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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

**Regional Spatial Data Infrastructure Coordination and Collaboration
Supporting Integrated Ocean Governance in the Caribbean and North
Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems**

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

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Related information paper:

- *Collaboratively Developing and Sustaining a Regional Integrated “SOMEE” Reporting Mechanism on the State of the Marine Environment and Its Contributions to Socio-Economic Development in the Wider Caribbean Region*

The purpose of this paper is to inform about the ongoing and further planned collaborative efforts to build an integrated marine data/information/knowledge management landscape and infrastructure for the Wider Caribbean, that will enable informed decision-making in support of (a) the Cartagena Convention and its protocols (and associated reporting obligations), and (b) wider-ranging regional ambitions relative to the sustainable management of the living marine environment and associated socio-economics.

Spatially and temporally explicit knowledge and information on the marine environment, the status and trends of associated governance and management processes and investments, and how these together affect socio-economics and human well-being is a critical need for cost-effective action in the Wider Caribbean towards the development of sustainable and resilient blue/ocean-based economies which are supported by biodiversity-rich, healthy and productive oceans, as well as for monitoring and evaluating the progress obtained from the implementation of sustainable ocean instruments, including GEF-supported multi-stakeholder [Strategic Action Programmes](#) (SAPs), the forthcoming [regional Ocean Coordination Mechanism](#), the new UNEP CEP Cartagena Convention Strategy, and associated Regional and national-level thematic Strategies and Action Plans. Planners, decision-makers and investors require information on baseline, targets/aspirations/commitments, progress and trends.

How the marine and coastal natural capital in the region contributes and can further contribute to our societies, livelihoods and economies is, however, far from being completely understood. This leads to suboptimal planning and decision-making, and inefficient, ineffective or even antagonistic investments across sectors. This “regional root cause” of continued environmental degradation is not just a result of a lack of data and information, but in many cases an issue of lack of cross-sectoral integration or simply a lack of access to the data that does exist. This itself is often a consequence of the highly fragmented nature of data collection and management.

Optimizing the use of goods and services from the marine ecosystems, while addressing anthropogenic threats and understanding/enhancing the effectiveness of management interventions and tools (e.g. marine spatial and

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“blue economy” planning), will require further investing in better cross-sectoral knowledge management and sharing, and will need to be complemented with additional data collection and research, and monitoring and evaluation efforts.

In the region, partial progress towards these goals has been obtained through the [CLME+ and other projects](#), as well as through the [CLME+ Interim Coordination Mechanism \(ICM\)](#), especially in terms of management, access to and exchange of knowledge among ICM members and their constituent countries through e.g. the [CLME+ Hub](#), the collaborative [SAP Progress Tracking Tool](#), the [SOMEE](#) building blocks, and the [regional Research Agenda](#).

However, despite these advances, many projects and marine sectors still see data/knowledge generation and management as a “project” or “sector-specific product”. They fail to materialize the critically needed connection between their products and the incipient, native (i.e. regional), integrated marine data/information/knowledge management landscape, nor do they necessarily support its further development. As a consequence, highly valuable data and information does not become more widely available and may ultimately end up being lost, leading to loss of investments and a duplication of efforts.

Awareness among both State and non-State actors of the importance of the marine environment generally, the related work being undertaken, and the progress obtained by the myriad of projects and initiatives, remains limited with as a result that opportunities for synergistic, collaborative and/or remedial action fail to materialize.

The CLME+ initiative, in coordination with ICM members including UNEP CEP and the countries from the region, is therefore currently proposing the inclusion of a dedicated Project Component in the concept note for the forthcoming [UNDP/GEF PROCARIBE+ Project](#): “*Protecting and Restoring the Ocean’s Natural Capital, Building Resilience and Supporting Region-Wide Investments for Sustainable Blue Socio-Economic Development*”.

The proposed PROCARIBE+ Project will seek to strengthen and support cross-sectoral planning, management, monitoring and decision making processes and investments in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf LME, through a formal information and knowledge generation and management infrastructure, centered on the forthcoming [Ocean Governance Coordination Mechanism](#) (OCM) and co-owned by its membership (including the UNEP CEP/Cartagena Convention Secretariat), and supported by wider-ranging “marine” partnership.

To achieve this, PROCARIBE+ Component 4 has as one of its expected Outcomes:

Outcome 4.1: A well-articulated marine data, information and knowledge management infrastructure/network, (a) providing a science-policy interface; (b) supporting the development/updating, implementation and M&E of regional Action Programmes and Plans; (c) boosting and increasing the impacts of marine & coastal investments

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, were undertaken in a non-systematic/standardized way, and have

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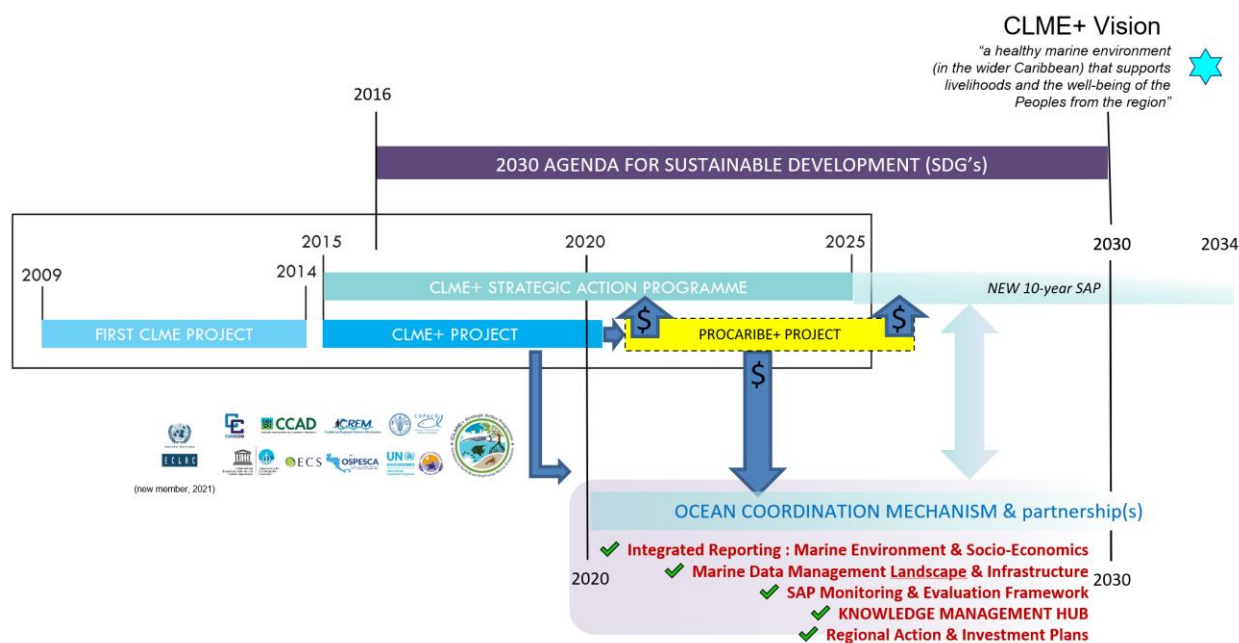
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therefore not been formally or sustainably embedded in regional mechanisms that seek to support a more holistic, long-term approach towards more effective, integrated ocean governance and management (ecosystem approach).



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. 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 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 are not linked together in a unified knowledge infrastructure and remain insufficiently used.

This complex situation was cited as an important root cause of the ongoing environmental degradation, acknowledged in the TDA's, and became particularly evident during the CLME+ Project's efforts to develop a first (partial) prototype version of a regional integrated SOMEE report, as well as the associated efforts to produce eg. the State of Habitats, State of Fisheries and State of LBS Pollution sub-reports ("SOMEE building-blocks").

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Outcome 4.1. will be achieved, in part, through the continued, collaborative development of the online [\(CLME+\) HUB](#) as a central, regional information and knowledge management portal co-managed by the OCM Secretariat and membership and supported by wider-ranging marine stakeholder partnerships. The Hub will facilitate access to knowledge, resources and tools of relevance to the region and its stakeholders, provided directly on-site as well as by serving as a single, convenient gateway which links up with other, well-established platforms and data and information sources (incl. global platforms, among which IW:LEARN and the LME Hub). Among its many features, the HUB will host progress tracking portals for the different regional ocean sustainability instrument and facilitate and foster collaboration by providing key information on the many regional projects and initiatives. The HUB will also host the online, dynamic version of the “SOME” *State of the Marine Environment and associated socio-Economics* regional reports (**Output 4.1.1**).

While central to its design, the aforementioned CLME+ HUB will constitute just one element of the **comprehensive marine data/information/knowledge infrastructure** 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.

For this reason, the PROCARIBE+ Project will assist the region in developing and putting into place, through the OCM and wider-ranging stakeholder partnerships, a solid regional marine data/information/knowledge infrastructure (MDI), capable of underpinning the regional and national-level ocean governance, management and decision-making processes.

To this effect and using the results from a baseline inventory initiated through the CLME+ Project, the PROCARIBE+ Project will develop and submit, for formal adoption by the OCM and its membership, a detailed “blueprint” for a “**Regional Marine Data Infrastructure**” (MDI). Through collaborative action among the Secretariat and Members of the OCM and of the marine partnerships, the MDI blueprint will seek to (a) sustainably harness and connect existing global, regional and national data/information/knowledge management efforts, while (b) articulating the means to put in place the key missing elements of such regional MDI.

To name just a few, in addition to the CLME+ HUB and its SAP Progress Tracking Portal, existing platforms whose integration in the MDI may be sought include: “Mapping Ocean Wealth” (TNC), the FAO Fisheries and Resources Monitoring System (FIRMS), the BIOPAMA Caribbean Gateway (IUCN), the CAMPAM/SPAW database, the UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre’s World Database on Protected Areas (WCMC-WDPA), the Marine Conservation Institute “Marine Protection Atlas”, Sea around Us, the IW:LEARN LME Hub, the Caribbean Marine Atlas, the NDC Knowledge Hub (SDG14 tracker) etc.

Similarly, the potential role of remote sensing data sources and products in strengthening and supporting ocean governance and management processes in the region will be explored, in collaboration with the European Space Agency (ESA) and others. (**Output 4.1.2**).

One of the important applications of Outputs 4.1.1. and 4.1.2 will be to enable data/information collection and reporting at the regional and national levels to support both (a) the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the current 10-year CLME+ SAP, as well as (b) the development of the new, 10-year iteration of the regional SAP (2025-20234, see Component 1).

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The development of the new regional, cross-sectoral SAP will be informed by the collaborative development under this PROCARIBE+ Project Component 4 of the **first-ever full-fledged regional integrated “SOME E” report**, facilitated by the OCM Secretariat. The State of the Convention Area Reports are considered, to this effect, important building blocks of the regional integrated SOME E. The development of the regional SOME E will be vertically linked with national-level SOME E reporting efforts which will be supported in selected countries through Output 2.1.2. As such, national and regional-level reporting and assessment efforts will become mutually supportive, in line with the concepts of EBM/EAF (**Output 4.1.3**).

Outcome 4.1 is thus strongly aligned with the [formally adopted functions of the forthcoming regional Ocean Coordination Mechanism \(OCM\)](#).

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