

Marine mammals management toolkit

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The Impact Report 2020/2023

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This project is funded by the European Union

The marine mammals management toolkit

Marine mammals play a crucial role in marine ecosystem function and carbon sequestration in the face of climate change, providing valuable ecosystem services and significant economic, social, and cultural benefits to coastal communities.

Historically marine mammals have been severely impacted by human activity. While international efforts have seen some populations recover, many remain critically endangered. Incidental by-catch, entanglement, ship strikes/collisions, including indirect habitat destruction, prey removal and noise pollution, are ubiquitous threats.

With the continued threats to marine mammals, compounded by the detrimental effects of climate change, there is a real need for effective conservation measures. The diversity of threats faced by marine mammals requires an equally diverse suite of conservation tools. One of the most common approaches is the use of Area-based Management Tools (ABMT) including Marine Protected Areas (MPA).

However, in many cases, the success of MPAs is drastically hindered by a lack of resources and technical capacity to effectively implement management practices. To tackle these threats, fill knowledge gaps, and empower practitioners, managers, and policy makers to effectively conserve marine mammals, the Marine Mammals Management toolkit was created by the Marine Mammal Twinning.

The Marine Mammal Twinning designed and created the Marine Mammals Management Toolkit for the inclusion of marine mammals into management plans for their effective management through ABMTs and MPAs. It aims to build the technical capacities of managers by sharing knowledge, expertise, and good practices, whilst establishing a global network of managers to collectively conserve marine mammals.

In order to guide effective, and support managers, the Marine Mammals Management Toolkit is built founded on five core themes; Management Frameworks, Addressing Activities and Threats, Research and Monitoring, Outreach and Engagement, and Management Effectiveness. And four key components address the core themes;

1. The Factsheets

A provision of concise and valuable information that contextualises examples of common barriers, and guidance on solutions while signposting to the latest available resources and case studies.

2. The Self-Assessment Tool

A multiple-choice assessment tool and dashboard to signify the effectiveness of assessed management plans regarding marine mammals.

3. Good Practices

Examples of effective and impactful management approaches.

4. The Community of Practice

A forum to connect managers, share experiences, lessons learnt and forge partnerships.

The Toolkit is available online at : www.marine-mammals.info

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Highlights of the twinning

The Marine Mammals Management Toolkit Impact Report seeks to demonstrate the impact of Marine Mammal Twinning's activities since the projects inception. It brings together data on actions undertaken and changes seen through to 2023 and summarises these as a snapshot of impact towards achieving the effective conservation of marine mammals.

Since 2021, the Marine Mammal Twinning has undertaken numerous activities to strengthen the Toolkit, disseminate its resources, and to support managers,

policy makers and practitioners in its application, including the hosting of regional webinars, development of new, and updating existing, components of the toolkit, and maintaining a strong regional and international presence at technical events. The Twinning, working alongside partners, has also supported regional and local networks through technical support and promoted the toolkit across a range of platforms, from the Toolkit's website to social media and other media channels.

The below statistics demonstrate the impact of these activities:

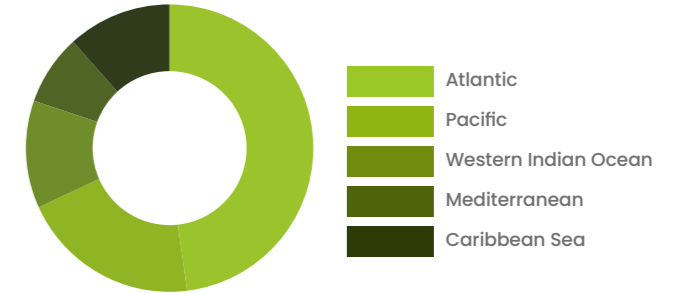


The self-assessment tool

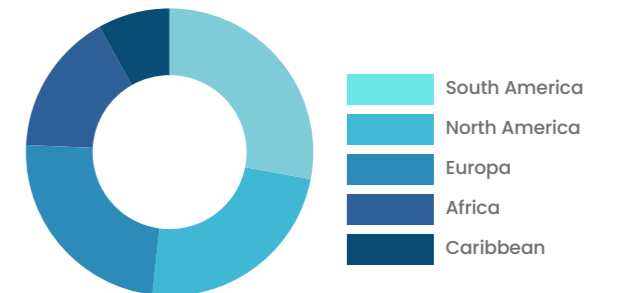
Supported by the factsheets, the Self-Assessment Tool (SAT) enables MPA managers to assess the extent to which marine mammals are included in their respective management plans. The SAT is available both online and offline in a range of languages and guides the assessor through a range of questions that are intrinsically linked to the core themes of the toolkit. The SAT is also available in a reduced version (SAT-LITE), to provide a rapid overview of the MPA with prompts to address key topics or undertake the full SAT.

Each answer is graded, and a dashboard presents results that unlock the ability of managers to grade and monitor the status and performance of the MPA with respect to marine mammals. Both versions of the SAT have been designed to be a continuous process, facilitating adaptive management and monitoring and evaluation over time.

Since its launch, the SAT has been utilised by over 25 ABMTs, MPAs or Partners to assess, re-evaluate, or to plan for the development of, a management plan for the effective conservation of marine mammals;



The distribution of completed Self-Assessment Tools (SAT) across major continents & regions



The distribution of completed Self-Assessment Tools (SAT) across major Ocean basins & seas

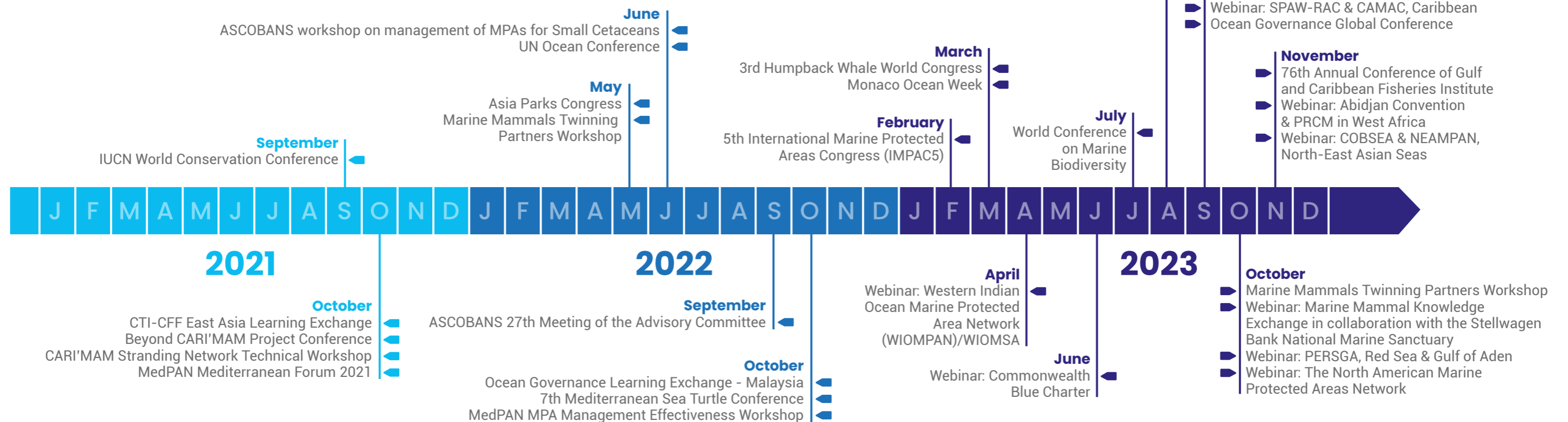
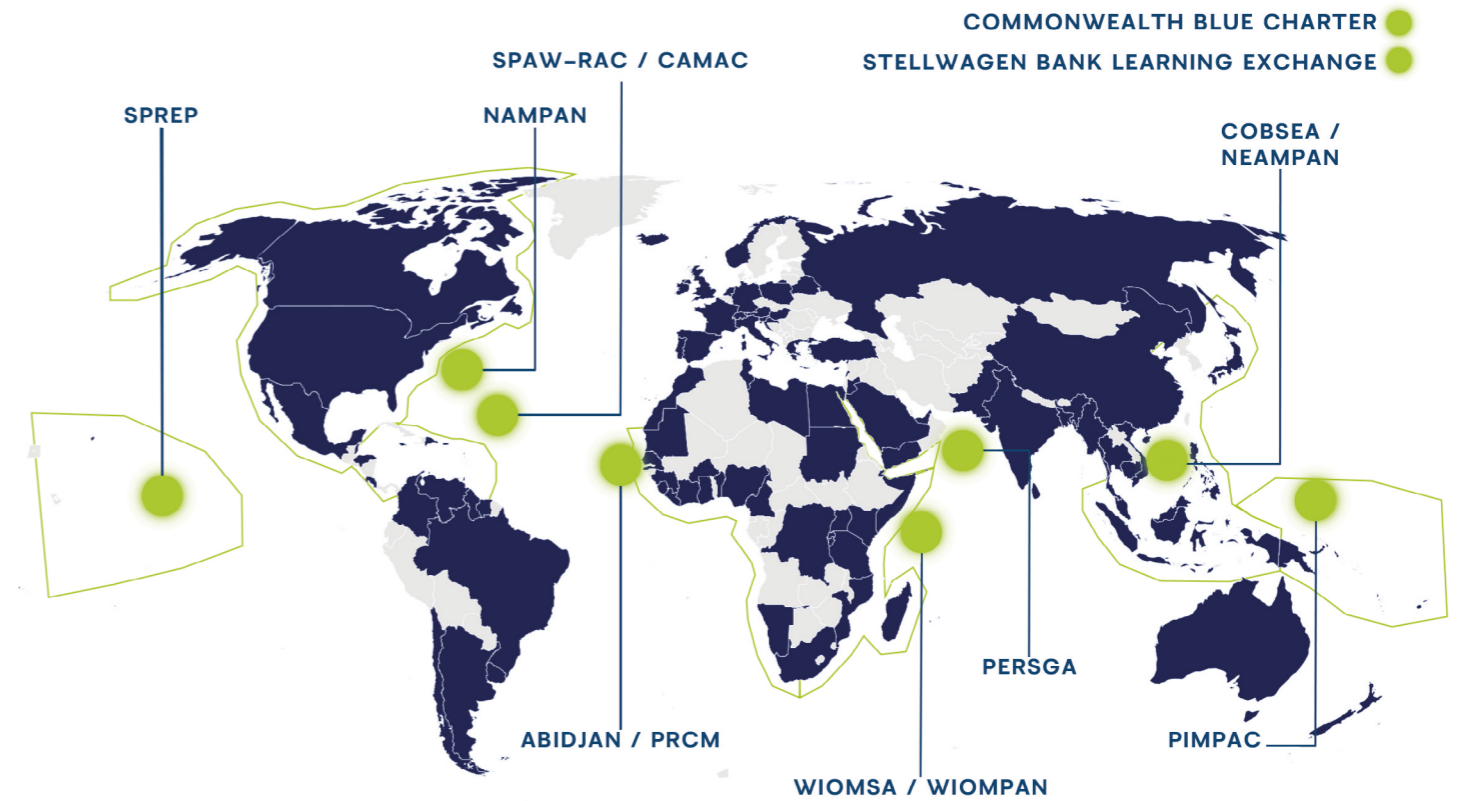


Global dissemination of the marine mammals management toolkit & developing technical capacities of managers

Since the Twinning's inception, a core aim was to drive the dissemination of the Marine Mammals Management Toolkit, from technical workshops to develop and strengthen the Toolkit at Monaco Ocean Week, engaging with managers and stakeholders to build technical capacities at the 3rd Humpback Whale World Congress to supporting countries by informing international processes at the 5th International marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC5) and the IUCN World Conservation Congress. Through this aim, the Toolkit was featured at **31** different international, regional, and online events, resulting in over **50** dedicated sessions and workshops engaging over **2,500** attendees.

A major engagement initiative undertaken by the Twinning in 2023 was the instigation of regional webinars, in collaboration with UNEP Regional Seas and global initiatives, as well as technical webinars to share lessons learnt and exchange knowledge. Through these webinars, **1,088 managers and stakeholders** were provided regional context on the importance of marine mammals and an introduction to the Self-Assessment Tool, focusing on its use and the interpretation of results.

As a result of these webinars, over **360 MPA managers** were introduced to the Self-Assessment Tool, over **60%** of all attendees were women, and the attendees represented **123 countries**, or **63%** of all countries across 5 major Ocean basins.



The marine mammals management toolkit: a success in improving management effectiveness



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A core aim of the Marine Mammal Twinning was to “provide MPA managers with a toolbox (a self-assessment tool to ‘track’ the integration of marine mammals into MPA management plans and a checklist)” whilst “building the technical capacities of MPA managers by sharing knowledge, expertise and good practice”. By creating a peer network to aid other MPA managers, the Twinning continually supported and engaged with twinning Partners, key collaborators, and managers, to support the application of the Toolkit, and namely the Self-Assessment Tool.

As a result, for these efforts, the Toolkit and Self-Assessment Tool have been widely applied across a range of protected areas, scenarios, and conservation landscapes – all with the common goal of improving management effectiveness and supporting managers. Through its application, multiple successes have been recorded and shared with the Twinning:



STELLWAGEN BANK NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

The Self-Assessment Tool was utilised to evaluate the Marine Sanctuary’s 2023 management plan the re-development of the 2009 management plan; augmenting the existing performance measures in the management plan which are the primary means by which management effectiveness is evaluated.

THE AGOA SANCTUARY

The Self-Assessment Tool was integrated into the Sanctuary’s Monitoring & Evaluation framework within the management plan, stating the Self-Assessment Tool will be used every 5 years to evaluate the effectiveness of the existing management plan and adapt future management actions.



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Department of Environment and Natural Resources

THE BERMUDA MARINE MAMMAL SANCTUARY

In 2012, Bermuda’s Exclusive-Economic Zone was declared a marine mammal sanctuary and in 2019 the Self-Assessment Tool was used to support the development of a Marine-Spatial Plan, understanding the effectiveness of existing legislation, whilst providing a checklist for management decisions to be considered for the conservation of marine mammals.

IROISE MARINE NATURAL PARK

The Self-Assessment Tool was utilised to evaluate the Marine Sanctuary’s 2023 management plan the re-development of the 2009 management plan; augmenting the existing performance measures in the management plan which are the primary means by which management effectiveness is evaluated.



SKJALFANDI BAY, ICELAND

The University of Iceland utilised the Self-assessment Tool to understand the legislative landscape for the development of Iceland’s first Marine Protected Area. By understanding if current legislation could support an MPA with clear objectives for the conservation of marine mammals has supported the development of proposed management plans for Skjalfandi bay.

DEPARTMENT OF MARINE CONSERVATION, MINISTRY OF BLUE ECONOMY AND FISHERIES, ZANZIBAR

“SAT was an eye opening tool that helped us to understand our gaps in marine mammal conservation” - Through the use of the Self-Assessment Tool, the Ministry of blue Economy and Fisheries are able to understand their current capabilities and limitations and plan future activities to improvement management frameworks on marine mammals.



Conclusion

“I am not a marine mammal expert, so being able to be involved with the Marine Mammal Twinning and with other managers of Marine Protected Areas has been a tremendous benefit for me [and for the effective management of marine mammals in Bermuda’s EEZ]”

–Sarah Manuel, Senior Marine Conservation Officer, Department of Environment & Natural Resources, Government of Bermuda

Since its inception, the Marine Mammal Twinning has consistently supported managers and practitioners in taking informed management decision to improve management effectiveness for the conservation of marine mammals. This has been achieved by building technical capacity of managers in the use of the Self-Assessment Tool, interpretation of its results, and the use of the Toolkit’s components (factsheets, good practices, for example) to undertake adaptive management, develop management plans or better understand the processes gaps, and strengths, in existing legislation during the creation of a protected area.

By establishing a network of peers and managers on a global scale, the Toolkit provided a platform for the exchange of knowledge and lessons learnt in the management of marine mammals; providing both a means for the collective advancement of conservation practices and a network of protected areas to support coherent management throughout the migratory cycles and transboundary movement of marine mammals.

The toolkit successfully empowered managers to address threats and activities within their protected areas whilst subsequently raising the awareness around the threats facing marine mammals, the possible solutions to address these and the importance of evaluating management plans to improve management actions.

Showcased on a range of levels, from international to regional and local, the Twinning connected managers for a collective purpose and has provided a cohesive resource that has, and will continue, to enable local-level action for the benefit of marine mammals and people, as well as unlocking the ability of Nations to achieve national commitments and international targets, including the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Global climate change, the increase in the use, and exploitation, of the Ocean, poses a continual threat to marine mammals. However, with the continued perseverance of marine managers, organisations and countries, the effective conservation of marine mammals will, and must, continue – and the Marine Mammals Management Toolkit has a key role to play in supporting these necessary actions to ensure the protection, resilience, and restoration of marine mammal populations.

Acknowledgments

The Marine Mammal Twinning, part of the EU-funded Ocean Governance Project, would like to express its gratitude to the Twinning Partners, collaborators and dedicated individuals for the development, dissemination, and support of the Marine Mammals management Toolkit:

AGOA Sanctuary, Azores Marine Park, Caribbean Marine Mammals Preservation Network (CARI’MAM), Government of Bermuda’s Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Iroise Marine Nature park, Ministry of Agriculture and Environment – Cape Verde, Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary, the Regional Activity Center for Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife of the Caribbean according to the Cartagena Convention (SPAW-RAC), University of Iceland, Yarari Marine Mammal and Shark Sanctuary, Abidjan Convention, Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS), Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas (ASCOBANS), African Marine Mammal Conservation Organisation (AMMCO), Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA), Fisheries

and Ocean Canada, IUCN Marine Mammals Protected Areas task Force / IMMAs, Joint Nature Conservation Committee, MedPan, MIRACETI, North American Marine Protected Areas Network (NAMPAN), Nature Foundation - St. Marteen, North East Asian Marine Protected Areas Network (NEAMPAN)/ North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC), The French Biodiversity Agency (OFB), The Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (PERSGA), The Pacific Islands Managed and Protected Areas Community (PIMPAC), The Regional Partnership for Coastal and Marine Conservation (PRCM), The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), CARibbean marine Megafauna and anthropogenic Activities (CAMAC), Caribbean Marine Mammals Preservation Network (CARI’MAM), International Whaling Commission, United Nations Environment Programme, Whale & Dolphin Conservation, Whale Seeker, Western Indian Ocean Marine Protected Areas Management Network (WIOMPAN), The Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA), Department of Marine Conservation, Ministry of Blue Economy and Fisheries, Zanzibar.



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The EU-funded Ocean Governance Project

The Ocean Governance project was initiated by the European Commission to contribute to European Union (EU) objectives on international ocean governance and to the delivery of EU global commitments regarding sustainable development, climate change and biodiversity protection. The EU is committed to act on international ocean governance to ensure safe, secure, clean and sustainably managed oceans. The action is funded by the EU Partnership Instrument.



Ocean Governance

The project was implemented by a consortium of partners including GOPA International Consultants, B&S Europe, and WWF Indonesia.

The objectives of the project were:

- to advance a process leading to enhanced cooperation of MPAs in and between the Atlantic and South-East Asian regions;
- to support the implementation of marine and coastal ecosystem restoration activity in the South-East Asian region;
- to facilitate broader regional cooperation on marine and coastal resilience in the South-East Asian region with a view to underpin regional stability; and
- to contribute to the effective management of MPAs in the Atlantic and South-East Asian regions.

Activities in the project were divided into 4 components:

1. Increased knowledge and practice of protecting and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems in three selected areas of marine protected areas in the South-East Asian region.

2. Improved management of marine protected areas around the Atlantic Ocean using the concept of shared environmental protection.
3. Strengthened knowledge exchange between Atlantic and South-East Asian marine and coastal regions.
4. Improved basis for dialogue among marine and coastal stakeholders in the South-East Asian region.

To implement the activities, under component 2, three Twinning were established; MPA Networks, Resilience and Marine Mammals. The activities of the Marine Mammal Twinning from 2020 - 2023 are detailed in this Impact Report.

The project built upon the EU-funded Transatlantic Action 'Cooperation with Northern and Southern Transatlantic Dimension – MPAs' project and its extension (2016-19) with a view to consolidate and deepen the initiated cooperation.

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