



*Regional Dialogue on*

**CONSERVATION OF MARINE MAMMALS & TURTLES**  
**Experience Sharing on Meeting Trade**  
**Obligations by the Bay of Bengal Rim Countries**

**Hotel Trident | Chennai**  
**28 Aug 2024**



## Background

Marine mammals, including whales, dolphins, and dugongs, play essential roles in marine ecosystems as predators and influencers of nutrient cycles. Sea turtles contribute to the health of marine ecosystems by controlling jellyfish populations and maintaining healthy seagrass beds. Both marine mammals and sea turtles are endangered and vulnerable to threats such as habitat loss, pollution, coastal development, and bycatch/incidental capture in fishing gear.

Incidental capture of marine mammals and sea turtles in fishing gear has been identified as a major conservation challenge globally. Apart from the national conservational laws by all the countries, some of the fish importing countries impose specific conservation measures to be compiled by the exporting countries.

*The Marine Mammal Protection Act of United States of America (USA), one of the major fish importing country, is an illustrative case, which stipulates that **fish exported to the US should be captured in a manner that does not result in greater incidental mortality or serious injury of marine mammals**. As per this law, the fish harvesting nations need to provide population abundance and mortality data on marine mammals, including levels of fisheries bycatch. Submission of ‘Comparability Finding Application’ is a mandatory requirement to continue exporting fish and fish products to the U.S. This new regime is one of the most significant attempts ever taken by a single nation to influence the conservation actions of other States with respect to fisheries harvest and bycatch.*

*Similarly, U.S. law (Section 609 of P.L. 101-162, or Section 609) provides that wild-caught shrimp or products from wild-caught shrimp harvested with commercial fishing technology that may adversely affect protected sea turtles species may not be imported into the United States unless the exporting nation harvests shrimp under conditions that minimize the impact on endangered sea turtle populations.*

The trading partners of the USA are taking steps to meet these standards and contribute to the protection and conservation of marine mammals and turtles. The countries face challenges in ensuring compliance in terms of capacity and additional studies to be commissioned viz., developing new marine mammal stock assessment programmes, collect robust scientific data on marine mammal abundance and bycatch, and develop mitigation measures, all of which require expertise and resources.

The Bay of Bengal rim countries need to build their capacity and establish more comprehensive policies on marine mammal and turtle protection and by-catch reduction, given the livelihood issues that are deeply entwined with conservation of marine mammal and turtle.



*This Regional Dialogue, organized jointly by the Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organization (BOBP-IGO), Chennai; Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (ICAR-CMFRI), Kochi; and Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA), Kochi aims to bridge the gaps in regulation, enforcement, engagement, and knowledge, and to explore practical solutions that can effectively reduce bycatch, while supporting sustainable livelihoods.*

## Objectives

The broad objectives of the workshop are to:

- (i) Share information on emerging trade policies on conservation of marine mammals and turtles.
- (ii) Share experiences from the BOB rim countries on the national efforts towards conservation of marine mammals and turtles
- (iii) Identify challenges in meeting the standards of trade regulations; and
- (iv) Deliberate solutions for strengthening conservation of marine mammals and turtles.

## Participants

- Officials and experts from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Mauritius, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Seychelles, Thailand, Timor-Leste and other countries.
- Experts from research and academic organizations; fisheries and conservation organizations; based in India.

## Expected Outcomes

- Improved understanding of trade policies and their impact on conservation efforts.
- Identification of specific challenges in meeting international trade regulations.
- Increased capacity among participants in data collection and bycatch mitigation.
- Appreciation of collaboration among Bay of Bengal rim countries.
- Better knowledge on practical solutions to reduce bycatch and protect marine species.



# Provisional Agenda

1800	Welcome & Context Setting	BOBP-IGO
1810	Marine mammals and sea turtles: Interface between national policies for conservation and international policies on trade	MPEDA
1820	Assessing and documenting conservation status of marine mammals and sea turtles: India's Experience	ICAR-CMFRI ICAR-CIFT
1830	<p><b>Moderation:</b></p> <p><b>Dr. K. Arulanathan</b>, <i>Director General, NARA</i>  <b>Dr. Grinson George</b>, <i>Director, CMFRI</i>  <b>Dr. M. Karthikeyan</b>, <i>Director, MPEDA</i></p> <p><b>Discussion Points</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategies and experiences in conservation of marine mammals and sea turtles</li> <li>• Challenges in meeting the standards of conservation &amp; implications in seafood trade</li> <li>• Opportunities for knowledge sharing and capacity development</li> </ul> <p>(4 - 5 minutes intervention from each country experts)</p>	<p>Reflections of experts from</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bangladesh</li> <li>• Cambodia</li> <li>• Indonesia</li> <li>• Maldives</li> <li>• Myanmar</li> <li>• Sri Lanka</li> <li>• Thailand</li> <li>• Timor Leste</li> </ul>
1950	Closing Remarks & Way forward	BOBP-IGO
2000	Social Event & Networking Dinner	

