

## **ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES (ACS)**

### **CARIBBEAN SEA COMMISSION (CSC)**

#### **REPORT BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL**

#### **Advances in the implementation of UN Resolution A/RES/75/277**

### **"Towards the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea for present and future generations".**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

1. The Caribbean Sea is a sub-oceanic basin of the Atlantic Ocean, the largest and most geopolitically complex marine ecosystem in the world because it is home to the largest number of countries and the most maritime boundaries of any large marine ecosystem in the world. The region is a complex marine area shared by countries of different sizes and with different levels of sustainable development. The Caribbean Sea is considered the common heritage of the peoples of the region who share a cultural identity. The inhabitants of the region depend on this ecosystem in economic, social, cultural, environmental, climatic and other terms. Therefore, it is necessary to promote spatial planning and governance to create structures that connect the region through tools such as international cooperation and policies that favour the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea.
2. Approximately 44 million<sup>1</sup> people depend directly on the resources of the Caribbean Sea and it is one of the most biologically diverse marine ecosystems in the world. Unfortunately, it is affected by a lack of protection and recurrent threats associated

---

<sup>1</sup> The Nature Conservancy. (2021). Caribbean Impact Report. May, 2022, de The Nature Conservancy website: <https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/caribbean/stories-in-caribbean/caribbean-annual-impact-report/>

with pollution, habitat loss, overexploitation of resources, climate change, invasion of alien species, massive arrivals of sargassum and, in general, lack of sustainable development and planning.

3. In light of the increasing adverse impacts of climate change, the different public health crises such as the current pandemic caused by COVID-19, the loss of biodiversity, the continuous degradation of ecosystems and pollution, it is essential to achieve sustainable management of the ecosystems of the Caribbean Sea and the ecosystem services it provides. To achieve the management and preservation of this large geographic area, coherent ocean governance is required, through actions aimed at the promotion of conservation and sustainable usage of marine resources for present and future generations.
4. In light of this, the Caribbean Sea Commission (CSC) was conceived to provide and oversee the sustainable use of the Caribbean Sea. The CSC has held 21 meetings with the purpose of fostering greater public awareness of the importance of the Caribbean Sea; establishing a forum to discuss issues relating to its uses and related activities; and facilitating a policy for the integration of ocean management, to improve the link between governance and the social and economic development of the Greater Caribbean region.
5. In 2014, in response to mandates from the V Meeting of ACS Heads of State and Government and UNGA to examine the implications of the designation, a consultancy was engaged to analyse the various ways in which the concept of "Special Area" is addressed in legal instruments such as the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the International Maritime Organisation's resolution on Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas. The review concluded that the Caribbean Sea qualifies as a Special Area because of its ecological, socio-economic and scientific value to the peoples of the

Caribbean. However, the report needs to be updated to include broader issues such as sustainable tourism, trade and the impact of the pandemic. Similarly, it was determined that Member States should work towards a consensus in the definition including the three dimensions of Sustainable Development: economic, environmental and social.

6. While the CSC was revitalised in 2015, seeking special area status was envisioned two decades ago with the Caribbean Sea Initiative. The creation of the CSC reflected the commitment of ACS members to preserve and protect the Caribbean Sea. Since then, it has sought to coordinate efforts to achieve its aims is to achieve recognition of the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development.
7. This report describes progress made from 2020 to 2022 in follow-up to resolution A/75/277.

## **I. Managua Declaration**

8. In the framework of the Managua Declaration, adopted in March 2019 by the Heads of State and Government of the Member States and Associate Members, with the main theme "Joining Efforts in the Caribbean to Confront Climate Change", the importance of confronting climate change and its effects on the countries and territories of the region was recognised; the Work Programme of the Caribbean Sea Commission was established, which included seeking recognition of the Caribbean Sea as a Special Area in the Context of Sustainable Development and the project "Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on Sandy Shorelines" (Sandy Shorelines).

## **II. Action Plan 2022-2028**

9. On 28 April 2022, during the 27th ACS Ministerial Meeting, the 2022-2028 Action Plan was approved. Its strategic objectives are interlinked and have as a priority the

sustainable development of the Greater Caribbean. The strategies consider cross-cutting issues related to the protection and conservation of ecosystems through ecosystem-based solutions, community participation, engagement with youth, women, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, such as indigenous peoples.

10. Strategic Objective C of the ACS concerning CSC activities aims to: Reduce environmental risks, biodiversity loss and promote the restoration, preservation, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and other natural resources through improved governance of the Caribbean Sea. Through the implementation of four (4) general strategies: i. Promote the designation of the Caribbean Sea as a Special Area in the context of sustainable development; ii. Promote the sustainable management of the Caribbean Sea and its resources; iii. Strengthen measures to mitigate and adapt to Climate Change; iv. Promote the sustainable management of waste and residues.

### **III. Strengthening Collaboration with Regional and International Partners**

11. The Managua Declaration acknowledges the technical and financial resources offered by Member States, Associate Members, Founding Observers, Observer States, Observer Organisations, and Social Actors and thanks them for their support for the implementation of the Plan of Action for the Triennium 2019-2021.
12. The recently approved Plan of Action 2022-2028 aims to promote multidimensional cooperation as a fundamental tool for the development of the Greater Caribbean region, the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other international development agendas through ACS projects and programmes.

13. In fulfilment of the mandate given by ACS Member States as a body for "regional consultation, cooperation and concerted action", the Secretariat has intensified its collaboration with regional and international partners on issues related to climate change, disaster risk reduction, trade, transport and sustainable tourism, with the aim of achieving effective and sustainable solutions to promote adaptation and resilience of ACS Member States.
14. With 25 Member States, 10 Associate Members and 28 Observer Countries, the ACS has a unique position within the region. In addition to existing partnerships with donor countries such as South Korea, Turkey and the Kingdom of the Netherlands for the implementation of CSC projects, it requires the technical and financial support of the United Nations to implement such a large-scale task.
15. Some examples include the role of the ACS in addressing the widespread threat of Sargasso algae. On 29 October 2021, the 3rd Steering Committee Meeting of the SARGCOOP project was held by the Regional Council of Guadeloupe in conjunction with Interreg Caraibes. The meeting sought to discuss the SARGCOOP project which was born in partnership with the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and the ACS after the international conference on sargassum in 2019.
16. The ACS engages with the CLME+ Project Coordination Unit to seek the final drafting and adoption of the Coordinating Mechanism Memorandum of Understanding, as well as to open the Memorandum of Understanding for signature and review the roadmap towards the implementation of the Coordinating Mechanism Memorandum of Understanding.
17. Subsequently, the ACS participated in the Virtual Dialogue on Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) and Blue Economy (BE) for the Large Marine Ecosystems of the Caribbean Shelf and Northern Brazil (CLME+ region). The objective of the meeting was to

establish the current status and opportunities for advancing MSP through the global PROCARIBE+ and MSP projects, as well as the future GEF IW: LEARN project.

#### **IV. Ongoing projects of the Caribbean Sea Commission**

18. The various crises facing our region have caused a slowdown in the implementation of CSC projects. However, under new online collaboration schemes and modalities, it has been possible to continue working.
19. The CSC and ACS Flagship Project, entitled "Assessment of Climate Change Impacts on Caribbean Sandy Shorelines; Alternatives for Control and Resilience" referred to in the General Secretariat's 2020 report, seeks to improve the coastal resilience of ACS Member States by bringing together coastal erosion experts in the region through the establishment of a coastal erosion monitoring network in nine (9) member countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti, Jamaica, Panama, and Trinidad and Tobago, all of which currently have a national focal point.
20. This project was launched in 2017 with funding from the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), which provided US\$4 million. It will enable ACS Member States to understand some of the impacts of climate change on the region's coastal zones such as sea level rise and coastal erosion. An amendment to the agreement was made in April 2022, approving an extension of the project until September 2023. This will allow the integration of proposals from regional specialists to restore beaches that have suffered the impact of climate change in the region, taking into account the characteristics that differentiate them from the rest of the world.

21. The Secretariat continues to work in constant collaboration with the Focal Points of the network (Component 1) and on the equipment procurement strategy (Component 3). The countries of Trinidad and Tobago, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Costa Rica and Panama have met with the ACS individually during the last quarter of 2021 to update the equipment list, which consists of 250 items. In parallel, the ACS is preparing a custody transfer agreement and the supply of the equipment to Member States, including donation processes, tax exemption and securing data to integrate the monitoring network.
22. In January 2021, the project signed a contract with GAMMA Investments to carry out executive studies for beach rehabilitation in 3 countries: Panama, Trinidad and Tobago and Antigua and Barbuda (Component 4.1). The beach rehabilitation projects by the GAMMA consultancy began in September 2021 in Viento Frío, Panama and were successfully completed in October 2021. Subsequently, the team moved on and commenced project activities in the countries of Trinidad and Tobago and Antigua and Barbuda in April 2022. The Projects consist of fieldwork exercises and a Postgraduate course entitled "Coastal Processes and Methodological Criteria for Beach Restoration and Sedimentology Seminar".
23. On 2 June 2021 the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA) of Jamaica submitted the Status Report on the video monitoring tower in Hellshire (Component 4.2), in which they report the completion of the construction of the tower in May 2021. Subsequently, the Agency received the monitoring equipment for future installation and training by experts from the Korean Institute of Science and Technology (KIOST).
24. The General Secretariat is developing a website for the Sandy Shorelines Project (Component 5) that will serve as a platform for knowledge transfer and will showcase the results of the different components of the project.

25. In addition to the Sandy Shorelines project mentioned above, the Kingdom of the Netherlands financed the participation of Dutch Members: Curaçao and Sint Maarten. Approximately US\$70,000 worth of coastal monitoring equipment was procured in September 2020 and successfully delivered to Curaçao and Sint Maarten in November 2020.
26. Additionally, the CSC included in the 2022-2028 Action Plan the "Caribbean Climate Mobility Initiative" (CCMI), which was presented to Member States on 2 September 2021 during the 1st Meeting of the Bureau of the CSC Special Committee and its inclusion in the CSC project agenda was discussed. The CCMI will be launched in July 2022. The climate crisis is the key driver of forced displacement and migration. In this regard, the Greater Caribbean would benefit from developing "people-centered climate action" in line with its objectives of advancing common prosperity and greater economic integration.
27. Our region faces continuing and new development needs, particularly in the context of COVID-19, climate change and related threats. It is therefore necessary to reposition it in order to identify and develop regional comparative advantages to promote sustainable development, production complementarity and resilience in the productive sectors of the Greater Caribbean.
28. Therefore, it is necessary to recognize sustainable tourism as an essential activity for the economic and environmental development of the region. In this regard, the designation of the Caribbean as a Sustainable Tourism Zone will be promoted in recognition of the contributions of the tourism industry to improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the Greater Caribbean.
29. The high vulnerability of the Caribbean to the climate crisis demands greater regional action. For this reason, the ACS will begin the process of accreditation to the Green



Climate Fund and the Adaptation Fund, seeking to join the regional efforts already being implemented in the region.

## **V. Designation of Special Area - Definition of the Caribbean Sea as a Special Area**

30. The 20th Meeting of the Caribbean Sea Commission was held online on 14 August 2020. During the discussion, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the progress of the project portfolio, the modality of work and the efforts deployed by ACS countries to contain it were highlighted. The CSC approved the composition of the Sub-Commissions (Annex I).
31. Since the formation of the Sub-Commissions, four (4) meetings have been held between 2020 and 2021. The Sub-Commissions have focused on advancing the work of determining the legal, financial and technical implications of defining the Caribbean Sea as a Special Area in the context of sustainable development, as described in the United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/75/277 (UNGA).
32. The sub-commissions have developed a joint meeting mechanism to maximise time and share expertise among experts. In this regard, they approved the Terms of Reference (ToR) to carry out an update of the 2014 consultants' report, in light of new international and regional legislation, using a multidimensional, ocean governance approach, taking into account the SDGs; as well as the multidimensional and sectoral implications of the designation of special areas and incorporating current issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change. These ToR were approved during the II Extraordinary Meeting of the CSC held on 16 April 2021.
33. In 2021, the Membership was consulted on possible consultancy firms that could develop the project to analyse the implications of designating the Caribbean Sea as

a special area in the context of sustainable development and to update the consultancy carried out in 2014. Colombia and Mexico sent their proposals to the ACS.

34. The CSC will establish the path that the Legal and Scientific and Technical Sub-Committees should implement to initiate the work detailed in resolution A/75/277 and build consensus to define the Special Zone by underlining the three dimensions of sustainable development - economic, social and environmental aspects - and recognising their interrelationships. The Work Programme of the sub-committees is expected to include research on global and regional agreements to which ACS Member States are party, existing definitions of "Special Zone", the shortcomings of such existing agreements, as well as their level of ratification among Member States.
35. The Legal Sub-Commission will lead i) the investigation of existing legal concepts of special area, in particular as they apply to the Caribbean Sea and ii) the examination of the conceptual elements of a "special area" within relevant international instruments, and how these can be extended and/or applied to the concept of "special area in the context of sustainable development".
36. The Scientific and Technical Sub-Commission will provide scientific research that details and highlights the environmental characteristics of the Caribbean Sea as unique and the desires of Member States with respect to the management of the Sea. These desires should reflect a concerted effort towards the integration of the management of the Caribbean Sea and include a mechanism based on participatory and consensus building rather than punitive actions.
37. A draft definition of the Special Zone will be presented which incorporates all the above-mentioned considerations, including the contributions of the different UN agencies working on the matter.

38. During this process, the CSC will consult with agencies and/or mechanisms that have similar activities to the initiative, such as the Caribbean Development Bank and the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre.

## **CONCLUSION**

39. The ACS, through the CSC, remains committed to the goal of achieving Special Area status for the Caribbean Sea. The Commission is actively working on the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea through activities such as joint research, management projects, meetings and cooperative information exchange mechanisms, in order to improve coordination and cooperation on issues relating to the management of the marine environment and related decision-making.

40. The ACS Secretariat considers it essential to move from narrative to results. In this sense, it will convene the UN agencies that report inputs to this report, through the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

41. While this issue has been high on the ACS agenda during the reporting period, the members of the Association and the General Secretariat must join forces to continue to strengthen and mobilise resources for approved projects, as well as new initiatives that promote the development of the Caribbean Sea, its preservation and sustainability. The Association has every confidence that the joint efforts and active participation of the Members will help to ensure the strategic objectives of the Commission.

Finally, the SG expresses its appreciation to the UN General Assembly and the UN Secretary-General for the consideration of this matter.

## Annex I

<b>Country</b>	<b>Members nominated for the Scientific and Technical Sub-Commission</b>	<b>Members nominated for the Legal Subcommittee</b>
Colombia	Erick Castro	Dr. Andrés Villegas Jaramillo
Dominica	Mr Minchinton Burton; Mr. Florian Mitchel	Mr Minchinton Burton; Mr. Florian Mitchel
Guadeloupe	Ms Jessica Julan-Aubourg; Mr. Nicolas Diaz; Mr. Pierre Bourgeois	Ms Jessica Julan-Aubourg; Mr. Nicolas Diaz; Mr. Pierre Bourgeois
Guyana		Ms. Donnette Streete
Jamaica	Mr. Anthony McKenzie; Prof. Mona Webber	
Mexico	Dr. Daniel Robledo Ramírez; Dr. Francisco Arreguín Sánchez	
Nicaragua		Dr. Julio César Saborío Arguello; Dr. Claudia Loza Obregón
Panama	José Julio Casas; Ligia Castro	Elvia Bustavino
Saint Lucia	Ms. Bethia Thomas (principal) ; Ms. Lavina Alexander (alternate)	

<b>Country</b>	<b>Members nominated for the Scientific and Technical Sub-Commission</b>	<b>Members nominated for the Legal Subcommittee</b>
Trinidad and Tobago	Dr. Anjani Ganase	Dr. Rahanna Juman; Ms. Mary Tang-Yew