

ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES (ACS)

CARIBBEAN SEA COMMISSION (CSC)

REPORT BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL

Advances in the implementation of UN Resolution A/RES/77/163

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

I. INTRODUCTION

The Caribbean Sea is recognized as the largest and most geopolitically diverse marine area. This complexity stems from the numerous countries and maritime boundaries in the region, creating a shared marine space among nations of various sizes and levels of sustainable development. Seen as the collective heritage of its diverse populations, the Caribbean Sea is integral to its cultural identity.

Around 44 million people rely directly on the Caribbean Sea's resources, which are part of one of the world's most biologically diverse marine ecosystems. However, this region is under significant threat due to inadequate protection and ongoing challenges such as pollution, habitat loss, resource overexploitation, climate change, invasive species, massive sargassum influxes, and unsustainable development and planning. Additionally, the region's economic dependency on tourism and fishing exacerbates these issues, as these industries are particularly vulnerable to environmental degradation. The inhabitants of the region depend on this ecosystem for their economic, social, cultural, environmental, and climatic needs. Therefore, it is crucial to implement effective spatial planning and governance to improve regional connectivity through international cooperation and

policies that promote the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea. Efforts must also include community engagement and education to ensure local populations are active participants in conservation and sustainability initiatives.

Given the rising adverse impacts of climate change, disaster recovery, public health crises, biodiversity loss, ecosystem degradation, and pollution, it is crucial to achieve sustainable management of the Caribbean Sea's ecosystems and the services they provide. The region's dependence on marine resources for food security, livelihoods, and economic stability heightens the urgency of these issues. Coherent ocean governance is essential for the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources, ensuring benefits for present and future generations. This governance must integrate scientific research, traditional knowledge, and adaptive management practices to address the dynamic challenges facing the Caribbean Sea. Additionally, fostering regional and international cooperation is vital to implement effective policies and practices that protect marine biodiversity and enhance the resilience of coastal communities. Public awareness and education programs are also necessary to engage local populations in sustainable practices and conservation efforts.

In response to these challenges, the Caribbean Sea Commission (CSC) was established to oversee the sustainable use of the Caribbean Sea. Since its inception, the CSC has conducted 23 meetings aimed at increasing public awareness about the Caribbean Sea's significance, providing a forum for discussing its use and related activities, and facilitating policies that integrate ocean management with the social and economic development of the Greater Caribbean region. Additionally, the CSC has been instrumental in promoting collaborative research, enhancing regional cooperation, and supporting capacity-building initiatives to strengthen local and national capabilities in marine conservation. The

Commission also works to address emerging threats through adaptive management strategies and fosters partnerships with international organizations to align regional efforts with global sustainability goals. Public outreach and education campaigns are a core part of the CSC's mission, ensuring that communities understand the importance of the Caribbean Sea and are actively involved in its stewardship.

In 2014, following mandates from the V Meeting of ACS Heads of State and Government and the UNGA, a consultancy was commissioned to explore the concept of "Special Area" status as 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 Organization's resolution on Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas. The review affirmed that the Caribbean Sea qualifies as a Special Area due to its ecological, socio-economic, and scientific value. However, the report needs updates to address broader issues like sustainable tourism, trade, and the impact of the pandemic. It was also determined that Member States should work towards a consensus definition that encompasses the three dimensions of Sustainable Development: economic, environmental, and social.

Furthermore, there is a need for enhanced regional cooperation to implement effective policies and measures that protect the Caribbean Sea while promoting sustainable development. This involves engaging with international stakeholders, updating legal frameworks, and incorporating the latest scientific research to address new and emerging challenges. Public awareness and participation are crucial to ensuring that the designation as a Special Area translates into tangible benefits for the region and its inhabitants.

Although the Caribbean Sea Commission (CSC) was revitalized in 2015, the vision of designating the Caribbean Sea as a Special Area dates back over two decades with the Caribbean Sea Initiative. The creation of the CSC reflected the commitment of ACS members to preserving and protecting the Caribbean Sea. Since then, coordinated efforts have been made to achieve recognition of the Caribbean Sea as a Special Area in the context of sustainable development. These efforts include fostering regional collaboration, aligning with international environmental standards, and promoting policies that support marine conservation. The CSC has also been active in raising public awareness about the importance of the Caribbean Sea, engaging with stakeholders at all levels, and advocating for the integration of sustainable practices across various sectors. The ongoing work aims to ensure that the Caribbean Sea remains a vital resource for future generations, balancing ecological health with socio-economic development.

This report outlines the progress made from 2022 to 2024 relative to resolution A/75/277. Over this period, significant strides have been made in advancing the sustainable management and protection of the Caribbean Sea.

The progress achieved from 2022 to 2024 demonstrates the ACS' strong commitment to the sustainable management of the Caribbean Sea. Continued efforts and enhanced cooperation will be essential to address ongoing and emerging challenges, ensuring that the Caribbean Sea remains a vibrant and resilient ecosystem for generations to come.

II. Action Plan 2022-2028

On 28 April 2022, the 27th ACS Ministerial Meeting approved the 2022-2028 Action Plan. The plan's strategic objectives prioritize the sustainable development of the

Greater Caribbean, focusing on ecosystem protection and conservation through ecosystem-based solutions, community participation, and engagement with youth, women, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups, including indigenous peoples.

Strategic Objective C of the ACS regarding CSC activities aims to reduce environmental risks, prevent biodiversity loss, and promote the restoration, preservation, conservation, and sustainable use of natural resources through improved governance of the Caribbean Sea. This will be achieved through four general strategies: i. Promote the designation of the Caribbean Sea as a Special Area in the context of sustainable development; ii. Promote sustainable management of the Caribbean Sea and its resources; iii. Strengthen measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change; iv. Promote sustainable waste and residue management.

III. Declaration of La Antigua

The IX Summit of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), held on May 12, 2023, in Antigua Guatemala, focused on promoting sustainable development and integration in the Greater Caribbean region. The summit produced the "Declaration of Antigua Guatemala," (Attached) which addressed several critical ocean and environmental issues pertinent to the region, and highlighted the role of the "Caribbean Sea Commission."

Ocean Issues and the Blue Agenda

Promotion of the Blue Agenda: The summit emphasized the need to adopt a "Blue Agenda," which is central to promoting the sustainable use of ocean resources in the Caribbean Sea. This includes the themes of:

Strengthening International Frameworks: Promoting proposals to enhance international regulations governing the oceans:

Sustainable Blue Economy: Creating conditions to reduce pressures on oceans and support sustainable economic activities.

Marine Research and Data:

Strengthening research and international data sharing to improve decision-making regarding ocean resources.

Support for UN Decade of Ocean Sciences:

The ACS committed to supporting the United Nations Decade of Ocean Sciences for Sustainable Development (2021-2030). This initiative aims to develop and apply marine environmental management tools to promote the conservation and sustainable use of the Caribbean Sea and its ecosystems.

Caribbean Sea Commission

Sustainable Development of the Caribbean Sea: The Declaration reaffirmed the ACS's commitment to the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea in alignment with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No. 14 and the 2030 Agenda. The Caribbean Sea Commission is a critical body within the ACS framework tasked with promoting sustainable policies and programs for the region's marine and coastal resources.

Climate Change and Environmental Concerns

Climate Change Threats: The summit recognized climate change as the most significant threat to the Greater Caribbean, impacting ecosystems through events like persistent drought, extreme weather, land degradation, rising sea levels,

coastal erosion, and ocean acidification. The ACS called for a global response proportional to these challenges. The ACS Membership, also, stressed the need for a fairer, more inclusive global financial system and supports the "Bridgetown Initiative" proposed by Barbados for its potential to reshape the system, particularly in responding to climate crises and development challenges. This initiative aims to revamp financial support for climate-vulnerable nations by introducing clauses for interest rate suspension during disasters, providing grants instead of loans for reconstruction, and establishing a \$500 billion Global Climate Change Mitigation Trust Fund, among other measures. The ACS Membership welcomes these steps toward bolstering climate finance and bolstering resilience in developing countries.

Adaptation and Mitigation Funding:

The Declaration highlighted the urgent need for financial resources and technology transfer from developed countries to help the Caribbean region adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change. The ACS urged developed nations to fulfill their commitments to climate funding, including contributions to the Adaptation Fund. ***Sustainable Tourism and Economic Integration***

Sustainable Tourism: The ACS acknowledged the importance of sustainable tourism for the region's economic and environmental development. Efforts will be redoubled to promote sustainable fisheries, agriculture, and forestry, contributing to resilience against climate change.

Economic Integration:

The summit also focused on enhancing trade, digital transformation, and connectivity to boost economic integration and competitiveness in international markets.

Sargassum Sub Commission

The proposal to establish the Sargassum Sub-Commission originated at the IX Summit of the ACS and was incorporated into the CSC's Work Programme for 2023-2024, receiving approval at the 23rd Meeting of the Caribbean Sea Commission. Guided by the ACS Legal Advisor, internal discussions focused on aligning the Terms of Reference (TOR) with the Sub-Commission's positions. The Draft TOR will be revised and circulated among members, emphasizing geographic representation and tailored criteria.

The ACS, during its 29th Ordinary Meeting of the Ministerial Council in Paramaribo, Suriname on May 9, 2024, approved Draft Agreement No. 4/24, officially establishing the Caribbean Sea Commission Sargassum Sub-Commission. This decision recognizes the urgent sargassum crisis, declared an emergency due to its severe impact on the Greater Caribbean region's economy, society, culture, tourism, fishing, and marine biodiversity. The Sub-Commission aims to coordinate actions and develop strategies to manage and mitigate the effects of sargassum, emphasizing its significance in maintaining marine and coastal ecosystem stability.

IV. Collaborations with Regional and International Partners

Following the mandate from ACS Member States to serve as a body for "regional consultation, cooperation, and concerted action," the Secretariat has intensified collaboration with regional and international partners on climate change, disaster risk reduction, trade, transport, and sustainable tourism to achieve effective and sustainable solutions for promoting adaptation and resilience among ACS Member States.

With 25 Member States, 10 Associate Members, and 28 Observer Countries, the ACS occupies a unique position within the region. Alongside existing partnerships

with donor countries such as South Korea, Turkey, and the Kingdom of the Netherlands for implementing CSC projects, the technical and financial support of the United Nations is crucial for executing such large-scale tasks.

Cooperation with the Federative Republic of Brazil

Furthering regional collaboration on ocean matters, the Embassy of the Federative Republic of Brazil engaged in a series of meetings with the Secretariat of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) to discuss technical cooperation actions for controlling sargassum. The meetings highlighted the impact of sargassum on tourism, health, and biodiversity in the Caribbean Sea. Proposed actions include establishing an observatory for data collection and studies on sargassum. Further discussions focused on defining the technical scope of cooperation actions, identifying sargassum observatories, and proposing projects for alternative commercial uses of sargassum. Additionally, a technical mission to Brazil aimed to foster technical cooperation, hosted by the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC), occurred in April 2024. The delegation, composed of representatives focusing on disaster risk reduction, environment, sustainable tourism, the Caribbean Sea, commerce, and sustainable development, engaged in fruitful discussions with key Brazilian institutions to enhance project management capacity and South-South technical cooperation.

Moreover, the technical mission to Brazil, facilitated by the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC), further strengthened cooperation efforts. Representatives from various sectors engaged in fruitful discussions with key Brazilian institutions to enhance project management capacity and foster South-South technical cooperation. Areas identified for further cooperation include joint initiatives on the sargassum influx crisis, disaster risk reduction, sustainable tourism, and capacity building initiatives.

These discussions led to the development of a Basic Agreement on Technical Cooperation between the ACS and ABC that signifies a commitment to advancing collaborative opportunities. This agreement, scheduled to be signed in June 2024, reflects a shared commitment to promoting international cooperation and fostering partnerships for sustainable development in the Greater Caribbean region.

International Workshop on Sustainable Blue Economies in the Caribbean Islands

The International Workshop on Sustainable Blue Economies in the Caribbean Islands convened from March 26th to March 28th, 2024, in St. John's, Antigua and Barbuda. Hosted by the University of West Indies Five Islands Campus and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, Japan, the workshop aimed to address critical issues surrounding sustainable development, conservation, and economic growth in the Caribbean region, with a focus on challenges faced by small island nations and low-lying communities.

The workshop featured panel discussions covering various topics such as ocean policy, sustainable fisheries, marine pollution control, tourism, renewable energy, blue financing, and transboundary ecosystem management. Participants engaged in discussions to address challenges and foster collaboration in advancing sustainable blue economies. Key activities included presentations on the Caribbean Sea Commission (CSC) at the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), highlighting the relevance of the CSC as a mechanism for ocean governance and discussing the Special Area Designation initiative.

Participants emphasized the importance of collaboration and integrated approaches at regional and international levels to address priority issues such as microplastic pollution, sargassum management, and climate migration.

CSC Seminar: "Microplastics in the Caribbean: Sources, Impacts and Monitoring Methodologies"

The Association of Caribbean States (ACS) in collaboration with the Institute of Marine Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago (IMA), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP CEP) through the Secretariat of the Cartagena Convention, the Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation (AMEXCID), the Centre for Research and Advanced Studies of the National Polytechnic Institute (CINVESTAV), and the Basel Convention Regional Training and Technology Transfer Centre for the Caribbean (BCRC-Caribbean), the Centre for Research and Advanced Studies of the National Polytechnic Institute (CINVESTAV), and the Basel Convention Regional Centre for Training and Technology Transfer for the Caribbean (BCRC-Caribbean) are jointly organising the Caribbean Sea Commission (CSC) seminar entitled: "Microplastics in the Caribbean: Sources, Impacts and Monitoring Methodologies". This seminar, was held virtually from Monday 31 October to Friday 4 November 2022. The seminar had a total of 22 facilitators from 12 countries and 468 attendants from 52 countries.

The CSC Seminar lasted 4 hours per day with 30 minutes of refreshments, for a total of 20 hours. The target audiences were decision and policy makers; scientists/academics; environment ministries/regulators, waste management authorities, private sector stakeholders: manufacturing sector/key industry stakeholders; NGOs and CSOs with an interest in microplastic pollution reduction and interested students. The seminar was delivered in three languages simultaneously (English, French and Spanish). To ensure the organisation of the Seminar, DECS organised a total of 9 meetings with the different organisers, individually and in groups, to ensure efficient coordination and logistical planning. These meetings took place between May and October 2022.

Stemming from this collaboration with UNEP-Cartagena Convention Secretariat was invited to attend the Tenth Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) of the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) in the Wider Caribbean Region and the Sixth Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) of the Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities (LBS) in the Wider Caribbean Region which was held virtually on February 3rd 2023. The ACS was invited to present highlights of the work done on building capacity for microplastics monitoring within the region. Advisor Cherisse Briathwaite-Joseph attended and presented at this meeting.

Korea- Caribbean Joint Oceanographic Research Center

The proposed Joint Oceanographic Research Center is a collaboration between the Greater Caribbean Region, represented by the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between the ACS and Korea's Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries to cooperate on marine science. The MOU sets the framework for cooperation in various areas, including human resources development, marine environment protection, and marine industry development.

The establishment of the Korea-Caribbean Joint Research Centre is proposed to advance scientific knowledge, promote sustainable management practices, and support conservation efforts in the marine ecosystems of the Greater Caribbean Region. This initiative aims to address emerging issues, conserve biodiversity, mitigate human impacts, adapt to climate change, and foster regional collaboration.

The partnership between the ACS and Korea focuses on marine science cooperation, aiming to develop human resources, protect the marine environment, develop the marine industry, and formulate marine policies and maritime laws. The cooperation involves establishing a joint oceanographic research center for the Greater Caribbean, which will facilitate multidisciplinary research and collaboration between the two regions. The selection of the Research Centre's location will be determined through a competitive bidding process, considering criteria such as the presence of existing research centers and Korean diplomatic representation.

The Research Centre's objectives include conducting participatory action research, supporting conservation efforts, promoting sustainable use of ecosystem services, enhancing climate change resilience, facilitating knowledge exchange, informing policy development, and fostering regional collaboration. Through these efforts, the Research Centre aims to contribute to the sustainable development, conservation, restoration, and resilience of marine ecosystems in the Greater Caribbean Region, while supporting the well-being of local communities. Discussions are ongoing regarding the selection process for the hosting of this center and the specific criteria that will contribute to the decision.

CLME+

The UNDP/GEF CLME Project (2009-2014) laid the groundwork for regional cooperation by developing the 10-year Strategic Action Programme (CLME+ SAP) for the Sustainable Management of the Shared Living Marine Resources of the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems (2015-2025). This program provides a roadmap for conserving and sustainably using marine resources through enhanced regional cooperation and the implementation of

Ecosystem-Based Management (EBM) and the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF).

The ACS has engaged with the CLME+ Project Coordination Unit to finalize and adopt the Coordinating Mechanism Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This MOU builds on the CLME+ SAP and aims to create a permanent coordination mechanism to support integrated ocean governance.

The Coordination Mechanism seeks to enhance regional collaboration for the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal ecosystems, support coordinated ocean governance to achieve sustainable development, promote partnerships with stakeholders to strengthen ecosystem-based conservation and use, and provide a platform for assessing and monitoring the marine environment and progress towards sustainability goals.

The MOU requires a minimum of 23 signatures to formally establish the Coordination Mechanism. The new PROCARIBE+ Project by UNDP/GEF, initiated in May 2023, will fund the Coordination Mechanism's operations. The ACS has participated in discussions and has been invited to sign the MoU but has not done so yet, awaiting a mandate from its Membership. Concerns have been raised regarding this mandate, and these matters are earmarked to be discussed at the 24th Meeting of the Caribbean Sea Commission. The ACS is currently gathering all relevant information for effective decision-making.

While the MoU presents opportunities for enhanced regional cooperation in ocean governance, it also poses significant challenges and potential conflicts with existing ACS mandates. Careful consideration, strategic planning, and clear communication are essential to navigate these complexities and ensure the MoU's successful integration with the ACS's objectives and initiatives. The non-binding nature of the

Offers flexibility and minimizes legal conflicts, but the ACS may be constrained in its ability to participate due to potential legal implications, compatibility issues with existing ACS mandates, and potential impacts on the Caribbean Sea Commission (CSC).

There is a potential overlap in functions between the CSC and the new Coordination Mechanism, particularly regarding ocean governance and conservation. Article XIV(1)(c) of the MOU states it does not intend to alter the mandates or programs of its signatories, but practical overlap could lead to conflicts or duplication of efforts. The MOU targets a similar group of members as the ACS, raising concerns about resource allocation and strategic coherence. The inclusion of non-ACS members (e.g., the USA) could elicit political reactions and potentially lead to duplicity between the CSC's "Special Area" designation project and the new Coordination Mechanism.

The financial sustainability of the Coordination Mechanism relies on member contributions, potentially diverting resources from the CSC. This diversion could impact ongoing CSC projects and initiatives. Additionally, assuming the Secretariat role for the Coordination Mechanism could enhance the ACS's profile but impose significant responsibilities.

A clear relationship between the CSC and the Coordination Mechanism must be established to avoid competition and ensure coordinated efforts. This should address the scope of activities, resource allocation, and strategic objectives to prevent conflicts and redundancy. Strategic collaboration with the CLME+ project should be sought to leverage the ACS's institutional framework while ensuring alignment with the CSC's objectives. This collaboration should enhance regional governance without duplicating efforts or creating conflicts. A thorough assessment of the ACS's and CSC's capacities to participate effectively in the

Coordination Mechanism should be conducted, considering financial, technical, and strategic aspects to ensure sustainable engagement without overextending resources.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

In 2022, the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) received a favourable recommendation for provisional admission as an observer organization to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) during COP28. Subsequently, the ACS sent an official delegation to the COP28 event in Dubai, with Secretary-General H.E. Rodolfo Sabonge representing the organization. During the event, the ACS participated in the side event "Anticipating Climate Mobility in the Greater Caribbean," organized by the Global Centre for Climate Mobility (GCCM) on 3 December. This event focused on addressing the impact of the climate crisis on community resilience and human mobility in the Greater Caribbean region, emphasizing response strategies and anticipatory planning. The ACS was requested to highlight its role in promoting a unified regional approach to climate-resilient development.

In January 2024, the ACS was formally notified of the approval of its status as an Observer Organization. This designation is significant due to the pivotal role the UNFCCC plays in shaping global climate policy. As an observer organization, the ACS gains the opportunity to actively participate in COP meetings and related processes, contributing expertise, perspectives, and initiatives to address climate change on a global scale. This status provides a platform for the ACS and the Caribbean Sea Commission (CSC) to advocate and collaborate with other stakeholders, influencing decision-making processes aimed at mitigating climate change and fostering resilience.

Furthermore, as observer status grants access to valuable information, networks, and resources, enabling organizations to stay informed about the latest developments in climate science, policy, and action. This access is particularly important as the ACS intends to engage the Member States and host relevant side events as an official observer and attendee in future COP events, further advancing its contributions to global climate action.

IV. Projects of the Caribbean Sea Commission

The Caribbean Sea Commission acknowledges that the ongoing and emerging development challenges facing the region, particularly those intensified by climate change and related threats, necessitate a strategic repositioning. This entails identifying and capitalizing on regional comparative advantages to drive sustainable development, foster complementarity in production, and bolster resilience across key sectors in the Greater Caribbean.

Given the dynamic and evolving nature of global challenges, the Commission underscores the significance of proactive and innovative strategies to tackle the region's development needs. By prioritizing the identification and utilization of regional strengths, the Commission aims to unlock opportunities for sustainable growth and development that positively impact all member states

i) Designation of the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development

The designation of the Caribbean Sea as a Special Area presents an opportunity to proactively address the region's unique challenges and opportunities. This initiative aims to facilitate targeted policies, enhanced cooperation, and innovative initiatives for sustainable development and resilience to climate change impacts. The Caribbean

Sea Commission is spearheading efforts to update a consultancy study on the legal implications of this designation, with submissions from Colombia. Despite challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, progress continues, with Sub-Commissions focusing on determining the implications of the Special Area designation. Consultancy firms from Colombia and Mexico have submitted proposals, underscoring the commitment to advancing this important initiative.

The CSC will guide the Legal and Scientific and Technical Sub-Committees to initiate work detailed in resolution A/75/277, building consensus on the Special Zone's definition, emphasizing sustainable development's economic, social, and environmental dimensions. Research will include global and regional agreements, existing "Special Zone" definitions, and their ratification among Member States.

The Legal Sub-Commission is meant to investigate existing legal concepts and examine their applicability to the Caribbean Sea. The Scientific and Technical Sub-Commission will provide research on the Sea's environmental characteristics and Member States' management desires, aiming for integrated and consensus-based management.

In 2014 a consultancy report was completed to prepare and submit a report on the implications of obtaining Special Area designation for the Caribbean Sea. It was decided by the Member states that this report not only needs to be updated, but the 'scope' widened to incorporate new legal, financial, economic, environmental, social and cultural implications of the designation. It was also noted that there should be an identification of parameters for a conceptual definition of a Caribbean Special Area aimed at a blue economy with measurable actions.

At the 23rd CSC meeting, ongoing efforts included reviewing the Terms of Reference for updating the 2014 consultancy study on the Caribbean Sea's special area

designation. No comments were received, and resources are being actively sought. The initiative was also discussed at the 8th ACS International Cooperation Conference, with Cuba providing updates as Chair of the Caribbean Sea Commission. Additionally, a presentation highlighted Mexico's commitment to collaborative efforts in the Sea's sustainable development.

ii) "Assessment of Climate Change Impacts on Caribbean Sandy Shorelines; Alternatives for Control and Resilience"

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.

This project was launched in 2017 with funding from the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), which provided US\$4 million. Designation of the Caribbean Sea as a Special Area in the Context of Sustainable Development

The "Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on Sandy Shorelines in the Caribbean: Alternatives for Control and Resilience" (Sandy Shorelines) project sought to improve the resilience of ACS Member States by bringing together experts in coastal erosion from the region through the establishment of a network of coastal erosion monitoring stations. The Sandy Shorelines project involves nine participating countries and focuses on monitoring and preserving coastal areas. A key objective is

to establish a regional network for monitoring coastal erosion to better understand climate change impacts and advocate for international funding.

One significant outcome was the execution of beach rehabilitation projects in prioritized areas such as Panama, Trinidad & Tobago, and Antigua & Barbuda. This involves fieldwork, laboratory analysis, and research resulting in another output, a Beach Rehabilitation Guidebook tailored to the Caribbean's tropical shoreline features. Additionally, an online monitoring platform was developed in 2023 providing real-time data for coastal management.

Another significant output of the project was the hosting of the First Conference on Identification, Protection, Restoration, and Management of Caribbean Beaches (IPREM) in 2023, in Ciudad del Saber, Panama, as part of the Sandy Shorelines Project. Originally scheduled for October to December 2019, the conference faced delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic, eventually taking place from June 28 to 30, 2023. IPReM 2023 aimed to address Caribbean beach challenges and promote sustainable development and management.

Before the conference, several crucial activities were undertaken. The "Save Our Shorelines" social media contest engaged students and the public in countries like Honduras, Trinidad and Tobago, and Jamaica. Simultaneously, a social media campaign for World Oceans Month promoted the IPReM conference, emphasizing sustainable practices and marine conservation efforts.

The Technical Advisory Group (TAG) played a pivotal role in selecting technical presenters for the conference. Through a standardized evaluation procedure, scientists submitted research abstracts, ensuring diverse representation and contributions from experts. Keynote speakers, chosen with input from subject matter experts, enriched the agenda.

Spanning three days, the conference addressed coastal processes, erosion, restoration, and management. It emphasized community involvement and showcased best practices. The event concluded by encouraging participants to apply gained knowledge in their countries. Importantly, it underscored the significance of regional efforts to protect the health and services provided by the Caribbean Sea in development efforts. Overall, the Sandy Shorelines Project has made significant strides in improving the resilience of coastal communities to climate change and sea-level rise by facilitating collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and practical solutions for coastal management in the Caribbean region.

iii) Greater Caribbean Climate Mobility Initiative (GCCMI)

The Association of Caribbean States (ACS), the World Bank (WB), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) established an unprecedented alliance to address the challenges of climate-forced mobility in the Greater Caribbean region. Forced migration and displacement due to the adverse effects of sudden or slow-onset climate impacts are likely to negatively affect lives and livelihoods in many parts of the region, impacting local and national development pathways. The Greater Caribbean Climate Mobility Initiative (GCCMI) aims to develop comprehensive solutions for climate mobility in the region through modelling projections and field research. In consultation with interested ACS Member States, GCCMI will produce a comprehensive report on the scope, nature, implications, and response to climate displacement and migration, across all relevant areas, in the Greater Caribbean. The report will be based on state-of-the-art models projecting climate mobility for the coming decades and field research at current

critical points of climate mobility to take stock of local drivers of climate mobility. The resulting GCCMI Action Program will promote a regional vision and roadmap for people-centered, locally anchored, and evidence-based efforts to address climate mobility by strengthening the resilience and adaptive capacity of affected communities at critical points. Over 2023-24, the GCCMI is collecting data and developing a report and Agenda for Action to be presented at COP29. Virtual Consultations in May and June 2024 will engage stakeholders to discuss modelling and research findings and develop recommendations. Structured around five constituencies, the Consultations will focus on presenting results in May and discussing policy implications in June. By involving regional stakeholders, the GCCMI seeks to foster a climate mobility policy ecosystem and Community of Practice in the Greater Caribbean. The concept of climate mobility, as addressed by the Greater Caribbean Climate Mobility Initiative (GCCMI), is closely tied to the objectives of the designation of the Caribbean Sea as a Special Area within the context of sustainable development. By designating the Caribbean Sea as a Special Area, policymakers and stakeholders can potentially implement measures to address the specific challenges posed by climate mobility, such as policies and strategies to mitigate the impacts of climate change on coastal communities, supporting the relocation of vulnerable populations, and promoting sustainable development practices that enhance resilience to environmental threats.

Additionally, the designation of the Caribbean Sea as a Special Area could provide a framework for coordinated action among countries in the region, as well as with international organizations and stakeholders, to develop and implement effective strategies for managing climate-induced migration and protecting the rights and well-being of affected populations.

V. CONCLUSION

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.

While this issue has been high on the ACS agenda during the reporting period, the members of the Association and the UN General Secretariat must join forces to continue to collaborate 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.