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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

**Collaborative Development and Institutionalization of A Regional Integrated
SOMEE Reporting Mechanism and Its Contributions to Socio-Economic
Development in The Wider Caribbean Region: An Update**

For reasons of public health and safety associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, this meeting is being convened virtually. Delegates are kindly requested to access all meeting documents electronically for download as necessary.

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The “State of the Marine Environment and associated Economies” (SOMEE) reporting mechanism: progress to date, and what comes next

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Related information paper:

- *Towards a Collaborative Integrated Marine Data, Information and Knowledge Management Landscape and Infrastructure in the Wider Caribbean, supporting informed decision-making*

The purpose of this paper is to inform about the progress-to-date and next steps towards the development of an integrated, collaborative and standardized long-term reporting mechanism on: the state of the marine environment, and on how the marine environment contributes/can contribute to sustainable “blue”/oceans-based socio-economic development in the Convention Area.

The concept of a “SOMEE” long-term reporting mechanism for the region

The collaborative [“State of the Marine Environment and associated socio-Economics” \(SOMEE\) reporting mechanism](#) aims to provide comprehensive information on the status and use of the marine ecosystems and associated governance and management processes in the region, and how these contribute to economies and human well-being. In support of the application of ecosystem-based management (EBM), it aims to create awareness, track progress, and inform and trigger action; for example by enabling enhanced, cross-sectoral and 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. SOMEE will aim to highlight opportunities for coordinated efforts towards a healthy marine environment in the region that contributes to human wellbeing, pursuing the development of sustainable blue/ocean-based economies, and attending disaster risk reduction as well as climate change mitigation and resilience.

The development of the SOMEE concept was supported by 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+](#)

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[Project](#)). This effort was undertaken in response to the calls formulated under the [10-year CLME+ Strategic Action Programme \(CLME+ SAP\)](#) for the region to achieve better monitoring and reporting on the state of its Large Marine Ecosystems. It is meant to help the region in protecting and harnessing its marine and coastal natural capital as key assets for sustainable, climate-resilient, "blue" socio-economic development.

Regional Coordination Mechanism supporting integrated reporting

The collaborative development of a “State of the Marine Environment and associated Economies” (SOMEE) reporting mechanism, and the active promotion of the sustained use of the mechanism as a means to bridge the science-policy gap, was listed as one of the core functions of the [CLME+ Interim Coordination Mechanism \(ICM\)](#), with the ICM having been created in 2017 through the signing of a [Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\)](#) among 8 Inter-Governmental Organizations with an oceans-related mandate¹. This ICM, of which UNEP CEP is one of the members, aims to enhance regional coordination and collaboration, and support the integration and monitoring of actions for sustainable fisheries and the protection and sustainable use of the marine environment, and is meant to continue to exist until it is replaced by an enhanced, [long-term Ocean Coordination Mechanism \(OCM\)](#):

Recognising the need to transition the interim mechanism into a long-term arrangement (called for under the CLME+ SAP) with enhanced country ownership, governments and regional organizations are in the final stages of negotiating a sustainable and long-term Coordination Mechanism for integrated Ocean governance (further also referred to in this paper as “Ocean Coordination Mechanism” or “OCM”). This “OCM” will continue to build on the experiences and lessons learnt from the operations of the interim ICM, and is expected to provide a solid platform to further strengthen and develop the SOMEE reporting mechanism.

The OCM, of which it is anticipated that its [membership will consist of \(a\) the countries from the Wider Caribbean Region, \(b\) the current ICM member IGO’s, as well as \(3\) potentially additional IGO’s with an oceans-related mandate](#), is expected to become operational during the current 2021-2022 biennium: to date (March 2021), the content of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that will operationalize the OCM has been technically cleared, and it is anticipated that the MOU may be opened for signature by prospective members by June 2021.

In similar ways as was the case with the ICM MOU, the [draft OCM MOU](#) indicates that the OCM is to “provide a platform for cyclical Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis/Strategic Action Programme (“TDA/SAP”) processes, including the coordination of the periodic assessment of and reporting on the state of the marine environment and associated economies in the MOU Area and the monitoring, periodic evaluation and revision of MoU Area Strategic Action Programmes”. As such, it can be anticipated that **the OCM will seek to give continuity to the SOMEE reporting efforts initiated with the support of the CLME+ Project.**

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The newly proposed PROCARIBE+ Project, providing funding for the OCM and SOMEЕ reporting

Of critical importance to achieving the latter will be the successful mobilization of renewed financial support from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) through the [newly proposed UNDP/GEF PROCARIBE+ Project](#).

This project is expected to provide funding, during the period 2022-2027, a.o., to operationalize the OCM Secretariat, and to support continued monitoring and reporting efforts in the region, including those related to the objectives, and implementation progress, of the new Cartagena Convention Strategy, the LBS and SPAW Protocols, and associated Regional Strategies and Action Plans.

In addition to the support for continued work on the regional, integrated SOMEЕ, the PROCARIBE+ Project is also expected to support national-level, SOMEЕ-based reporting efforts, in a number of pilot countries. Once more widespread, national-level SOMEЕ reporting is expected to substantially contribute to the enhanced quality of regional-level reporting efforts (long-term goal).

Under the **CLME+ Project**, which is slated to end in October 2021, significant progress was made to deliver a **first "prototype, partial SOMEЕ"**, consisting of the delivery of several **key "SOMEЕ building blocks"**. These "building blocks" included the first-ever **"State of the Convention Area (SOCAR) Reports"** on **Land-Based Sources of Pollution** and on **Coastal and Marine Habitats**, responding also to reporting requirements and needs under the Cartagena Convention's LBS and SPAW Protocols, respectively.

With the CLME+ project nearing completion, it is anticipated that a fully integrated SOMEЕ report will be produced with the support of the new PROCARIBE+ Project. This first full version of SOMEЕ will then inspire the collaborative development of a **new, 10-year holistic Strategic Action Programme on the Marine Environment (2025-2034)** for the region.

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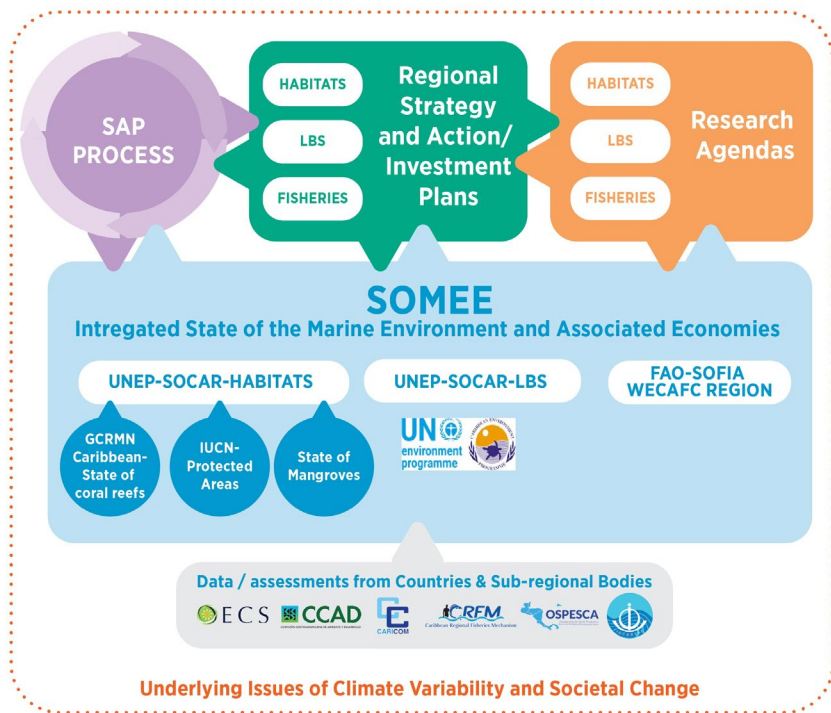
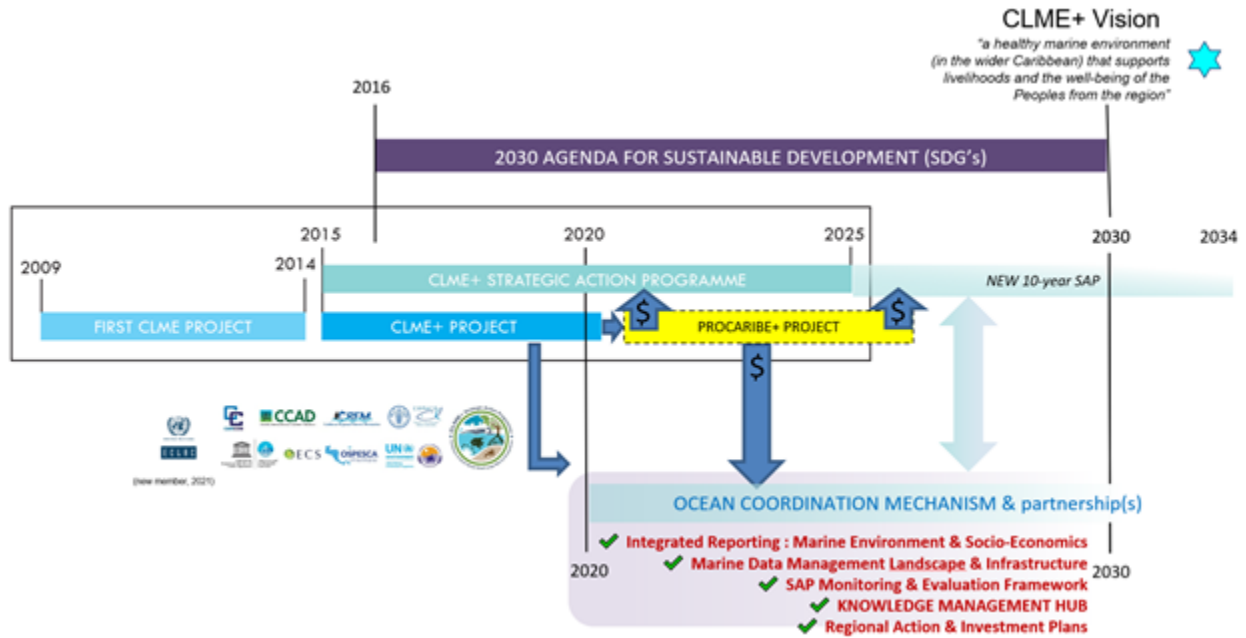


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From fragmented reporting efforts to progressive collaboration on a holistic SOMEE by regional IGO's

While several regional organizations are mandated to undertake assessments of the status of the marine environment or associated living resources within the limits of their specific geographic (e.g. sub-region) and/or thematic area of mandate, the production of past assessments has often been opportunity-based and “ad hoc”/project-driven, and not as a part of a long-term, regular and regionally-owned collaborative effort. This has often led to fragmented instead of integrated reporting effort. Many of these reports have also not explicitly explored the link between the state of the marine environment and its resources, the related governance processes, and the resulting impacts on human wellbeing and economies in the region. In addition, the assessment methodologies including analytical frameworks and approaches have varied across thematic areas and responsible organizations. All of these constraints have made it challenging to produce and periodically reproduce integrated, holistic assessments that allow for the sound tracking of progress, the measuring of distance-to-target, and the identification of, and proper allocation of financial resources for the most effective management actions. This has not allowed to maximize the usefulness of these reporting efforts for enhanced decision-making (e.g. in the context of periodic revisions of region-wide Strategies such as the CLME+ SAP, and/or the Strategies and Work Programmes of individual IGO's such as UN Environment-CEP).

By building on existing regional reporting obligations and 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 integrating the SOMEE reporting efforts as part of the OCM core functions, the SOMEE mechanism can now indeed progressively become the highly needed tool to guide effective and cost-efficient action on the marine environment in the region.

Guiding frameworks for SOMEE development

SOMEE proposes to adopt a standardized “story-telling” approach by systematically using a fixed narrative: a series of linked questions, building on 2 analytical frameworks, (1) the “DPSIR²” Framework and (2) the Governance Effectiveness Assessment Framework (GEAF). Building from these frameworks, SOMEE will convey key messages by using the best available information and exploring trends of our seas, marine habitats, biodiversity and various fish stocks and how these changes impact human wellbeing and associated economies. SOMEE will also explore what has been and can be done to progressively close the gap between current environmental conditions and associated socio-economic benefits, and our related societal aspirations and/or political commitments. A generic outline for 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.

SOMEE will consist of a combination of a static reports, which will be periodically updated, and more dynamic online resources hosted on the [CLME+ Hub](#).

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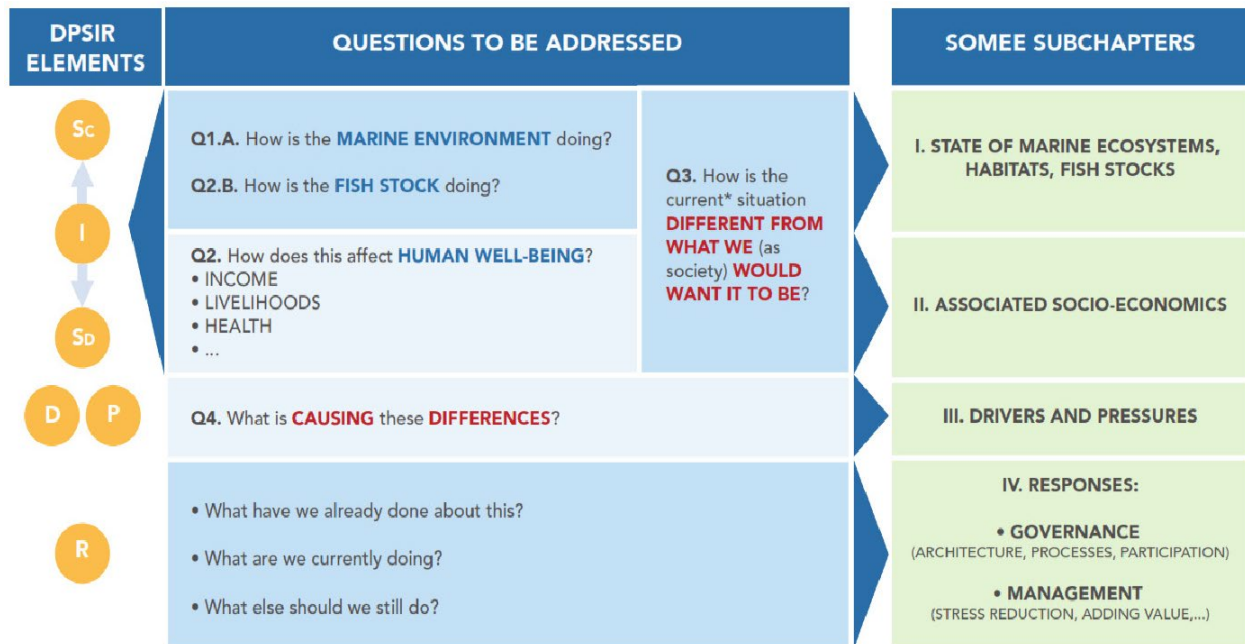
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Fig 1. Questions to be addressed by the SOMEE assessment



Additional information on the SOMEE approach can be found on the [CLME+ Hub](#).

The need for a Marine Data/Information Management Landscape and Infrastructure to underpin SOMEE development

Over the past decades, substantial amounts of data, information and reports on the marine environment and its resources have been created in the region, both with and without the explicit aim of supporting management processes, decision-making and investments. Unfortunately, many of these efforts were project- and/or sector-driven, have been “ad hoc” in nature, and were undertaken in a non-systematic way.

Many initiatives, including those geared towards the creation of information platforms and websites lacked continuity beyond project end, or are not sufficiently known and remain under-utilized. In addition, silo approaches often remained predominant in decision-making processes. A multitude of strategies and action programmes were developed, but often lacked the data and mechanisms to track and evaluate their implementation.

Awareness about, and access to the wealth of existing data and information is fragmented among the many stakeholders. Despite the acknowledged scarcity of financial resources, knowledge generation efforts are often duplicated, while critical knowledge gaps persist in time. Existing information platforms and products

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are not linked together in a unified knowledge infrastructure, and remain insufficiently used in planning and resource management.

This complex situation is an important root cause of the ongoing environmental degradation, and has created challenges for developing the prototype version of the SOME E report, as well as the associated efforts to produce eg. the State of Habitats, State of Fisheries and State of LBS Pollution sub-reports (“SOME E building-blocks”).

With a view to help improve this situation, a regional, collaborative platform, called the [CLME+ HUB](#), providing and connecting access to information, knowledge, resources and tools to support all people and organizations working towards a healthier marine environment in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem has been developed under the CLME+ project. The aim of the CLME+ HUB is to serve as a single, convenient gateway which links up with other, well-established platforms and data and information sources important for all ocean stakeholders in the region. The CLME+ HUB will continue to be collaboratively developed under the proposed new PROCARIBE+ Project and provide an interactive platform for SOME E.

While central to its design, the aforementioned CLME+ HUB will constitute just one element of the comprehensive marine data infrastructure landscape that will be needed in order to allow the region to optimally protect and restore marine and coastal ecosystems and their associated goods, services and biodiversity, and simultaneously enable the development of thriving and resilient ocean-based societies.

In combination with the HUB, a solid regional Marine Data Management Landscape and Infrastructure (MDI), capable of underpinning the regional and national-level ocean governance, management and decision-making processes is required. Building on initial information gathering on the existing marine data infrastructure in the region initiated under the CLME+ Project, and the forthcoming more detailed baseline, SWOT and needs assessment, the PROCARIBE+ Project will seek to develop a detailed “blueprint” for such regional marine data management landscape and infrastructure. Through collaborative action among the OCM, this “MDI blueprint” will seek to (a) sustainably harness and connect existing global, regional and national data management efforts, while (b) articulating the means to put in place the key missing elements of such regional MDI. See also the separate, dedicated information paper submitted for this meeting.

The MDI is meant to strengthen the development of SOME E through improved data flows and associated baseline information for a standardized, integrated reporting mechanism.

Status of the first partial prototype SOME E building blocks

SOME E aims at building on and integrating existing reporting efforts in the region. As a result, a phased approach has been undertaken for its development, and as a first step, support was provided through the CLME+ Project for regional Inter-Governmental Organizations that have mandates to undertake

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assessments of the status of the marine environment or associated living resources to produce “**SOMEE building blocks**” that will be used to consolidate, at a later stage, a fully integrated version of SOMEE (Table 1). The reports completed under this first phase are:

Report	Lead	Status
General State of Selected Marine Fish and Shellfish Status and Associated Economies	WECAFC	Completed
State of the Cartagena Convention Area (SOCAR). An Assessment of Marine Pollution from Land-based Sources and Activities in the Wider Caribbean Region	UNEP-CEP	Completed
The State of Nearshore Marine Habitats in the Wider Caribbean	UNEP-CEP	Completed
State of the Marine Environment and Associated Economies in the OECS Sub-region (OECS sub-regional SOMEE)	OECS	Completed
Science and Research Serving Effective Ocean Governance in the Wider Caribbean Region	GCFI	Completed
Governance Effectiveness Assessment Framework (GEAF) Indicators Report	CERMES	Completed
Ocean Briefs	IOC-Caribe	In progress

Table 1. “Building blocks” for the forthcoming, fully integrated SOMEE

The aforementioned reports that are finalized can be accessed on the [CLME+ HUB’s SOMEE](#) section. The first complete version of an integrated, consolidated SOMEE report is anticipated to be developed with the support of the proposed PROCARIBE+ Project. It will provide baseline information and guide the collaborative development by regional and national stakeholders of the next iteration of the region's 10-year Strategic Action Programme on the Marine Environment (SAP; 2025-2034). For the development of the integrated report, lessons learnt from work conducted under the CLME+ Project on the first partial SOMEE prototype will be used.

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