



REPORT ON THE TRI-NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SEA TURTLE MARINE PROTECTED AREA (MPA) NETWORK AND MONITORING, CONTROL, AND SURVEILLANCE (MCS) SYSTEM IN THE SULU SULAWESI MARINE ECOREGION

Coastal and Marine Resources Management in the
Coral Triangle-Southeast Asia (TA 7813-REG)

Technical Report



REPORT¹ ON THE TRI-NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SEA TURTLE MARINE PROTECTED AREA (MPA) NETWORK AND MONITORING, CONTROL, AND SURVEILLANCE (MCS) SYSTEM IN THE SSME

A. Background

1. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) Regional Technical Assistance (RETA) 7813 for Coastal and Marine Resources Management in the Coral Triangle – Southeast Asia (CTI-SEA) aims to assist Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines (CT3) in implementing actions under their respective Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI) national plans of action (NPOAs). RETA 7813 will result in the increased resilience of coastal and marine ecosystems and human communities in the CT3 through improved management of coastal and marine resources established in the Sulu-Sulawesi Marine Ecoregion (SSME) priority seascape within the Coral Triangle (CT).
2. The conservation of sea turtles is a key priority within the CT3 because they are migratory species, traveling long distances within the SSME and nesting beaches on islands in the three countries. Some of the nesting beaches are within protected areas, but others are not. Beaches and other habitats, such as migratory corridors and foraging grounds, which are important in the life history of sea turtles throughout their life cycle, are in need of protection in a coordinated manner.
3. Sea turtles are important to local coastal communities and are attractions for tourists in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. As such, the tangible and intangible benefits, as well as the value of a network of protected areas for species conservation, can be best demonstrated with sea turtles.
4. RETA 7813 convened a Tri-national Workshop on the Establishment of a Sea Turtle Marine Protected Area (MPA) Network and Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance (MCS) in the SSME in Manado, Indonesia on 12-14 June 2017. The consultant, Dr. Nicolas Pilcher, was engaged by the Regional Project Management Office (RPMO) to assist as International Resource Person.² This report summarizes the consultant's knowledge contributions to the workshop and the importance of the proposed network.

B. The Biological Value of a Network of Protected Areas for Sea Turtles in the SSME

5. Sea turtles rely on a number of different habitats to complete their natural life cycle. Eggs are deposited on clean sandy beaches and hatchling, juvenile, and adult migrations take place through unmanaged waters that cross international boundaries. Foraging takes place in shallow habitats, such as seagrass beds, worm reefs, and coral reefs, and deep oceans teeming with life. Each of these habitats forms a critical link in the life cycle of sea turtles, and each requires protection to ensure turtle population viability. It is insufficient to protect nesting beaches, even though these can be considered critical conservation bottlenecks.
6. On some beaches, there are risks of density-dependent nesting mortality as the population size grows exponentially, where nests face higher risks of being disinterred by other

¹ Prepared by Dr. Nicolas J. Pilcher, International Resource Person, Marine Research Foundation, Sabah, Malaysia.

² Dr. Pilcher has over 30 years of experience in sea turtle biology, research, and conservation, the last 25 of these in the Southeast Asian region. He is the past president of the International Sea Turtle Society and the past Co-Chair of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) SSC Marine Turtle Specialty Group. He is currently the Executive Director of the Marine Research Foundation (MRF), a Malaysia-based nongovernment organization (NGO) working on sea turtle research and conservation issues. He has published extensively on sea turtles and marine conservation and is well respected among the CT3 countries for his contributions to sea turtle research and conservation.



nesting adults. Lighting on beaches is hazardous to emerging hatchlings as lights attract hatchlings away from the shoreline. Nesting habitats are also threatened by the disappearance of beaches through sea level rise (SLR) and erosion. These are important reasons for protecting nesting beaches.

7. In addition, turtles face the risk of fishery mortality and a number of other threats while in the marine realm, such as oil pollution. At foraging sites, turtles are threatened by marine debris, destructive fishing practices, anchors and propellers, siltation, and the use of bottom trawls in seagrass ecosystems. Their habitats are also prone to ocean acidification, dredging and landfilling, sedimentation, and increases in sea surface temperature (SST) and sea level.

8. Given the threats faced by turtles and their habitats, as well as the conservation opportunities that a network of protected areas (PAs) offers, stand-alone conservation efforts will be of limited conservation value in the long run. Not only that, but a network of PAs represents a conservation value far greater than the sum of its individual parts (sites) and, thus, offers greater benefits beyond the conservation of a valuable natural and cultural resource. The full array of benefits that an effective Tri-National MPA Network may provide to the SSME and turtle resources include:

- Helping to ensure that a major marine natural and cultural resource is conserved, enhanced, and/or restored throughout the ecoregion;
- Contributing to the region's economic health through new or enhanced opportunities for tourism and recreation;
- Promoting efficient protection of turtle resources through integration of conservation and management objectives;
- Improving public access to scientific information and decision-making about turtle resources;
- Increasing an individual country's ability to protect and conserve species whose life cycles span multiple jurisdictions;
- Encouraging greater government agency efficiency through cooperation and integration; and
- Linking MPAs in other nations to address shared conservation issues.

9. MPA networks are valuable tools for conserving marine natural and cultural heritage and sustaining marine resources vital to economic livelihoods. The existing array of MPAs in the SSME can allow turtle populations to recover from declines and provide key areas for comprehensive protection from most major threats. They can also act as reference sites for measuring the effectiveness of management and separating the effects of natural phenomena from human effects, while raising awareness of natural and cultural resources.

10. A Tri-National MPA Network could add even greater value to these existing MPA programs and efforts by providing a framework for additional cooperation and coordination, improved efficiency, and greater synergy among state, district, and federal government partners and with the region's stakeholders.

11. In addition, the sea turtles protected by MPAs in one country often rely on areas in another country for important stages in their life history. For instance, turtles foraging around the Berau Marine Conservation Area in Indonesia rely heavily on the Turtle Islands Heritage Protected Area (TIHPA) shared by Malaysia and the Philippines for nesting. In these instances and many others, the Tri-National MPA Network provides a variety of incremental benefits that could not be achieved by MPA programs working independently, providing a forum for intergovernmental coordination leading to synergistic ecological and social linkages and enhanced effectiveness of existing MPA efforts.



12. Given the vast wealth of knowledge on turtles, their behavior, and critical sites that already exists in the SSME, a framework of PAs is the next logical step in the progression of conservation efforts. Nesting turtle populations have been well documented in the SSME. However, with the exception of recent work from Mantanani in Malaysia, Tubbataha in the Philippines, and Berau in Indonesia, virtually all knowledge relates to nesting beaches and adult female turtles as well as eggs and hatchlings, with little or no known information on foraging populations in the SSME. This research, which has resulted in the great body of knowledge of turtles in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seascape (SSS), is the same research that has led to the establishment of a series of PAs. Bringing the focus, objectives, and strategies for each of those sites under an overarching umbrella will result in greater conservation synergy and, ultimately, the long-term protection of marine turtles themselves.

C. Knowledge Contributions to the Manado Workshop

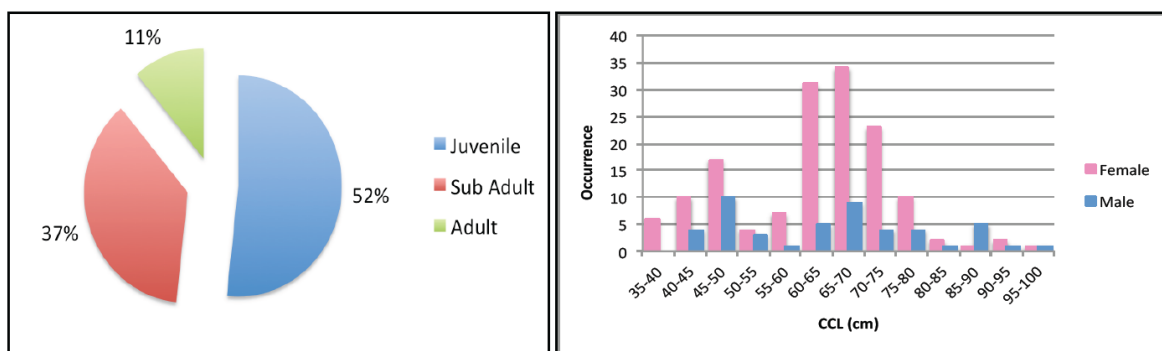
13. The following key presentations were provided by the consultant: “Science-Based Support for Sea Turtle Conservation in the SSS” and “Network of Protected Areas to Safeguard Sea Turtles in the SSS”. Excerpts from each of these are provided below.

1. Science-based Support for Sea Turtle Conservation in the SSS

14. This talk concentrated on MRF’s research findings under the recent BMUB SSS Project funded by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ Philippines), collated movement information, research gaps, conservation, and research outlook for the SSME. MRF’s research undertakings under the BMUB SSS Project included aerial surveys over three key sites in Palawan, satellite tracking of sea turtles from TIHPA to their foraging grounds, the use of laparoscopy at Mantanani and Tubbataha to determine population structure, and genetic sample investigations to determine population origins.

15. This foraging ground subcomponent used laparoscopic investigations linked to genetic studies to provide data on population structure (sex ratios in the wild, age-class structure, and genetic origin), which can be used for effective marine turtle conservation in the SSME. Examples of the types of data derived from this project comment are presented in **Figure 1**.

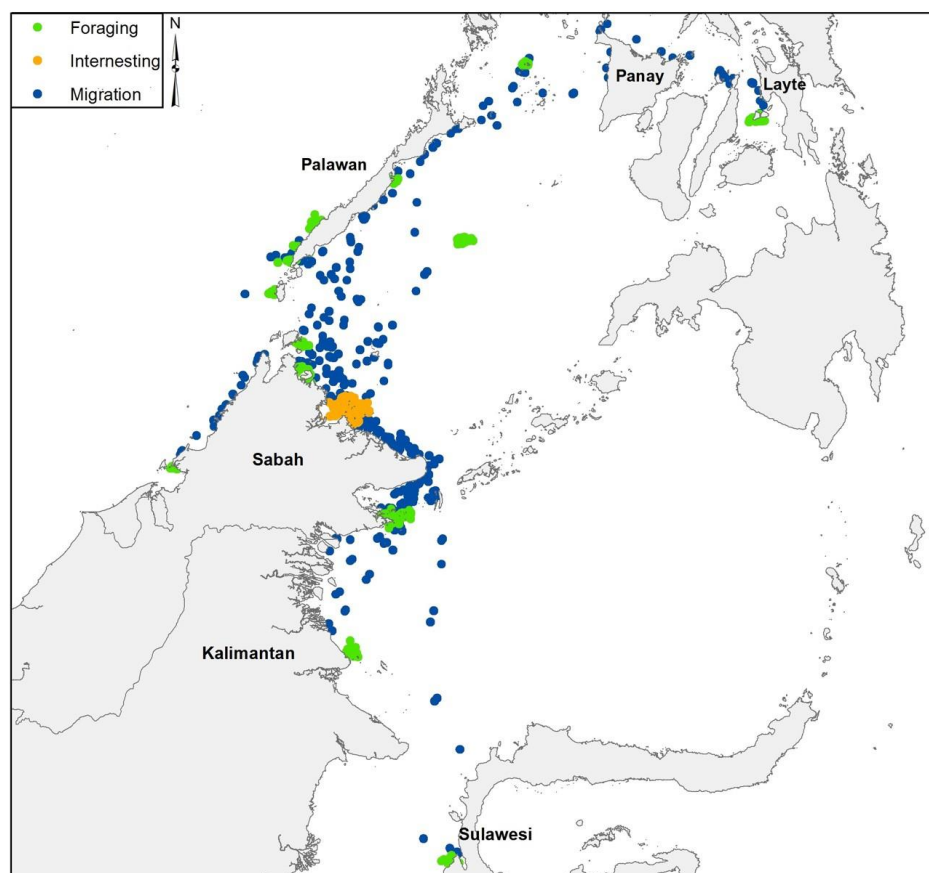
Figure 1: Age Class Distribution (Left) and Size by Gender (Right) for Turtles in Tubbataha, 2016



16. Satellite tracking of post-nesting females to identify foraging grounds determined the migration paths of marine turtles and linkages between foraging and nesting populations within the important Sulu-Sulawesi biogeographic region. Satellite transmitters were deployed on 25 green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) at TIHPA and addresses several interlinked issues, which build on the conservation or information needs for effective management of turtles in the SSS. Several distinct movement patterns emerged from these migrations: (i) some turtles stay close

to the TIHPA islands for long periods; (ii) others migrate up the Sabah coastline but remain in Sabah; (iii) others follow a similar path but move further northeast up into Palawan and beyond in the Philippines; and (iv) yet others travel southward along the Sabah coast and move as far south as Sulawesi in Indonesia (**Fig. 2**).

Figure 2: Filtered Satellite Tracking Data (One Point per Turtle per Day) Indicating Major Migratory Routes (Blue) and Foraging Grounds (Green)



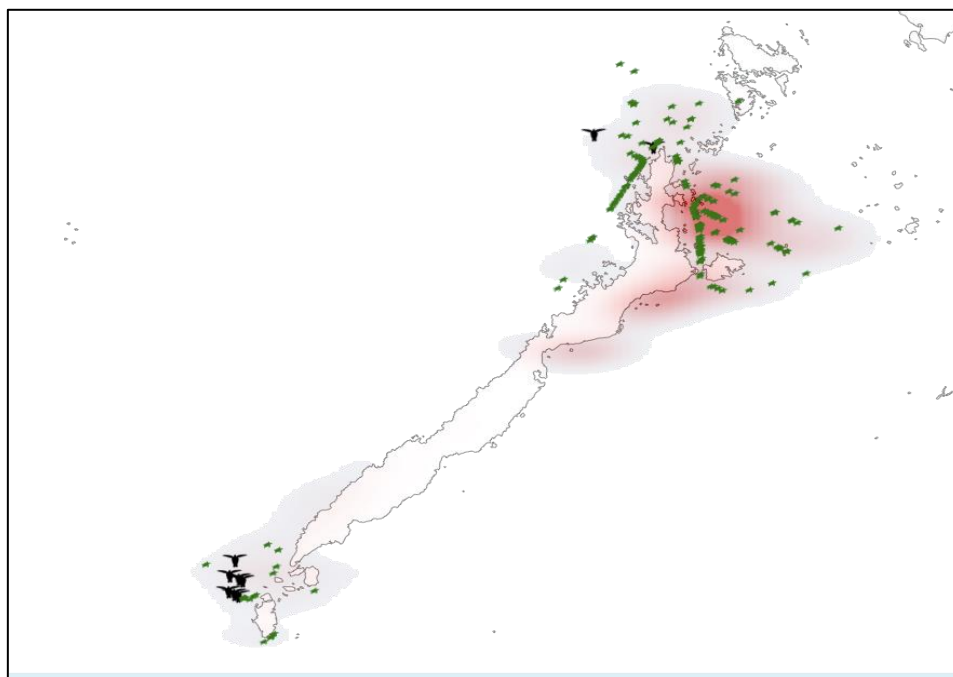
17. The aerial survey subcomponent identified temporal habitat use in key foraging grounds in the SSME, highlighting when turtles use different habitats via aerial surveys and allowing for potential future development of time-area closure management practices, and for determining habitat impacts such as fisheries, poaching, and industrial development (**Fig. 3**). In addition to sea turtles, the surveys recorded a number of dugongs (*Dugong dugon*), manta rays (*Manta birostris*), several species of dolphins (*Delphinus* spp., *Stenella* spp., *Tursiops* spp.), and one whale. The whale appeared to be a Bryde's whale (*Balaenoptera brydei*), but as this can be easily confused with Omura's whale (*Balaenoptera omurai*), the whale is listed as unidentified.

18. These aerial surveys demonstrated the ability to detect turtle presence and shifts in concentrations of sea turtles across time and link these to fishing pressure. The expansion of this work to other sectors of Indonesia, the Philippines, and Malaysia would enable a far greater understanding of turtle population distribution, but we understand the issues related to survey costs.

19. These data can also contribute to national databases on turtle populations and to management plans at the local level. For instance, enforcement agencies in Palawan may need

to focus attention on the fishery/green turtle overlap in the spring/summer in Taytay and address this possibly through time-area colures, gear restrictions, or combinations thereof. Of pressing concern related to leatherbacks is the large number of purse seine vessels and long-line vessels fishing off the NE coast of Palawan. Continuing with the documentation of fishing vessel presence alongside all fauna detection surveys is suggested so that the fishery-turtle interactions can be more accurately described.

Figure 3: Green and Leatherback Turtle Distribution around Palawan in August 2015 with Fishing Density (Red Overlay) Highlighting Turtle and Fishery Spatial Overlap



2. Network of Protected Areas to Safeguard Sea Turtles in the SSS

20. The presentation focused on sea turtle status in the SSME and discussed the need for continued long-term index beach nest counts, the need for a network of MPAs³ (MPANs), some background on the original design of an MPAN, best practices for an MPAN, and benefits of an MPAN.

21. The current status of green turtles globally (as per the IUCN Red List) is Endangered, but they are classified as Vulnerable at regional management unit (RMU) level. The hawksbill is Critically Endangered at both global and regional levels. The leatherback is Vulnerable globally, but Critically Endangered at the RMU level. There is insufficient data to determine the status of the Olive Ridley at the regional level, but it is listed as Vulnerable globally.

22. Key threats at the regional level are: fisheries bycatch (commercial and artisanal), turtle poaching (foreign, but assisted by locals), habitat degradation (coral bleaching, terrestrial runoff, coastal reclamation, dredging), and egg harvests (large and small scale). However, while egg harvests are illegal, they do not appear to be causing population declines in the major nesting sites.

³ A network of MPAs is a complex of sites with the capacity to act cohesively to protect a species or complex of species by leveraging each other's strengths and streamlining management effectiveness.

23. The benefits of an MPAN are varied. A network of sea turtle MPAs will be more resilient, productive, efficient, cost-effective, and more successful than individual MPAs. An MPAN can help ensure that major marine natural and cultural resources are conserved and can (i) contribute to the region's economic health, (ii) promote efficient protection of turtle resources through integration of conservation and management objectives, (iii) improve public access to scientific information and decision-making about the turtle resources, and (iv) increase the individual country's ability to protect and conserve species whose life cycles span multiple jurisdictions.

24. The 2009 design of an MPAN⁴ built on the fact that there already existed a number of MPAs, which addressed turtles in the SSS, and that there was a wealth of information on turtles in the SSME. This information came from (i) ongoing beach monitoring (of which there was a lot), (ii) tag recoveries (a few), (iii) foraging ground research (only a small amount), (iv) satellite tracking (some), (v) aerial surveys (some), and (vi) lots of local knowledge. The framework designed in 2009 depicted key goals and conservation targets, and particular special considerations. To be functional, it has to be sufficiently comprehensive to include all key life stage habitats (nesting, migratory, developmental, and foraging). Over and above the criteria developed by the SSME process covering all critical life stages, habitats, and threats that turtles may face, there is a variety of other factors, such as current management practices as well as research and monitoring needs, which need incorporating. By 2009, turtle-benefiting MPAs already existed, and management capacity and resources existed alongside communication linkages and scientific networking. The Existing MPAs that could be incorporated were the following: Turtle Island Park (TIP), SIMCA, Tun Sakaran Marine Park (MP), Tun Mustapha MP, Berau, Bunaken, Turtle Islands, Balabac Straits, El Nido-Taytay, TIHPA, and Tubbataha MP.

25. Best practices for a Network of MPA were suggested as follows:

- Should be national in scope and regional in scale;
- Must build ecosystem approaches into the MPA process;
- Must promote coordination and integration by supporting partnerships and coordination among national, state, district, and local MPA sites and systems;
- Should develop and apply the best available scientific information;
- Should promote continued, effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and allow for adaptive management effectiveness;
- Should ensure that communication and outreach are cornerstone activities; and
- Must provide clear roles for all governmental partners, as well as stakeholders, by providing ongoing and meaningful opportunities for input.

26. The benefits of an MPAN include the following:

- Ensuring that a major marine natural and cultural resource is conserved, enhanced, and/or restored;
- Contributing to regional economic health through new/enhanced opportunities for tourism and recreation;
- Promoting efficient protection of turtle resources through integration of conservation and management objectives;
- Improving public access to scientific information and decision-making about the turtle resources;
- Increasing individual partners' abilities to protect and conserve species whose life cycles span multiple jurisdictions;

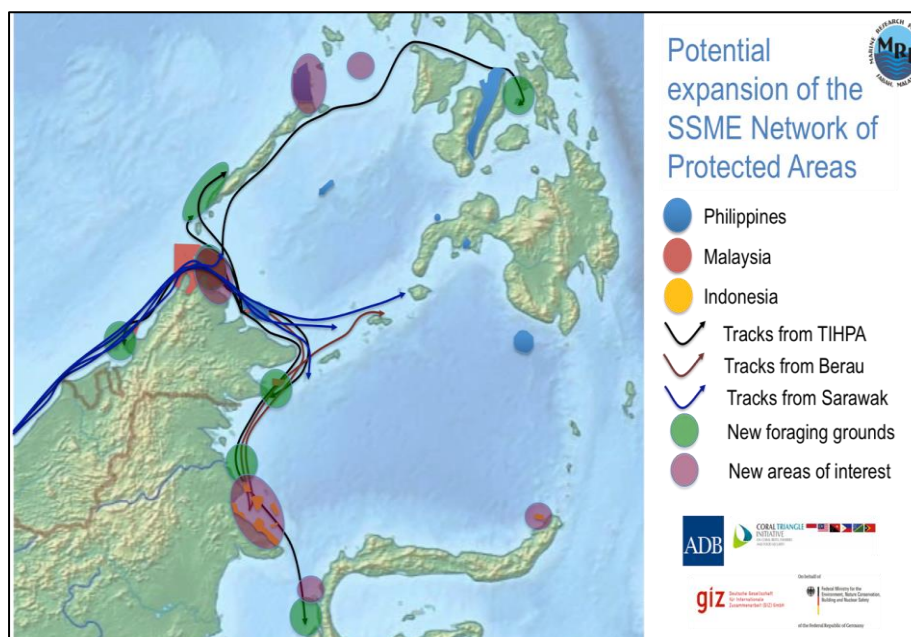
⁴ This was also developed by the consultant on contract to CI-Philippines.

- Encouraging greater government agency efficiency through cooperation and integration;
- Linking MPAs in other nations to address shared conservation issues;
- Providing immediate feedback on turtle status;
- Allowing direct communication among conservation practitioners;
- Enabling more effective enforcement through improved communications; and
- Conserving sea turtles more efficiently.

D. Provision of Guidance on Potential Expansion of the SSME NMPA

27. The International Resource Person provided extensive science-based evidence for the development and expansion of a network of protected areas in the SSME based on scientific information provided by the CT3 participants, previous research, and the consultant's own experiences in the region. A figure was developed to facilitate discussion during the workshop, when work groups broke up to discuss designing an MPAN and threats to migrating sea turtles (Fig. 4).

Figure 4: Resource Map Provided to Workshop Participants during Breakout Discussions



E. Draft Text of the Manado Legacy

28. The International Resource Person also provided the draft text for a declaration document to emerge from the workshop and assisted in crafting the final version with the participants. The draft text (to be finalized by the RETA 7813 team) reads as follows.

“The Tri-national representatives of the Technical Working Groups of Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, alarmed by the threatened status of sea turtles and the precarious nature of the habitats upon which they depend, and cognizant of the important ecological, cultural, and economic roles of sea turtles in the SSME Priority Seascape and the valuable conservation efforts implemented at the national level:

- *Recognize the urgent need to network existing MPAs, which safeguard sea turtles and their habitats and which (as a network) have the potential to provide greater conservation benefits than the sum of the individual MPA components;*
- *Recognize the value and contribution of scientific research which provides robust support for transnational movements of turtles that use multiple MPAs in the SSME;*
- *Acknowledge the potential for increased capacity building throughout the SSME region and the benefits this may bring to conservation practitioners and to the wider public;*
- *Encourage further research to provide a more thorough understanding of habitat connectivity, with a view to enabling future expansion of the network;*
- *Recognize the urgent need to reduce bycatch of sea turtles in fisheries throughout the SSME Priority Seascape;*
- *Call for strengthened coordination and collaboration in monitoring, control and surveillance to address bycatch and the poaching and illegal trade in sea turtles and their by-product derivatives;*
- *Put in place a mechanism for real-time information sharing and connectivity among conservation practitioners within the network and the added value this will bring to conservation of sea turtles and their habitats, to enforcement capacity, and to effective and efficient management of sea turtle stocks; and*
- *Recognize the importance of balancing conservation efforts with the socio-economic well-being and aspirations of local communities.*

Grateful for the support of the development partners and donors in the conservation of SSME Priority Seascape and the conduct of research on sea turtles, the group highly recommends to senior agency managers at the national level, the CTI-CFF Technical Working Groups, and Senior Officials that a network of marine protected areas and monitoring control and surveillance system be developed programmatically as a legacy process to further safeguard sea turtle populations and their habitats alongside local officials and communities in the SSME Priority Seascape.”

Annex 1

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Annex 2

WORKSHOP AGENDA

**Trinational Meeting to Establish a Network of Marine Protected Areas for Sea Turtles
in the Sulu-Sulawesi Marine Ecoregion Priority Seascape,
Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries, and Food Security**

Proposed dates: 12, 13, and 14 June 2017

Venue: CTI-CFF Secretariat Building, Manado, Indonesia

Objectives:

1. Design a network of MPAs to protect the migratory sea turtles in the Sulu-Sulawesi Marine Ecosystem (SSME) Priority Seascape;
2. Design a framework for sea turtle management with Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance (MCS) System

Provisional Agenda

Time	Agenda Item	Person In-charge	Remarks
Day 1: June 12, 2017			
8:00-9:00	Registration	ADB RETA 7813 staff	
9:00-9:30	Opening ceremony Welcome remarks Opening remarks	Regional Secretariat	ED to welcome the participants, resource persons, and guests to the workshop. Dr. Lukman to provide the opening statements, particularly on the collaboration between the Regional Secretariat and the ADB RETA 7813 Project.
9:30-10:00	Overview of ADB RETA 7813 Project Objectives of the Workshop	ADB RETA 7813 Staff	Mr. Guillermo L. Morales, Team Leader will present the overview of the ADB RETA 7813 Project and its contribution to the CTI CFF. Dr. Annadel S. Cabanban will present the objectives, the design, and expected outputs of the workshop.

Time	Agenda Item	Person In-charge	Remarks
10:00-10:20	Break		
10:20-12:20	Session # 1 – Country Presentations on status and threats to sea turtles and survey of MPAs for sea turtle conservation	Facilitator and ADB RETA 7813 Team Resource Person	Key findings of the status of sea turtles, the conservation measures, including protection of habitat and addressing threats along the migratory pathway. Expected outcome: Understanding of the status of sea turtles, gaps in conservation, and the need for a collaborative approach to conserve the sea turtles as a migratory species.
12:20-1:20	Lunch Break		
1:20-2:20	Session # 2 – Presentations of Related regional projects in the SSME Priority Seascape	Facilitator CTI MPA TWG CTI Partners: GIZ Sulu-Sulawesi Seascape Project WWF-IUU Fishing on Sea Turtles USAID NMPA Project in Indonesia CT Atlas (WorldFish)	Project leaders or their representatives will present their respective projects, particularly those related to the objectives of this Workshop, lessons learned from the establishment of network of MPAs and/or monitoring, control, and surveillance system. Expected outcome: Participants will have the context to relate or build a NMPA and will learn lessons from the experiences of these projects.
2:20-3:00	i) Results of the Sea Turtle Workshop ii) Designing a Network of Marine Protected Areas for Species Conservation: Opportunities and Challenges	Dr. Nicolas Pilcher	Presentation and open forum of the results of the Sea Turtle workshop conducted in Clark, Philippines which was organized by GIZ and CI.

Time	Agenda Item	Person In-charge	Remarks
3:00 - 5:00	Session # 3 – Break-out discussions on: Designing a Network of MPAs for Sea Turtles Topics for discussion: 1. Specific objective/s of the network and the corresponding indicators; 2. Transboundary network or network of selected MPAs for better management 3) MPAs for inclusion in the network; 4) Framework for management of MPA sites and MCS System (national or transboundary or both)	Facilitators, ADB RETA 7813	The participants will be divided into 2 groups: Group 1 – to discuss topics pertaining to the need to protect habitats of sea turtles and Group 2 – to discuss threats to migrating sea turtles (e.g., illegal harvesting and sale of eggs, accidental by-catch, poaching, etc.). In this Session, the 2 groups will also begin to discuss the important aspects in designing a network of MPA for sea turtles, with MCS system, in the SSME Priority Seascape.
Day 2: June 13, 2017			
8:00-9:00	Session # 4 Presentation of Group discussions and Open Forum	Facilitator, ADB RETA 7813	

Time	Agenda Item	Person In-charge	Remarks
9:00-4:00	Session # 5 – Designing a network of MPAs, cont'd. Plenary Topics for discussion: v) Action plan and partners vi) Potential costs vi) Mechanism for monitoring and reporting (against objective/s and indicators)	Facilitator, ADB RETA 7813	<p>The participants will decide in plenary the design of the NMPA and MCS for sea turtles. The decision-making process will be moderated and guided by the facilitator.</p> <p>The expected output of the Session is an outline of the design for a NMPA for sea turtles with a management framework to provide monitoring, control, and surveillance system, and coordination and reporting system on the performance (based on indicators) of the NMPA.</p>
4:00 - 5:00	Session # 6 - Next steps In the CTI CFF, what TWG will lead the implementation of the NMPA ? Is it a combination of TWGs? What are the necessary steps to institutionalize the NMPA design and implementation in the CTI CFF ?	Facilitator, Regional Secretariat	<p>This session will be a discussion on the next steps.</p> <p>A few guide questions are provided to initiate the discussion.</p> <p>At the end of the session, a timeline for action will be prepared.</p>
Day 3: June 14, 2017			
8:00-10:30	Session # 7 – Summary of results of discussions	Facilitator, Regional Secretariat	Expected output: A brief summary of discussions, accepted by the participants, that can be used for advancing the conservation of sea turtles in the SSME Priority Seascape.
11:00-12:00	Session # 8 – Closing Ceremony	Regional Secretariat	