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Fifth Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) to the Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities in the Wider Caribbean.

Virtual

15 to 17 March 2021

**Report of the work on the Caribbean Node of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter
(GPML-Caribe) for Marine Litter Management
January 2019 to December 2020**

The Caribbean Node of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML-Caribe) represents a partnership for national and regional organizations, governments, research, and technical agencies and individuals, that work together to reduce the quality and impact of marine litter in coastal zones of the Wider Caribbean Region. The Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI) is currently the co-host of GPML-Caribe together with the United Nations Environment Programme Cartagena Convention Secretariat.

1. Developing a harmonized approach to marine litter monitoring in the Caribbean.

In October 2018, GPML-Caribe hosted a workshop in Miami focused on harmonizing litter monitoring in the WCR. As a result of this workshop, the Node hired consultants to develop the report “Harmonizing Marine Litter Monitoring in the Wider Caribbean Region: A Hybrid Approach” which was published in 2019. This study compared three initiatives in the Caribbean region and the OSPAR marine litter monitoring methodology against a set of predetermined criteria. Findings from this research also helped to contribute to the development of a monitoring scheme for marine litter in the WCR, with a focus on monitoring visible marine litter on the shoreline - litter that derives from rivers, ocean currents, waves and wind, or discarded by tourists. This report aimed to assess leading initiatives and provide recommendations to policymakers and experts in the WCR on how best to monitor marine litter to achieve scientific and policy objectives. This project has since been successfully piloted and implemented by Clean Seas Bonaire and will be introduced to other Caribbean islands in partnership with the Caribbean Youth Environment Network (CYEN).

2. Hosting a strategic planning session to develop a regional marine litter management strategy

GPML-Caribe enlisted national and regional marine litter experts to attend a session hosted in Miami in March 2019 to assist with the development of a Marine Litter Management Strategy for the region. This strategy identified priority actions which can be used as the basis for developing new project proposals and assist in resource mobilization efforts whilst supporting both the implementation of the Regional Action Plan for Marine Litter Management in the Wider Caribbean Region (RAPMaLi) and implementation of the Protocol on Land Based Sources of Pollution (LBS Protocol) of the Cartagena Convention. The meeting was an important milestone in regional collaboration, and all participants looked forward to continued knowledge sharing and cooperation for plastic-free oceans.

3. Translation of Marine Litter factsheets to French

GPML-Caribe has developed several factsheets to visually communicate relevant issues related to marine litter in the region. Thus far factsheets have been developed related to 1) Marine litter in the Caribbean, 2) Microplastics in the Caribbean, 3) How can we reduce marine litter and 4) Introducing the Caribbean Node of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter. These factsheets were previously available in English and through funding from the Government of Canada’s Environment and Climate Change Division, these factsheets were translated to French and subsequently widely distributed. All factsheets are available for download on [GPML-Caribe’s website](#).

4. Launching the Caribbean Clean Seas Campaign

This effort focused on enhancing the work of the GPML-Caribe through the design and launch of a Regional Clean Seas Campaign that formed an integral part of the International Coastal Cleanup (ICC)

2019 regional campaign and supported UNEP's Global Clean Seas Campaign launched in 2017. Additionally, the Node developed communication materials to adopt and implement the Clean Seas Campaign in the Wider Caribbean Region, and field-tested the aforementioned standardized hybrid approach to monitoring marine litter on beaches. The ongoing overall aim of the project is to increase engagement and awareness of the general public, private sector, and government in the fight against marine plastic pollution. The Caribbean Youth Environment Network (CYEN) Chapters in Barbados, St Kitts and Nevis, St Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago helped facilitate this project.

5. Enhancing the Whitehouse and Bluefields Solid Waste Reduction Project in Jamaica

In partnership with the Sandals Foundation, this project focused on enhancing the Whitehouse and Bluefields Solid Waste Reduction Project through the institution of a waste management system upgrade in Bluefields, implementing sustainable meals in schools, improving plastic waste storage and transportation, facilitating the start-up of a sustainable compost business startup, and development of a video case study of the project. The project focused on education and provided residents along the south coast of Jamaica with a structure for better solid waste management through effective waste separation. This project ultimately aims to use the strategy of waste separation and waste diversion to reduce and prevent pollution on both land and sea. This built on a previous project under the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Trash Free International Programme implemented in partnership with UNEP CEP.

6. Marine Litter Activities at the 72nd Annual Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI72)

At GCFI72, a Special Session was convened on the Science, Management and Solutions to address marine litter in the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico. This session featured submissions on marine litter including research on microplastics, incidence and impacts as well as monitoring, management and solutions. Additionally, two GPML-Caribe scholarships were awarded to support students conducting research on marine litter in the Wider Caribbean region to attend and present at GCFI72. Furthermore GPML-Caribe hosted a special screening of *Albatross, A Film* by Chris Jordan at GCFI72 which is a powerful film that relays the tragedy of the impacts of plastic pollution on albatrosses in Midway Island in the North Pacific Ocean.

7. Supporting the attendance of fishers at the FAO/GGGI Workshop on Best Practices to Reduce and Prevent Abandoned, Lost and Otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear

This workshop involved raising the awareness and understanding of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear (VGMFG) as well as the Global Ghost Gear Initiative's (GGGI) Best Practice Framework whilst also conducting technical training and certification on the removal of derelict fishing gear. The workshop also included presentations on initiatives and advances in the Latin America and Caribbean region as well as other international perspectives. Two fishers from Grenada attended this meeting to receive training in order to assist and be involved with the ongoing research being conducted by GGGI in Grenada.

8. Social Media Campaigns: Plastic Free July and Plastic Free Christmas

A targeted social media campaign for Plastic Free July was developed in collaboration with the UNEP Cartagena Convention Secretariat in 2019. Plastic Free July is a global annual challenge where millions of people give up single-use plastic for the entire month. This event also helps to raise awareness on the amount and impact of single-use plastics being generated as well as means by which individuals can reduce their own usage. For the targeted Caribbean campaign, tips were developed and translated to English, Spanish and French and shared daily on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#). Due to the success of this campaign, a subsequent campaign for Plastic Free Christmas was developed in collaboration with UNEP CEP and executed in December 2019. Both campaigns were subsequently refined and repeated in 2020.

9. Preparation of research gap analysis for the UNDP/GEF CLME+ Project (2015-2020)

GCFI in its role as co-host of the Caribbean Node and as part of the Project Execution Team (PEG) for the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems project (CLME+) conducted a gap analysis of research needs related to marine pollution including marine litter that will help inform managers within the region. The report entitled “Science and Research Serving Effective Ocean Governance in the Wider Caribbean Region” represents the results of a project conducted by GCFI designed to identify research priorities at the nexus of science and policy. Research gaps were identified in the following five themes: science, monitoring, communications, economics, and governance. In addition to pollution (of which litter is a subset), the project focused on two other issues affecting coastal societies and Small Island Developing States (SIDS): unsustainable fisheries and habitat degradation.

10. Identification of Research Priorities for UNDP/GEF CLME+ Project (2015-2020)

In association with the research gap analysis created for the CLME+ project, GCFI in its role as co-host of the Caribbean Node, used the results of the gap analysis to poll decision makers so they could identify the research priorities related to marine pollution including marine litter from their perspective in each of the five themes: science, monitoring, communications, economics, and governance.

11. Reduction of Fishing Gear Loss into the Marine Environment in the Caribbean

For this project, a proposal developed in partnership with the Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI) and funded by Fisheries and Oceans Canada will provide added incentive to Caribbean Small Island Developing States to minimize the occurrence and impact of abandoned, lost, discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) in extreme weather events. This project focuses on effectively integrating the GGGI Best Practice Framework into the Caribbean context, and subsequently testing those best practices in Belize. A baseline of hotspot locations in Belize will be determined and gear removal activities to ground-truth this hotspot analysis will be conducted. Additionally, the availability of in country port reception facilities will be investigated along with the feasibility of recycling fishing gear locally or regionally. Finally, in order to expand these approaches to other countries in the region, a lessons learnt document will be prepared along with prioritized recommendations. At GCFI74 (pending COVID-19 restrictions) a workshop will be held where regional fishers will be trained in safe internationally recognized gear removal protocols and pilot trials of innovative fishing gear and gear marking techniques will also be conducted.