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Tenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP) to
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Region

Roatán, Honduras, 3 June 2019

**Paper on the State of the Marine Environment and Associated Economies
(SOMEE)
COLLABORATIVE DEVELOPMENT & INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF A REGIONAL
INTEGRATED REPORTING MECHANISM**

For reasons of economy and the environment, Delegates are kindly requested to bring their copies of the Working and Information documents to the Meeting, and not to request additional copies.

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COLLABORATIVE DEVELOPMENT & INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF A REGIONAL INTEGRATED REPORTING MECHANISM ON THE STATE OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT AND ITS CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE WIDER CARIBBEAN REGION

PART 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The purpose of this two-part paper is **(1)** to inform participants of the 18th Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM18) of the Action Plan for the Caribbean Environment Programme, the 15th Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP) to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena Convention), the 10th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW10) and the 4th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities (LBS4) about the ongoing collaborative efforts to develop and institutionalize a regional, long-term mechanism for the integrated assessment and periodic reporting on the State of the Marine Environment and Associated Economies (SOMEE); **(2)** to present recommendations for further development of the State of Marine Habitats report by UN Environment–Caribbean Environment Programme (CEP) as a key contribution to this integrated reporting effort; and **(3)** to request the continued support and participation of the IGM and COPs in the aforementioned processes as well as its endorsement and uptake, as deemed applicable, of suggested recommendations.

The SOMEE mechanism aims to create awareness, track progress, inform and trigger action, for example, by supporting enhanced, synergistic policy development, decision-making, strategic planning and programming by countries and Inter-Governmental Organizations (IGOs) with a marine mandate or stake in the marine environment in the Wider Caribbean. In addition to governments and IGOs, SOMEE’s target audience will also include economic sectors that depend on or benefit from healthy marine habitats. SOMEE will aim to highlight opportunities for the contribution of the region’s marine environment and its living marine resources to human wellbeing, development of sustainable blue economies, and disaster risk reduction as well as climate change mitigation and resilience. More information on SOMEE can also be found in the [SOMEE Information Booklet](#)

The aforementioned efforts are being supported through the UNDP/GEF Project (2015-2021) “*Catalysing Implementation of the Strategic Action Programme for the Sustainable Management of shared Living Marine Resources in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem*” (CLME+ Project). In this regard, the Project aims to assist the region in achieving its aspirations towards climate resilient socio-economic development including a sustainable ocean economy.

Catalysing implementation of the
Strategic Action Programme for the Caribbean and
North Brazil Shelf LME's (2015-2025)



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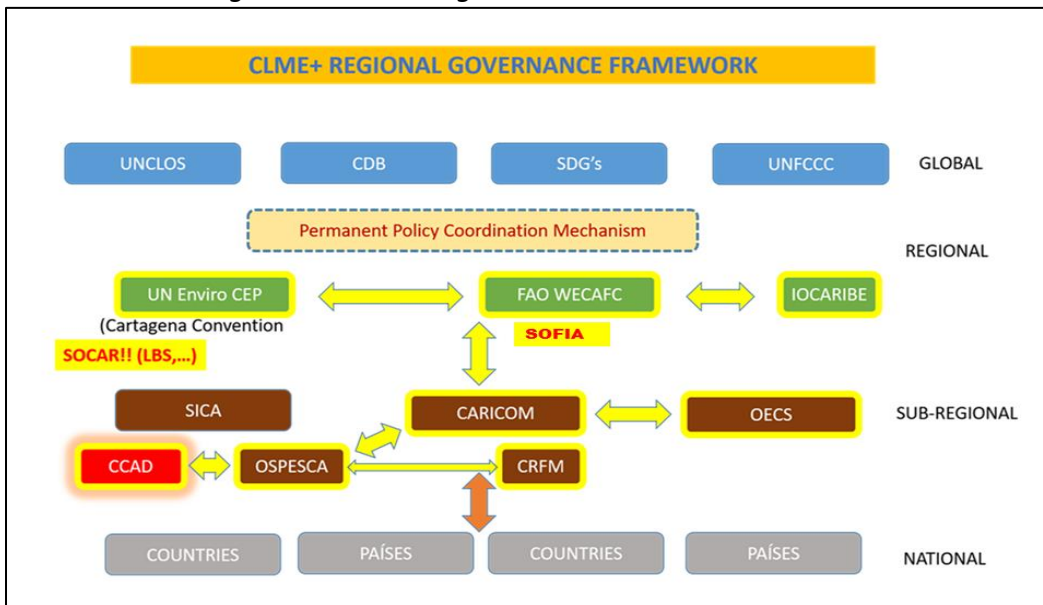
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Specifically, the SAP addresses root causes of habitat degradation, marine pollution, and unsustainability of fisheries while duly considering the cross-cutting issue of climate change. Two of these root causes relate to weaknesses in governance arrangements and inadequate (access) to data and information to support enhanced decision-making.

Efforts are currently being undertaken to consolidate a region-wide, multi-level collaborative network, consisting of governmental departments and Inter-Governmental Organizations (IGOs) with a core mandate on the marine environment (Figure 1): the CLME+ Regional Governance Framework (RGF). A consultancy is currently being facilitated through the CLME+ Project to determine the form and functions of a (permanent) Coordination Mechanism for integrated ocean governance.

Figure 1. CLME+ Regional Governance Framework



In the meantime, a CLME+ SAP Interim Coordination Mechanism (ICM) has been established among eight regional IGOs, among which is UN Environment-CEP (the IGOs that are members of the ICM are indicated with a yellow outline in Figure 1). The ICM's mandate includes supporting the development and institutionalization of the SOMEE reporting mechanism.

A REGIONAL, INSTITUTIONALIZED MECHANISM FOR ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING ON THE STATE OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT AND ASSOCIATED ECONOMIES

The main SOMEE products will be a static report, which will be periodically updated, and a more dynamic, online version of the report. Launch of the first SOMEE report and portal is expected to take place in early 2020.

While several regional organizations are mandated to undertake assessments of the status of the marine environment or associated living resources, assessments have been often “ad hoc” and fragmented, and have not explicitly explored the link between environmental state and governance, human wellbeing, and economies in an integrated manner. Another constraint is that the assessment methodologies including analytical frameworks and approaches vary across thematic areas and responsible organizations, and even between subsequent reporting efforts. These inconsistencies make it challenging to produce and periodically reproduce integrated, holistic assessments that allow tracking of progress and measuring distance-to-target, and as such maximizing usefulness for enhanced decision-making (e.g. in the context of periodic revisions of region-wide Strategies such as the CLME+ SAP and the Strategies and Work Programmes of individual IGO’s such as UN Environment-CEP). SOMEE aims to address this by building on and integrating existing reporting efforts, such as the UN Environment State of the Cartagena Convention Area with respect to land-based pollution (SOCAR-LBS) and State of Nearshore Marine Habitats, and FAO State of Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA), and by helping the region to formally adopt a standardized reporting approach.

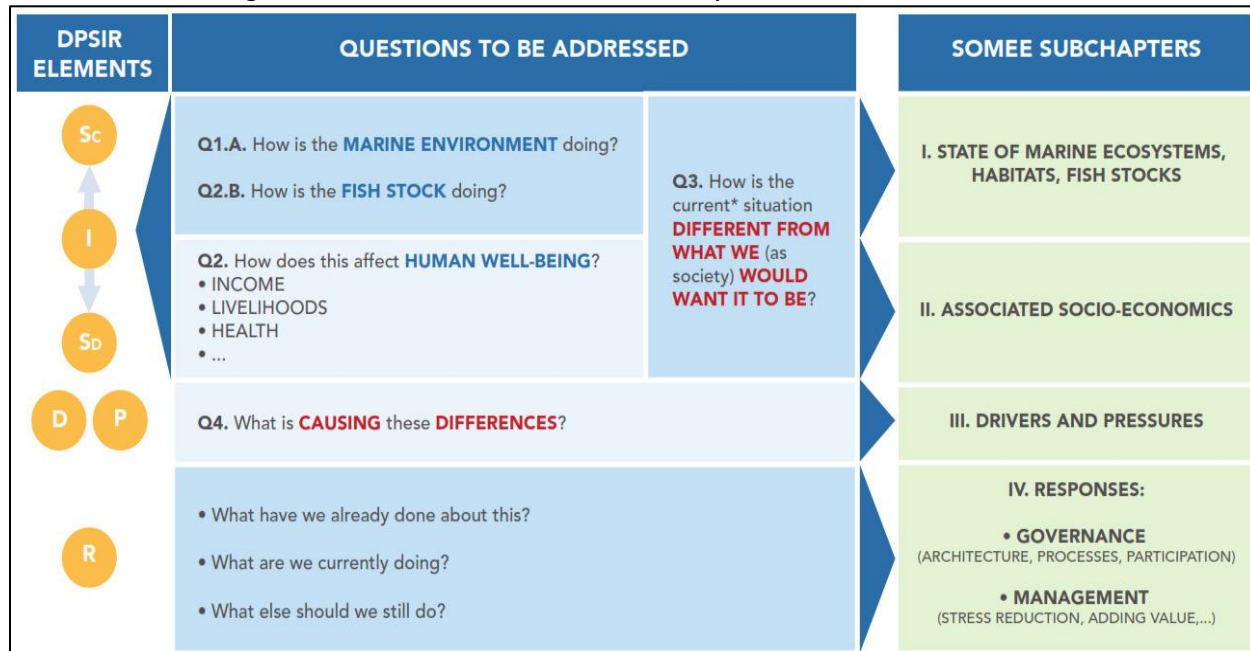
Sustainability of the SOMEE approach will be accomplished by embedding the collaborative, periodic development of the SOMEE reports within the mandates of the IGOs that form the foundation for the CLME+ RGF (CLME+ SAP ICM). Overall coordination of the SOMEE mechanism is expected to be one of the core responsibilities of the Coordination Mechanism.

SOMEE approach

SOMEE will adopt a standardized “*story-telling*” approach by systematically using a fixed narrative across its different chapters: a series of linked questions (Figure 2), building on the “DPSIR” Driver (D) - Pressure (P) - Status (S) - Impact (I) - Response (R) Analytical Framework and the Governance Effectiveness Assessment Framework (GEAF) will allow to convey key messages by exploring current, past and possible future conditions of our seas, marine habitats, biodiversity and fish stocks, what this means for human wellbeing and our economies, and why current (or future) conditions may be different from what society desires and from the targets it sets for itself. SOMEE will also explore what has been and can be done to progressively close the gap between current conditions and our societal aspirations. As such, SOMEE will inform

renewed programming and decision-making. The outline of the SOMEE report (see the [SOMEE Information Booklet](#) for an overview of the structure of the report) has been endorsed by the CLME+ countries and the constituents of the respective ICM members.

Figure 2. Questions to be addressed by the SOMEE assessment



Status of the first version of the SOMEE report

A phased approach has been adopted for the development of the SOMEE report, with initial focus on development of a sub-set of chapters/subchapters and sections (Table 1). All chapters are expected to highlight the linkage between living marine resources, and associated socio-economic benefits and societal aspirations.

Table 1. Status of preparation of content for the first version of the SOMEE report

Chapter/subchapter	Subchapter/section	Lead	Status
Chapter 1. Introduction		CLME+ Project Coordinating Unit (PCU) & ICM	In progress
Chapter 2. General state of the marine environment and associated economies	Land-based pollution (selected content to be integrated in SOMEE chapters as appropriate)	UN Env-CEP	Final SOCAR LBS report to be presented at the 2019 IGM/COP for endorsement
	Overview of fish stocks	FAO-WECAFC	In progress
Chapter 3. Sub-	3.1.Ecosystem-based	UN Env-CEP	In progress (earlier draft)

ecosystem: coral reefs, mangroves and seagrass beds	Management for the Reefs Sub-Ecosystem: Status of nearshore marine habitats		reviewed by the CLME+ PCU and recommendations for development provided to UN Env-CEP; overarching recommendations given below)
	3.2.1. Ecosystem approach to fisheries for the Caribbean spiny lobster	OSPESCA	In progress

Linkages between SOMEE and related efforts

The SOMEE is expected to inspire the development of Regional Strategies and Action Plans, and associated Investment Plans, such as those on Nutrient Reduction and Marine Habitats, which are being developed by UN Environment-CEP with the support of the CLME+ Project. Further, data and knowledge gaps identified in the development of the first version of SOMEE are expected to be captured in the development of the CLME+ Research Agenda, a collaborative effort led by the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI), with the support of the CLME+ Project. In turn, the Research Agenda is expected to lead to reduced knowledge gaps in subsequent SOMEE (and SOCAR) assessments. As SOMEE will be in part based on geospatial information, its development and periodic updating will be supported by the deployment by the ICM of a geonode (currently piloted through the Caribbean Marine Atlas, www.caribbeanmarineatlas.net), or network of geonodes. A digital version of SOMEE will be housed on the CLME+ Hub (www.clmeplus.org).

Requirements for institutionalizing and sustaining the SOMEE mechanism

Institutionalizing the SOMEE mechanism will require the following, among others:

- Establishment of a regional coordinating body (Secretariat of the CLME+ Coordinating Mechanism) for the Regional Ocean Governance Framework.
- Assigning coordination of periodic SOMEE development as part of the latter mechanisms'/body's mandate.
- Formal adoption of a common assessment methodology, reporting structure and report development approach across the ICM membership.
- Formalizing commitments by partners, for example, long-term commitments reflected in institutional mandates, medium term strategies and work programmes, meeting decisions of governing bodies, and modified terms of reference (e.g., Joint Working Groups, scientific committees).
- Decisions by individual IGOs conducive to such institutionalization process.

Sustaining and progressively improving the SOMEE mechanism will require the following, among others:

- Identifying data gaps, and filling data gaps through research and improved data collecting and monitoring programmes.
- Strengthening human and institutional capacity for assessment and reporting.
- Meeting financial needs to adequately conduct the assessment and reporting exercise.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are given at the end of Part 2 below.

PART 2

STATE OF MARINE HABITATS REPORT: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE WAY FORWARD

BACKGROUND

The development of the first edition of a State of Marine Habitats in the Convention Area report by UN Environment-CEP (which will contribute to the integrated SOMEE report and mechanism) – is being facilitated by the CLME+ Project. In January 2019, the CLME+ Project Coordinating Unit (PCU) reviewed the first draft of the State of Marine Habitats report and provided feedback to UN Environment-CEP. The PCU also participated in the workshop that was convened in December 2018 to review the draft report as well as in the workshop convened in March 2019 for development of the Regional Strategy and Action/Investment Plan on marine Habitats, and held a number of meetings and teleconferences with UN Environment-CEP and CANARI to discuss the draft report. In March 2019, the second draft of the report was circulated for review. The suggestions below in part reiterate, and further expand on earlier feedback and suggestions from the CLME+ PCU.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE FIRST EDITION OF THE STATE OF HABITATS REPORT

In its current version the draft report documents a valuable review of information gathered from a wider range of sources on the three major nearshore marine habitats: coral reefs, mangroves and seagrass beds. In order to become an effective tool to track progress across the Convention Area and inform decision-making for the up-scaling of action (e.g., through the development and subsequent implementation of a Regional Strategy and Action Plan for the protection and restoration of key marine habitats), further development and revisions are required.

The CLME+ PCU wishes to present the following overarching recommendations for the further development of the report, **for consideration and endorsement by the 10th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife, and decision by the 18th Intergovernmental Meeting of the Action Plan for the Caribbean Environment Programme and the 15th Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP) to the Cartagena Convention:**

1. Develop and structure the State of Marine Habitats report using the SOMEE narrative (described in Part 1 above under 'SOMEE approach'), which constituted the basis for the formally endorsed SOMEE outline, and which builds upon the DPSIR and GEAF conceptual frameworks: *describe the extent and condition of marine habitats across the region and what this means for human wellbeing and economies and the achievement of international and regional goals and targets*

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(SDGs, Aichi, etc.) – clearly describe and, to the best extent possible, evaluate or approximate the (potential) contributions from marine habitats to human wellbeing and socio-economic development, including the blue economy and disaster risk reduction; an as-comprehensive-as-possible regional overview of the extent to which, and why current and possible/plausible future condition may be different from what society desires and from related goals and targets; and what is being done and still needs to be done to address these differences.

2. As the first as well as subsequent versions of the State of Marine Habitats report are expected to constitute products of a formal mechanism for the periodic reporting on the state of marine/coastal habitats, it is desirable/the intention that key content from the report (e.g., on marine habitat status, its socio-economic contributions, associated governance processes, across the wider region) can be periodically re-evaluated and updated. The first edition of the report should therefore be conceived as a standardized assessment, using as much as possible information from regular, authoritative (or in their absence, otherwise well-identified) sources which will allow, or provide the highest opportunities for regular updating, so that progress can be periodically tracked. It should not be conceived merely as a review of currently available information.
3. The report should focus on information that is key for (in particular, regional-level and sub-regional level) planning, programming, prioritization, policy/decision-making and investments, and present such information in a concise, easily digestible (and not overly technical) format, so that a clear (sub)regional overview of processes and status, remaining data/knowledge gaps, and associated key messages can promptly be obtained and assimilated by the reader. Report content and format should focus on what will trigger and facilitate cost-effective and climate resilient action.
4. The report must be conceived in such a way that it will help expanding its reach to less traditional but critically important target publics (that is, economic sectors that depend on or benefit from healthy marine habitats), for example, by presenting a summary of key facts and statistics to highlight the importance of the region's marine habitats to socio-economic development, with a brief overview of both the threats these habitats face, and the opportunities they (can) provide to human societies (this will then set the context for the rest of the report).
5. The report should strive to incorporate relevant core indicators that are adopted or proposed in different international and regional frameworks such as SDGs and Aichi, the Regional Seas core indicators, the CLME+ GEAF SAP M&E indicator set on Habitats, as well as those that are being routinely monitored, for example by the AGGRA programme. This will form the baseline for tracking changes over time and future reporting on the state of marine habitats and associated economies and governance processes.
6. Description of "Drivers and Pressures" is meant to be part of the report, but may have a negative connotation. The report should be more balanced by highlighting opportunities and the value of marine habitats for the region and its people as critical assets that will allow the region to build a thriving and sustainable blue economy, and help to reduce vulnerability to disasters (Socio-economics section).
7. In the draft report, information is sometimes "broken down" or "aggregated" (depending on the case) by LME, which is meaningful from the perspective of the adoption of the LME/EBM

approach in the region. However, from the perspective of the intended target public/end-users, consider additional/alternative spatial “breakdown” or “aggregation” levels that coincide with the geographic scopes of mandate of relevant IGOs’ and as such will most contribute to triggering action and enhanced decision-making (and help consolidating the regional ocean governance framework), for example, the Wider Caribbean Region/Convention Area (SPAW Protocol), CARICOM, OECS, SICA, the Caribbean Biological Corridor sub-region, etc. (The possible use of marine ecoregions or other ecological classifications could also be used in cases where the ecological/biodiversity perspective is important).

8. Give due consideration to the relevance of land-based sources of pollution for the status of key marine habitats and the associated provision of goods and services, and ensure adequate linkages with, and consideration of and/or cross-references to content and information from the SOCAR-LBS (and, where deemed highly relevant, WECAFC SOFIA), so as to inform holistic, integrated (ecosystem-based) programming/planning and decision-making (e.g., in the development of the Regional Strategies and Action/Investment Plans on Nutrients, and on the Protection and Restoration of Key Marine Habitats).
9. Sections or sub-sections under the reporting narrative, or specific topics to be covered under these (sub-)sections for which no or only partial data is available, should not be eliminated from the report. Instead, the existence of such data gaps should be explicitly flagged in the report, so that efforts can be undertaken to address these data gaps and as such reduce the amount of gaps in subsequent periodic updates of the report. Existing data and knowledge gaps should be adequately communicated so that such gaps can be addressed through the Research Strategy being developed by GCFI (facilitated by the CLME+ Project) in collaboration with UN Environment-CEP.
10. Avoid to the extent possible lengthy sections of text and give preference to presenting information in tabular format or using other graphical means, to highlight key information, enhance assimilation of content by the reader, and facilitate the reporting on (and tracking of) progress across subsequent editions of the report. Consider the use of text boxes and other means to make information stand out. Consider the use of “traffic lights”, arrows and other visual means to communicate information on status, trends,... and the level of confidence in the assessment of both. We refer to the use of these approaches in the development of the “Australia State of the Environment Reports”.
11. For detailed information that is of lesser relevance for tracking/evaluating progress and informing decision-making but that might still provide important background, we recommend the use of simple references to the original publication (or alternatively, its inclusion as an Annex to the report) rather than its direct and full incorporation in the main report, as the latter would not allow key messages to sufficiently stand out.
12. We recommend standardization of the layout of maps in the State of Marine Habitats report using the templates that are being developed for similar purposes for the integrated CLME+ SOME report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations to the 10th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW10) and the 4th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities (LBS4):

SPAW10:

1. Contracting Parties endorse the overarching recommendations from the CLME+ Project Coordinating Unit and their uptake by the Secretariat in the further development of the State of Marine Habitats report, to ensure that it is consistent with the SOME E approach.
2. The Secretariat ensures that the State of Marine Habitats report is completed in a timely manner to facilitate its incorporation in the SOME E report and online portal during the latter part of 2019.

SPAW10 and LBS4:

1. The Secretariat continues to collaborate and coordinate with the CLME+ PCU and ICM members to institutionalize the SOME E mechanism, including pursuing alignment and synergy between the SOCAR-Land-based Sources and State of Marine Habitats report and the SOME E approach (e.g., Driver-Pressure-State-Impact-Response Framework and the Governance Effectiveness Assessment Framework) and incorporation of the SOME E development process and subsequent revisions into UN Environment-CEP's work programme.
2. The Secretariat strengthens collaboration with FAO and other fisheries-related inter-governmental organizations such as CRFM and OSPESCA to integrate pollution, marine habitats, and fisheries in future SOCAR-LBS and State of marine Habitats reports, in line with the SOME E approach.
3. Request that the Eighteenth Intergovernmental Meeting of the Action Plan for the Caribbean Environment Programme and Fifteenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Cartagena Convention take a favourable decision in response to the above recommendations with respect to institutionalization of the SOME E mechanism and development of the State of Marine Habitats report.