

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 21 December 2020

75/214. Towards the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea for present and future generations

Report of the Secretary-General

Progress report by the United Nations Environment Programme in the Wider Caribbean Region

The present report highlights the key actions undertaken by the [Secretariat of the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region](#) (Cartagena Convention) in accordance with the decisions made under resolution 75/214 of the General Assembly. The Convention is supported by its three Protocols on Cooperation in Combating Oil Spills, Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) and Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities (LBS). The reporting period is from March 2020 to March 2022.

1. Regional ocean governance and partnerships (*progress on Decisions 1, 18*)

- i. The [Government of Nicaragua ratified the Cartagena Convention's Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife \(SPAW\)](#) on 4th May 2021. The Governments of Guatemala, Mexico and Suriname were provided with technical support to assist them with becoming Parties to the Protocols (and Convention in the case of Suriname) that they have not yet ratified. Saint Kitts and Nevis also received support and a request was submitted to its Cabinet of Ministers for ratification of the SPAW and LBS Protocols. Two [virtual workshops](#) were convened in English and Spanish in November 2021 to provide guidance on ratification to Non-Contracting Parties to the LBS Protocol.
- ii. In response to a request from Contracting Parties for the Secretariat to gain a better understanding of blue economy initiatives in the Wider Caribbean, an [information paper on sustainable blue economy](#) was prepared by the Secretariat and presented to the 16th Conference of Parties (COP). The [2021-2030 Regional Strategy for the Caribbean Environment Programme \(CEP\)](#), which is being updated, provides a framework to strengthen regional ocean governance and enhance partnerships and action for the protection of the Caribbean Sea..
- iii. The [Capacity Building Related to Multilateral Environmental Agreements in African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries - Phase 3](#) (ACP MEAs III) project is supporting better management of coastal and marine ecosystems, and effective implementation of the Cartagena Convention and related Global MEAs. The [GEF CReW+](#) Project "An integrated approach to water and wastewater management in the Wider Caribbean Region using innovative solutions and sustainable financing mechanisms" is assisting 18 countries in the Wider Caribbean region to implement institutional, policy, legislative and regulatory reforms on water and wastewater management.
- iv. The Cartagena Convention Secretariat provided support for the establishment of a Coordinating Mechanism and Sustainable Financing Plan for ocean governance in the CLME+ region. A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed by participating agencies, including UNEP.
- v. The Secretariat is committed to participating in a new project on 'Protecting and Restoring the Ocean's natural Capital, building Resilience and supporting region-wide Investments for sustainable Blue socio-economic development' ([PROCARIBE+](#)), which is a follow up to the [UNDP GEF CLME+ project](#).
- vi. Expert Working Groups have been established to support the implementation of national obligations for the LBS and SPAW Protocols and related global Multilateral Environmental Agreements on marine biodiversity and marine pollution.
- vii. A [Memorandum of Cooperation \(MoC\) with the Mesoamerican Reef Fund was extended until May 2026](#). Cooperation with the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) is ongoing under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed in May 2018 (*progress on Decisions 14, 15, 16, 17*).

Memoranda of Understanding were signed with the Secretariat of the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR) in November 2021; the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI) in July 2020; the Institute of Marine and Coastal Research (INVEMAR) in November 2020 and [The Ocean Foundation \(TOF\)](#) in October 2019. A draft MOU with the International Whaling Commission (IWC) was also developed and awaiting final signature.

- viii. The Secretariat facilitated coordination at the international, regional, national and local levels on marine pollution, marine biodiversity, and the overall protection and sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea's marine and coastal resources. Partnerships were strengthened with other Regional Seas Conventions such as the Abidjan Convention, universities such as the George Washington University, research institutions such as the Centre for Research and Advanced Studies of the National Polytechnic Institute (CINVESTAV), among others.
- ix. Notable regional publications to support decision-making and policy development include summaries of the first [State of the Cartagena Convention Area \(SOCAR\) Report](#) on marine pollution in the Wider Caribbean Region for [private sector](#), [policymakers](#), and [civil society](#); [Regional Nutrients Pollution Reduction Strategy and Action Plan](#); [State of Nearshore Marine Habitats in the Wider Caribbean \(SoMH\)](#); a [Regional Strategy and Action Plan for the Valuation, Protection and/or Restoration of Key Marine Habitats in the Wider Caribbean 2021-2030 \(RSAP\)](#); [Integrated Large-Scale Action on Habitat Restoration and Pollution in the CLME+ Region: A Baseline and Feasibility Assessment Report on the Needs and Opportunities](#); and a [Manual for the ecological restoration of mangroves in the Mesoamerican Reef System and the Wider Caribbean](#);

2. Environmental management and pollution prevention (*progress on Decisions 10, 19, 25*)

- i. Efforts to strengthen water and wastewater management in the Wider Caribbean have been ongoing. A report on [Nature-Based Solutions for Wastewater Management](#) was completed through funding from the Swedish Ministry of Environment. Some of the ongoing and/or planned activities under the [GEF CReW+](#) project include the development of national Water Information Management systems and a regional environmental monitoring platform, community-based interventions and training activities through additional financing from the ACP MEAs III project, development of public education materials, training of water and wastewater operators, the development of domestic wastewater classifications as well as capacity-building on behaviour change, and strengthening the management of freshwater resources and reducing nutrient pollution.
- ii. Through the Global Environment Facility-funded Integrating Water, Land and Ecosystems Management in Caribbean Small Island Developing States ([GEF IWECO](#)) project, activities are ongoing to contribute to the preservation of Caribbean ecosystems and to the sustainability of livelihoods.
- iii. Activities to strengthen solid waste and marine litter management have included the development of a [Regional Marine Litter Management Strategy for the Wider Caribbean Region](#), the update of an [interactive map](#) on the status of Styrofoam and plastic bag bans in the Wider Caribbean and continued work by the [Caribbean Node of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter](#) which is co-hosted by the Secretariat and the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute. A new [GEF-funded project proposal](#) will support cities in the region in their efforts to reduce plastic pollution and adopt circular economy approaches.
- iv. Several governments in the region benefitted from regional and national [workshops and trainings](#) which supported the implementation of the Convention's Oil Spills Protocol and related MEAs administered by the International Maritime Organization (IMO). Virtual capacity building workshops focused on marine spatial planning, shoreline clean-up assessment techniques, satellite monitoring of oil spills, the use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to address oil pollution, preparedness and response to oil spills, as well as trade and maritime transport in the Caribbean.

- v. The [first joint UN Human Security project in Jamaica](#) provided an opportunity for the Secretariat to implement rainwater harvesting systems and strengthen the capacity of schools and communities to adopt sustainable practices, such as composting and wastewater reuse. Efforts are ongoing to replicate this project in the Wider Caribbean Region.

3. Conservation of marine biodiversity, protected areas and species (*progress on Decisions 1, 17*)

- i. The Secretariat's continued work to strengthen the management and networking of marine protected areas (MPAs) and protected species included the incorporation of the [Cotubanama National Park](#) in the Dominican Republic as a SPAW-listed site, progress on the establishment of a SPAW MPAs Networking Group to lead the inter-regional network of MPAs and improve MPA networking, and restructuring and update of the [Caribbean Marine Protected Area Network and Forum \(CaMPAM\)](#).
- ii. Several new planning tools were developed including one to [link SPAW-listed MPAs based on the ecological connectivity between the sites](#), an [Assessment of the Impact and Effectiveness of the Caribbean Marine Protected Area Network and Forum \(CaMPAM\)](#) along with [Strategic Directions and Network Development Plan for the Caribbean Marine Protected Area Network and Forum \(CaMPAM\)](#).
- iii. With the increasing impact of Sargassum in the Caribbean Sea, a [toolbox for reporting Sargassum sightings was developed](#) and supported by a [collaborative webinar series](#) to highlight the challenges and responses to the influx. Other activities included the establishment of a Sargassum Ad Hoc Working Group; the publication of several information products such as a [UNEP foresight brief](#), an updated [White Paper](#) and White Paper summaries for [policymakers](#), [civil society organizations](#), [women and youth](#) and [entrepreneurs and small and medium-sized businesses](#).
- iv. Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD) has been a prominent threat to coral reef ecosystems. The Secretariat, the SPAW Regional Activity Centre and several partners developed a [White Paper](#) with recommended actions for local, national and regional stakeholders and an [interactive dashboard](#) to record and track sightings of the disease in the region.
- v. Coral reef conservation initiatives have been on-going and include the submission of data to the 2020 "Global coral reef status and trends" report, continued coordination of the [regional node for the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network](#) and the conservation of herbivorous fish (particularly parrotfish).

Complementary to the above work of the Cartagena Convention Secretariat, the UNEP Caribbean Sub-Regional Office (CSRO) can report on the following activities in support of SIDS (Decisions 19, 27):

1. **Blue/green economy and sustainable finance policy development and planning** UNEP and its Finance Initiative (UNEP FI) are collaborating with UNDP, FAO and UNFPA on various catalytic projects funded by the SDG Joint Fund and the [Partnership for Action on Green Economy](#). The support is elaborating inclusive sustainable development financing strategies for prioritized SIDS blue economy sectors (e.g. forestry, fishing, small scale gold mining, maritime affairs, coastal development, tourism etc.), and for green economy (agriculture, SIDS knowledge hub). These projects support upstream policy reform to attract sustainable finance and investment, capacity strengthening, and achievement of various SDGs (8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15). As SIDS struggle with slow, post-COVID-19 recovery and high indebtedness, awareness is increasing of the utility of UNEP FI's Principles: for [Responsible Banking](#), for [sustainable insurance](#) and for [responsible investment](#); its international expertise on blue/green/climate financing and networks of finance practitioners; and its partnership with the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) on capacity strengthening is raising awareness of stakeholder for the conditions required for financing the blue/green economies. PAGE green recovery support is supporting SIDS knowledge and resilience building. Budget and financing staff and risk analysts have been trained to apply climate, social and environmental risk assessment criteria to blue economy projects. Technical staff are being trained to implement regulatory reforms and strengthen the enabling environment.

2. **Circular economy and waste management policy:** UNEP is collaborating with the AFD and GIZ to improve capacity for circular economy, waste management and resource efficiency in Caribbean SIDS on a recently-launched EU funded project. The core objective is to better align solid waste management systems in SIDS with circular economy principles and the priorities of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), to make these policies more attractive to investments. The joint effort will support strengthening of national legislative frameworks and the establishment of a regional policy structure to support sub-regional and Caribbean SIDS actions. UNEP is leading activities for the component output, "*ER1: Robust solid waste management legal and strategic frameworks are developed in the context of promoting a circular economy*" and will contribute to an output facilitating policy dialogue and awareness raising. The project's governance structure is designed to ensure that SIDS representatives and focal points are engaged at decision-making, technical and implementation levels.

3. **Regional Forum of Environment Ministers and the SIDS Working group:** UNEP serves as the secretariat of the Regional Forum. The CSRO works assiduously with the Regional Directorate to encourage SIDS participation and representation at the Regional Forum and at UNEA, and to ratify Cartagena Convention Protocols, where relevant. Under Decision 8 of the *XXIII Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean* (18th November 2021) a Working Group (WG) was established to support and guide the development of the Caribbean SIDS Programme. CSRO convened a first meeting in December 2021 of SIDS Working Group representatives that discussed a work scope and operating terms of reference. The Working Group is chaired by the Government of Barbados and has prioritized COVID-19 Recovery Response in areas such as tourism recovery, sustainable consumption and production and food security through the sustainable use of land and marine resources.
 - **Caribbean High-Level Fora - Water and Waste:** UNEP has been supporting the High-Level Forum of Caribbean Ministers Responsible for Water (HLF Water) over the last decade and the High-Level Forum of Caribbean Ministers Responsible for Waste Management (HLF Waste) since its inception in 2017 conducted under the aegis of the Caribbean Water and Wastewater Water

Association's (CWWA) Annual Conference. UNEP continues to provide both technical assistance and financial support through capacity building for the CWWA constituency which comprises policy makers, experts, academia, community stakeholders and others. Both fora have been instrumental in setting the Caribbean agenda such the Regional Action Plan (RSAP) for Water and Climate which was adopted by Ministers in 2019, and the Caribbean Waste Management Action Plan. UNEP's support to these Ministerial fora has been channelled through a collaborative partnership with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), CARICOM, PAHO, the Ministry of Infrastructure of the Netherlands among others to support the Caribbean agenda.