

General Assembly

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CARIBBEAN SEA FOR PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

This report has been prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 71/224, entitled “Towards the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea for present and future generations”¹, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report at its seventy third session on the status of implementation of the resolution. The report highlights a range of activities undertaken at national and regional levels by member States, international development partners and other stakeholders to advance the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea. A report of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) on progress made in implementation of the resolution is also contained in Annex 1.

A. INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 71/224, entitled “Towards the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea for present and future generations”, the General Assembly recognized that the Caribbean Sea is an area of unique biodiversity and highly fragile ecosystems, which is surrounded by the largest number of countries in the world, many of which are heavily reliant on the marine environment for economic growth and sustainable development. In noting the many efforts of Caribbean States to develop and implement regional initiatives to promote the sustainable conservation and management of coastal and marine resources, including the work of the Caribbean Sea Commission (CSC) of the ACS, the Assembly invited the international community to work together with regional organizations and Caribbean States to develop and implement appropriate regional initiatives to promote the sustainable conservation and management of coastal and marine resources. In this regard, the General Assembly also invited the ACS to submit a report to the Secretary-General on progress made in implementation of the resolution, for consideration at its seventy-third session.

2. In preparing this report, information was obtained through desk research, inputs from the UN system organizations and regional and sub regional organizations operating in the Caribbean.²

B. DESIGNATION OF THE CONCEPT OF THE CARIBBEAN SEA AS A SPECIAL AREA WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

3. Critical to the achievement of a special area in the context of sustainable development is international consensus on the definition of this concept. The call for this designation first emanated from a 1997 Caribbean ministerial meeting on the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

¹ <https://undocs.org/A/RES/71/224>

² Inputs were received from United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, The Caribbean Community Secretariat, the University of the West Indies, the OECS Commission, The Association of Caribbean States, the United Nations Development Programme, UNDP/GEF CLME+ Project

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Since then, the international community has continued to consider those characteristics of the Caribbean Sea that might justify this type of designation.

4. The CSC was created under the auspices of the ACS in 2006 and has been designated as the mechanism to pursue the goal of having the Caribbean Sea designated a Special area in the context of sustainable development. Since then the Commission has worked to improve the coordination of preservation efforts in the wider Caribbean Region (WCR). In defining its work programme for the current biennium³ the CSC has divided its activities into two parallel work streams. The first titled “*Coordinating Marine Preservation in the Region and Maximizing Collaborative Project Opportunities*” will focus on development of a portfolio of projects and initiatives that will result in coordinated management of the region’s ocean resources. The second titled “*Achieving Special Area in the Context of Sustainable Development through Consultation, Consensus and Awareness Building*” will see the development of a roadmap for achieving a clear definition of the concept of a special area in the context of sustainable development, without prejudice to international law.

5. The ACS intends to ensure that any agreed definition is built on the best available information, and on what is best required for effective and coordinated management of the Caribbean Sea, as agreed by Member States.

C. LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL LANDSCAPE FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CARIBBEAN SEA

6. Marine-based tourism is a major contributor to the economy of many Caribbean countries. The World Travel and Tourism Council in 2016 estimated the total contribution of travel and tourism in terms of economic impact (direct, indirect and induced) to be 14.9% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), with many countries having a much greater dependence than reflected in the average for the region. For example, 30.3 % to GDP for Jamaica, Barbados, 39.9 %, The Bahamas 44.8 %, and Antigua & Barbuda, 60.4 % of GDP⁴. In addition to the linkage to seafood for the industry, healthy marine ecosystems are critical for tourism.

7. Countries in the WCR are increasingly understanding the interconnectedness of Caribbean Sea ecosystems, the transboundary nature of most issues affecting the marine resources in the region, and the need for collaborative management of their shared resources. This is evidenced by their significant commitment to participate in key global and regional multi-lateral environmental agreements (MEAs) relating to marine ecosystem-based management (EBM). There is however considerable variation in capacity among countries to effectively implement and monitor MEAs.

8. Several international and regional agreements have been adopted by Caribbean Member States to improve governance of ocean resources. The global agreements of relevance include the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS); the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity; the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); the 1973/78 International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), with its six annexes; the 1995 United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement (UNFSA) governing straddling and highly migratory stocks.

9. The regional agreements of relevance include the 1983 Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment in the Wider Caribbean Region (The Cartagena Convention); the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT); the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) establishing agreement and Common Fisheries Policy; the Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission (WECAFC) establishing agreement; IOC Sub-Commission for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions (IOCARIBE) establishing agreement; Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC); The Strategic Action Programme for the Sustainable Management of the Shared Living Marine Resources of the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems (CLME+ SAP).

10. Global and Regional organizations also play a crucial role in supporting MEA implementation, and there are several such organizations, whose activities are relevant to the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea. Some are indigenous intergovernmental organizations e.g. the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat, the

³ See Annex 1

⁴ <https://www.wttc.org/-/media/files/reports/economic-impact-research/regions-2017/caribbean2017.pdf>

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Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Secretariat⁵ and the ACS, others are regional bodies of United Nations agencies, one is an independent Regional Fisheries Management Organization (RFMO) and there are a number of regional civil society organizations (CSOs) that are making valuable contributions.

11. The regional bodies of UN agencies with specific mandates for marine management related activities are:
 - i. UN Environment's Caribbean Environmental Programme-Regional Coordinating Unit (CEP) which is the secretariat for the Cartagena Convention and its protocols. The protocols relate to oil pollution, land-based sources of pollution, marine protected areas and marine biodiversity conservation in general. The CEP also has a mandate to promote implementation of the CBD, Ramsar Convention and Highly Migratory Species Convention in the WCR. Its membership includes all countries except Brazil.
 - ii. The FAO Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission, constituted under Article VI of the FAO Constitution;
 - iii. The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission Sub-Commission for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions (IOCARIBE) which implements IOC's mandate in the WCR. IOCARIBE has implemented a number of science and information sharing projects in the region, including the Caribbean Marine Atlas, and is also responsible for promoting ocean acidification monitoring in the WCR.
 - iv. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) has a Regional office in Trinidad and Tobago and is supporting the Caribbean Memorandum of Understanding (CMOU) on Port State Control⁶, the Secretariat of which is in Jamaica.

12. The indigenous regional CSOs play an important role in facilitating stakeholder engagement in ocean governance. The most prominent of these are:
 - i. The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI)⁷, which focuses on community involvement in management and has a coastal and marine programme;
 - ii. The Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organizations (CFNO)⁸, which promotes representation of fishers in regional fisheries matters in CARICOM.
 - iii. The Association of Marine Laboratories of the Caribbean (AMLC)⁹ which provides a forum for exchange of information among laboratories

13. For the majority of countries in the region, the importance of building the shared capacity needed for the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea cannot be over stated. This is also important for implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the SAMOA Pathway. Countries in the WCR recognize the increasing role that global and regional authorities, civil society organizations, and international development partners must play in boosting resilience and increasing gains in the economic, social and environmental domains.

D. CURRENT ACTIVITIES OF CARIBBEAN STATES AND OTHER KEY STAKEHOLDERS

The United Nations Multi-Country Sustainable Development Framework

14. The major regional level activity relating to the assessment of a baseline to gauge the current status and subsequent implementation of efforts aimed at achieving the full suite of SDGs, including SDG 14 in the Caribbean region is the United Nations Multi-Country Sustainable Development Framework (UN MSDF) for the Caribbean¹⁰. One of the four priority areas of the UN MSDF, "A sustainable and resilient Caribbean", addressed a suite of SDGs that included SDG14. This priority area focuses on support for strengthening institutional and community resilience at both regional and national levels, in terms of natural resources management; the protection and sustainable use of terrestrial, coastal and marine ecosystems; renewable energy systems; and inclusive and sustainable societies.

⁵ The OECS Secretariat is supporting implementation of the Eastern Caribbean Regional Ocean Policy (ECROP). The EROP promotes a common approach to ocean governance in all OECS member States and has a number of priorities and goals, many of which find synergy with the Sustainable Development Goals.

⁶ <http://www.caribbeanmou.org/>

⁷ <https://www.canari.org/>

⁸ <http://www.cirp.org.tt/cnfo/>

⁹ <http://www.amlc-carib.org/>

¹⁰ <http://www.2030caribbean.org/content/unct/caribbean/en/home/MSDF/overview.html>

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15. It is important to note that the 2017-2021 UN MSDF defines how the Agencies, Funds, and Programs of the UN will pool their comparative advantages within a single strategic framework that aligns with and supports the overarching strategic goals of the Caribbean's governments and key stakeholders. The expectation is to allow for a focus on common priorities, enhance regional initiatives and collaboration, and enable knowledge sharing and cross-collaboration within the region. To facilitate this, the UN System in the Caribbean will work with committees and institutions established with CARICOM and the OECS to identify sub-regional initiatives and programs for implementation through the UN MSDF.

Land-Based and Marine-Based Sources Of Pollution

16. The Caribbean Sea region is being endangered by pollution from sources that are based both on the land and in the sea. The 1983 Cartagena Convention covers several aspects of marine pollution for which the Contracting Parties must adopt specific measures. The Convention, which has been ratified by 25 United Nations Member States in the WCR, covers the marine environment of the Gulf of Mexico, the Caribbean Sea and the areas of the Atlantic Ocean adjacent thereto, south of 30 north latitude and within 200 nautical miles of the Atlantic Coasts of the States.

17. UN Environment's CEP continues to actively promote accession/ratification of the Convention's Protocols as well as activities for the implementation of the obligations under the Protocol at national and regional levels. In this regard, the agreement for hosting the Regional Activity Centre (RAC) for the LBS Protocol at the Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA), Trinidad and Tobago was signed between UN Environment and the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in July 2017. Discussions are also on-going between the CEP and the Government of Cuba for the formalization of the Centre of Engineering and Environmental Management of Coasts and Bays (CIMAB) as the other LBS RAC. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was also signed between the CEP and the Caribbean Industrial Research Institute, Trinidad and Tobago to focus on analytical testing and techniques for water, wastewater and air, land-based interventions for improving water quality in marine and freshwater environments, ground water and aquifer assessment, alternative processes and technologies for waste management and climate change mitigation.

18. The working group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment continued to further develop the State of the Convention Area Report (SOCAR). The SOCAR is intended to respond to gaps in monitoring and assessment programmes of patterns and trends in the environmental quality of the Convention area.

19. The GEF CReW+ Project Identification Form (PIF) was developed by the CEP, IDB and the GEF CReW Project Management Unit and submitted to the GEF Secretariat for consideration in July 2016. Following the approval of the project concept in November 2017, close liaison has begun with all countries to secure their input, endorsement/validation and co-financing for the project.

20. The CEP also worked with the Project Management Unit of the UNDP GEF-funded Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem Project (GEF CLME+) to support the implementation of project activities. The focus during the reporting period was the development of a proposal for an EBM project for the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf. This proposal was finalized, submitted and approved by the UNDP/GEF CLME+ Project Coordinating Unit and will provide approximately US\$300,000 financial support for activities in Guyana, Suriname, Brazil and Trinidad and Tobago.

21. The CEP and the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) convened a joint Inception Workshop for the two UNDP/GEF CLME+ EBM Sub-projects for the North Brazil Shelf. The workshop focused on the FAO lead Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF) project and UN Environment-lead EBM project for pollution and habitats. This joint effort will facilitate the coordinated implementation of the CLME+ sub-projects on shrimp and groundfish and Strengthening EBM Frameworks and Ocean Governance in the North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem.

22. During the 2017 United Nations (UN) Conference to Support the Implementation of SDG14, the OSPAR Commission and the CEP registered a voluntary commitment to collaborate across the Atlantic and the Wider Caribbean Region. The focal areas identified for inter-regional corporation include marine protected areas (MPAs), marine litter and ecosystem-based delivery. Project activities will include a marine litter database and monitoring of those marine protected areas (MPAs) managed by CEP and Caribbean Marine Protected Area Management Network and Forum (CaMPAM). To raise public awareness and outreach, a Conference will be organized to focus on marine litter and MPA issues. Training and capacity building will also be enhanced within this partnership with a full-sized

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project proposal on MPA monitoring. So far, funding support for this Partnership has been secured from the Government of Netherlands in the amount of £10,000 (USD11,807) and the Government of Sweden of 1,000,000 SEK (USD115,806).

23. The first joint UN Human Security project ‘Strengthening Human Resilience in Northern Clarendon and West Kingston, Jamaica’ is being jointly implemented by the Government of Jamaica and five United Nations agencies in Jamaica: Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), Pan American Health Organization (PAHO/WHO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme, and UN Women. The CEP will over a three-year period (November 2017 to October 2020), support the implementation of activities related to improving water and sanitation in selected vulnerable communities in Jamaica. Project activities will include *inter alia* development of effective models for participatory management and operation of community-based water systems and training stakeholders in the design, construction, use and maintenance of water harvesting systems. Funding is being provided by the Government of Jamaica, the UN agencies and the UN Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS).

24. The CEP continues to collaborate with the recently established UN Environment Sub-Regional Office for the Caribbean (CRSO) in Jamaica. The CSRO was established in February 2016 to strengthen UN Environment’s presence in the Caribbean. Like the CEP, the CSRO’s work is based on an integrated approach to the sustainable use and management of the natural resources and ecosystems. The CRSO helps countries of the Caribbean to jointly program activities through the Multi-Country Sustainable Development Framework (MSDF). This partnership enables greater synergies and coordination between the work of UN Environment and the CEP. Areas of collaboration to date have focused on waste and chemicals management.

25. The CEP finalized a report on the Status of Plastics and Styrofoam bans in the WCR. A growing number of governments are committed to or have been introducing policies to regulate the production, import, and use of plastic bags and Styrofoam (Expanded Polystyrene Foam) products. The report summarizes policies and bans that have been implemented in the WCR, identifies lessons learned for policy makers that will assist in future efforts to regulate the use and production of disposable plastics and analyses the bans in action and those that are about to be promulgated among all the countries of the WCR.

Projects

26. There are several ongoing regional and sub regional projects that are contributing to the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea. These are funded by a wide range of donors and focus on an array of themes. The following are a few of the most significant:

Caribbean Challenge Initiative

27. The Caribbean Challenge Initiative (CCI)¹¹ is a coalition of governments, companies and partners working together to accelerate action on the marine and coastal environment. Founded in 2008 by a group of Caribbean governments to enhance the conservation of their marine and coastal resources, the CCI has since grown to include private sector membership and garner over US \$75 million in funding commitments. CCI Governments and territories signed a CCI Leaders Declaration in May 2013 committing them to protect and conserve 20% of their marine and coastal resources by 20207 (SDG Target 14.5).

Caribbean Marine Biodiversity Program (CMBP)

28. The overall objective of this USAID funded project is “to reduce threats to marine-coastal biodiversity in priority areas in the Caribbean, including high biodiversity ecosystems such as coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass beds, in order to achieve sustained biodiversity conservation, maintain critical ecosystem services, and realize tangible improvements in human wellbeing for communities adjacent to marine protected areas.” CMBP involves actions at four geographic scales: site, seascape, national, and regional, and specifically targets seven priority marine protected areas (MPAs) within four Caribbean priority seascapes (Jamaica, Haiti, Dominican Republic and Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines). The Program extends from 2014-2019.

¹¹ <http://caribbeanchallengeinitiative.org>

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Integrating Water, Land and Ecosystem Management in Caribbean Small Island Developing States (GEF IWEco)

29. GEF-IWEco is a five-year (2016-2021) regional multi-focal area project with a GEF cash allocation of US\$20.7 million and a total budget of US\$ 88.7 million including cash and in-kind co-financing. There are 10 participating Caribbean countries. UN Environment and UNDP are the co-implementing agencies with UN Environment being the lead implementing agency. UN Environment's CEP is the lead co-executing agency with the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) as the other co-executing agency. The project's primary goal is the implementation of an integrated approach to water, land and ecosystems services management, supported by policy, institutional and legislative reforms, and implementation of effective appropriate technologies to accelerate contribution to global targets on access to safe and reliable water supplies. The project also works to implement innovative solutions for reduced pollution and improved fresh and coastal water resources, considering the additional challenges imposed by climate change and climate variability.

30. To date, the project has commenced work on a Marine Litter Policy Assessment Report (focusing on Styrofoam and Single Use plastic bags bans already in place/under preparation in the WCR). It is expected that lead institutions OECS/CARPHA (with partners) will further advance the policy and legislative aspects related to marine litter.

GEF Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem (CLME+) Project

31. The CLME+ Project is focused on an Ecosystem Approach to governance of transboundary living marine resources in the WCR. Countries of the region have been working on addressing transboundary governance (with the support of the Global Environment Facility) through two development phases (1998-1999, 2006-2008) and two full phases (2009-2013, 2015-2020) of the CLME and adjacent areas project covering the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf LMEs. This has included transboundary diagnostic analyses for the three fishery ecosystems and for governance and the preparation of a Strategic Action Programme (SAP) as a roadmap for improved ocean governance 2015-2025. The SAP is signed 25 countries in the region, and all the major regional organizations with responsibility for aspects of EBM of oceans are engaged in SAP implementation.

32. The SAP is structured around a Regional Ocean Governance Framework which seeks to enhance governance efforts under six strategic themes. These are identified as arrangements aimed at the protection of the marine environment, sustainable fisheries, development of a regional policy coordinating mechanism for living marine resources, EBM of reefs and associated ecosystems, pelagic ecosystems and continental shelf ecosystems. It is notable that GEF funding can only serve to catalyze SAP implementation and is insufficient to cover full implementation; the project therefore includes a great deal of partnership building. Indeed, all regional organizations are bringing a considerable amount of support for the SAP in the form of core activities and projects funded from other sources.

33. Through this project two Memorandum of Understandings (MOU) promoting linkages for enhanced collaboration with regional organizations have been formalized. The Interim Coordination Mechanism for Sustainable Fisheries encompassing three Regional Fisheries Bodies (Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission, Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism and the Central American Fisheries and Aquaculture Organization) seeks to enhance regional governance for sustainable fisheries by formalizing an interim arrangement to facilitate, support and strengthen the coordination of actions among the Regional Fisheries Bodies in the Western Central Atlantic region. The CLME+ Strategic Action Programme Interim Coordination Mechanism, which was formalized in August 2017, seeks to enhance regional coordination and collaboration, support oversight and integration of actions for sustainable fisheries and the protection and sustainable use of the marine environment.

34. The following eight inter-governmental organizations make up the CLME+ Strategic Action Programme Interim Coordination Mechanism: Food and Agriculture Organization represented by the Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission; UN Environment represented by its Caribbean Regional Coordinating Unit and Secretariat to the Cartagena Convention; Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO; Organization of the Central American Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector; Central American Commission for Environment and Development; Caribbean Community Secretariat; Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism; Organization of Eastern Caribbean States Commission.

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35. The CLME+ Project is also supporting the development of Regional Strategies and Action Plans, as well as Investment Plans, to address the three identified transboundary issues of unsustainable fisheries, habitat degradation and community modification, and pollution. The Project is also facilitating the development of an overarching framework for monitoring and evaluating progress in SAP implementation as well as the preparation of an integrated, sustainable and institutionalized “State of the Marine Environment and Associated Economies” (CLME+ SOMEE) assessment and reporting mechanism. Through the SOMEE process, available data and information on the state of the marine environment, associated governance mechanisms/processes and socio-economics, will be transformed and made accessible to regional and national-level policy and decision-makers, as well as the global donor and development aid community, thus providing the basis for informed decision-making in support of enhanced marine resources governance.

36. The “Large Marine Ecosystem” (“LME”) concept provides a meaningful geospatial concept for forging and promoting collaboration for ecosystem-based management among organizations and countries that share large areas of marine space. Efforts to better engage regional Civil Society Organizations in CLME+ SAP implementation are currently ongoing, including through the development of a dedicated “civil society” version of the Strategic Action Programme. With the financial support of the CLME+ Project, efforts are ongoing to formalize and progressively expand a “Global Partnership for the Protection, Sustainable Management and Use of the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf LMEs”.

Marine Litter

37. Marine pollution and coastal degradation have become serious development issues in the WCR. Coastal and marine ecosystems are being negatively impacted by pollution including from solid waste and marine litter. This threatens livelihoods especially through economic losses to the tourism, shipping and fishing sectors. The impact of marine pollution also poses risks to human health.

38. UN Environment’s Regional Seas Coordinating Office and the Global Programme of Action (GPA) developed a “Global Initiative on Marine Litter” for the establishment and development of pilot regional activities in regions that are most affected. This initiative provides a global platform for the establishment of partnerships, co-operation and co-ordination of activities for the control and sustainable management of marine litter.

39. The Global Partnership for Marine Litter (GPML) supports the work of the Global Partnership on Waste Management to reduce and manage marine litter and thereby protecting human health and the marine environment. It also addresses the ecological and economic impacts of marine litter globally. The Caribbean node of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML) was launched in 2016 and is co-hosted by the CEP and the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute, a regional not-for-profit organization. Several activities have been initiated under the umbrella of marine litter management within the region.

40. The UN Environment #CleanSeas campaign launch was announced at the 2017 World Ocean Summit in Bali, Indonesia. The campaign aims to eliminate major sources of marine litter i.e. microplastics in cosmetics and single-use plastic over the next five years. Within one year of the launch of the global campaign, the Governments of Panama, Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, Saint Lucia, Grenada and France made commitments under the #CleanSeas Campaign to eliminate marine litter. In June 2018, Guyana also joined the initiative.

41. One of the challenges faced in the WCR is poorly developed solid waste management infrastructure which gives rise to waste streams that negatively impact inland waterways (including streams and gullies), as well as rivers, coastal communities, and marine ecosystems. *The Trash Free Waters in the Caribbean Initiative: Reducing Marine Litter by improving Solid Waste Management* will help *inter alia* Jamaica to control, reduce and prevent their land-based sources of trash/solid waste from entering waterways and polluting their coastal and marine environment.

42. The CEP, with financial support from the US EPA, will promote synergies and coordination between various ongoing solid waste and marine litter projects and activities, and assist participating countries to develop a more integrated and cohesive approach to solid waste and marine litter management with an emphasis on local communities. The CEP will guide the process and work with NGOs, CBOs and other stakeholders in the region to help implement these solid waste/marine litter management projects and to promote a more consistent message to stakeholders and the public concerning solid waste management.

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43. In Jamaica, the Sandals Foundation is coordinating the implementation of project activities in the towns of Bluefields and Whitehouse. Work has been initiated within the communities to identify solid waste priorities and to identify monitoring and clean-up sites. Linkages were also established with the national project on Plastic Waste Minimization supported by UN Environment's CSRO. The Plastic Waste Minimization project seeks to enhance the legislative framework for improved waste management systems to reduce plastic marine litter generated from land-based activities. The project is funded through the International Environmental Technology Centre in Japan. The two-year project (2018-2020) is valued at approximately US\$700,000.

Ocean Acidification

44. Adapting to climate change is also important for the Caribbean Sea region. As part of the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) regional programme in Latin America and the Caribbean, the project entitled "*Strengthening regional monitoring and response for sustainable marine and coastal environments*" is being implemented. This project which focuses on raising awareness of the results of its precursor previous project¹² has the ultimate goal of improving the marine environment management of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean through actionable information provided by the network for monitoring and response.

The Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WCAFC)

45. The WCAFC was established in 1973 by the FAO Council and currently comprises 33 countries and the European Union as members. Almost all Caribbean and Central American countries are members of the Commission, whose objective is to promote the conservation, management and development of living marine resources in the Commission's area of operation, in line with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, and to address common fisheries management and development problems faced by Commission members.

46. During the reporting period a range of activities have been undertaken by the WCAFC Secretariat. This included development of the GEF international waters funded project on "*Developing Organizational Capacity for Ecosystem Stewardship and Livelihoods in Caribbean Small-Scale Fisheries*" (StewardFish), which commenced in early 2017 and the "*Sustainable management of bycatch in Latin America and Caribbean trawl fisheries*" Project (REBYC-II LAC). The later is a US\$5.6 million which promotes the international by-catch guidelines and introduces bycatch reduction technology to the region.

47. Support for the application of the international Guidelines on securing sustainable small-scale fisheries was carried out in close collaboration with the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), University of the West Indies – Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (UWI/CERMES), CANARI and CNFO, various national fisherfolk organizations and national Fisheries Divisions and Departments.

48. The Regional Working Group on IUU fishing (RWG-IUU), established by WECAFC 15, was convened by CRFM with financial support from the US Department of Commerce/NOAA, the European Union, the CLME+ project and the Caribbean Billfish Project. Two meetings of the RWG IUU were held in 2017. The meetings sort to *inter alia* : i) increase awareness and understanding of the IUU fishing problem in the Caribbean region; and ii) increase capacity of States for more effective collaboration in preventing, deterring and eliminating IUU fishing in the Caribbean region.

49. Hurricanes Irma and Maria in September 2017 devastated various islands in the Caribbean region and negatively impacted the fisheries sector. The FAO and WECAFC provided fisheries disaster needs assessment guidance to the affected countries and developed and supported various emergency projects in support of the sector's rehabilitation in Dominica and Antigua and Barbuda. Various WECAFC members also provided support to each other in the aftermath of the natural disasters.

50. With support from the World Bank funded Caribbean Billfish Project a regional workshop on recreational fisheries statistics in the Caribbean, was held in June 2017. The workshop brought together 38 representatives from 13 Caribbean countries, regional fisheries bodies, fisheries technical advisory institutions, nongovernmental organizations, various fishery statistics specialists and other relevant stakeholders. Participants' knowledge of regional

¹² "*Establishing the Caribbean observing network for ocean acidification and its impact on harmful algal blooms, using nuclear and isotopic techniques*"

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fishery data challenges and their capacities to address these challenges effectively were developed during the workshop.

Moving Towards a Blue Economy

51. A growing number of Caribbean States have expressed their desire to explore ‘blue economy’ policies, in recognition of the countless benefits to be derived in the form of food, employment, foreign exchange, culture and recreation. Through evidence-based policy interventions and innovations, the marine environment can make significantly enhanced and sustained contributions to economic growth, welfare and prosperity, and also provide countries with a basis for pursuing a low-carbon and resource-efficient pathways to economic growth and development and boost national policy coherence.

52. The Caribbean region has embraced notions of reaping economic benefits from their ocean spaces as the centerpiece of future growth strategies, and have begun to put in place policy, legal and institutional frameworks to address this. Grenada has made several strides in this regard. During the 2017 UN Ocean Conference Grenada registered a Partnership between the Ministry of Economic Affairs (DG Agro), Government of the Netherlands and the Government of Grenada entitled “*Supporting Grenada's national transformation to a Blue Economy Ocean State, and development of a National Blue Economy and Oceans Governance Institute*”. The Partnership will support sustainable increases in the productivity of marine food systems, single-use and multi-use coastal and ocean spaces, coastal people's livelihoods that are threatened by climate change, practices that contribute to sustainable use of coastal and marine resources. A Blue Grenada Concept Note for optimizing Grenada's coastal, marine and ocean resources and for the establishment of a dedicated Blue Growth and Oceans Governance institute, to be hosted in Grenada, will be developed.

Activities of the Caribbean Sea Commission

53. Activities of the CSC are described in the annex. During the reporting period, the Commission focused *inter alia* on revitalization of its work. With regard to revitalization of the Commission’s work, the ACS has continued to position the Commission as the primary mechanism for coordination and cooperation in activities promoting the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea. For the 2016-2018 period, the CSC has built on this momentum by continuing to coordinate projects and activities aimed at preservation of the Caribbean Sea and developing a process of consultation for achievement of a consensus concept of “Special Area in the context of Sustainable development.” Notable highlights within the 2016-2018 period also include the Association’s participation in the UN Ocean Conference in 2017.

E. CONCLUSION

54. Member States in the WCR have continued in this biennium to work collaboratively on behalf of their shared resource, the Caribbean Sea. They have been supported in their efforts by the international community, including partner Governments, intergovernmental organizations and the private sector. Their efforts address economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development and often include capacity-building components. In addition, the ecosystem-based approach has been adopted in many cases.

55. The ACS, through the CSC, remains committed to the goal of attaining Special Area status for the Caribbean Sea. Through its recent revitalization, the Commission is actively pursuing the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea by means of activities such as joint research, management projects, meetings and information-sharing mechanisms, with the aim of improving coordination and cooperation in marine environmental management issues and the requisite decision-making.

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Annex

Progress made in the implementation of resolution 71/224

Report of the Caribbean Sea Commission of the Association of Caribbean States

Introduction

I. Introduction

1. The Caribbean Sea is considered to be a semi enclosed sea and is considered the most geopolitically complex large marine ecosystem in the world. This is as it has the highest number of Countries of the world's large marine ecosystems, and the highest number of maritime Boundaries of any Large Marine Ecosystem in the world. The Caribbean Sea is considered to be the common patrimony to the peoples of the Greater Caribbean region. It is a fragile¹ and complex² marine area that is shared by countries of varying sizes and with different levels of progress in their sustainable development. The populations of those countries depend on the Sea for their development and draw from it their cultural identity. Therefore, in order to facilitate the sustainable management and development of the Caribbean Sea it is necessary to promote structures that connect the wider region to facilitate coordination of the projects and policies that relate to the Caribbean Sea.

2. The Caribbean Sea Initiative which was established in 1999 came from the recognition by Caribbean Member states of the unique characteristics of this semi-enclosed sea, its high level of vulnerability and the need to administer its resources in a sustainable way.

3. In this regard the Caribbean Sea Commission was created under the auspices of the Association of Caribbean States in 2006 as a follow up commission for the Caribbean Sea Initiative. The Caribbean Sea Commission has been designated as the mechanism to pursue the goal of having the Caribbean Sea designated a Special area in the context of sustainable development. The creation of this Commission reflected the commitment of member states of the Association of Caribbean States to preserve and protect the Caribbean Sea. It has worked since then to improve the coordination of preservation efforts in the wider Caribbean Region.

4. During the 2014-2016 periods, the member states of the Association of Caribbean States revitalized the work of the Commission through the execution of a consultancy mandated by Heads of Government to assess the implications of the Special Area Status, the hosting of the 1st Symposium of the Caribbean Sea Commission, and the contracting of a Programme Coordinator.

5. The Coastal areas of the wider Caribbean region is considered to be particularly vulnerable to the effects of anthropogenic climate change, particularly sea level rise, extreme events such as hurricanes and the large number of Small Island Developing states.

6. Continuing the revitalization work started during 2014-2016 for this process, the Association of Caribbean States has continued to position the Commission as the primary mechanism for coordination and cooperation in activities promoting the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea. For the 2016-2018 period, the Caribbean Sea Commission has built on this momentum by continuing to coordinate projects and activities aimed at preservation of the common patrimony of its member states, the Caribbean Sea, and developing a process of consultation for achievement of a consensus concept of "Special Area in the context of Sustainable development."

7. Notable highlights within the 2016-2018 period also include the Association's participation in the landmark World Oceans Conference in 2017. Focusing on Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, the Association's main objectives align with several of the targets outlined. These include conserving and increasing resilience of the Caribbean Sea area and its coasts, addressing issues such as ocean acidification and maximizing the benefits of our marine resources through sustainable practices.

8. This report outlines the activities and progress made during the 2016-2018 period and the proposed activities for 2018-2019 as they relate to the implementation of General Assembly resolution 71/224 adopted by the UNGA, entitled "Towards the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea for the present and future generations" as follows;

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- i. The introduction of the Caribbean Sea Commission Parallel Process;
- ii. The launch of the Sandy Shorelines project;
- iii. Deepening collaboration with regional institutions;
- iv. The future activities of the Commission.

II. The Caribbean Sea Commission parallel process

9. At the 1st Extraordinary Meeting of the Caribbean Sea Commission held on 5th February, 2018, the Association proposed a new approach to classify the activities of the Commission. Recognizing the requests made by the General Assembly resolution 71/224 and the Secretary General's report A/71/265, the Association of Caribbean States and the Caribbean Sea Commission have developed the "*Caribbean Sea Commission Parallel Process - Defining Special Area While Coordinating its Preservation.*" This process was developed through a series of consultations and concept papers and is divided into two parallel 'streams' of activities.

10. The first stream is titled "Coordinating Marine Preservation in the Region and Maximizing Collaborative Project Opportunities" This stream recognizes that special area designation in the United Nations General Assembly must be supported by a practical work programme of projects and initiatives that coordinate the management of these shared resources.

11. The second stream titled Achieving Special Area in the Context of Sustainable Development through Consultation, Consensus and Awareness Building presents a roadmap towards achieving a clear definition of the concept of a special area in the context of sustainable development. This is particularly important as the member states of the Association of Caribbean States are seeking to establish a new concept without prejudice to international law.

A. Stream 1: Coordinating Marine Preservation in the region and Maximizing Collaborative Project Opportunities

12. This stream involves the implementation of tangible projects for cooperative management of the Caribbean Sea through the enhancement of relationships with key institutions related to the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea. The following proposals are intended to be achieved through the work program of the Commission.

13. *Implementation of the Havana Projects.* Cognizant of the instructions laid out in the Havana Declaration and the 2016-2018 Plan of Action, the Commission continues to implement the projects defined therein. The Flagship project of the Commission 'Sandy shorelines' described in this report establishes a template for future cooperation and coordination projects to be executed by the Commission.

14. *Coordinate Regional Maritime Efforts through Collaboration.* The Commission intends to continue building relationships with key regional projects and initiatives through the establishment of project partnerships and, where appropriate, memoranda of understanding. These coordination efforts are intended to reduce duplication of efforts, and enhance the communication of science, solutions and resource opportunities to Association of Caribbean States decision-makers. Initially, partnerships are proposed United Nations Environment Programme - Caribbean Environment Programme, Central America Fisheries and Aquaculture Organization (OSPESCA by its Spanish acronym), the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism, North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems Project and the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre, through partnership on existing projects of the Association or the joint development of new projects for consideration.

15. *Facilitation of Relevant Existing Legal Agreements.* The Commission, where requested by its member states, will facilitate the ratification of relevant international agreements to bring the member states of the Association under a common legal standard. This role was articulated clearly in the 'Role of Caribbean Sea Commission' in Resolutions A/RES/54/225, and 67/205;

B. Stream 2: Achieving Special area in the Context of Sustainable Development through Consultation, Consensus and Awareness Building.

16. Critical to the achievement of a special area in the context of sustainable development is the internal consensus amongst member states of the Association of Caribbean States as to the definition of this concept. The

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Commission envisions that this will require a process of consultation, consensus, and continued awareness building at the national, regional, and eventually global levels.

17. This definition will consider existing global and regional agreements¹³ that member states of the Association are party to, existing definitions of “Special Zone”, the shortcomings of such agreements, and their level of ratification amongst member states.

18. This definition will be built on the best available information on what makes the Caribbean Sea unique, and considering its unique nature, what Member States desire regarding its management. These desires must reflect a concerted effort towards integrated management of the Caribbean Sea and a mechanism whose success is based on participation and consensus building rather than on punitive actions.

19. The Secretariat recommends the following as a two-year process, to be further elaborated as a project for funding as necessary; The Convening of a Special Area in the Context of Sustainable Development Working Group, comprised of the Members of the Legal Sub Commission, the Scientific and Technical Sub Commission of the Caribbean Sea Commission, the Commission’s board and the Secretariat of the Association. The working group would:

- i. Map existing legal concepts of special area, particularly those which apply to the Caribbean Sea, and how the Commission through its work can add value with a “special area in the context of sustainable development”. It is proposed that this step be led by the Legal Sub Commission.
- ii. Examination of the conceptual elements of a “special area” within the relevant international instruments, and how these can be extended and or applied to the concept of “special area in the context of sustainable development”.
- iii. Development of a draft working concept on “special area” in the context of sustainable development. This concept will be defined as a starting ground for consultations by all member states.

20. During this process the working group would benefit from inviting appropriate bodies such as the UN Environment Caribbean Environment Program (implementing agency for the Cartagena protocol), or representatives from the respective secretariats of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Caribbean Development Bank. The process will serve to enhance understanding of the gaps in the implementation of these agreements and how the Association and its Commission can add value in the current landscape without duplicating efforts.

III. The “Sandy Shorelines” Project

21. In the previous Secretary General’s Report, A/71/265, the Commission detailed two proposed projects under the Future activities of the Caribbean Sea Commission. These projects were presented by the Government of Cuba at the 1st meeting of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Commission. The projects focused on the preservation of coral reefs and the other on the management and monitoring of coastal erosion. The Association of Caribbean States has received funding for the latter project which is currently being implemented.

22. This project, titled “Impact assessment of Climate Change on the Sandy Shorelines” focuses on building the coastal resilience of member of the Association of Caribbean States through coordinated and enhanced coastal erosion and sea level rise monitoring. It is the flagship project of the Commission and the Association. After concluding negotiations with the Korea International Cooperation Agency the project, valued at 4.16 million USD, was launched on July 28th, 2017.

23. This project is also supported by the generous contributions of the Republic of Turkey, which funded the critical inception phase of the project. Additionally, the Kingdom of the Netherlands provided financial support to facilitate the involvement of Dutch Associate Members of the Association of the Caribbean States.

¹³ In particular the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), , the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment in the Wider Caribbean Region signed in Cartagena de Indias (Colombia) on 24th March, 1983 and its Protocols, the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), and Convention on Biological Diversity.

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24. Finally, the Caribbean Sea Commission is a partner on the CARIB-COAST INTERG project, which focuses on enhancing coastal erosion modeling and decision support in the French Associate Members of the ACS, namely Martinique, Guadeloupe and Saint Martin. The partnerships with this project will supplement the efforts of the sandy shorelines project, while ensuring that efforts are coordinated with French Associate Members of the Association of Caribbean States.

IV. Deepening collaboration with Regional Institutions

25. In recognition of the need to involve more member States of the Association of Caribbean States Member States in projects, the ACS Secretariat is in dialogue with the Caribbean Community Climate Change Center in Belize regarding the possibilities of together seeking additional funding for the ‘Sandy Shorelines’ project and working together to deepen regional scientific collaboration and reduce duplication of efforts.

26. The Caribbean Sea Commission continues its discussions with the United Nations Environment Program to enable the participation of the Program as an observer in the ‘Sandy Shorelines’ project to seek synergies and reduce duplication of efforts in the region.

27. Finally, cognizant of the high importance placed on the Sustainable Development Goals, the Commission is currently developing a concept paper on how it can assist in the implementation and monitoring of Sustainable Development Goal 14 “Life below water” through building partnerships with the United Nations Environment Program, the United Nations Economic Commission on Latin America and the Caribbean and other entities working in this area.

V. Future Activities of Caribbean Sea Commission

28. *Coral Reef project.* The Secretariat of the Association of Caribbean States continues to seek funding for its project on coral reefs which entails the development of 3 aquarium bases in the Caribbean region to preserve coral genetic resources and enhance regional knowledge of regeneration methods and techniques.

29. *The Second Symposium of the Caribbean Sea Commission.* Building on the success of the first symposium, this second symposium will continue to build the recognition of the Caribbean Sea Commission as the as the primary high-level science policy forum for marine environmental issues. This three-day symposium will focus on;

- i. Fundraising and Joint Project Development- Through the presentation of past success stories and new collaborative project concepts. This session of the symposium will explore south-south and triangular cooperative project opportunities; and
- ii. Improving Information Flow at the Science Policy Interface. This session will focus on topics deemed of particular importance by the Commission. Regional experts will present state of the art science, projections, and management recommendations to regional decision makers, regional institutions and national representatives.

30. *The Caribbean Sea Commission Databank.* While the implementation of the Databank has been delayed the Commission remains committed to the implementation of this project. In 2018 the Sub-Commissions of the Caribbean Sea Commission will be convened to address the implementation of this project. The key features of the Databank remain the same. These are:

- i. An online database of national and regional projects related to the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea;
- ii. A database of best practice guides and case studies of management responses; and
- iii. A database of regional experts to address emerging topics/specific critical issues.

VI. Conclusion

31. The Member States of the Association of States and its Caribbean Sea Commission remain committed to the goal of achieving Special Area recognition for the Caribbean Sea in the context of sustainable development status. It

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remains the ideal body for the coordination management of this shared resource for a number of reasons, including but not limited to, its wide membership base comprising 35 Members and Associate Members that have coastlines on the Caribbean Sea of the variety of states and protectorates in the Caribbean Region, its geographic scope, its focus on key issues related to sustainable development in its Directorates¹⁴ and its hosting of the Caribbean Sea Commission.

32. The Commission remains committed to the activation of the concept of coordinated and collaborative management through the implementation of tangible projects focusing on joint research and information sharing mechanisms as well as through the building of relationships with appropriate bodies and initiatives, particularly those of the UN system.

33. The Association of Caribbean States and the Commission remain committed to supporting greater inclusion of all groups in the decision-making process. This includes incorporating the voices of indigenous communities, women, young people and other, vulnerable groups in fulfilling the mandates of the Caribbean Sea Commission and the wider Association. The Association therefore sees great potential for the collaboration between the United Nations and the Association of Caribbean States in areas of advocacy, policy and awareness for these groups.

34. In particular, the Association of Caribbean States and the Commission remain committed to supporting greater participation of young people in the decision-making process. This includes incorporating the voices and perspectives of the region's youth in fulfilling the mandates of the Caribbean Sea Commission and the wider Association.

35. Building on the momentum generated in the 2016-2018 periods, the Association of Caribbean States and its Caribbean Sea Commission looks forward to reporting to the 75th United Nations General Assembly in 2020 a consensus definition of its concept of Special Area in the Context of Sustainable Development following its internal proposed process of consultation detailed in this report.

36. Cognizant of the geopolitical complexity, high levels of social and economic dependence and extreme levels of vulnerability of coastal and marine areas of Caribbean Member States as was illustrated by the 2017 Hurricane season the Association of Caribbean States is ever aware of the importance of the work of its Caribbean Sea Commission in the preservation of this common patrimony and core element of Caribbean life and identity. The Association of Caribbean States is thus grateful for the consideration of the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Secretary-General in this matter.

¹⁴ The Association of Caribbean States hosts Directorates responsible for the issues of Sustainable Tourism, Disaster Risk Reduction, Transportation, and Trade and External Economic Relations.