefing paper in that meeting. From that meeting, an agreed draft MoU and Conservation and Management Plan, was circulated towards the end of 2006 for consideration by range states. SPREP and IFAW again circulated a briefing paper encouraging SPREP range states to sign the MoU given the relevance to regional effort and in particular the SPREP regional Dugong Action Plan.

Recommendation

13. The Meeting is invited to:

- **endorse** the revised Marine Species Programme Framework for the next five years, 2008-2012;
- **consider** the inclusion of sharks as a species of special interest to the regional Marine Species Programme Framework 2008-2012;
- **direct** the Secretariat to collaborate with other relevant regional IGOs, in particular, Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), SPC, and FFA in progressing an appropriate approach in developing a Regional Action Plan for sharks, noting the decision 2006/05 by the Third Regular Session of WCPFC on Conservation and Management Measure for Sharks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean;
- **encourage** participating PICTs who have not signed the MoU for the Conservation of Cetaceans and their Habitats in the Pacific Islands Region under the auspices of CMS to sign;
- **note** the forthcoming report of the First Meeting of Signatories to the CMS MoU for the Conservation of Cetaceans and their Habitats in the Pacific Islands Region;
- **encourage** dugong range states and territories to sign the MoU for Conservation and Management of Dugongs in the south-east Asian region under the auspices of CMS when it is open for signature; and
- **urge** members who are parties to CMS and the CMS Secretariat, in collaboration with SPREP, to initiate the first meeting to develop the MoU for the Conservation of Marine Turtles in the Pacific.