



4TH INTERNATIONAL  
CONFERENCE ON  
**Small Island  
Developing States**  
27-30 MAY, 2024  
ST. JOHN'S, ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

## **SIDS4 Conference Side Event**

### **Turning the Golden Tide – Crisis or Opportunity for Caribbean SIDS**

**29 May 2024 / 10 to 11:30 am / Room 10**

**Organized by: The UNEP Cartagena Convention Secretariat  
in collaboration with the Governments of France and the  
Dominican Republic and the Regional Activity Centre of the  
Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife Protocol (SPA  
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RAC).**

#### **Background on the event (one paragraph)**

Countries of the Wider Caribbean Region including Small Island Developing States have been affected for more than a decade by the impacts of Sargassum on human health, the environment and economic sectors such as fisheries, maritime transportation and tourism. The event brought together members of regional organizations, including intergovernmental, and governments from the Wider Caribbean region to engage in discussions, share knowledge and expertise, and offer insights into the experiences, strategies, and action plans aimed at addressing the Sargassum influx. Speakers discussed the themes outlined in four promotional videos, developed with the support of the Global Environment Facility funded Integrating Land, Water and Ecosystem Management (GEF IWEco) Project, implemented by the Cartagena Convention Secretariat, including how the significant influx of Sargassum has negatively impacted local economies reliant on fishing and tourism, particularly Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and some of the outlined solutions that Caribbean countries, with the assistance of regional

partners, have adopted to address the influx. The videos and speakers presented various experiences demonstrating that this unavoidable issue, whose causes are still unclear, can be an opportunity for Caribbean economies if managed effectively.

### **Key Issues discussed**

- Impact, challenges, and opportunities over a decade of Sargassum influx affecting the Wider Caribbean region.
- Promotion of regional cooperation through various initiatives, including the coordination by the SPAW Regional Activity Center of a regional Sargassum Working Group as mandated by parties of the Cartagena Convention in the framework of the work of the SPAW Protocol.
- Experiences in implementing several nature-based and other private sector led solutions aimed at addressing the Sargassum influx.
- The relevance of financial sustainability in tackling this issue.
- Different approaches to addressing the problem from local, national, and regional perspectives.
- The importance of avoiding imported solutions and relying on local and regional expertise to combat the Sargassum influx.

### **Key recommendations for action**

- Continue strengthening regional cooperation in addressing the Sargassum influx through various existing and new forums, initiatives, projects, and programs as well as promoting further research on this topic.
- Further explore nature-based and other sustainable solutions for managing Sargassum that are equitable, inclusive, and considerate of local communities' needs and traditional activities and supportive of private sector engagement.
- Promote sustainable financial mechanisms to assist countries in addressing associated issues and advocating for alternatives when livelihoods are affected.
- Encourage strategies for training, capacity building, and raising awareness to make knowledge and experiences accessible to all stakeholders, including governments, civil society, academia, and the general public, including local communities.
- Embedding these efforts within regional and national strategies and initiatives aimed at conserving biodiversity and addressing the threats it faces.
- Encourage push notification early warning systems to warn communities of incoming influxes is critical for sustainable management at local level. This requires technical collaboration and funding at international level thereby

acknowledging that SIDS and other Caribbean nations are not the cause of the influx but have to manage the impacts nonetheless.

- Support local innovators who have rigorously informed, regionally appropriate solutions and intellectual property developed within our local networks.
- Encourage regulation on sargassum harvesting