



Distr. LIMITED

UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/5
18 August 2023

Original: ENGLISH

Tenth Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife in the Wider Caribbean.

Virtual, 30th January – 1st February 2023

REPORT OF THE MEETING

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ACRONYMS

OFB	Agence française pour la biodiversité (<i>French Agency for Biodiversity</i>)
AMEP	Assessment and Management of Environmental Pollution
AWI	Animal Welfare Institute
CaMPAM	Caribbean Marine Protected Areas Managers Network and Forum
CARI'MAM	Caribbean Marine Mammals Preservation Network
CARIB-COAST	Caribbean Coastal Risks related to climate change for a monitoring and prevention network
CaribWEN	Caribbean Wildlife Enforcement Network
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEP	Caribbean Environment Programme
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
COP	Conference of Parties
DR	Dominican Republic
EBM	Ecosystem Based Management
EU	European Union
GCFI	Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute
GCRMN	Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IGM	Intergovernmental Meeting
IMO	International Maritime Organization
IOCARIBE	Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission's Sub-Commission for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions
INVMAR	Institute of Marine and Coastal Research
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
IWC	International Whaling Commission
LBS	Protocol Concerning Land-Based Sources of Pollution
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
MMAP	Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals in the Wider Caribbean Region
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPA	Marine Protected Area
NGO	Non-Government Organizations
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
OECS	Organization of Eastern Caribbean States
PA	Protected Area
PAME	Protected Areas Management Effectiveness
RAC	Regional Activity Centre
RAN	Regional Activity Network
RAMSAR	Convention on Wetlands of International Importance
SCTLD	Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease
SPAW	Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife in the Wider Caribbean Region
STAC	Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee
TOF	The Ocean Foundation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
US	US of America
WCR	Wider Caribbean Region

INTRODUCTION

1. The Conference of Plenipotentiaries on Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) in the Wider Caribbean Region (WCR) held in Kingston, 15 to 18 January 1990, adopted the SPAW Protocol to the Cartagena Convention, which entered into force on 18 June 2000. Article 20 of the SPAW Protocol established the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC). This Article indicated that each Party shall appoint a scientific expert appropriately qualified in the field covered by the Protocol as its representative on the Committee, who may be accompanied by other experts and advisors appointed by that Party. Article 20 also indicated that the Committee may also seek information from scientifically and technically qualified experts and organisations.
2. In light of the above, and in keeping with Decision No.1 of the First Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) (COP1) (Havana, Cuba, 24-25 September 2001) and Decisions of COP11 (virtual, 27 July 2021), this Meeting is being convened by the Secretariat to the Cartagena Convention in virtual format, 30 January – 1 February 2023.
3. The proposed objectives of the Tenth Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC10) to the SPAW Protocol were to:
 - i. Review the status of Activities of the SPAW Sub-programme for 2021-2022, including activities of the Regional Activity Centre for SPAW (SPAW-RAC) in Guadeloupe;
 - ii. Review the submissions for the protected areas proposed by Parties for listing under the SPAW Protocol and make recommendations to SPAW COP12;
 - iii. Review the species proposed by Contracting Parties for listing under the Annexes of the SPAW Protocol following the existing criteria and revised process proposed by SPAW COP10 and make recommendations to SPAW COP12.
 - iv. Review the reports for Exemptions under Article 11(2) of the SPAW Protocol submitted by Contracting Parties and make recommendations for adoption by SPAW COP12; and
 - v. Develop the 2023-2024 Work plan of the SPAW Sub-programme for subsequent approval by SPAW COP12 and the Twentieth Intergovernmental Meeting on the Action Plan of the Caribbean Environment Programme, and Seventeenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the WCR in October 2023, respectively.
4. The eighteen (18) Contracting Parties to the SPAW Protocol were invited to the Meeting to nominate their respective representatives to be part of the SPAW STAC10 in keeping with Article 20 of the Protocol. Other member Governments of the Caribbean Environment Programme (CEP), United Nations agencies and non-governmental and intergovernmental organisations were invited to participate as Observers. The provisional list of participants was prepared during the Meeting and presented in document UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.2.

AGENDA ITEM 1: OPENING OF THE MEETING

5. The Meeting was opened by the Secretariat, Ms Sarah Wollring, Associate Programme Officer on Monday, 30 January 2023, at 8:00 a.m. (UTC-5) in Kingston, Jamaica. It was held virtually via the Zoom platform.
6. Ms Wollring welcomed participants and acknowledged the donors, namely, the Global Environment Facility, the European Union and the Government of France who had seen the value in supporting the programme and its activities through projects such as those promoting Marine Protected Areas Conservation and emerging environmental issues.

7. Ms Wollring invited Mr Christopher Corbin, Coordinator of CEP and of the Secretariat to the Cartagena Convention to welcome attendees to the STAC meeting and deliver opening remarks.
8. Mr Corbin welcomed those in attendance and brought greetings on behalf of UNEP Headquarters, from the new head of the Ecosystems Integration branch, Mr Johan Robinson, who had taken over from Ms Kerstin Stendahl. He highlighted the significant work executed under SPAW over the last biennium by the Secretariat and the SPAW-RAC. Contracting Parties were also thanked for their contribution to the protocol as well as their patience.
9. Mr Corbin made a call to all Parties to provide guidance to the Secretariat during discussions on the key technical issues to address as well as the priorities for the Secretariat to focus on over the next biennium 2023-2024. He also acknowledged the significant support pledged through the Kingdom of the Netherlands (KNL) to the Conference of Parties (COP) as well for the presence and support of the SPAW Focal Point Mr Yoeeri de Vries.
10. Ms Wollring thanked Mr Corbin. A minute of silence was dedicated in memory of Ms Vivian Ramnarace, SPAW Focal Point for Belize who recently passed away. Ms Ramnarace, a marine scientist, was actively involved in the fisheries sector in Belize for 15 years and was passionate about marine conservation and contributing to the work of the SPAW Protocol.
11. Ms Wollring reminded participants of the objectives of the Meeting according to the Agenda Items outlined.

AGENDA ITEM 2: ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

2.1 Rules of Procedure

12. The Meeting agreed to apply *mutatis mutandis* the Rules of Procedure for the Meetings of the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the WCR (Cartagena Convention). Rule 26 pertaining to quorum. (See Reference Document UNEP, 2012).
13. The Contracting Parties were asked to indicate their presence. Thirteen (13) Contracting Parties indicated their presence during the agenda item of the meeting (See Annex IV for list of participants).

2.2. Election of Officers

14. The Secretariat received nominations from the representatives of Contracting Parties for the role of President, 1st and 2nd Vice-President and Rapporteur for the Meeting as follows:

President:	Yoeeri de Vries (The Kingdom of the Netherlands)
1 st Vice-President:	Ana María González - Delgadillo (Colombia)
2 nd Vice-President :	Jean Vermot, (France)
Rapporteur :	Adrian Bellamy (Barbados)

15. The Secretariat asked the Contracting Parties if there were any objections to the nominations for the Bureau. There were no objections, the Bureau was endorsed by acclamation.
16. The election of the Bureau was seconded by Honduras and Panama.

2.3 Organization of Work

17. English, French and Spanish were the working languages of the Meeting and simultaneous interpretation was provided using the Zoom platform for the meeting. The Working Documents were made available in all the working languages. The Provisional List of Documents of the Meeting was presented in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.1.
18. The Secretariat proposed convening the Meeting in plenary sessions, with the assistance of breakout groups, if necessary, which may be established by the Chairperson. Participants were reminded that, given the length of the Meeting, breaking into working groups was not feasible. Participants were therefore expected to be prepared, having reviewed all working documents as appropriate, to provide concrete inputs at the time of discussion.

AGENDA ITEM 3: ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

19. The Meeting was invited to adopt the Provisional Agenda of the Meeting, prepared by the Secretariat based on inputs received from the Contracting Parties during preparations for the Meeting, on relevant recommendations and decisions from previous STAC and COP Meetings of the SPAW Protocol, as well as on emerging issues of relevance to the marine biodiversity of the Wider Caribbean. The Provisional Agenda proposed by the Secretariat was presented in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/1.
20. The Head of Delegation of the United States (US), Ms Samantha Dowdell, asked if the agenda could be adopted as the US had noted that the meeting quorum was not achieved.
21. The Secretariat advised that the agenda could be provisionally adopted, to allow for other countries to join the meeting, until quorum is achieved. The Secretariat will continue to update the meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 4: STATUS OF ACTIVITIES OF THE SPAW SUB-PROGRAMME FOR 2021-2022 INCLUDING THE ACTIVITIES OF THE REGIONAL ACTIVITY CENTRE FOR SPAW (SPAW-RAC) IN GUADELOUPE

22. The President invited Ms Sarah Wollring of the Secretariat to present the “Draft Status of Activities of the SPAW Sub-programme for 2021-2022” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.5) including status of STAC9 Recommendations and the Eleventh Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP11) to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) in the WCR.
23. In her introduction, Ms Wollring mentioned that the Work plan and Budget of the SPAW Programme for 2021-2022 was approved by COP11 to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) in the WCR as well as the 19th Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM) on the Action Plan for the Caribbean Environment Programme. Both held virtually in July 2021.
24. Ms Wollring provided a brief overview of the objectives of the SPAW Programme and gave an update on the status of the five areas of sub-programmes and activities:
 - i. Programme Coordination
 - ii. Strengthening of Protected Areas in the WCR
 - iii. Development of Guidelines for Protected Areas and Species Management
 - iv. Conservation of Threatened and Endangered Species
 - v. Conservation and Sustainable Use of Coastal and Marine Ecosystems
25. The objectives of *Programme Coordination* were outlined as well as the major outputs. A major output

achieved was the ratification of the SPAW Protocol by Nicaragua. Two new projects were also approved in the biennium: GEF PROCARIBE+ and Gulf of Mexico Large Marine Ecosystem (GoM LME) project.

26. The objectives of *Strengthening of Protected Areas in the WCR* were outlined as well as the major outputs. The major outputs achieved included the review of CaMPAM and support to national MPA initiatives and MPA capacity building initiatives through an agreement with the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI) under the ACP MEA III Project.
27. Ms Wollring highlighted the STAC9 recommendation 19 which requested the development of Options Papers based on a review of recommendations in the CaMPAM and the Connectivity Papers. These were finalised and included as information documents.
28. The objectives of *Development of Guidelines for Protected Areas and Species Management* were outlined as well as the major outputs. The major outputs achieved included the revision and finalisation of the Terms of Reference for SPAW STAC Ad Hoc working groups and an updated list of protected areas under the SPAW Protocol. The outputs were primarily undertaken by the SPAW-RAC.
29. The objectives of the *Conservation of Threatened and Endangered Species* were outlined as well as the major outputs. Major outputs achieved included a focus on the updated Marine Mammal Action Plan, knowledge products developed on the Sargassum Influx, links with the pollution sub-programme and the development of a draft work plan with the International Whaling Commission (IWC).
30. The objectives of the *Conservation and Sustainable Use of Coastal and Marine Ecosystems* were outlined as well as the major outputs. Major outputs achieved included the development of reports, the Regional Mangrove Restoration Manual, the Coral Reef Restoration Guidelines for Tourism Sector and the State of Nearshore Marine Habitats and associated summaries for different stakeholders. The Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD) White Paper was also launched in partnership with GCFI and collaboration with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) continued.
31. A brief overview of the status of SPAW decisions was also provided.
32. The President thanked Ms Wollring for her presentation and invited Parties to provide comments on the presentation.
33. The Head of delegation of the US thanked the Secretariat and SPAW-RAC for organizing this meeting, including preparation of the meeting documents. Planning a meeting of this size was an immense task, and they thanked the Secretariat for their tireless efforts.
34. The US provided a few comments on the collective approach to this meeting. Whilst acknowledging the wealth of documents, they however noted with concern that a majority of the documents were first posted on December 29, 2022, which fell short of the 42-day deadline articulated in the Convention's Rules of Procedure.
35. They understood that the time of year likely made finalization of meeting documents particularly challenging, as it also complicated their review and preparations. For this meeting, rather than object to all documents that were posted late, they would be circumspect in their approach. They would be very cautious about how documents were referenced in the recommendations of this meeting.
36. -The US expressed their deepest appreciation to the Secretariat and SPAW-RAC for the comprehensive overview of the status of activities and for all of their efforts over the last biennium, and to the

Government of France for its continued support to the SPAW-RAC. They were amazed at the depth and breadth of work that has been achieved.

37. Collectively there was significant progress made in many areas, there were other areas that still lacked attention and needed to be addressed. Moving forward, the US encouraged all Contracting Parties to think about what was needed to effectively implement the SPAW Protocol and to set realistic expectations based on what can be achieved over the next biennium.
38. They suggested that a clear prioritization of activities that directly support implementation of obligations under the Convention and Protocol was critically important, and they were concerned that a proliferation of projects and tasks on other issues would detract attention and limited resources from essential fundamental work under SPAW. They anticipated further discussion on these suggestions during the presentation on the work plan and budget for the next biennium under agenda item 9.
39. The President thanked the US for their comments.
40. The Head of Delegation of Colombia, Ms Ana María González - Delgado, congratulated the KNL, France and Barbados for their nomination to the SPAW Bureau. Colombia expressed thanks for the proposal for the first Vice-Presidency for the meeting and to the past SPAW Programme Officer, Ileana Lopez, for her contribution to SPAW.
41. Colombia acknowledged the work of the Programme Associate and SPAW Programme Assistant for their work during the interim and thanked the Secretariat for convening the meeting. Colombia looked forward to productive decisions from the proposals.
42. The President thanked Colombia for their comments and invited the Secretariat to respond to the comments of the US.
43. The Secretariat thanked the Heads of Delegation of the US and Colombia for their interventions and expressed appreciation to the Contracting Parties for their flexibility and patience as the Secretariat continued to work towards improved compliance with the Rules of Procedure for meetings. It was important for delegates to receive documents in advance allowing for adequate time for review at the national level.
44. The President thanked the Secretariat for their comments and requested the Secretariat check if additional Contracting Parties had joined the meeting, which the Secretariat confirmed to do.
45. Ms Wollring introduced Ms Martha Prada, the Consultant that developed the two Options Papers to give a brief presentation on CAMPAM and the development of a functional ecological network of SPAW listed sites. The papers were developed in response to a recommendation of STAC9 as an output of the EU-funded ACP MEA III Project.
46. Ms Prada thanked the Secretariat for the opportunity and outlined the consultation process. One to three options were presented for each recommendation for implementation in the short- (2 years), medium- (5 years) and long-term (10 years).
47. The Option Paper for Connectivity proposed four main recommendations from the initial assessment of the five. The recommendations focused on further work with the listed MPAs and included integrating the surrounding MPAs. Ms Prada also summarised the findings of the Option Paper.
48. Ms Wollring outlined a general consideration for Contracting Parties on options to choose from either

endorsing or rejecting the creation of an ecological network of protected areas and requested their review and guidance on a decision.

49. Ms Prada provided a brief background on CAMPAM which was created in 1997 by the Secretariat to strengthen capacities of Caribbean MPAs. The Option Paper for CAMPAM proposed three main recommendations from the initial assessment of seventeen. The recommendations focused on improving the governance structure and financial sustainability. Ms Prada also summarised the findings of the Option Paper.
50. Ms Wollring invited Ms Geraldine Conruyt, Deputy Director of the SPAW-RAC to present one of the tasks that was assigned by the Protected Areas working group (PA working group) to review the recommendations of the Options Papers.
51. Ms Conruyt advised that the PA working group had emphasized the importance of the actions that could be carried out in a realistic way as well as the importance of having a common vision. The working group had not provided their opinion on the Connectivity Options Paper and suggested that the process of consultation be extended to allow for additional partners to provide their input.
52. Ms Wollring thanked the SPAW-RAC for their contribution to the development of the Options Papers. She presented a decision tree including options on the future governance of CaMPAM for general consideration by the Contracting Parties and requested their guidance on the decision.
53. The President invited Contracting Parties and observers to provide their questions and comments.
54. The Head of Delegation of the US thanked the Secretariat and Ms Prada for the presentations and welcomed the reports exploring the feasibility of implementing recommendations regarding CaMPAM and protected area connectivity and thanked Ms Prada for her work. She synthesized a wealth of information in a very coherent manner and presented a clear set of recommendations to consider.
55. The US recognized that support specific to protected areas listed under the SPAW Protocol was currently lacking and saw value in considering the creation of a network to identify and address the needs of protected area managers. The US was interested in exploring the possible creation of such a network, coordinated by the Secretariat or SPAW-RAC, and contingent on available resources.
56. Such a network, if created, could work with relevant partners in the region with experience assessing and addressing the needs of protected area practitioners, such as MPACConnect. It may also be able to facilitate implementation of the recommendations related to enhancing connectivity among protected areas via improved coordination, as appropriate.
57. The US proposed the following recommendation to COP12: “The Secretariat and SPAW-RAC, as appropriate, work with Contracting Parties, including managers of SPAW-listed protected areas, and other relevant partners, as appropriate, to develop a proposal for the creation of a network for SPAW-listed protected areas coordinated by the Secretariat or SPAW-RAC with the purpose of understanding and addressing the needs of protected area managers to improve protected area effectiveness. The proposal should include a suggested strategic vision, work plan, institutional structure, and budget and should be presented to STAC11 and COP13 for consideration.”
58. The President thanked the US for their intervention and proposed recommendation and requested that the Secretariat provide a response.
59. The Secretariat expressed gratitude to the US for their recommendation and emphasized the need to

continue supporting Contracting Parties in the development and implementation of Marine Protected Areas. They also acknowledged the success of the CAMPAM Network over the last two decades in areas such as training and capacity building.

60. The Secretariat welcomed recommendations that would allow them to continue advancing their work through the SPAW Protocol and sought feedback from Parties on ongoing work related to MPAs and ecological connectivity. The Secretariat mentioned ongoing work with other partners in the region and requested guidance from Parties on potential areas of focus for the upcoming biennium to maintain coordination and synergies.
61. The observer of Foundation for Development Planning Inc. (FDPI), Lloyd Gardner, thanked the Secretariat for the opportunity to participate in the meeting. He requested that Parties provide a clear statement on the purpose of a network of experts in order to determine future options.
62. The Secretariat agreed with the intervention of the observer from FDPI and stated that the objectives and mandate of the SPAW Protocol and the importance of PA and PA management were clear. They recognized the importance of considering emerging issues and opportunities for collaboration and acknowledged the importance of feedback from Parties on critical focus areas.
63. They also emphasized the importance of strengthening relationships with existing networks that complemented the work of the SPAW protocol and sub-programme, while remaining guided by the primary focus of Contracting Parties in advancing the work over the biennium.
64. The Head of Delegation of France, Jean Vermot, thanked the Secretariat, SPAW Contracting Parties and the Consultant that contributed to the work. The recommendation of the US was noted and France added that it would help to understand the actual position and identify new implications. They requested the inclusion of additional sites not included in CAMPAM.
65. France requested that the recommendation also include the need to work to support the creation of additional marine protected areas in the perspective of the 30/30 objective for countries whose focal points so request and have already pre-identified marine protected areas that meet the criteria identified in the protocol in order to be labelled as SPAW-listed.
66. The Head of Delegation of Colombia, Ana Maria Gonzalez-Delgadillo, agreed with the suggested recommendation by the US and stated that it was important to continue to work on the topic of strengthening networks and to seek the best way forward to evaluate the connectivity of current protected areas.
67. The Head of delegation of the US responded to comments made on Protected Areas based on their proposed recommendation.
68. Creating a network of SPAW-listed protected areas could provide an incentive for Contracting Parties and PA Managers to consider listing protected areas under the SPAW Protocol. The incentive to list the protected areas would encourage the protected areas to meet the criteria to be listed under the SPAW Protocol and also encourage the creation of new protected areas.
69. It was important that any new network for SPAW-listed protected areas draw upon existing resources and networks. There was a lot of work ongoing in the region, and it was important to build upon what had already been done and leverage existing opportunities. This was particularly true to avoid overtaxing protected areas managers.

70. The US felt that such a network could help to consolidate existing resources and information and be provided to SPAW-listed protected areas.
71. The President thanked the Meeting for their interventions and invited Ms Lucile Rossin, Director of SPAW-RAC, to present their report and update on major activities.
72. Ms Rossin thanked all those who were present and thanked the Secretariat for their support.
73. A brief overview was provided of the areas SPAW-RAC worked on as well as its organizational structure. The current staff complement was 3 (director, deputy director and executive assistant), supported by the Government of France, and 3 project officers supported through project funding. The objectives under each area were the same as outlined by the Secretariat.
74. Regarding *Programme Coordination*, the major outputs included leading the working groups, work with GCRMN- Caribbean, call for proposals, as well as evaluating the potential costs, benefits and operational framework of a Marine Mammal RAN, the revision of the marine mammals action plan. Support was also provided to regional programmes such as CARI'MAM, CARIB-COAST and CAMAC.
75. Regarding *Guidelines*, the SPAW-RAC presented the results of a questionnaire to the working group experts. The survey showed that overall, the experts were satisfied however there were certain areas identified for improvement e.g. low participation of certain countries. The SPAW RAC presents proposals to improve the functioning of the working groups.
76. Regarding *Protected Areas*, the major outputs were already mentioned briefly, however the SPAW-RAC wanted to highlight the issue of the PA listing interface which was not being utilised and would be changed to a more effective system.
77. Regarding *Coastal and Marine Ecosystems*, the focus was on call for proposals for ecosystem restoration, the CARIB-COAST project and improving GCRMN-Caribbean.
78. The SPAW-RAC provided a brief overview of their Strategic Plan for 2023-2028. Two key objectives were highlighted: (i) improved quality of service and (ii) visibility of the SPAW Protocol. The action plan which showed the different strategies was presented.
79. A summary of the expenses and revenues for 2021 and 2022 and the 2023-2024 forecast was presented.
80. The President thanked the SPAW-RAC for their presentation and invited Contracting Parties to provide comments. The President also confirmed the presence of additional Parties for the quorum of the meeting.
81. The Head of Delegation of Colombia thanked the Government of France for their constant support to SPAW-RAC and the SPAW-RAC for their continued work. Gratitude was extended to Ms Sandrine Pivard, the past Director of SPAW-RAC, for her contribution to the success of the organization.
82. They reiterated that the work of the SPAW-RAC would continue to be communicated to national Focal Points. The SPAW-RAC was also thanked for the action plan and it was requested that Colombia be included in similar reflections as the rest of the Caribbean.
83. The delegate of the KNL supported the proposition of the US, France and Colombia and suggested to consider using the current existing infrastructure framework, strengthen it and not create a new entity.

84. The Head of Delegation of the US thanked the SPAW-RAC for the presentation of a six-year strategic plan. She thanked Ms Pivard for her contribution to SPAW-RAC and welcomed Ms Rossin as the new Director of SPAW-RAC. The US expressed that they looked forward to working with her. They added that such a plan was a very valuable resource, both in terms of informing Contracting Parties of the SPAW-RAC's general direction for the next six years and to serve as a framework for SPAW-RAC work plans and budgets during this period.
85. The US identified a number of very important elements in the strategic plan, such as strengthening coordination with other RACs and a few areas that needed adjustment before they would recommend approval.
86. For instance, The US would not support the SPAW-RAC encouraging Contracting Parties to list new species under the Protocol and did not believe that the number of new species listed per biennium was an appropriate performance indicator. Rather, they believed the focus should be on supporting Contracting Parties in implementing their obligations for existing species listings under the Protocol.
87. The US also identified a number of instances that used confusing terminology, such as "propose waiver requests." It was unclear what this referred to, but they imagined it was probably referring to reporting exemptions. The same section also referred to exemption requests.
88. SPAW Contracting Parties did not request exemptions or waivers. They reported exemptions. The Strategic Plan should properly refer to the Protocol's requirements. Further, the US believed the strategic plan should set a higher goal than one exemption report per biennium.
89. Each Contracting Party was required to report its exemptions, and a set of recommendations from the Exemptions working group to improve compliance with this requirement is being presented to STAC10 for consideration. The strategic plan should set performance goals and objectives commensurate with this requirement and the recommendations from the Exemptions working group.
90. Along these lines and recognizing they had already heard from the KNL on adjustments they recommended for the strategic plan, the US proposed that the STAC recommend that Contracting Parties submit comments to the SPAW-RAC by a specific deadline so the strategic plan may be adjusted accordingly before being presented to the COP for approval.
91. The US proposed the following recommendation: *(Review of Documents before the COP) Contracting Parties provide comments on the "SPAW Regional Activity Centre Strategic Plan 2023-2028" (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.7) prior to submission to SPAW COP12 for approval.*
92. The President thanked the US and advised that with regards to the proposed recommendations, the Bureau would be requested to work on the wording and invited any additional Contracting Parties who wished to join the drafting group to advise the Secretariat.
93. The Secretariat acknowledged the significant work of the outgoing Director of SPAW-RAC, Sandrine Pivard, for her significant support and also welcomed Lucile Rossin, the new Director as well as the new colleagues that had recently joined SPAW-RAC.
94. With regard to the SPAW-RAC Strategic Plan, similar strategies were developed by other RACs (LBS and Oil Spills), the Secretariat congratulated the SPAW-RAC for developing the medium-term strategy.
95. The Secretariat agreed with the recommendation provided by the US as it provided the Parties with the

opportunity to provide feedback. They advised the meeting that the medium-term strategy of the Secretariat was being updated and would be presented at the next COP.

96. The President thanked the Secretariat for their intervention and invited observer parties to provide comments.
97. The observer of Animal Welfare Institute (AWI), Susan Millward, was pleased to present on behalf of partner organisations and individuals who worked on Caribbean natural resource issues and the initiative to establish a Consortium in support of the SPAW sub-programme of the Cartagena Convention.
98. They were scientists, lawyers, and policy experts who were joining together in support of the Cartagena Convention and the SPAW Protocol. They brought experience and expertise in issues relevant to the Protocol and its member countries. The consortium was intended to add value to the implementation of the SPAW sub-programme functioning as a coordinated regional platform and enhance synergies among its members from civil society to support capacity building.
99. The Consortium concept had its own governance structure and while supporting the implementation of the Cartagena Convention, it was independent from its institutional framework, did not duplicate work or compete with the roles or mandates of organizations designated as Regional Activity Centres, or which are part of the Regional Activity Networks under the Cartagena Convention.
100. AWI believed that only by working together, sharing resources and expertise can countries fulfil their obligations under the Protocol. AWI would welcome feedback and recognition of parties and also invite potential interested organisations which may want to join this initiative.
101. They offered to provide the Consortium concept paper as a Conference Room Paper for the further review by parties, available in English, Spanish and French.
102. A positive response by SPAW parties would enhance resources, expertise and experience without costs to help support capacity building and the successful promulgation of the Protocol's mandate throughout the region.
103. The President thanked the observer from AWI for her intervention and advised Contracting Parties that the document could be found on the Secretariat's website and in the meeting chat.
104. The Secretariat thanked the coalition for their intervention and advised the Meeting that the documents were available in all three languages as a Conference Room paper on the STAC10 webpage as well as included in the meeting chat. Contracting Parties were encouraged to review the documents and propose a recommendation which STAC10 may wish to take forward.
105. The coalition consisted of members that had a long historical and fruitful collaboration with the work of the Secretariat. The Secretariat welcomed coordinated support. The SPAW-RAC was seen as playing a critical role in ensuring that this supported Contracting Parties in meeting the objectives under the convention.
106. *At this point in the agenda, the Meeting reverted to discussions under Agenda Item 5 on Protected Areas.*
107. *Following discussions on Agenda Item 5, the Meeting reverted to finalise discussions under Agenda Item 4 on CAMAC and the Marine Mammal RAN which were inadvertently skipped.*

108. The Head of Delegation of France supported the inclusion of the SPAW sub-programme in the CAMAC project. The project provided a lot of good input to it and was an efficient way to complete SPAW objectives and common goals. France did not have a concrete recommendation.
109. The Head of Delegation of the US thanked the SPAW-RAC for providing further information on CAMAC and noted the report. The report stated that the CAMAC project was in response to a need which was clearly identified in several SPAW recommendation documents drafted in recent years, but it did not identify such specific recommendations or documents. The US sought clarification from the SPAW-RAC regarding to which SPAW recommendations, decisions, and/or documents this project responds.
110. The President thanked the US and invited the SPAW-RAC to respond.
111. The SPAW-RAC responded that the project was developed in response to a STAC9 recommendation, and a document could be shared to advise on the specific recommendation the project referred to. SPAW-RAC thought it was important to advance on marine mammal conservation and to work in close collaboration with the fishing industry. Contracting Parties were invited to work with the SPAW-RAC on the project.
112. The Head of Delegation of Colombia thanked SPAW-RAC on the CAMAC presentation and wished them success on the results of the project. The delegate suggested that the lessons learnt be used as an example for replication in other Spanish-speaking countries.
113. The Head of Delegation of France stated it was important to protect biodiversity and proposed a recommendation on the CAMAC project. The Contracting Parties support the SPAW-RAC in the CAMAC project which promotes the implementation of the SPAW sub-programme and the achievement of the SPAW objective. France supported this drafting proposal by the Bureau and wishes to join it.
114. The President invited the delegates to comment on the information paper, *Potential costs, benefits, and operational framework of a Marine Mammal Regional Activity Network (RAN)* (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.32). He reminded Contracting Parties that this was a suggestion in the previous biennium from the KNL.
115. The Head of Delegation of the US welcomed the report on the potential costs, benefits, and operational framework for the establishment of a Marine Mammal Regional Activity Network (RAN) and thanked those engaged in this effort for their consideration of this complex issue. Given the process to update the Marine Mammal Action Plan, discussions of establishing a RAN are particularly timely. Coordinated action to conserve and manage marine mammals in the WCR is needed now more than ever given the myriad of threats facing marine mammals. A network could support such coordination.
116. In the US' opinion, the last Marine Mammal Action Plan languished due to a failure to fully implement its recommendations as discussed in the 2020 Scientific and Technical Analysis of the Action Plan presented in STAC9 document INF 29 Addendum 1 (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.29 Add.1). For this reason, the US was interested in considering how a Marine Mammal RAN could support the implementation of the Marine Mammal Action Plan. They were also interested in exploring the possibility of establishing such a RAN as a new independent organization.
117. However, they believed that some legal and institutional questions require additional consideration. For example: Can SPAW take a decision to set up a new "independent organization"? If so, what would be

the process for doing so?

118. The proposed RAN architecture in the report suggested that the organization should be “specifically and only dedicated to the RAN.” The US asked, ‘How could SPAW guarantee this dedication if the RAN is independent of SPAW?’. The proposed RAN architecture also envisions that the work plan and budget would be “validated” by the SPAW STAC and COP and integrated into the SPAW Work plan and Budget. The US asked, ‘How could SPAW “approve” or “validate” the Work plan and Budget of an independent organization?’.
119. And finally, the proposed RAN architecture suggested that the RAN be guided by a steering committee and that members of the RAN must meet the criteria outlined in the 2008 UNEP CEP Guidelines for RACs and RANs. The US asked, ‘How could SPAW dictate the governance structure and membership of an independent organization?’.
120. As could be seen, these were rather complex legal and institutional questions about establishing and governing a RAN, but addressing them was essential to ensuring that, if SPAW was to establish a Marine Mammal RAN, it should be done correctly.
121. Along these lines, the US proposed that the SPAW STAC make the following recommendation to the COP: The Secretariat work with Contracting Parties, with input from the SPAW-RAC as appropriate, to further elaborate on the legal and institutional mechanisms that would be required to establish a potential Marine Mammal RAN, taking into consideration the various options outlined in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.32, including the proposed RAN architecture described in section 3.2. The resulting report should be presented to STAC11 and COP13 for consideration and should include a review of the legal and institutional considerations related to a potential RAN’s governance structure.
122. *France proposed a slighted amended version of the recommendation in the chat:* The Secretariat and/or SPAW-RAC work with the Contracting Parties to propose the legal and institutional mechanisms that would be necessary to establish a marine mammal RAN, taking into consideration the various options described in document UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.32, including the proposed architecture of the RAN described in section 3.2, as well as a proposed strategic plan, programme of work, and timetable of action. The resulting report should be submitted within one year for consideration and should include a review of the legal and institutional considerations related to the governance structure of a RAN. This consultation will be done by the secretariat to the contracting parties through a meeting and a written consultation that will allow for a formal approval.
123. The Head of Delegation of Colombia thanked the US for their points on governance and reminded the meeting that Colombia remained active regarding the new governance system in the WCR and made reference to the PROCARIBE+ project which was scheduled to begin soon.
124. The Head of Delegation of France thanked the US for the proposed recommendations and stated that the creation of a new RAN was not an easy task and proposed three possible strategies.
125. The delegate of Panama supported the recommendation of the US and France and expressed that the issue of marine mammals was relevant to their country and the WCR.
126. The delegate of the KNL stated they supported that SPAW Secretariat and SPAW-RAC continue to work on an operational framework for a marine mammal RAN. They suggested that organizations such as WIDECAS could be consulted on how to set up such a network.

127. The observer of Lightkeepers Foundation, Courtney Vail, thanked the ongoing collaboration with members of the Bureau, Parties and observers and welcomed Ms Lucile Rossin as the new Director of the SPAW-RAC. She also thanked the multi-party working group for their hard work in outlining the potential costs and benefits of a marine mammal RAN.
128. Having been involved in the working group that drafted the original MMAP in 2005 and adopted in 2008, as co-author of the recent Scientific and Technical analysis looking at the status of implementation of the MMAP, and also part of the Marine Mammal experts working group that worked to update the MMAP, Lightkeepers Foundation believed the RAN is essential and supported the conclusion and recommendation of the analysis that proposes that the MM RAN be housed with a Party and/or be coordinated by a separate entity dedicated solely to the functioning of the Marine Mammal RAN.
129. Lightkeepers Foundation also supported and welcomed the recommendation that the RAN be governed by a steering committee, with country coordinators, and an advisory board that will build upon the existing marine mammal experts' group within the SPAW species working group. They recommended that the RAN also integrates individuals and organizations from the existing Cari'Mam network who continue to collaborate on regional marine mammal issues through informal Whatsapp groups and subgroups coordinated by the RAC.
130. They supported projects and approaches spearheaded by the RAC, including Cari'Mam and CAMAC that work to create networks around marine mammals and their integration into existing national and regional governance mechanisms, including MPA or fisheries management plans.
131. Lightkeepers Foundation welcomed the acknowledgement of the importance of collaboration with civil society and other stakeholders within governance structures that will require and benefit from transboundary collaboration.
132. Finally, they believed that the governance concerns of the US could be addressed in a fully articulated MOU between the independent entity and the SPAW Secretariat or SPAW-RAC.
133. The observer of World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Monique van de Water, expressed that a RAN was important and could build on other existing organizations. The example of WIDECAS could be used as a good example on how to set up the RAN and still be connected to SPAW. The governance structure should not be a reason to postpone it for another two years. They urged parties to find solutions to build a network which included other organizations and make a recommendation to the COP to begin working on establishing a RAN for marine mammals.
134. The President thanked the observers for their interventions and noted the mention of WIDECAS in two interventions.
135. The Secretariat presented two information documents relevant to the discussions on RACs and RANs (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.39 and UNEP CEP, 2022, Review of Operations, Functioning, and Financing of RACs and RANs of the Cartagena Convention), and reminded delegates of the specific request for a detailed analysis of RACs and RANs in support of the work of the Convention and its Protocols during the last Cartagena Convention COP.
136. The Secretariat reviewed and analyzed the recommendations of the consultant's comprehensive report on the governance structure of RACs and RANs and highlighted a few recommendations that were relevant to discussions on the proposed RAN.

137. They recognized the need to update the current guidelines for the operation of RACs and RANs to provide more effective guidance for their further development within the framework of the Convention and envisioned a greater leadership role for RACs in supporting the technical work and sub-programmes of the Secretariat. The SPAW draft work plan showed an effort to substantially integrate the work of the SPAW-RAC through the projects that they would be engaged in.
138. The Secretariat acknowledged the intervention of the delegate from Colombia that made specific reference to the PROCARIBE+ project as it proposed significant coordination for governance within the region. The Secretariat and by extension its networks would have some role to play in that process.
139. The observer of Humane Society International (HSI), Ronald Orenstein, congratulated all for their work on SPAW. It had been a while since HSI had participated in a SPAW meeting. He reiterated the comments made by other organizations regarding the importance of establishing the marine mammal RAN.
140. Since the original RAN was developed there was a biological development of Rice's Whale, which was endemic to the WCR and one of the rarest in the world in terms of Great Whales and was affected by issues being discussed as it related to marine mammal hunting. This raised the urgency in the establishment of such a network and putting it into practice in the best possible way.
141. The Head of Delegation of France requested a response to his intervention mentioned earlier. Three suggestions were made, one would be to wait two more years, the other to look closely at the report which was a good report. Many experts put a lot of effort into the report to come up with hypotheses on the marine mammal RAN and advised that it was not created from scratch.
142. France proposed that a working group be convened with the US and others. They proposed one year would be given to complete the work in order to review the institutional framework and have a timetable. Following that the Secretariat write to the Contracting Parties to find out if they agree to the conclusion.
143. The President invited the delegates to review the document (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.39) mentioned by the Secretariat and asked delegates if they had any comments, in addition to any comments on the establishment of a marine mammal RAN (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.32).
144. The Head of Delegation of the US expressed appreciation for the Secretariat highlighting the review. The US considered the recommendations provided as well as the Secretariat's overview of actions and progress in the work plan.
145. They looked forward to the Secretariat's overview of actions and progress in the work plan as well as subsequent discussion at the COP. The US requested a point of clarification on whether the Secretariat required substantive comments on the report during the meeting or if they could be open to more in-depth discussion during the upcoming IGM and COPs.
146. The Secretariat responded that more detailed discussions would take place during the Protocol and Convention COPs. They thought it would be useful to present to the STAC to obtain feedback on the usefulness or importance of reviewing the RAC/RAN guidelines or governance structure as new RANs and cooperative arrangements with partners were being developed.
147. The Secretariat welcomed any recommendations that referred to activities or additional work needed leading up to the next COP, during the intersessional period and to the subsequent STACs and COPs as well as timeframes for the Secretariat to respond to the requirements and requests of the Contracting

Parties. This was important for planning and prioritizing the work over the next biennium.

148. The President requested the Secretariat to provide a summary of the recommendations presented and the way forward.
149. The Secretariat announced that the meeting quorum was met and apologized for any connectivity issues. Delegates were advised to inform the Secretariat if they had issues connecting to the meeting.
150. With regards to the recommendations, the Secretariat was able to extract elements of recommendations brought forward and proposed that the Bureau and other delegates that expressed interest could work on the fine tuning.

AGENDA ITEM 5: REPORT OF THE PROTECTED AREAS WORKING GROUP (INCLUDING THE REVIEW OF THE PROTOCOL)

151. The President invited SPAW-RAC, as Chair of the Protected Areas working group on the assessment of the protected areas proposed for listing, to report on the tasks assigned during SPAW STAC9 held virtually, 17-19 March and 14-15 April 2021 and detailed in the updated terms of reference (UNEP(DEPI)CAR WG.42/INF.12/Rev.1) as per information contained in document UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.12.
152. The Deputy Director of SPAW-RAC, Ms Conruyt presented the report of the Protected Areas working group. Ms Conruyt outlined the requirements, role and functioning of the working groups in general which was included in the updated terms of reference defined by the Contracting Parties and approved in January 2022. The tasks defined by STAC 9 were also outlined as presented in the report.
153. The STAC appointed the Chair of each working group for a two-year term. Over the previous biennium 2021/2022, the SPAW-RAC chaired all the working groups and they thanked all working group experts for their involvement and availability. The functioning of the working group for each task was provided.
154. Included in the tasks was the review of the proposal of the Government of Aruba for the inclusion of Parke Marino Aruba in the SPAW listing sites which was submitted to the SPAW Secretariat for review on the 31 January, 2021.
155. The experts indicated that there was still missing information and elements required to meet all the criteria for inclusion in the SPAW protocol and outlined these elements.
156. In conclusion: The experts recommended that the current application be considered premature due to the missing elements and invited Aruba to strengthen the proposal for a new submission once the identified deficiencies were addressed. The experts recommended that the resubmission include a validated management plan and a performance evaluation report.
157. The experts were ready to provide technical support to Aruba with suggestions to improve the proposal for future submission.
158. The proposal of France for the inclusion of the Marine Natural Park of Martinique (MMNP) in the SPAW classified sites was submitted to the SPAW-RAC on July 29, 2022. The process to evaluate the proposal was provided as stated in the report.
159. The experts recognized the great interest of the nomination of the Marine Natural Park of Martinique

and the quality of the file and confirmed that the information presented in the nomination supported the inscription of the MMNP under the SPAW Protocol.

160. The experts believed that the ecological aspects (rarity, naturalness, diversity, connectivity and resilience) of the case should be developed. They also suggested better clarifying the alignment between the objectives of the MMNP and the conservation objectives of the nature reserves, the protection of specific habitats and vulnerable species as well as the reduction of threats and the resilience of ecological processes.
161. In conclusion: The experts recommended to fully support the French proposal to include the Martinique Marine Natural Park as a SPAW site.
162. In October 2022, a virtual kick-off meeting with the PA working group experts was organized by SPAW-RAC to launch Task 3, revision of the procedure allowing Contracting Parties to nominate a new protected area to be listed as SPAW. A first collective work had been initiated but remained unfinished and should be continued during the next biennium.
163. During the meeting, all experts agreed that the current application format was too complicated and suggested that some of the criteria be revised to simplify the process. All experts agreed that the consolidation of the SPAW network and the revision of the enrolment process were two related elements according to Article 7 of the SPAW protocol. Working on this topic will be a first step to make the enrolment process more comprehensive.
164. It remained important to define what was expected of the SPAW network in order to define a more appropriate nomination and evaluation procedure.
165. Task 2 was conducted by a Martha Prada consultant from the SPAW Secretariat who was supported by the SPAW-RAC and the experts of the PA working group. Two option papers were previously presented.
166. At the end of the biennial and following the working groups, the SPAW-RAC submitted a survey to the experts and thanked the experts who took the time to answer this questionnaire, which allowed them to identify areas for improvement in the organization and support of the working groups.
167. The results of the survey were presented which indicated that as far as the PA working group was concerned, they had clearly noted that there was a strong need to review what was expected of SPAW protected areas in order to review the procedure for registering and analysing SPAW protected areas.
168. The President thanked SPAW-RAC for their presentation and invited Contracting Parties to comment.
169. The Head of Delegation of France thanked the Contracting Parties and observers for their evaluation of the PA proposals. France felt it was important to simplify the procedures which were considered difficult and requested the opportunity for a representative to present on the proposal of the Parc Natural Marin Martinique (Marine Natural Park of Martinique).
170. The President approved the request.
171. The delegate of France, Mr Paul Giannasi, Deputy Director of the Parc Natural Marin Martinique (Marine Natural Park of Martinique), thanked the President for the opportunity and provided a brief presentation on the work of the Parc Natural Marin Martinique to the meeting.

172. The President thanked France for their presentation and invited Contracting Parties to provide comments.
173. The Head of Delegation of Colombia thanked the SPAW-RAC for their presentation. The delegate also thanked Aruba and France and acknowledged their effort in submitting the proposals. Colombia reiterated the importance of the protected areas working group including the importance of having gender equity within the group.
174. The Head of Delegation of the US thanked the SPAW-RAC for their comprehensive presentation of the Protected Areas working group and the experts of the working group. The US thanked Aruba for submitting the proposal to list Parke Marine Aruba, which the US hoped Aruba would consider resubmitting. The US expressed their appreciation for Aruba's efforts to protect and conserve this important area.
175. The US strongly supported continued work to review the procedure through which Contracting Parties may nominate new protected areas to be listed as SPAW sites and suggested that the STAC renew recommendation V(7) from STAC9.
176. The US suggested that STAC10 could make the following recommendation to the COP: The Protected Areas working group review the procedure through which Contracting Parties may nominate new protected areas to be listed as SPAW sites and prepare suggestions to simplify and streamline the process for consideration at STAC11 and COP13.
177. The delegate of the KNL thanked the experts in the working group for reviewing the nomination and took note of the split advice and the three key action points for the revision and improvement of the nomination. These included:
1. The request for inclusion of additional references to publications, documents and all relevant sources of information to support information provided on ecological and cultural/socio-economic aspects. The delegate advised that the relevant references to the nomination would be included in due time before the COP.
 2. The request that a Management Plan should be elaborated and validated in consultation with a broad range of stakeholders, to then be implemented prior to submitting the application. The delegate informed the STAC that the process to establish the management plan had been a cooperative process with many different types of stakeholders involved. It was expected that the management plan would be formally adopted before the COP.
 3. The request for the inclusion of an evaluation framework to monitor the success of management. For that reason, the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance (DCNA), which was the umbrella organization for the nature parks in the Dutch Caribbean, had established a management success framework which has been used for several years for the various (SPAW) protected areas on the six islands in the Dutch Caribbean. The delegate referred to that evaluation framework as it would be applied to the Parke Marino Aruba as well.
178. The delegate of the KNL suggested to the STAC to recommend positively on the listing of the Parke Marino Aruba as a SPAW Protected Area to the COP, under the condition that in due time before the COP the aforementioned key action points had been implemented. Meaning that the requested references would be added to the nomination document and that the management plan would be formally established.

179. The KNL did not agree with the request for resubmission but instead the follow-up of the action points between the time of the STAC and the COP.
180. The observer of the FDPI stated that the SPAW Protocol was supposed to improve management of ecological systems, sites and threatened species. He expressed a concern that he observed that there was a lack of rigour in how sites were managed and requested that this be improved and that there be less hastening to list a site without reviewing their capacity to manage.
181. The Head of Delegation of Colombia supported the intervention of the observer from FDPI. The delegate referred to the recommendation from the US and asked for clarification on task 3.
182. The Secretariat thanked the delegates for their intervention and noted two recommendations that came from the working group, one (1) was for full acceptance of the proposal from the Government of France for Parc Natural Marin Martinique and the other (2) was to not accept the proposal from Aruba and experts to request additional information for consideration.
183. The Secretariat highlighted the interventions from the KNL (Aruba) and several Contracting Parties. They made note of the reference made, by the delegate of the US, to a previous STAC recommendation that requested this detailed information to allow for clarity on how the working group would proceed.
184. The Secretariat acknowledged the consensus on the acceptance of the proposal from the Government of France and more deliberation required for the proposal from KNL (Aruba). Also, a recommendation that spoke more broadly to the importance of the rigorousness of the selection process and one that reiterated the request for more detailed information moving forward.
185. The President requested that the Contracting Parties confirm their consensus on the recommendation to approve the proposal from the Government of France for Parc Natural Marin Martinique to the COP. There was no objection. The President congratulated France for the positive recommendation.
186. The President requested that the Contracting Parties to confirm their consensus of a possible recommendation on the proposal from the KNL (Aruba) on the Parke Marino Aruba to the COP.
187. The Head of Delegation of the US requested an update from the Secretariat on the status of the quorum of the meeting. The delegate also requested additional time to review the new information based on the additional context provided by the KNL on Parke Marino Aruba and proposed returning to the agenda item at a later time.
188. The Secretariat responded that according to the Rules of Procedure, the quorum was two-thirds (12) based on the number of Contracting Parties (18). There was a caveat which referred to the financial rules adopted subsequent to the approval of the Rules of Procedure, which made specific reference to the active participation, voting rights and funding to attend face to face meetings of the Secretariat.
189. Currently there were ten (10) out of the 18 parties to the Convention present. If the focus was on the Parties present that were in a good financial position as it related to the Caribbean Trust Fund (CTF), to have a decision making or recommending role, eight out of 12 was present which represented a quorum of the governments that were up to date with their contribution to the CTF.
190. The Secretariat was focused on getting all the Contracting Parties present but was aware that the financial rules had implications for their active engagement.
191. The President asked Contracting Parties for their comments on the quorum. There was no intervention.

The President confirmed the meeting had reached a quorum.

192. The Head of Delegation of the US thanked the Secretariat for the explanation and requested time to review the financial rules to determine if the meeting had achieved quorum. There was concern that using the financial rules as a means of meeting the quorum to achieve consensus on a substantive matter related to protected areas was questionable.
193. The Secretariat thanked the US for their intervention and advised that copies of the amendment of the financial rules would be shared for review. It was recognized that if there were Contracting Parties that felt full consensus was not met on decisions of a quorum at the time of the discussion, when it was time to endorse the recommendations at the end of the meeting, then a full quorum would be met to achieve that.
194. Based on the caveat, the Secretariat would seek advice on the application of the financial rules that were presented. A list of the members of the Bureau who were nominated and present at the meeting was also shared in the chat.
195. The Head of Delegation of France reiterated the importance of the marine mammals and forming a network and expressed the need for a recommendation on this subject.
196. The Secretariat confirmed that the subject would be discussed under agenda item 6 on species scheduled for the following day.
197. The Head of Delegation of France confirmed that he was aware of this as he was referring to agenda item 4 of the provisional annotated agenda which mentioned an information document on the marine mammal RAN. The delegate wanted to ensure that this was not forgotten.
198. The President thanked France for the clarification.
199. The SPAW-RAC stated that agenda item 6 would be dedicated to the Species working group and the marine mammal RAN would not be discussed under that agenda item.
200. The Secretariat thanked the SPAW-RAC for facilitating the consultation on the marine mammal RAN and stated that they participated in some of the discussions. It built on discussions held at previous STACs and COPs on the role of RACs, partner agencies and RANs and was also linked to the potential recommendation stated earlier regarding the consortium. Therefore, the issue establishing a marine mammal RAN and the implications and mechanisms for moving it forward was important.
201. The Secretariat invited the SPAW-RAC to restate the findings of the analysis mentioned in their presentation and what they felt was an appropriate way forward and how the work would continue to meet the requirements of the SPAW Protocol and the sub-programme. The delegate of France was also invited to make an intervention based on what was presented.
202. The Head of Delegation of France thanked the President and the Secretariat for their intervention. The delegate expressed that he was not sure if the presentation would allow the Contracting Parties enough time to discuss the subject.
203. The Secretariat advised that the subject was included in the draft SPAW Work plan but subject to decision or recommendation by the STAC on the way forward and requested if it could be considered under agenda item 9 on the Work plan.

204. The Head of Delegation of Colombia requested that the meeting reverted back to the recommendation on Aruba.
205. The Head of Delegation of the US thanked France for raising the point of the RAN and was open to the discussion being included under agenda item 9. The US requested that in future, the provisional agenda for the SPAW COP and STAC should be made very clear indicating documents that were open for discussion under each agenda item to allow Contracting Parties to follow properly.
206. It was hoped that it would prevent any confusion in the future. The US was available to assist the Secretariat and the Bureau with the development of the agenda for the upcoming SPAW COP.
207. The President thanked the US for their intervention.
208. The Head of Delegation of France also referred to the presentation of the CAMAC project and referenced the possibility of making a recommendation on this under this agenda item or would it be done under the work plan.
209. The President suggested that discussion on the recommendations for the protected areas be finalised first before moving on to the other topics requested.
210. The delegate of the KNL (Aruba), Ms Oriana Wouters, stated that between the 15th and 24th of August Aruba was still communicating to SPAW regarding the evaluation. On the 25th of August there was the last evaluation meeting. The National Park Authority should be the group to answer these questions and the recommendations, yet the governmental agency that supported the park, was present at the meeting to provide answers on the evaluation.
211. Ms Wouters added that the proposal was a copy/paste of the first three parks that were proposed by deceased Mr Paul Hoetjes and was surprised that there was missing information and that Aruba handed in a premature proposal.
212. Additionally, Ms Wouters advised that Aruba received comments recently, yet the proposal was handed in two years ago and the Park Authority, that should really be receiving this feedback, was not present in this STAC meeting.
213. Reference was made to the intervention of the observer from FDPI, who brought a few issues forward regarding the governance of sites. Ms Wouters reminded the Meeting that countries had limited resources and faced many challenges.
214. Aruba was asked to provide more in-depth information regarding the four points which were planning, methods of evaluation, indicators of success and socio-economic information of park users.
215. The KNL stressed the fact that the National Park was not present in the meeting to provide this information. Although the information was necessary to share, they all faced limitations in resources. The limited information provided was acknowledged however Aruba felt that there should have been positive support towards the proposal and counted on the SPAW community for their support. Regarding the information required, they hoped that they could be united in the approach and enhancement of activities.
216. The President asked the US if the intervention from the KNL provided additional context for deliberation for the STAC to adopt the suggestion from the KNL or not.

217. The US thanked the KNL for providing additional context. It was not their intention to ask the KNL to provide the information during the meeting and recognized the need to reach consensus. They proposed reopening the agenda item the following day.
218. The President thanked the US for their intervention and suggested that the Bureau work interessionally on the recommendations and invited delegates to indicate in the chat if they wished to join the drafting group.
219. The Secretariat thanked the President and the delegates for their willingness to support the drafting of recommendations. The Secretariat supported the President's suggestion.
220. The observer of WWF (Monique Van de Water), considering the proposal by Aruba, stated that one of the most important things for a listing of an MPA was the management plan and the solid waste management plan. If this was provided before the next COP, WWF would support this proposal and let the COP decide and see if they would adhere to all the missing documents requested.
221. The President thanked the observer from WWF for their intervention. He asked the Meeting if there were any comments on the protected area procedure.
222. The Secretariat provided additional clarification with reference made by the US to a previous recommendation of SPAW STAC9 regarding the procedures suggested that may form a basis for a follow up recommendation that continued to emphasize the importance of the process and how these areas were nominated. This was also reiterated by the delegate of Colombia and the observer from FDPI. The Secretariat asked the delegate of the US if the recommendation could be elaborated to help guide the future work of the PA procedures.
223. The US responded that the Secretariat provided a good summary of their intervention. With regards to further interventions received today regarding the importance of the process for listing, it would be appropriate to elaborate on the STAC9 recommendation.
224. ***The President thanked the US for their intervention and reverted discussions to Agenda Item 4 to finalise discussions on the CAMAC project and the Marine Mammal RAN.***
225. ***Discussions on Agenda Item 5 continued on day 2 of the Meeting.***
226. The President continued discussions on the Parke Marino Aruba for listing as a protected area under the SPAW Protocol on day 2 of the meeting following the closure of Agenda Item 7. The President brought the attention of the Meeting to the recommendation (para. 178) provided by the KNL and invited Contracting Parties to make comments.
227. The Head of Delegation of the US recognized the challenges the proposal faced over the last biennium and appreciated the submission of the proposal by the KNL for consideration. The US noted that in the guidelines for criteria for listing Protected Areas under the SPAW Protocol, the criteria for inclusion of a management framework was a requirement and therefore the US was uncomfortable with the precedent that this proposal would set which was to list a Protected Area which at the time of submission did not meet the requirements as set out in the guidelines.
228. The US did not believe that this was the process envisioned in the protocol or the guidelines and welcomed the guidance of the Contracting Parties.
229. The Head of Delegation of Colombia referred to the Rules of Procedure with regard to the precedence

that may arise and mentioned that during STAC 3, there were areas where verification was requested. Colombia requested that there be more detail for the application of these regulations and to exercise great care to state precedence for the decision-making process.

230. The Head of Delegation of France stated that he clearly understood the statement of Colombia and the US, however, the proposition from the KNL asked different questions. It was not clear on whether the management plan would be finalised. France asked the KNL to clarify. It would have been ideal for the process to have been done before the STAC however maybe it could be taken into consideration if provided before the COP.
231. The delegate of the KNL thanked the Contracting Parties for the concerns expressed. The management plan was being prepared ahead of the COP so it could be addressed there.
232. It was important not only for the SPAW Protocol but also for what was agreed upon at the COP of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework in December 2022, which was to agree to the 30 by 30. It was a good indication that the KNL was seriously working on that aspect.
233. *The delegate of Aruba (Oriana Wouters) provided an intervention in the chat:* The proposal was handed in while there was an active management plan (January 2021). The new management plan was in development and used extensive stakeholder engagement, as prescribed by the UN. With the ongoing COVID activity, there were delays on the development of the management plan. It should be published this year.
234. The President invited the observer parties to provide comments.
235. The observer of FDPI stated that the listing of a protected area under SPAW involved assessment of the documentation submitted in the proposal to determine whether the conditions exist for adequate management of the protected area.
236. FDPI asked if the submission of documentation after STAC10 allowed for assessment by the working group. He requested that Parties act with caution to not design bypass mechanisms to the assessment process as that would undermine the efficacy of the process and the role of the STAC.
237. He stated that just listing a SPAW site did not improve their management therefore emphasizing that the intended work by any submitting Party should not be contingent on a SPAW listing, but instead on the conservation objectives and programming of the country.
238. The question by the US on timeline was very important and FDPI asked if Aruba could state when the management plan and other supporting documentation would be available for review. Also, confirmation on clarity on the institutional management arrangements.
239. The President invited the Secretariat to comment.
240. The Secretariat thanked the Contracting Parties and the observer that have shared their views on the issue and noted the significant efforts of the KNL (Aruba). These efforts were focused on long term conservation.
241. They had reviewed the procedure for delisting and listing of areas. Based on the feedback provided there may be a window of opportunity, which in reference to the intervention by the observer FDPI, should involve the working group, specifically the experts that did the assessment of the submission. There were areas identified that needed additional information, specifically the management plan.

242. The Secretariat believed that sending the technical documents to the COP would not be useful as the STAC and the working group were setup for this purpose.
243. They asked if there was an opportunity for the KNL, in a timely way, to respond specifically to the issues identified by the working group. This would allow for an additional technical assessment to be done by the working group before the COP.
244. The Secretariat did not want to circumvent the process however and was conscious that delaying it for another two years may not help with the overall process of improving management and would not be a positive signal to Contracting Parties on the efforts being made.
245. The President thanked the Secretariat and invited Contracting Parties to comment on the suggestions made.
246. The delegate of the KNL thanked the Secretariat for their balanced approach to the issues being raised. The extension of time for the working group to review the proposal for the KNL to the COP was needed and was in line with the procedures. This could be the basis for the formulation of the recommendation.
247. The Head of Delegation of Colombia asked if there was a historical record available on proposals for Protected Areas from other countries which was similar. This would help with the formulation of the recommendation.
248. The Secretariat responded that there was limited knowledge of this, and further research would be required on the precedence set. This would be done, and the feedback provided. The points raised were valid as there was a policy, a procedure, a decision-making forum and a mandate for what the STAC could recommend in terms of moving forward.
249. There were recommendations that could be made that may not set unusual precedent if as a STAC Contracting Parties felt that there was a contribution to the overall objective and aim of the protocol.
250. It was important for STAC10 to ensure that the appropriate measures were in place to do the necessary analysis so that the recommendation for the COP was based on that analysis and review.
251. Generally, during some of the discussions it was noted that some activities were delayed for various reasons. The Secretariat wanted to maintain the highest standards set through the protocol but still provide a level of flexibility.
252. The Secretariat was conscious that the STAC did not want to make strong recommendations on a task that was lacking in its assessment and therefore required more work but believed that Contracting Parties would consider a middle ground that allowed a window of opportunity to fulfil the gaps identified. This would allow a re-evaluation and re-assessment prior to the COP.
253. The President requested guidance from the Secretariat on the formulation of a recommendation.
254. The Secretariat suggested a short dialogue with the Contracting Parties of Colombia, France, KNL and the US to reach a consensus and frame a recommendation that would take place intersessionally. There was an opportunity to enhance a proposal without waiting to get it done in another biennium.
255. The Head of Delegation of the US expressed that they would be happy to engage in dialogue on the issues presented. The US requested clarification on the timeline that would be needed for this process

recognizing any documents presented to the COP would have to be finalised and posted within the 42-day deadline.

256. The delegate of the KNL noted the issues raised and proposed the recommendation be framed based on two possibilities, based on the negative advice, or the working group deliberate on these issues to address them and report to the STAC on the outcomes of the additional review. The outcomes would then be discussed at the COP.
257. The SPAW-RAC stated that with regards to procedure and timing it was mentioned before that it's important to allow sufficient time for review, in this case at least one month including the evaluation and analysis before presentation to the COP. It was important to establish a timeline as it would be difficult to produce good quality work without specifying a timeframe.
258. The President requested the KNL to further work on the language of the recommendation to allow the Contracting Parties to take this into consideration and also to provide more information on the questions from Colombia and the US.
259. The Secretariat responded to the question regarding the timing. The COP and IGM were scheduled to take place between April 18-21 (dates were revised post-STAC). A formal announcement would be made to Protocol Focal Points after the STAC.
260. With regards to the 6-week period (42 days) for the upload of the documents prior to COP, the deadline would be March 3rd. The Secretariat was committed to having the documents for the COP uploaded by this date.
261. Therefore, the month of February would be used by the working group and the STAC to respond to technical questions that needed attention and provide the working group with time to do a reassessment of the additional information provided and evaluate whether it satisfied the areas that were lacking in the original proposal.
262. The Secretariat proposed that instead of creating a new meeting document, it could be included as an annex to the existing document.
263. The President thanked the Secretariat for their comments and proposed that the KNL work on the language of the recommendation suggested. The President asked the Meeting if there were any further comments on Agenda Item 5. There were none and the Agenda Item was concluded.
264. The President brought to the attention of the Meeting the Conference Room Paper on the SPAW Consortium Concept Brief (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/ CRP.1) and invited the Secretariat to comment.
265. The Secretariat highlighted the significant support provided to the SPAW Protocol by several partner agencies both at the region and international level. The Secretariat also acknowledged the continued contribution of observer agencies, many of whom were present at the STAC and have provided technical input.
266. Also, the partnerships established with the SPAW-RAC and the Secretariat in supporting the work of Contracting Parties and advancing the objectives of the SPAW Protocol and sub-programme. The Secretariat expressed that they appreciated the importance of those partnerships.
267. The Consortium could be in a position to provide some level of support and partnerships in helping to

further the objectives of the SPAW Protocol and sub-programme in general and this was linked to other parallel initiatives that are taking place at the Secretariat, including the development of the CEP Strategy.

268. The Secretariat also recognised a potential establishment of the Consortium had implications for the proposed work to update the guidelines for RACs and RANs and there may be a need for institutionalization. The Secretariat proposed that the SPAW STAC may wish to acknowledge the contribution proposed by the Consortium and encouraged the COP to consider how the Secretariat could continue to engage in these sorts of partnerships and collaborations with agencies, the Consortium and other NGOs given their wealth of knowledge and expertise.
269. The Secretariat welcomed views from Contracting Parties on how such a collaboration could be operationalized during the work plan or the COP.
270. The Head of Delegation of the US valued the contributions of observers, in particular non-governmental organizations, to the implementation of the Cartagena Convention and SPAW Protocol and welcomed further coordination among stakeholders.
271. Given this Consortium would operate outside of the Convention, the US proposed that it would be most appropriate for the STAC to note the Consortium Concept Brief.
272. The US noted that the concept note stated that IGOs could also participate in such a Consortium and requested more detail as they were not familiar with this.
273. The Secretariat thanked the US for their intervention and shared that their observation was the same in regards to how and to what extent the IGOs could be involved. It was seen more in terms of mutual collaboration, working together on areas of interest and seeking specialised expertise.
274. The Secretariat was unsure if other IGOs could be a part of a Consortium but was open to comments on this.
275. The observer of Monitor Caribbean, Ms Monica Borobia, thanked the Secretariat for the opportunity to participate in the meeting. She congratulated the Secretariat and the SPAW-RAC for the depth of work presented for consideration by the STAC.
276. In the Concept Brief, membership was meant to be inclusive for a wide range of potential partners especially those that were very active in the work of the Cartagena Convention and other MEAs in the WCR. For example, the OECs and ACS had contributed to a larger framework of work within the conservation of the marine environment. The idea was to propose that such organizations could also promote their interest in joining the Consortium and eventually become a part of it. The concept note provided further details.
277. The Head of Delegation of Colombia stated that the topic of governance was discussed in different spaces resulting in discussions with positive results and lessons learnt. Reference was made to a GEF Project which included terms like alliances, advisory group and working groups. It was noted that there were new terms, for example, consortium and membership used in the document.
278. Colombia requested clarification from the Secretariat on the terms used with respect to governance. The Spanish language had many definitions and connotations; therefore, it was important to clarify the scope and meaning of these words as it related to governance.

279. The Head of Delegation of France recognized the depth that existed with NGOs and the work done with them to achieve the SPAW objectives.
280. The observer of FDPI expressed support for the Consortium and was involved in the development of the idea. As indicated by the delegate from Colombia regarding the terms used, he acknowledged there were issues that had to be dealt with as far as involvement of potential members like the private sector, IGOs and community organizations was concerned.
281. Some organizations were registered in their countries or recognized but not registered under their specific laws. One of the positive things about the consortium was that it allowed the programme to be linked to a growing complexity of the governance arrangements recognized by the UN.
282. This allowed for potential to be tapped into, the reduction of overlaps, the potential for certain synergies especially in the context of resource limitations and rapidly changing environmental and institutional conditions.
283. FDPI suggested that the extent to which the consortium supported the CEP allowed for evolution of certain practises and ways to make the governance structures work without trying to include them in the normal treaty arrangements. This would be useful to the programme and to the countries overall.
284. In how far this could be followed, supported and learned without requiring formal codification within the treaty would be useful.
285. The observer of HSI supported the Consortium and directed the Parties' attention to the comparable role of the Species Survival Network (SSN), a coalition of over 80 NGOs working on CITES issues. Over its thirty years of existence, SSN, with its broad range of expertise and experience, has become a valuable resource for many Parties and the CITES Secretariat. In the more collegial atmosphere of SPAW an analogous body including IGOs, and Parties could well serve the same function, and could become a valuable adjunct to the Secretariat and the RAC as well as to individual Parties.
286. The Secretariat noted the general recognition that the group could add value and technical support to the work of the Secretariat, SPAW-RAC and sub-programme. There was no need for formal institutional arrangements.
287. The Consortium proponents could consider terminology and how it was viewed by different parties in the region as part of overall governance arrangements. It would be useful to include the particular involvement of IGOs which would be subject to their own rules of procedure or decision-making processes.
288. The US appreciated the engagement of the observers with SPAW and expressed concern that initially it was considered to be a proposal that would coordinate views among NGOs, in a way they could be presented to SPAW. The US was not certain what the participation of IGOs would mean. It seemed to propose a more formal process and outside of what was comfortable. The US was conscious of the more individual governance structures of various IGOs and requested further consideration.
289. The observer of Monitor Caribbean stated that the idea behind the consortium was to be as inclusive as possible to those that were interested in the development and implementation of objectives of the SPAW Protocol and sub-programmes. It was a space for possible collaboration among interested organizations, the network and partnerships had included IGOs, but it was recognized that this would be dependent on the decision of the organization to join the consortium.

290. It was to prioritise the work of ongoing partnerships within the realm of civil society and to possibly extend the scope of that organization as well as collaboration and coordination to include potential IGOs that had participated and contributed to the work of the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols.
291. Monitor Caribbean thanked the Secretariat for the positive response and looked forward to the development of this idea and concept within the work of the Convention and with the support and guidance of parties and observers in this effort.
292. *The observer of FDPI provided an intervention in the chat:* the concern about membership was understandable. Parties were reminded of arrangements such as the IUCN that had governmental membership and UNEP Major Groups arrangements, arrangements that enhanced synergies in governance and program delivery.
293. The Secretariat proposed that the Consortium would not be a process through which the Secretariat engaged with other IGOs because there were already existing mechanisms through which these IGOs participate in the work of the Secretariat.
294. The Secretariat noted that the Consortium had a goal of being as inclusive as possible and it should recognize that different IGOs had different processes of engagement. The Cartagena Convention Secretariat had clear rules of engagement with other IGOs that would not necessarily take place through the Consortium.

AGENDA ITEM 6: REPORT OF THE SPECIES WORKING GROUP

295. The Secretariat invited the SPAW-RAC, as Chair of the Species working group to report on the tasks assigned during the SPAW STAC9 (virtually, 17-19 March and 14-15 April 2021) and detailed in the terms of reference (UNEP(DEPI)CAR WG.42/INF.12/Rev.1), as contained in documents UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.16 and UNEP(DEPI)CAR WG.42/INF.24; UNEP(DEPI)CAR WG.42/INF.25; UNEP(DEPI)CAR WG.42/INF.38; UNEP(DEPI)CAR WG.42/INF.39).
296. The SPAW-RAC thanked for the opportunity to present on the Species working group for 2021-2022 and outlined the tasks and functioning of the working group.
297. The Species working group had been assigned the following tasks by STAC 9:
- Review, evaluate and provide recommendations on proposals from Contracting Parties to add new species to the SPAW Protocol Appendices or to change the listing status of species currently included in the Appendices.
 - Strengthen work on the conservation and management of species listed in the annexes to the Protocol, taking into account the recommendations of UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF 24 on sharks and rays, INF.25 on sawfish, INF.38 on the Nassau Grouper and INF.39 on sea turtles
 - Review and update the MMAP.
298. The Species working group was mainly active from June to September 2022. The SPAW-RAC thanked the experts who participated in the Working groups for their involvement and availability.
299. The following applications were received for the biennium:
- The listing of all parrotfish (Perciformes: Scaridae) and the Caribbean reef shark (*Carcharhinus perezi*) in Appendix III of the SPAW Protocol,
 - Three hammerhead sharks (*Sphyrna lewini*, *Sphyrna mokarran*, *Sphyrna zygaena*) and the giant manta ray (*Manta birostris*) in Annex II of the SPAW Protocol

As well as :

- The change of the appendix of the oceanic whitetip shark (*Carcharhinus longimanus*), the whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*) and the Lesser Antillean iguana (*Iguana delicatissima*) from Appendix III to Appendix II of the SPAW Protocol

300.Regarding each application received, the experts provided various inputs and conclusions on the proposals.

301.The President thanked the SPAW-RAC for their presentation and invited Contracting Parties to make comments on the species proposals.

302.The delegate of the US thanked the SPAW -RAC and the Species working group experts for their work since SPAW COP11. The group was very focused and efficient despite short review timelines and the challenge of leadership transition within the SPAW-RAC. They commended the SPAW-RAC team for their balanced approach to guiding and supporting the Working group's efforts.

303.The US was particularly pleased with the group's work on species management recommendations, including recommendations on sawfish, Nassau grouper, and sea turtles, as well as the group's efforts to draft an updated Marine Mammal Action Plan. The working group produced very practical and actionable recommendations, which they hoped would lead to tangible conservation outcomes on the ground for these species.

304.They encouraged Parties to focus on and implement these conservation and management recommendations.

305.They also encouraged the SPAW Species working group to assist in developing cooperative programs for the conservation and management of SPAW listed species and facilitate implementation of regional recovery programs as described in Article 11(5) of the Protocol.

306.Although they were pleased to see that nine (9) SPAW Parties nominated experts to the working group, they were somewhat disappointed to see that only 5 experts reviewed and evaluated most of the species nomination proposals. They encouraged SPAW Parties to nominate experts to the Species working group in the future, and to actively participate in the working group discussions and outputs. Conservation outcomes were more likely to be successful if SPAW Parties expressed their priorities and helped to develop conservation actions that meet their needs in collaboration with other SPAW Parties.

307.These points were directly relevant to the Protected Areas and Exemptions working groups, where they also would like to encourage more robust engagement.

308.The Head of delegation of Colombia supported the intervention of the US and highlighted the consistency and persistence of the KNL and France to include the species proposals. Colombia saw the importance of the country's expert delegations. Experts that worked in different discussion groups made a difference.

309.The President began discussions and invited Contracting Parties to provide their comments or to express if they agreed with the consensus on the following species nomination:

- Uplisting of the Lesser Antillean Iguana (*Iguana delicatissima*) from Annex III to Annex II of the SPAW Protocol. (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.21). There was no objection therefore a positive recommendation.

- Inclusion of all Parrot Fishes (Perciformes: Scaridae) in Annex III of the SPAW Protocol (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.17). There was no objection therefore a positive recommendation.
310. The Head of delegation of Colombia requested clarification on the document shared by the SPAW-RAC. Colombia observed that the update did not follow national legislation.
311. The President invited SPAW-RAC to comment. However, they did not understand the intervention and therefore provided no comment.
312. The President continued with the remaining species:
- Listing of the Caribbean reef shark (*Carcharhinus perezii*) in Annex III of the SPAW Protocol (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.22). The President advised that there was consensus in the working group. There was no objection, therefore a positive recommendation.
313. The President began discussions on the species that did not have consensus in the working groups and asked Contracting Parties for their comments on the following:
- Uplisting of Oceanic whitetip shark (*Carcharhinus longimanus*) from Annex III to Annex II of the SPAW protocol (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.18).
314. The delegate from the US noted that the Species working group provided a consensus view that the oceanic whitetip shark proposal supported an Annex II listing.
315. The US believed an Annex II listing was warranted and supported a recommendation that the oceanic whitetip shark be uplisted from Annex III to Annex II.
316. The President thanked the US for highlighting that there was consensus on the Oceanic Whitetip Shark. There was no objection, therefore a positive recommendation. The President congratulated all Contracting Parties on the positive recommendation.
317. The President continued with the remaining species with no consensus in the working group:
- Listing of the Giant manta ray species (*Manta birostris*) in Annex II of the SPAW Protocol (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.23).
318. The delegate of the KNL thanked the experts of the working group for their work. KNL at minimum should accept a split advice to the COP, for a political decision to be made there.
319. The Head of Delegation of France thanked Colombia, USA and the KNL for their comments. He requested the profile of the experts that were in favour of adding these species to Annex II species and those that were not in favour. The delegate reminded the meeting that the large manta rays were very important for the marine biodiversity and it was important to protect them as they were threatened.
320. The delegate of the KNL, Ms Wouters, supported the proposal of France for the uplisting of the Giant Manta Ray. The current developments regarding the Cartagena Convention evoked the need to align the LBS Protocol with the SPAW Protocol. This particular species was highly vulnerable to land-based sources of pollution in the Caribbean. The delegate recommended that possibly under criteria 6, with the uplisting of the species, there could be cooperation on that point.

321. The US expressed their concerns with the information presented in the proposal and did not believe the proposal supported an Annex II listing.
322. The proposal presented some evidence of population decline, but the declines cited were from the Indo-Pacific and Eastern Pacific, and there was no global population estimate. The IUCN endangered classification was based on old data sets (up to 2014) from a few small locations. The proposal also lacked specific information about population trends and threats in the WCR.
323. Overall, the US felt that the species was appropriately listed in Annex III and the proposal did not present any new information to suggest that the status of the Giant Manta Ray had changed.
324. They supported the suggestion from the Netherlands that the STAC's views and lack of consensus be reported to the COP for a decision.
325. They also supported France's suggestion that the Species working group could be requested to develop conservation and management measures for the giant manta ray.
326. The Head of delegation of Colombia emphasized the need of leaving a clear recommendation from the STAC to the COP. The proposal from the KNL was previously presented several times and it was important that it was clearer which was also discussed. Colombia reiterated the importance of the information from the experts and highlighted that there was missing information in some of the documents.
327. The delegate of France thanked Colombia and the US and reminded the meeting that a collective decision could be made, and Contracting Parties could also state if they did agree. France understood that there was consensus on protection. The delegate proposed to follow the same procedure for the Nassau Grouper which was to have a working group and include protection measures which would be adopted during the upcoming COP.
328. The observer of HSI supported the inclusion of this species in Annex II and endorsed the comments of France. This was also relevant to the proposal of the Whale Shark as these species were listed under the CITES treaty. Parties should bear in mind that both of these species contribute to the economy of the WCR through their value to tourism (e.g. specifically directed whale shark tourism in Islas Mujeres, Mexico and the Bay Islands of Honduras), and that this value may be far more important than any value from fisheries.
329. In addition, concern that there was limited data for the WCR as opposed to the Indo-Pacific should be set against the high demand for these species from IUU fishing, and the well-known trade pattern in which depletion or exhaustion of overfished populations in one area are followed by a rapid shift to populations in other regions. This fact demonstrates the need for a precautionary approach to the conservation of these species and urged that the original proposal be supported.
330. The US supported the suggestion from the Netherlands that the STAC's views and lack of consensus be reported to the COP for a decision. They also supported France's suggestion that the Species working group could be requested to develop conservation and management measures for the giant manta ray.
331. The Secretariat thanked the delegates and requested a point of clarification regarding the request for the working group. They asked if the request was for the working group to produce work between the STAC and COP, in order to find out if it was medium- to long-term work that the working group should consider for its work following the COP.

332. The delegate of France thanked the Secretariat for their question, both recommendations would be interesting if the other states agreed to meet virtually to develop a work plan for the Giant Manta Ray. He acknowledged the intervention from the observer from HSI that provided a reminder of its importance to the ecosystem.
333. The delegate of the US responded to the question of the Secretariat and clarified they were referring to longer-term recommendations for the working group after the COP.
334. The Secretariat thanked the Contracting Parties for the clarification.
335. The President confirmed that there was no consensus on the Giant Manta Ray Species.
336. The President continued with the remaining species with no consensus in the working group:
- Uplisting of the whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*) from Annex III to Annex II of the SPAW Protocol (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.19).
337. The observer of WWF expressed that they were pleased about the attention paid by SPAW to marine megafauna, especially migratory species. The species mentioned for uplisting from Annex III to Annex II were all highly migratory. Although their routes were unknown, these species were vulnerable in a vast area in the region. Therefore, WWF believed this was a strong argument to have the best protection in place possible. Many threats took place offshore, such as shipping and (offshore) fisheries and although information was sometimes low, these threats existed.
338. IUCN assessments did not need to be fully specified for the region. In fact, if information or data was missing in a specific region, it was common to look at overall/global population trends and IUCN status. It was clear that human activities (fisheries and shipping) that caused declining population trends were also present in the WCR. This underscored the need for stronger conservation measures as a decreasing trend is present for all regions.
339. The human threats in the WCR called for a more participatory approach. Species should not be listed because less was known or because they had a complicated migratory pattern. She warned if we waited too long it may be too late. WWF supported the uplisting from Annex III to II for the shark species and the Giant Manta Ray.
340. The observers of AWI, Lightkeepers Foundation and Fundación Centhus supported the interventions of HSI and WWF.
341. The Head of Delegation of France agreed with the comment regarding the decline in population which was a decline by 50% in the last 65 years. Their reproduction was also very slow, and they matured very late. There was a possibility that they would move from endangered to a critically endangered species. It was sad to lose this species which was important to the marine ecosystem and impacted by human activities. The protection of these species was desired, and it was important to uplist to Annex II.
342. The Head of Delegation of Colombia expressed their intention to share their recent updated legislation of the Red List. They referred to certain endangered species in 2017, 2021 and 2022. The species was considered as important to be protected. Colombia had an important area of jurisdiction on the continent and in the islands of the Caribbean coast and had worked for a long time with national experts on this type of species.

343. The delegate of the US supported the way forward that was taken for manta rays. Similar to manta rays, the US did not believe the proposal for whale sharks justifies an Annex II listing. Much of the estimate of decline is an inferred estimate, and the 50% decline noted in the proposal is for the global population. The decline noted in the Atlantic population was much less, only a 30% decline.
344. The proposal did not present information indicating that threats such as fishing, trade, and habitat destruction were prevalent in the Caribbean in particular, and the threat of vessel strike was largely unexplored, and no actual data were provided. There was not enough evidence to indicate that current management measures were insufficient to protect the whale shark. The species has only been listed in Annex III since 2017.
345. Overall, the US maintained that the species was appropriately listed in Annex III. The proposal does not present new information to suggest the status of the whale shark has changed.
346. In response to the point raised earlier that species did not receive protection unless listed in Annex II, the US clarified that Annex III does require management measures and regional cooperation. The US has management measures in place for whale sharks; it is a prohibited species under the Highly Migratory Species Fisheries Management Plan, and fishing for or landing the species is prohibited in U.S. state and territorial waters in the Convention Area.
347. The observer of HSI reiterated that the whale shark was very important for tourism in Honduras and Mexico and was of more value for the Caribbean region. The long period of decline should be measured against the long lifespan of the species. It was hoped that Parties would consider its listing in Annex II.
348. The President continued with the remaining species with no consensus in the working group:
- Listing of 3 species of hammerhead sharks (*Sphyrna mokarran*) in Annex II of the SPAW Protocol (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.20)
349. The observer of HSI supported the inclusion of this species in Annex II. Sharks as apex predators have been shown to be critical to the health of fish populations on coral reefs. Hammerheads of all species were heavily in demand for the shark fin trade.
350. *S. mokarran* was already CITES listed (among others), and at the November 2022 CITES CoP in Panama, a successful proposal to list *S. tiburo* and other hammerhead species noted that there had been a severe decline in that species along the Atlantic coast of Central America (<https://cites.org/sites/default/files/documents/E-CoP19-Prop-38.pdf>). A precautionary approach should dictate that all hammerheads deserve to be protected at the highest level possible.
351. The Head of Delegation of Colombia supported the comment of HSI with regards to the discussions held at the CITES CoP in Panama and highlighted the work done in Colombia regarding other shark species. Colombia supported the position regarding this species.
352. The Head of Delegation of France noted that it would be strange if the Cartagena Convention and the SPAW Protocol did not follow the recommendations of scientists at the CITES Meeting in Panama. Especially the hammerhead shark as has been mentioned in Annex III and also the white tip shark.
353. The Secretariat noted the consistency in the concerns for species for example data issues and if the STAC wished to consider the information needed in the development of future projects. The Secretariat wished to endorse some of the elements of the precautionary principles that had been applied and the importance of science-based decision making for the work of the Secretariat.

354. The Secretariat was willing to work with Contracting Parties to develop a better knowledge base for the deliberations of the STAC and COP.
355. The President thanked the Secretariat and proposed that the same approach used for the Manta Ray and Whale Sharks be applied to the Hammerhead sharks.
356. The delegate of the US supported the President's proposal that we take the same way forward for hammerhead sharks as we did for manta rays and whale sharks.
357. The US had similar concerns with the proposal for hammerhead sharks as for the proposals for manta rays and whale sharks. The population declines noted in the proposal were not sufficient to list these species in Annex II. Some of the information presented in the proposal was inaccurate or out of date, and species-specific data was lacking for each of the species in the proposal.
358. The US maintained their support for these species' listing in Annex III and were committed to regional cooperation for sustainable management and conservation of hammerhead sharks.
359. The President invited the SPAW-RAC to present on the Update of the Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals (MMAP) in the Wider Caribbean.
360. The SPAW-RAC gave a brief background of the MMAP which was developed and adopted in 2008 by the parties. During the 10th SPAW COP, Contracting Parties decided to revise and update the MMAP, taking into account new information available and developments since 2008. They outlined the process to review the document.
361. The document produced by the working group has for each threat identified as a priority for the conservation of marine mammals in the Caribbean:
- i. proposed actions that governments and organizations should take to develop and improve marine mammal conservation policies and practices over the next 5 years, and
 - ii. present the resources and expertise available in the networks of actors working on marine mammals established by the SPAW Program.
362. Priority threats were ranked as follows: fisheries bycatch, hunting and captivity, habitat degradation, pollution and marine mammal health, commercial marine mammal watching and associated activities, acoustic disturbance, ship strikes and climate change.
363. For each priority threat, the actions were classified into 3 categories: evaluation, threat mitigation and capacity building.
364. For each threat, a short summary of available information was presented, followed by a table identifying objectives, actions, and potential partners, and a second table presenting expertise and other resources available in the region. The SPAW-RAC outlined the timeline of the review as well as the process for the drafting of "Recommendations for the Conservation of Marine Turtles in the Caribbean Region" (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.24), "Recommendations for the Conservation of Sawfish in the Caribbean Region" (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.25) and "Recommendations for the Conservation of the Nassau Grouper in the Caribbean Region" (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.26).
365. Ms Conruyt reiterated the results of the survey shared by Ms Rossin in a previous presentation which emphasized that it was important to have a greater diversity of experts in the working groups in order to have more diverse and objective opinions and thus results.

366. The President invited delegates to review the Update of the Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals (MMAP) in the Wider Caribbean (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.31) and make recommendations to the SPAW COP12 in April 2023.
367. The Head of Delegation of the US welcomed the “Update of the Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals in the WCR” and thanked the SPAW-RAC and working group for their efforts. They applauded the clear prioritization of threats and actions that Parties should take to address and mitigate these threats to marine mammals.
368. Given the highly migratory nature of marine mammals, they strongly support the idea that the Action Plan should provide a framework to encourage enhancement of marine mammal conservation by all countries in the WCR.
369. They urged Contracting Parties to take the objective seriously to develop and implement national conservation assessments and management measures to address each of the priority threats, where appropriate.
370. In particular, they stressed the need for monitoring and assessment of marine mammal bycatch in artisanal and commercial fishing operations and the implementation of bycatch mitigation measures where bycatch is determined to pose a threat.
371. The US believed the Action Plan would benefit from further clarifying that the listed actions are predominantly actions that Parties should undertake within their individual capacities to address the specific threats to marine mammals within their waters and that the list of “main partners” are those entities that can assist in the implementation of the priority actions, as appropriate.
372. They believed these issues could be addressed via some surgical edits to the Action Plan before the COP, so the updated Action Plan may be presented to the COP for adoption. They would be happy to facilitate this process, for example, by chairing a drafting group.
373. The US proposed that the STAC make the following recommendations:
- i. Prior to the convening of the Twelfth SPAW COP and Twentieth IGM:
 - a. Contracting Parties provide comments on the Update of the Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals in the WCR (UNEP(DEPI)CAR WG.43/INF.31) prior to submission to SPAW COP12 for approval.
 - ii. The Secretariat convene Contracting Parties in a drafting group to review and address the comments submitted on the Update of the Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals in the WCR (UNEP(DEPI)CAR WG.43/INF.31) and circulate the revised Action Plan to Contracting Parties prior to submission to SPAW COP12.
374. The Secretariat thanked the US for their intervention and commended the work of the SPAW-RAC and the Contracting Parties that worked on the update to the Marine Mammal Action Plan and was pleased to hear that edits would be made to the document ahead of its presentation to the SPAW COP for formal adoption. The Secretariat encouraged the SPAW STAC recommendations drafting group to include strict guidelines and deadlines for the actions to be completed.
375. The Head of Delegation of France supported the proposal by the US for the drafting group.
376. The Head of Delegation of Colombia acknowledged that the MMAP was a strategic tool for the region, not only at national but also international level, as well as that there was a responsibility for the

preservation of marine mammals. Colombia supported the intervention from the US in that the plan should also consider the individual capacities of the countries in the region.

377. The Head of Delegation of the US supported the intervention of Colombia and thanked France for their concurrence on the proposed recommendation.

378. They also proposed that the SPAW STAC recommended the following to the COP:

- i. The updated Marine Mammal Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals in the WCR, taking into account comments made during STAC10 and during the subsequent review period referenced in recommendation [XX], be presented to COP12 for adoption.
- ii. The COP adopt the updated Marine Mammal Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals in the WCR as a set of recommended actions and compilation of relevant resources to address the priority threats to marine mammals in the region.
- iii. Upon request, the Secretariat and SPAW-RAC assist SPAW Contracting Parties in implementing the Marine Mammal Action Plan, as appropriate and subject to the availability of resources.
- iv. The Secretariat and SPAW-RAC report to STAC11 on their activities in support of implementation of the Action Plan.

379. The President thanked the US for the recommendations and requested that delegates should indicate their interest in joining the drafting group. He also requested that recommendations be clear on the deadlines and responsible entities.

380. The observer of Lightkeepers Foundation endorsed the comments of the US. She told the Meeting that having co-authored the more recent Scientific and Technical Analysis assessing the status of implementation of the regional Marine Mammal Action Plan that was presented to the virtual STAC9 and endorsed by COP11, and having also worked as part of the marine mammal experts working group to update the 2008 Marine Mammal Action Plan, she emphasized that the primary objective of the plan was to encourage Parties to adopt and implement protective measures and strategies at the national level, including the development of national marine mammal action or recovery plans.

381. Lightkeepers Foundation recommended the continuation of the marine mammal experts working group to provide ongoing support to Parties seeking to enhance their national legislation and governance to accommodate specific consideration for the protection of marine mammals.

382. They encouraged Parties to integrate marine mammal-focused initiatives into MPA, fisheries and other resource management plans and encouraged the advancement of a MM RAN to support marine mammal focused initiatives and supported the RAC and the Convention with their ambitious marine mammal focused work plans.

383. The observer of WWF welcomed the update of the MMAP and supported the priorities identified by the SPAW-RAC and the experts. WWF-NL also supported the creation and implementation of a 5-year action plan and the emphasis placed on the need for transboundary efforts for the effective protection of marine mammals.

384. They agreed that actions should be directed to address the specific threats to Marine Mammals in the Caribbean.

- 385.They also encouraged and were willing to actively participate in further collaboration on actions for marine mammal protection in the region.
386. WWF initiated the creation of a regional action plan for the leatherback turtles in the WCR, which was now ready for adoption, and they would be working on the creation of a Sea Turtles Recovery Action Plan in the Dutch Caribbean.
- 387.The observer of HSI supported the intervention made by Lightkeepers Foundation and WWF. HSI noted that the recent identification of Rice's Whale (*Balaenoptera ricei*) as a Critically Endangered species endemic to the WCR, and probably the rarest cetacean in the world after the Vaquita Porpoise, made the adoption of an improved MMAP even more urgent.
- 388.HSI also noted that the WCR was one of the few regions in the world to have suffered the recent global extinction of a marine mammal, the Caribbean Monk Seal (*Neomonachus tropicalis*), and that history must not be allowed to repeat itself.
- 389.The observer of Caribbean Cetacean society (CCS), Jeffrey Bernus, supported the intervention of Lightkeepers Foundation and WWF-NL. CCS looked forward to supporting parties with marine mammal research and community outreach.
- 390.CCS was also willing to share recent data for the island of the Lesser Antilles on the cetacean distribution and associated threats.
- 391.The President invited Contracting Parties to provide comments on the proposals and make recommendations to the SPAW COP12 in April 2023 for the following:
- Recommendations for the protection and recovery of the Caribbean Sea turtles (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.24)
 - Recommendations for preventing sawfish extinction in the WCR (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.25)
 - Recommendations for conserving Nassau Grouper in the WCR (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.26)
- 392.The Head of Delegation of Colombia highlighted that the information in the introduction of the recommendations for the protection and recovery of the Caribbean Sea turtles (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.24) was outdated for them. There was a new legislation which Colombia requested to be considered.
- 393.Regarding the specific recommendations presented by the Secretariat on WIDECAST, Colombia inquired who would be responsible. They asked if the report would include the interviews of the countries. Colombia recommended to not have multiple interviews but instead have one survey in order to diversify the information obtained by the countries. The interviews should take place through the national focal points.
- 394.Colombia also requested that the terms used, for example, the exploitation of sea turtle populations, be reconsidered because the term exploitation may not exist in some countries.
- 395.Colombia requested support for updating their national sea turtle plan and also requested clarification on the difference between recommendation 5 and 10:
- i. 5 - Prepare an information paper that summarizes the regulatory framework and any

available data on the exploitation of sea turtle populations by SPAW Parties currently out of compliance with Annex II mandates to protect listed species. (Page. 5).

- ii. 10 - Develop and administer a questionnaire to SPAW Parties and observers looking at issues concerning national level enforcement to help identify gaps and barriers to effective enforcement. Potential areas of investigation include: available enforcement personnel and resources; evidence laws; officer, prosecutor and judicial training in environmental crimes; penalties; successful and unsuccessful prosecutions of sea turtle law violations. (Page. 7)
396. The delegate of the Dominican Republic (DR) provided a suggestion on the report. She stated that the DR was a member of the Inter-American Convention (IAC) for the Protection of Sea Turtles. The IAC had a database that member countries had, and the parameters were updated and disclosed on an annual basis.
397. The DR had not seen if it mentioned taking into consideration the databases from other activities or agreements for sea turtles. It should however be taken into consideration to enable the provision of the data and to enable data management in synergy.
398. The delegate of the US thanked the Species working group for their work on this document. The recommendations in WG.43/INF.24 presented a productive approach to advancing sea turtle conservation in the region and were appropriately prioritized within the document.
399. The US supported the recommendations in WG.43/INF.24 and noted the importance of renewing the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Inter-American Sea Turtle Convention and SPAW to strengthen collaboration between these regional conventions. The renewal of this MOU is included in the draft SPAW Work plan for 2023-2024.
400. The US proposed that the STAC approve the following recommendations to COP 11:
- i. The STAC recommends that the COP adopt the recommendations in UNEP(DEPI)CAR WG.43/INF.24, paragraphs 4-12, and request the Secretariat and SPAW-RAC to work with WIDECASST and other experts, as appropriate, to implement the recommendations, subject to availability of resources.
 - ii. The STAC recommends that the COP request the Secretariat and SPAW-RAC to report to STAC 11 on the progress implementing the recommendations in UNEP(DEPI)CAR WG.43/INF.24.
401. The Head of Delegation of France supported the plan for the protection of sea turtles and was very involved in the MMAP.
402. The Secretariat expressed that the recommendations highlighted that some of the activities would be dependent on additional resources both financial and human and requested Contracting Parties to identify the recommendations that were most critical in the short, medium and long-term within the constraints of the human and financial resources.
403. The Secretariat noted that there were opportunities for collaboration and synergies on this topic.
404. The President reiterated the request from the Secretariat for more guidance on the recommendations.
405. The President noted the request in the chat from the observer SeaLife Law to clarify the question from Colombia.
406. The observer of SeaLife Law (Olga Koubrak) stated that the first question was focused on the protection

of sea turtles and management of bycatch and specifically looked only at the management elements.

407. The second question looked at enforcement and specifically enforcement issues that countries had. Enforcement of national legislation was an issue in the WCR. Therefore, it was important to identify the gaps that existed in order to develop actions to address the gaps.
408. The President thanked SeaLife Law for their intervention and highlighted the intervention of Panama in the chat regarding the sea turtle action plan.
409. The delegate of Panama supported the Sea Turtle Action Plan. Being a member of the IAC and having four species of sea turtles in the Panamanian Caribbean, they were pleased that these emblematic species were considered for their protection and conservation. Panama highlighted the synergies and efforts in this regard.
410. The observer of HSI drew the attention of Parties to a document submitted to CITES CoP19 on the Conservation of Marine Turtles, submitted by Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Peru and the US of America (<https://cites.org/sites/default/files/documents/E-CoP19-64-02.pdf>), and encouraged coordination between SPAW and CITES on this issue.
411. The President thanked the observer from HSI for their intervention and invited Parties to make interventions on the Sawfish.
412. The Head of Delegation of Colombia supported the recommendations on Sawfish as their work was aimed at this type of recommendations. Colombia was a national distribution country of the species and would continue to work on national initiatives for this to be reflected in the WCR.
413. The delegate of the US thanked the Species working group for their work on this document. The recommendations in WG.43/INF.25 presented a productive approach to advancing sawfish conservation in the region and were appropriately prioritized within the document.
414. The US noted that U.S. species experts have reviewed the recommendations and were prepared to provide technical assistance as needed, particularly with regard to the recommendations in paragraphs 6 and 7.
415. The US supported the recommendations in WG.43/INF.25, and proposed that the STAC approve the following recommendations to COP 11:
- i. The STAC recommends that the COP adopt the recommendations in UNEP(DEPI)CAR WG.43/INF.25, paragraphs 6-11, and requests the Species working group to assist the Secretariat and SPAW-RAC with implementation of the recommendations, as appropriate.
 - ii. The STAC recommends that the COP request the Secretariat and SPAW-RAC to report to STAC 11 on the progress implementing the recommendations in UNEP(DEPI)CAR WG.43/INF.25.
416. The Head of Delegation of France thanked the US and Colombia for their comments and supported the recommendation for the sawfish.
417. The President invited the observers to make recommendations on the sawfish.
418. *The observer of Foundation Development Inc. provided an intervention in the chat:* The fisheries-related recommendations include the establishment of data collection and program linkages. It may be useful (at least initially) to establish cooperative arrangements with regional fisheries management bodies, such as the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism.

419. The President invited Parties to make interventions on the Nassau Grouper recommendations.
420. The US supported the recommendations in WG.43/INF.26, and proposed that the STAC approve the following recommendations to COP 11:
- i. The STAC recommends that the COP adopt the recommendations in UNEP(DEPI)CAR WG.43/INF.26, paragraphs 12-14, and invites Contracting Parties, the Secretariat, and SPAW-RAC to report on progress implementing these recommendations to STAC 11.
 - ii. The STAC requests the Species working group and Protected Areas working group to undertake the joint task in UNEP(DEPI)CAR WG.43/INF.26, paragraph 15, and to report progress and make recommendations, as appropriate, to STAC 11.
421. The delegate of the DR supported the proposal for the protection of the spawning sites presented.
422. The President invited the Secretariat or SPAW-RAC to provide comments on the recommendations for the species mentioned.
423. The Secretariat acknowledged the role of the working group in helping to facilitate the implementation of these recommendations. The reference to the role of the working groups should be consistently applied throughout the areas identified. For example, the recommendation for the MMAP could also reflect the continued work of the working group and could be applied to some of the species work.
424. The work on the Nassau Grouper indicated the work of the Secretariat to broaden its relationship with regional fisheries management organizations. The Secretariat anticipated that the new PROCARIBE+ project that would also focus on improving governance would continue to promote the collaboration of organizations that focused on fisheries, marine biodiversity and pollution.
425. The Secretariat welcomed the recommendations made. There were a few areas where the emphasis was for the Contracting Parties to do the work as it referred to national implementation and therefore the role of the SPAW-RAC and the Secretariat was more to provide technical support and advice and information exchange through training.
426. The SPAW-RAC supported the work of the working group and shared their opinions and recommendations. The SPAW-RAC also supported the Contracting Parties in their work as it was necessary at the regional level and noted the issue with the availability of resources.
427. France proposed a recommendation for the parrotfish and recommended a working group to manage the species:
- The Contracting Parties shall adopt the following decision concerning parrotfish:
- i. Develop a specific task or sub-group dedicated to parrotfish in the Species working group and work towards the development of a management plan for parrotfish in the Caribbean.
 - ii. Protect and enhance existing populations by reducing the negative effects of overexploitation and unsustainable fishing methods.
 - iii. To improve the status of the marine habitats on which parrotfish depend and prevent further degradation of these habitats.
 - iv. Improve understanding of the status of parrotfish by supporting fisheries-independent research into the physiology, life history and ecology of parrotfish.
 - v. Establish a fishery-dependent data collection programme to better record fisheries and landings data to determine the effects of fishing on parrotfish populations.
 - vi. Conduct socio-economic assessments to understand the role of parrotfish

vii. Strengthen outreach, communication and public awareness

428. The President invited the Contracting Parties to make comments on the recommendations on the Parrot fish.

429. The delegate of the DR supported the proposal of France in relation to a working group on parrotfish.

430. The observer of AWI requested the President to refer to their intervention regarding the SPAW Consortium and the availability of expert resources to assist parties with implementation of the Protocol. They welcomed delegates to contact them more information.

431. The delegate of the DR supported the comments of the Secretariat regarding the work on national level programmes. Additionally, the PROCARIBE+ project which included important points on the conservation of Parrot fish and Nassau Grouper.

432. Following the agenda item, the Secretariat advised the meeting that there was a full quorum as the two-thirds required (twelve Contracting Parties to the SPAW Protocol) was present.

AGENDA ITEM 7: REPORT OF THE EXEMPTION WORKING GROUP, INCLUDING THE REPORTING FORMAT FOR EXEMPTIONS UNDER ARTICLE 11(2) OF THE SPAW PROTOCOL

433. The President invited the Exemption working group to report on the tasks assigned during the SPAW STAC9 (virtually, 17-19 March and 14-15 April 2021) and detailed in the terms of reference (UNEP(DEPI)CAR WG.42/INF.12/Rev.1), as contained in documents UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.33 and UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.35.

434. Ms Conruyt of the SPAW-RAC thanked the President. In her presentation she outlined the functioning of these working groups which was included in the terms of reference defined by the Contracting Parties and approved in January 2022 (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42 INF. 12/Rev.1).

435. For this biennial the tasks defined by STAC 9 were as follows:

- i. Review reports on exemptions submitted by the Contracting Parties.
- ii. With the assistance of the Secretariat and/or the SPAW-RAC, consider ways to facilitate the communication of waivers and make recommendations for consideration at the next biennial period, for future discussion at STAC10 and subsequent consideration at COP12.
- iii. Each party may adopt exemptions from the prohibitions prescribed for the protection and recovery of species listed in Appendices I and II for scientific, educational or management purposes necessary to ensure the survival of the species or to prevent significant harm to the species. Such exemptions must not endanger the species and must be reported to the Organization so that the Scientific and Technical Committee may evaluate the appropriateness of the exemptions granted.
- iv. The STAC appoints the chair of each working group for a two-year term. This biennium the SPAW -RAC chaired all the working groups.

436. Ms Conruyt outlined the process of the working groups to review the report and outlined the recommendations to facilitate the reporting of waivers in document UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.33.

437. Ms Conruyt shared again the results of the compilation of the experts' opinions from all working groups and pointed out that with regard to the Exemption working group there was a very low participation of

experts. This was an important issue, and it would help to have other experts contributing to the working groups.

438. The SPAW-RAC encouraged the Contracting Parties to nominate experts to encourage their participation.

439. The President thanked the SPAW-RAC for their presentation and invited the Contracting Parties to make comments.

440. The delegate of the US shared the concern regarding the lack of participation in the Exemptions working group as well as lack of compliance with the requirement to report a Parties exemption for species listed in Annex II of the SPAW Protocol.

441. The working group reviewed the US' exemption report. It recognized the work done by the US and identified this proposal as an example that could be used by all Parties wishing to make exemptions. The working group also discussed increasing participation in the working group's meetings and increasing compliance by SPAW Parties with the requirement to report exemptions.

442. The working group developed sixteen recommendations to encourage and facilitate reporting of exemptions. Those recommendations are contained in "Recommendations for STAC10 to Facilitate the Reporting of Exemptions."

443. The recommendations focus on increasing compliance with the requirement to report exemptions and recommend increasing the role of the Secretariat in proactively communicating with Parties not complying with the reporting requirements and offer its expertise in providing support to Parties that are uncertain as to how to report or evaluate activities that may not be in compliance with the Protocol.

444. The US supported the work of this working group and its report, including these recommendations. A more proactive approach from the Secretariat and/or the RAC to remind Parties of their obligation to report and to facilitate reporting exemptions would be helpful. They also agree that the US' report could serve as an example for reporting exemptions and hope that it would be used as such.

445. The Secretariat thanked the US for submitting the exemptions request. It was important to the work of the SPAW Protocol and also welcomed the recommendations presented. It was noted that some aimed to build the capacity of Contracting Parties with reporting while others were aimed at making the process easier, e.g. through the establishment of the database.

446. The Secretariat thanked the US for their offer of opportunities for peer exchanges between Contracting Parties to facilitate improved reporting in the future and noted the challenges of membership mentioned in the presentation by SPAW-RAC.

447. The Secretariat encouraged Contracting Parties to consider recommendations aimed at improved participation by Contracting Parties in all working groups of the SPAW Protocol. Information was requested on the challenges being faced by other Contracting Parties that have prevented them from providing exemption reports. This would help to determine what was needed by the Contracting Parties to support this reporting in the future.

448. The delegate of the KNL supported the comments of the Secretariat regarding having a better understanding of the challenges faced by the Contracting Parties on the reporting of exemptions.

449. The observer of Lightkeepers Foundation stated that the development of the Exemptions process and

reporting format, involved many years of work and eventual endorsement by the Parties took over 15 years to fully develop and spanned at least 4 separate COPs. Obviously, the SPAW Programme did not take this issue lightly, yet only two Parties, the Netherlands (including Curacao) and the US, had ever submitted an Exemptions report in the history of the Protocol.

450. The heart of the SPAW Protocol was to regulate and, where necessary, prohibit activities having adverse effects on threatened and endangered species in the WCR that are listed in Annexes I and II of the Protocol.
451. The COP10 and the most recent COP11 of the SPAW Protocol called on Contracting Parties to comply with the provisions of the Protocol—and many COPs before had encouraged the same. Since the taking or destruction of any species listed under Annex I and II of the Protocol is prohibited, an exemption report should be submitted to the STAC to determine pertinence of the activity.
452. Decision 12 of COP10 (2019) calls on Parties to report exemptions in a format in which all relevant information be included—even if it is not the reporting format that was produced by the Exemptions working group and endorsed by Parties at COP9 in French Guiana in 2017.
453. Recent STACs and COPs had noted information on the killing of listed species, such as marine mammals and sea turtles, that were still being allowed by some Contracting Parties without any exemption reports made to the STAC, and Decision 9 of COP10 called on parties to take specific action regarding cetaceans, including implementation of national legislation prohibiting the hunting of cetaceans and reporting the numbers and species of cetaceans taken in hunts.
454. Understanding the important obligation to report exemptions, Parties should consider the options presented in CAR WG.43/INF.35 and offered by the Exemptions working group, to advance support for Parties seeking to comply with the Protocol.
455. Specifically, Lightkeepers Foundation endorsed those recommendations presented by the working group paper and just presented by the RAC, but perhaps most importantly, they sought clarification regarding what stance the STAC would take to address non-compliance by Parties still allowing the hunting of protected species.
456. The observer thanked the US and Netherlands for providing a model example for reporting. As observers, they were sometimes able to provide data relating to the directed hunting of listed species but hoped that Parties would seek to provide data if the Protocol was to be meaningful.
457. To the Secretariat's intervention regarding barriers to reporting by Parties, in the past, a national capacities survey had been shared with Parties regarding marine mammal capacities, perhaps a similar survey could be sent regarding exemptions, compliance and reporting.
458. Several observers supported the intervention by Lightkeepers Foundation.
459. The President invited the Secretariat to comment.
460. The Secretariat believed there was an opportunity for synthesising and consolidation in terms of the stand-alone STAC10 recommendations going forward to the SPAW COP. They noted the request for greater engagement in terms of representation in the working groups, the call for the assessment of barriers and obstacles to reporting the potential as well for having targeted discussions on capacity building.

461. The Secretariat acknowledged the comment of Lightkeepers Foundation regarding the survey and suggested a possible information session with SPAW Focal Points focused on the issue of exemptions. They suggested that a discussion could be held at the COP on how to manage the non-reporting issue which was a critical part of the governance work of the Protocol and the Convention.
462. The delegate of the KNL suggested that a review be done to understand the obstructions for submitting exemption reports. Also, the SPAW Secretariat and the SPAW-RAC to make clearer when and for which activities an exemption should be reported.

AGENDA ITEM 8: EMERGING ISSUES (Deep Seabed Mining, Invasive Species, and Ocean Acidification)

463. The Meeting was invited to consider relevant emerging issues such those relating to Deep Seabed Mining, Invasive Species and Ocean Acidification.
464. The Secretariat thanked the Contracting Parties that requested clarification on the agenda item and the reason for raising some of the issues to Contracting Parties on deep seabed mining, ocean acidification and biological diversity beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ).
465. The presentation on ocean acidification by the Ocean Foundation was in response to previous recommendations and decisions of both the SPAW protocol as well as the Cartagena Convention COP that recognised that there were concerns about the impact of ocean acidification in the WCR.
466. The topic of ocean acidification was of importance to both the SPAW and the LBS protocol and addressing this had been previously requested by Contracting Parties. The Secretariat continued to be part of ongoing discussions in the region on how they could support parties in addressing this issue.
467. The issue of deep seabed mining was a controversial issue within the multilateral environmental agreement. The Secretariat advised delegates that they shared the same building as the International Seabed Authority (ISA) and was often invited to be observer at discussions that took place during the assembly.
468. The Secretariat was often asked for comments or positions and since there was no mandate on this issue from the Contracting Parties, the Secretariat took a cautionary approach. There was some work done by UNEP headquarters with regards to applying the precautionary principle in terms of promoting improved data and research and monitoring.
469. The Secretariat recognised the potential impact of deep seabed mining on the coastal and marine biodiversity within the region. It also had the potential to significantly impact marine habitats. Therefore the Secretariat requested Contracting Parties to provide comments on how they wished the Secretariat to be engaged.
470. With regards to BBNJ, the Secretariat was advised through work on the ACP MEA III project that this issue was of high relevance to many of the countries within the WCR as well as Contracting Parties. There was also interest from other regional seas programmes in how the Secretariat could collaborate potentially with the Convention on Biological Diversity.
471. The President thanked the Secretariat and invited Contracting Parties to comment on the issues presented.

472. There were no comments from Contracting Parties therefore observers were invited to provide comments.
473. The observer of AWI provided a comment specifically on invasive species. AWI noted with concern that Sint Martin was planning on trapping and killing 450 vervet monkeys in an effort to rid them of its territory.
474. AWI acknowledged that these monkeys were an invasive species brought to the island that the Dutch Sint Maarten shares with the French Saint Martin in the 1700s. Nevertheless, not only was trapping and killing them inhumane, it was also unlikely to work as it was impossible to ensure that every monkey would be caught and even if they were, those on the Saint Martin side of the island would remain, and, as generally happens in similar situations, would overpopulate to fill the gap.
475. AWI advocated immunocontraception as the more effective and humane way to control the population and stand by to offer assistance in that effort if needed.
476. The Head of Delegation of Colombia thanked the Secretariat for their explanation with regards to the ISA however they were unaware of the scope that was expected from Contracting Parties and requested clarification.
477. Colombia also wanted to advise that in April 2022, SCTL D was detected in an area around the San Andres Island in Santa Catalina where there was SPAW-listed site. There was support from MPA Connect as well as Dr Emma Doyle.
478. Help was available through the international forum and talks with the environmental local authority. Colombia wanted to advise the Parties that they were working with other environmental experts on actions to review the issue which included a work plan.
479. The President requested the Secretariat to respond to the question from Colombia on the expectation from the Contracting Parties.
480. The Secretariat referred to Article 8 of the Cartagena Convention which mentioned pollution from seabed activities and called on the Contracting Parties to take all appropriate measures to prevent, reduce and control pollution of the Convention area resulting directly or indirectly from exploration and exploitation of the seabed and its subsoil.
481. This was not a high priority focus area for either Contracting Parties to the Convention or even to the two protocols. But given the high visibility of this issue in recent years, the Secretariat at this time was only seeking some input or feedback from Contracting Parties on how they would like the Secretariat to support this.
482. The Head of Delegation of the US thanked the Secretariat for the additional context on deep seabed mining and believed that the ISA Council should remain focused on developing a regulatory framework that would ensure effective protection of the marine environment from harmful effects of activities in the Area.
483. The US considered that in many cases, ISA Member and Observer States were already over-leveraged by existing work streams on the Protection and Preservation of the Marine Environment at the ISA, including the negotiation of draft exploitation regulations and the development of binding environmental thresholds, and we are therefore concerned that commitments from SPAW to further

work on deep seabed mining could dilute the effectiveness of results at the ISA by drawing on the resources of the same subject matter experts from participating States.

484. The US therefore recommended focusing resources and attention on existing mechanisms of the ISA during this critical year for the development of environmental provisions in the exploitation regulations.

485. The Head of Delegation of France thanked the US for their comments and recognized the importance of the topic. This was where, again, this area had to be discussed in agreement for propositions.

486. The Secretariat stated that based on the decision of a meeting of SPAW Contracting Parties as well as the Cartagena Convention COP, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed with The Ocean Foundation (TOF) to facilitate cooperation.

487. One of the areas that was identified for that cooperation was ocean acidification and TOF, together with many other partners including the Secretariat, had been facilitating work on this issue and the Secretariat thought it would be important for an update of this to be provided for Contracting Parties, both for information and to encourage engagement by all Contracting Parties in the WCR.

488. The President invited the representative of TOF to present on ocean acidification.

489. Ms Alexis Valauri-Orton, Program Officer at TOF, presented on behalf of the Community of Practice (CoP) on Ocean Acidification (OA) in the Caribbean.

490. In her presentation, she noted the 2019 resolution at the Cartagena Convention Conference of the Parties which encouraged collaboration with TOF on OA as a regional topic of common concern.

491. The CoP was founded by NOAA in 2021 and is open to all countries with national waters within the Caribbean Sea. The six goals of the CoP are to: 1) Expand connectivity and engagement in the region; 2) Identify current OA research gaps, needs, and challenges; 3) Build and strengthen capacity to monitor and understand OA; 4) Identify current and/or potential impacts of OA; 5) Identify opportunities to reduce local impacts; and 6) Integrate OA science with policy.

492. In the future, the CoP hoped to conduct activities such as supporting a regional hub or training centre in the Caribbean, securing funding, and delivering technical assistance. At present, the CoP was unfunded and all activities were conducted on a volunteer basis. To help better identify and prioritize activities, the CoP had prepared a [regional needs assessment survey](#) which will be distributed to institutions, agencies, and organizations throughout the region.

493. The STAC was invited to nominate new members of the CoP, to advise on key OA science and technology gaps, to connect the CoP to complimentary projects or frameworks, and to send the needs assessment survey to relevant partners.

494. The President invited the Contracting Parties to comment on the presentation of TOF.

495. The Head of Delegation of the US thanked TOF for their presentation on the OA CoP and welcomed further collaboration on addressing OA, including through participation in the OA CoP.

496. The current OA research community in the region was small and needed further support in order to identify socioeconomic impacts of OA in the region and generate solutions. In 2023, the CoP would

identify major obstacles for researchers and for coordinators in the region around OA through a needs survey.

497. The US also encouraged the Secretariat and SPAW-RAC to continue communicating with the regional sub-commission of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, IOCARIBE, on efforts to address OA, including sharing announcements of related funding calls for the region.
498. The US shared a possible recommendation on OA: The Secretariat and SPAW-RAC, as appropriate, continue to engage with the Ocean Acidification Community of Practice and communicate with the regional subcommission of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOCaribe) regarding any potential future work on ocean acidification, including sharing announcements of related funding calls for the region.
499. The President advised TOF that the request for guidance from the STAC was not possible at the time but invited the Secretariat to respond.
500. The Secretariat stated that their engagement in the CoP had been small but strategic. It was noted that there was value in being able to share their experiences as a Secretariat to assist the CoP in sharing information about ongoing projects and activities.
501. The Secretariat welcomed the ongoing efforts to mobilise resources to establish synergies and to encourage partnerships by additional experts and countries within the WCR and noted that the recommendation provided by the US was in line with expectations.
502. The CoP and TOF requested feedback from the Secretariat on the survey form which was done through comparisons with previous surveys done by the Secretariat. The Secretariat endorsed the content of the survey and felt that it would go a long way to identify some of the capacity building needs in the WCR.
503. The Secretariat looked forward to how they could continue to support this effort and to ensure that it complemented ongoing projects and activities.
504. The Secretariat also highlighted the comment provided by US and especially the importance of the collaboration with IOC, UNESCO, IOC Caribe who also had a strong focus on the issue of ocean acidification and also with our colleagues from INVEMAR in Colombia.
505. The Secretariat advised that they had a MOU with INVEMAR as far as their membership as a broader regional activity network. Though their work primarily supported the LBS Protocol, a lot of their work also focused on protection and conserving sustainable use of marine biodiversity.
506. INVEMAR had provided additional technical support to the work of our RACs and to the Secretariat in general. The collaboration was one that was anticipated to be further deepened through the collaboration on ocean acidification.

AGENDA ITEM 9: WORK PLAN AND BUDGET OF THE SPAW SUB-PROGRAMME FOR THE 2023- 2024 BIENNIUM

507. The President invited the Secretariat to present on the “Draft Work plan and Budget of the SPAW sub-programme for the 2023-2024 Biennium” (contained in document UNEP(DEPI)CAR WG.43/3), prepared by the Secretariat on the basis of the recommendations of previous STAC and COP Meetings, as well as on the outcome of activities of the 2021-2022 Work plan for SPAW and other relevant emerging regional and international issues.

508. Ms Wollring, Associate Programme Management Officer, presented the Work plan and Budget for 2023-2024 which covered five major areas and for which she provided a summary. She advised that some of the proposed activities did not have cost implications but were covered by staff time and in-kind contributions from the Secretariat and SPAW -RAC.
509. *Programme Coordination* was focused on promoting ratification, increasing collaboration, improving MPA regional coordination and coordination. One of the main activities of the work plan and the programme coordination was the implementation of relevant SPAW STAC recommendations and decisions as well as decisions from the overall Cartagena Convention COP. Where appropriate, the coordination with relevant programmes, donors and organisations would continue in order to develop synergies and collaboration. The objectives, planned activities and outputs were outlined.
510. *Strengthening of Protected Areas in the WCR* was aimed at enhancing management effectiveness of MPAs. Assistance to Governments and NGOs with developing human capacity to increase the effectiveness of marine protected areas, sensitized governments of the need for and the importance of financing protected areas. Relevant activities under the ACP MEA III Project, IWLEARN 5, PROCARIBE+ and the Gulf of Mexico Large Marine Ecosystem (GoM LME) projects were highlighted as well as plans to enhance the network of MPA Practitioners. The objectives, planned activities and outputs were outlined.
511. *Guidelines for Management of Species and Protected Areas*, was focused on promoting the implementation and use of guidelines on protected area establishment and management and also listing and implementation of national system planning for protected areas as a mechanism to develop relevant legislation and reporting mechanism. And also, the development and implementation of guidelines on species conservation and management. Activities under this sub-programme would be primarily carried out through the work of the SPAW -RAC. The objectives, planned activities and outputs were outlined.
512. *Conservation of Threatened Endangered Species* focused on migratory species particularly marine mammals, sea turtles, and elasmobranchs. As well as support to conservation programmes on sharks and rays and parrotfishes and coordination with relevant fisheries bodies such as the IWC and WECAFC. The objectives planned activities and outputs were outlined.
513. Regarding *Conservation and Sustainable Use of Coastal and Marine Ecosystems*, the support would continue with the promotion of Ecosystem Based Management (EBM) approaches. The objectives planned activities and outputs were outlined.
514. Activities, subject to funding availability, were highlighted under each sub-programme. The Secretariat requested guidance from the Contracting Parties regarding prioritization of the activities. A preliminary budget was also presented.
515. The Secretariat also presented a proposed recommendation for consideration by Contracting Parties.
516. The President invited the SPAW-RAC to present their draft work plan for 2023-2024 followed by the presentation by France on Sargassum.
517. The SPAW-RAC presented their draft work plan for 2023-2024 for approval by Contracting Parties with a focus on priority areas.
518. *Programme Coordination* focused on the reinforcement of the coordination and collaboration between

the secretariat and the RACs through the development and implementation of the projects and support from Contracting Parties with the implementation of the SPAW protocol. Additionally support to the conservation of endangered and migratory species and looking at different ways to continue cooperation with relevant institutions on Invasive Alien Species (IAS) and collaboration with relevant partners on the issue of *Sargassum* influx.

519. The SPAW-RAC would continue to maintain the list of species under Annex I of protocol and to effectively communicate through quarterly newsletters, website and social networks. Promotion of the SPAW Protocol and the coordination of the working groups to improve their functioning and work. Also strengthening active communication with the parties through the teamwork platform and international bilateral meetings with focal points.
520. Regarding *Protected Areas*, SPAW-RAC would continue to work with the Ad Hoc working groups on Protected Areas and continue and improve the updating of the database of listed Protected Areas and further develop the cooperation between listed protected areas. It was noted that the website for submitting proposals was not being utilised therefore it was proposed to change the system. SPAW-RAC also supported the reactivation and promotion of the CaMPAM network based on the decisions of STAC10 and if the budget was available.
521. Regarding *Implementation of Guidelines*, the STAC AdHoc working groups would continue to evaluate new proposals. In more general way, the SPAW-RAC would continue to provide support to Secretariat for orientation and use of the guidance of documents criteria and process to evaluate exemptions. Efforts would continue to simplify and update the procedures, the criteria and process inclusion of protected areas under the SPAW Protocol. Also, support to protected areas and species management including invasive species with consideration for *Sargassum* influx where appropriate.
522. Regarding *Species*, specifically marine mammals, continued support to the implementation of the Marine Mammal Action Plan (MMAP) and subsequent actions. For sea turtles, support for the creation of a RAN. Invasive Alien Species work would be dependent of the availability of funding. Reference was made to the CAMAC project and a request was made to Contracting Parties for their support for the project. With regards to the fish species, support to Contracting Parties to strengthen the conservation and sustainable management of the parrot fish. Lastly, there was a focus on greater collaboration with CITES.
523. Regarding *Coastal and Marine Ecosystems*, it was focused on the reactivation of the GCRMN-Caribbean Network for coral reef monitoring. Also continued work on Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease and other existing or new species and to share resources provided by partners such as GCFI and NOAA. With regards to mangroves and wetlands, the SPAW-RAC developed the activities designed to promote the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands and mangrove and reengaging on Ramsar/CariWet including the promotion and implementation of the mangrove manual.
524. Parties were encouraged to contribute to activities for the conservation and sustainable use of seagrass beds through engagement with regional and global seagrass initiatives. SPAW-RAC encouraged collaboration on the issue of *Sargassum* including joint programming between SPAW and LBS through the *Sargassum* working group and with relevant organizations and conventions.
525. The President thanked the SPAW-RAC for their presentation. The Secretariat requested to comment ahead of the presentation from France.
526. The Secretariat acknowledged the presentation and commended the SPAW-RAC on their work. With regards to the presentation on *Sargassum* from France, the Secretariat highlighted that the proposal built

on previous STAC recommendations and COP decisions from the SPAW Protocol and reflected previous activities that were also included in the status report and in the presentation.

527. The Sargassum working group was previously established, however the report previously developed by them including the activities were not extensively discussed at the last STAC therefore the working group did not have a mandate for the biennium. The Government of France had thought it was important to reintroduce or represent and what was previously endorsed by Contracting Parties.
528. The Head of Delegation of France presented on the Sargassum action plan and provided a brief background on the issue of Sargassum influx in the WCR and outlined the possible reasons, challenge, threats to public health and impacts. Reference was made to the White Paper, which was coordinated by the previous SPAW Programme Officer, Ms Ileana Lopez. There was a necessity to adopt regional actions to address the issue including the implementation of national plans.
529. They emphasized that the information paper (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.37) was not a French proposal as it referenced activities relevant to SPAW. The action plan included in the document was drafted by the past SPAW Programme Officer and presented at STAC9 however due to the difficulty of the STAC it was not given the required attention.
530. France felt it was important to reintroduce the previously proposed action plan to STAC10 and recommended that it be adopted and suggested working jointly in a working group ahead of the COP. The issue was an important regional issue especially due to its impact.
531. The President thanked France for their presentation and invited the Meeting to review the Draft Work plan, prioritize activities, and make recommendations to assist with its finalization prior to being adopted by SPAW COP12, the Twentieth Intergovernmental Meeting on the Action Plan of the Caribbean Environment Programme, and Seventeenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the WCR, tentatively April 2023, respectively.
532. The Head of Delegation of Colombia thanked France for their presentation on the management of Sargassum. Colombia reiterated their position regarding their continued support to the SPAW-RAC and would like to contribute to the objectives of the biennium more often.
533. The Head of Delegation of the US greatly appreciated the presentation of the draft Work plan. Many thanks to the Secretariat and SPAW-RAC for pulling together so many resources and preparing this draft plan for the next biennium. This was a very ambitious plan, and as noted earlier, the US would like to encourage all parties present - Contracting Parties, observers, the Secretariat, and the SPAW-RAC - to focus on and prioritize what is most needed to effectively implement the Protocol over the next biennium. There is a need to clearly prioritize activities that directly support implementation of obligations under the Convention and Protocol and avoid detracting attention and resources from that most essential work.
534. They were very pleased to see activities in the Work plan regarding assistance for SPAW Contracting Parties in implementing national legislation to fulfill obligations under and effectively implement the Protocol. The Work plan should also prioritize implementation of recommendations for the conservation and sustainable management of species listed under the Protocol.
535. For this biennium, that would include those recommendations considered the previous day on Caribbean sea turtles, Nassau grouper, and sawfish, as well as those on facilitating the reporting of exemptions. Implementation of such recommendations directly supported fundamental implementation

of the Protocol.

536. The US appreciated that the process for developing the SPAW Work plan included opportunities for Contracting Parties and working group experts to provide input, in line with recommendations 3 and 8 from STAC9.
537. The US hoped that in the future, consultation with working groups would take place at a point when working groups were further along in their processes so they would have a better sense of potential follow-on work in the next biennium. They also hoped that Contracting Parties would have an opportunity to review the full draft work plan and provide substantive comments ahead of the STAC, as envisioned in the STAC9 recommendations.
538. Along these lines, the US had a number of comments and questions regarding the draft Work plan for the next biennium. With respect for the limited amount of time available during the STAC, the US would gladly submit their comments and questions in writing after the meeting. To provide one example, the draft work plan suggested that the Secretariat would “Support Contracting Parties in their contributions to treaty negotiations for Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) with regards to the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) within the Cartagena Convention Area.”
539. However, given there were very limited areas beyond national jurisdiction within the Convention Area, and the BBNJ negotiations would hopefully conclude in March of 2023, before the SPAW COP, it was unclear how the Secretariat would support Contracting Parties in the negotiations.
540. The US would propose the work plan reflect that “upon request, the Secretariat would provide information about SPAW and its work,” and we would strongly prefer to use the full name of the process, “the Intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction.”
541. Additionally, as previously articulated, the US urged that work on deep seabed mining be done through existing mechanisms of the ISA during this critical period for the development of environmental provisions in the exploitation regulations. The US did not see a SPAW-specific role at this time.
542. In line with the process following STAC9, the US proposed that the STAC recommend that Contracting Parties submit comments on the draft Work plan by a specific deadline so the Work plan may be adjusted accordingly before the COP. If needed, the Secretariat could convene a drafting group.
543. The US specifically proposed the following recommendation: (Review of Documents before the COP) Contracting Parties provide comments on the “Draft Work Plan for the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife Sub-Programme for the 2023-2024 biennium” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/3) prior to submission to SPAW COP12 for approval. If needed, the Secretariat convene Contracting Parties in a drafting group to review and address the comments submitted on the Draft Work Plan and circulate the revised Draft Work Plan to Contracting Parties prior to submission to SPAW COP12.
544. They thanked France for their proposal regarding a Sargassum Action Plan for the Cartagena Convention and recognized Sargassum inundation to be an exceptionally challenging issue and appreciated the intention to promote action within SPAW and build on previous work.
545. At the same time, the US was concerned that undertaking this work within SPAW would duplicate ongoing efforts outside of the Convention and will detract limited resources from what they consider to be priority activities for SPAW, particularly implementation of existing obligations under the

Protocol.

546. Instead, they proposed that STAC9 encourage Contracting Parties and observers, as appropriate, to engage in and contribute to fora like the Sargassum Info Hub, GEO Blue Planet's Sargassum working group, and the IOCARIBE.
547. They also encouraged the Secretariat and SPAW-RAC, as appropriate, to provide information regarding the SPAW Protocol and its work to such fora, upon request.
548. The US proposed the STAC make the following recommendations to COP12: Contracting Parties engage in and contribute to relevant fora, as appropriate, including the Sargassum Information Hub and the Sargassum working group coordinated by the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) Blue Planet Initiative, as well as the IOC of UNESCO Sub-Commission for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions (IOCARIBE). Upon request, the Secretariat and SPAW-RAC, as appropriate, provide information on SPAW and its work to such fora.
549. The President thanked the US for their intervention.
550. The delegate of the KNL mentioned the reference to the GBF and added that the accompanying decisions were also important for Contracting Parties in the region and should be viewed as an outcome of the STAC.
551. The KNL fully endorsed the link with the procurement process and added that there were a lot of interesting linkages which could facilitate further implementation of the SPAW Protocol.
552. They emphasized the importance of reactivating CariWet and noted that it was referenced as an optional activity in the work plan however it was of great importance in the Dutch Caribbean and suggested that it be an activity in the work plan.
553. The KNL had editorial and grammatical comments to share with the Secretariat including two questions. One on the expected outcome of the development of a cooperative mechanism, there was a lack of clarity what the outcomes were. Secondly there was mention of a regional wildlife enforcement network supported however clarification was needed on the context in which the network functioned and whether it already existed or if it was new.
554. The President thanked the KNL for their intervention.
555. The SPAW-RAC requested to comment on the Sargassum proposal. The SPAW-RAC proposed to offer support and not to execute the work in its entirety, this was due to the current responsibilities and also availability of funds for human resources.
556. The Head of Delegation of France thanked all for their comments. It was important to look at the priorities concerning the action plan to guarantee the guidance of SPAW-RAC. The required action included different levels, short-, medium- and long- term. The White Paper provided information on activities undertaken and France recommended that the work be continued.
557. France encouraged countries to increase their participation and assist other countries to execute and coordinate their activities. If countries chose to work on Sargassum then SPAW-RAC would assist if additional funding was available as there were no funding resources available from SPAW-RAC.
558. The President thanked France for their comments and requested the Secretariat to comment based on

the interventions.

559. The Secretariat thanked all the Contracting Parties for their comments and feedback on the draft work plan. With regards to the time, the Secretariat welcomed the continued input of Contracting Parties to the work plan and noted that, going forward, the opportunity to have the discussions of working groups to better inform the formulation of the work plan.
560. The demands from various Contracting Parties were very high and the Secretariat reflected on the major issues raised by Contracting Parties when preparing the Work plan. The Secretariat appreciated the comments and the endorsement of the need to set priorities and the need to focus on the context of supporting Contracting Parties in their delivery of their obligations under the Protocol.
561. The Secretariat highlighted that many donors and partners including UNEP headquarters regard Regional Seas Conventions and action plans to play a very important role and tried as best as possible to be faithful to what had been mandated by Contracting Parties and ensured that issues relevant to the work of the Secretariat and the Protocol were brought to the table.
562. The issue of Sargassum was not of high importance at the global level because it primarily affected two regions, West Africa and the Caribbean and therefore, the Secretariat recognized that there was a significant amount of activities going on by partners already.
563. It was sometimes through the work of the Secretariat through networking and collaboration that the issue got a higher profile at a political level. For instance, through the White Paper that was presented at the last STAC and COP, and the UNEP foresight brief.
564. It was important that the resources or the effort by the Secretariat was not reduced and they welcomed language that would still be inclusive and not have the Secretariat completely separated from the issue and provide guidance on how to continue coordination, networking and possibly identification of resource implications for any more concrete involvement in terms of new projects and activities to ensure Contracting Parties were aware.
565. One of the high priority areas that had been addressed under the LBS protocol was the issue of nutrient pollution and one of the potential impacts that had been identified was Sargassum. Therefore, within the framework of the LBS Protocol, Contracting Parties have requested that some significant work continue under the LBS Protocol to identify the sources of pollution and the impacts that were being felt on the coastal and marine environment. The Secretariat had to be focused to ensure that ongoing activities were not diluted.
566. The Head of Delegation of France stated that it was evident that the efforts so far were not enough to address the Sargassum issue, and it should be prioritized. The working group should meet and develop clear mandates and discuss the best way forward on the issue, additionally with the link to LBS, as it was proposed, and a mandate given by the COP in 2019. France proposed a working drafting group for the work plan in order to provide a proposal to the COP.
567. The President thanked France for the intervention and acknowledged the recommendation for a drafting group to further work on the draft work plan.
568. The Head of Delegation of the US stated that their proposed draft recommendation could be further improved to offer more flexibility for the Secretariat and SPAW-RAC to engage with relevant fora. There was a very helpful recommendation during SPAW STAC9 that provided a bit more flexibility and so the US would be happy to consider reissuing the same recommendation.

569. The US also noted that there was interest in understanding the needs of Contracting Parties with respect to Sargassum and connecting them with available resources which could be considered including in the draft recommendations.
570. The observer of HSI inquired about the earlier presentation by the Secretariat which mentioned the APC and also discussed wildlife in crime or enforcement. HSI wanted to know the extent to which these two might be linked given that shared species such as sharks and manta rays were fish both in the Indian, Pacific and in the Caribbean. Whether there was anything within the level of coordination going on with the APC and SPAW to review shared information relating to the movement of IUU fishing flight fleets or other illegal activities taking care of the fishing of these species. If this was the case, then the Secretariat should coordinate these with other organizations or bodies looking at similar issues as it was an important area of cooperation.
571. The observer of Lightkeepers Foundation responded to a question from the delegate from the KNL. The comments amplified the item 2.4.2.5 on page 18 and 19 of the draft work plan for the 2023-24 biennium. There was a sentence about greater collaboration with CITES towards enforcement on illegal trade of species and an indicated output of the work plan was to support a regional wildlife enforcement network on page 19.
572. The illegal trafficking in wildlife was recognized as a global threat to many protected plant and animal species and the UN General Assembly had adopted several resolutions, most recently in 2019, recognizing the economic, social, and environmental impacts of the global illegal trade in wildlife. Many countries in the WCR were parties to CITES and are bound by its provisions.
573. The Latin American region, including the Caribbean, had been designated a priority region for combating wildlife crime by the UN. Both terrestrial and marine species in the region are harvested, hunted and trafficked, including turtles and other reptiles, queen conch, sharks, birds, and forest products. Similarly, wildlife was trafficked through the Caribbean in transit to other countries.
574. Wildlife enforcement networks had proven to be effective tools in combating wildlife crime elsewhere. However, no such formal network currently existed in the Caribbean region. At STAC8 in Panama in 2018, Parties welcomed the convening of the Special Session on the CaribWEN successfully organized by the UNODC and CEP with the support of the Animal Welfare Institute.
575. As a result, recommendation 6 of STAC8 was endorsed at COP10 and asked for the Secretariat to continue its collaboration with UNODC and interested partners to further develop and strengthen capacities to address wildlife crime in the Caribbean. Most recently, the 4th Global Meeting of the Wildlife Enforcement Networks (WENS) was held concurrent with CITES (COP19) meeting in Panama in November 2022 and refocused the interest of several Parties in the Region.
576. The momentum from this Global Meeting of the WENS resulted in a small informal group of countries and their representatives pooling together their interest to formally established a CaribWEN. The draft MOU that was in motion in 2017 was now being revisited. This was positive news and should be welcomed by CEP and the SPAW Protocol. Further, The Bahamas was working to reinforce its own BAWEN or Bahamas Wildlife Enforcement Network and may be able to provide leadership in tandem with other countries that have expressed an interest, including Trinidad and Tobago and Haiti.
577. Lightkeepers Foundation hoped that together we could welcome this renewed interest in establishing a formal CaribWEN. Because Parties may look to CEP and the Secretariat for guidance in how to engage on this issue through country focal points, we believed a positive decision from the STAC to the COP

reaffirming the commitment of the Secretariat to actively support and facilitate the development of a CaribWEN was in order.

578. Lightkeepers Foundation also recommended that a technical assessment of the illegal and undocumented trade in the Region be conducted for presentation to the Parties in the next Biennium to advance the objectives, and guide the effectiveness, of a CaribWEN, as Parties interest was encouraged.
579. They stood ready to help support this initiative and to help the Secretariat and Parties advance a regional wildlife enforcement network (CaribWEN).
580. The President thanked the observer from Lightkeepers Foundation for their intervention and requested guidance from the Parties on the way forward.
581. *Several observers endorsed the comments of Lightkeepers Foundation in the chat.* AWI added that it was proud to continue its involvement in the CaribWEN work.
582. The Secretariat stated that the strong suggestion proposed by the US regarding the previous recommendation of SPAW STAC9 and the COP provided a mandate and flexibility in terms of the type of work that was done during the biennium on networking, coordination, promotion and on linking Contracting Parties where there were possible opportunities, new projects and activities.
583. The Head of Delegation of France raised a point which the Secretariat had experienced in terms of an understanding of what was occurring and where there were opportunities. The Secretariat suggested possibly establishing a targeted group with a specific time frame that did an initial assessment of activities, opportunities and the gaps and could better inform how the Secretariat and the SPAW-RAC could be involved in future activities.
584. A full reactivation of the Sargassum working group was not perhaps yet required but instead a sort of partial reactivation of a dedicated group of interested parties and observers to better understand where the gaps were that linked specifically to countries implementing their obligations under the SPAW Protocol and more broadly under the Convention.
585. The Secretariat acknowledged the comments made by observers regarding the work plan's focus on enforcement and wildlife trade. Several global agreements, such as CITES and CBD, viewed the SPAW protocol as a consistent regional mechanism to implement some of the obligations under these global agreements. The Secretariat clarified that they were not leading this issue and that regional bodies and mechanisms were in place to support it.
586. The Secretariat would continue to collaborate with regional enforcement networks, particularly those related to fisheries, to address issues relevant to the SPAW Protocol and its enforcement. The Secretariat viewed this as part of their role, and with the endorsement of SPAW STAC and COP, they will continue to facilitate collaboration and identify opportunities for capacity building support to Contracting Parties.
587. The Head of Delegation of US thanked the Secretariat for their comments and was interested in understanding how this conversation could evolve and reemphasized that they understood Sargassum influx and Sargassum inundation in coastal areas to be a major challenge and supported the Secretariat and SPAW-RAC as appropriate with continued engagement on this issue.
588. They proposed recommendations that Contracting Parties and perhaps the Secretariat engaged specifically with initiatives like the Geo Blue Planet, Sargassum Information Hub and the Geo Blue

Planet Sargassum working group was because they understood that a lot of the work on this issue was being done through those fora in terms of understanding what countries were doing on Sargassum and the needs and challenges being done in that fora.

589. “Recommends that Secretariat [and perhaps include the SPAW-RAC as appropriate,] continue coordination and collaboration with relevant regional and global initiatives. The US also noted that there was interest in understanding the needs of Contracting Parties with respect to Sargassum and connecting them with available resources which could be considered including in the draft recommendations.”
590. A lot of the relevant experts that SPAW would likely tap to work on this issue were participating through that avenue. The US understood that to be a very productive space and the US did not wish to duplicate efforts.
591. The US also understood there was some interest in exploring opportunities for the Sargassum working group under SPAW to conduct specific work. They considered further in terms of how SPAW and the Sargassum Working group could engage on the issue and could contribute to this space in a way that added value rather than duplicating some of the ongoing work happening through other fora.
592. For instance, something the Sargassum working group could do was to consult with Contracting Parties or to send a survey to determine how Sargassum influxes were impacting their abilities to implement the SPAW Protocol or LBS protocol or make other connections to the specific realm of the Convention. It was something to be considered thoroughly to recognize what needed to be done to come to a conclusion on this issue during the meeting.
593. They cautioned against a drafting group on this issue, specifically ahead of the COP and recognized that there was a lot of work to be done in a very short period before the COP and there are a lot of issues or documents on the table that were seen as a priority for adoption at the COP.
594. Those were actions that certainly needed to take priority in terms of working to finalize them or get them to a point where they were ready to be presented to the COP for adoption. Given the timeline, there was a very short window to complete and it was important not to complicate the process or pose a risk to any of the priority areas for presentation to the COP.
595. The Head of Delegation of Colombia requested more clarity on the procedures and to reflect on the dynamics of the working groups in 2022. They also requested guidance from the Secretariat and the SPAW-RAC on how to improve their work mainly to support the question from the US on the challenges to be faced over in the upcoming weeks.
596. The Head of Delegation of France reiterated that it was important not to duplicate the work done for \$5 million to manage Sargassum. It was important to work with more coordination and suggested a drafting group.
597. The President requested the SPAW-RAC to comment on the discussion.
598. The SPAW-RAC had not worked on the Sargassum issue in two years however to advance this topic, but proposed a small working group, with the Contracting Parties that wished to participate, to work on the needs according to the SPAW Protocol and the capacity of the Secretariat and SPAW-RAC in terms of financial and human resources.
599. The President thanked the Parties for their comments and noted that a lot of work was needed between

the STAC and the COP. He suggested following up on the suggestion by the SPAW-RAC and the Secretariat to work in a drafting group on the work plan to fine tune it as well as the final text or language on a recommendation on how we moved on with the topic of Sargassum. Also, to reiterate what was stated by the Secretariat regarding the short deadline.

600. The Secretariat stated that the previous recommendation from SPAW STAC9 and the elements of the discussion that have took place during this STAC, the Secretariat believed it was quite appropriate that the recommendation that the US had indicated, with some additional flexibility built, essentially allowed the mandates (the Secretariat, SPAW-RAC and Contracting Parties) to engage in general networking, discussion and collaboration.
601. The Secretariat noted France's suggestion to potentially reactivate a working group or create a small focus group to specifically address the issue of Sargassum. They discussed some general ideas for activities the group could undertake.
602. The Secretariat found the recommendation useful but felt it should be further discussed during the COP to allow more time for the Parties and technical experts to deliberate. They suggested areas for the focus group to work on, such as conducting a survey and assessing needs or gaps.
603. SPAW STAC acknowledged the information presented and recognized that a small focus group could help identify how best to work on the issue of Sargassum. The specific Terms of Reference for the focus group would require further thought and would be developed during the COP.
604. The Secretariat hoped that the suggestion was acceptable to the Parties and then perhaps then we could perhaps have a recommendation drafted along that along that spirit.
605. The Head of Delegation of US requested clarification on the small focus group. France indicated that a Sargassum working group existed and while it was recognized that the working group was not assigned any tasks in the last biennium, the US requested further elaboration on the idea presented and was happy to discuss in the context of the recommendations of STAC10.
606. The Head of Delegation of Colombia repeated the question regarding the creation of a new group and was awaiting a response to the question.
607. The Secretariat responded to the question of the Parties. A Sargassum working group had been established through previous SPAW STAC and SPAW COP meetings and was very active prior to the last meeting of the SPAW STAC. There was no functioning group for the last biennium.
608. The Secretariat asked the Parties if the experts initially included in the working group were still available or interested and asked if the scope of the working group, as defined by the original Terms of Reference, was now being superseded by the other regional mechanisms. The Secretariat had no issues if Contracting Parties felt that the most efficient way forward would be a reactivation of the working group.
609. The idea of the small focus group was to address specific issues and to provide the focus on Sargassum moving forward. The work could be done by the Sargassum working group if it was reestablished with a focused mandate which would be advised by Contracting Parties. The Secretariat and SPAW-RAC would facilitate what was most efficient and effective to achieve the desired outputs.
610. The President stated that the third option of reactivation of the Sargassum group would require an adjustment of the terms of reference by Contracting Parties. The common denominator in the three

options presented was to have a subgroup of interested Contracting Parties to work on the reactivation or the terms of reference. The President requested the Parties to propose language that captured the discussion if Contracting Parties considered it to be a good way forward.

AGENDA ITEM 10: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

611. The President invited the delegate from the KNL to present on information paper "Protecting Blue Corridors" ([UNEP\(DEPI\)/CAR WG.43/INF.42](#)).

612. The delegate of the KNL brought to the attention of the STAC the report on the Blue Corridor approach which was based on existing historical data. The global main whale migration routes had been mapped for the Caribbean Sea. There was a lack of data for the WCR and the KNL thought it would be very useful, and in line, with SPAW Protocol and the Marine Mammal Action Plan, to map these whale highways for the region.

613. The representative requested permission from the President to give the floor to WWF, the group responsible for the programme. The President requested, Stacey MacDonald, representative from WWF to take the floor.

614. WWF, in collaboration with the KNL, worked on an information paper to introduce the Contracting Parties to global and collaborative projects and reports called protecting blue corridors. WWF believed this approach could be useful for marine mammal conservation in the WCR.

615. Protecting blue corridors was a report by WWF, the University of California, Santa Cruz, Oregon State University and University of Southampton visualising the satellite tracks of over 1000 migratory whales of eight species worldwide. The analysis was based on 30 years of data from 50 research groups.

616. The report drew on the practise of connectivity conservation, which was already widely used on land but applied it to the world's seas and in particular to wills. It provided a comprehensive look at the main global will migration routes, the so-called whale superhighways and the threats they face across these superhighways.

617. The report outlined how the blue corridor approach was a science-based collaborative conservation method and based on the analysis of the collected data, visual maps outlining the migratory routes of whales had been created.

618. The report also outlined how and where whales encountered multiple and growing threats along these routes. Thus, the blue corridor approach could identify the most critical habitats for whales to assist the development of local, national, regional and global management measures to safeguard whales throughout their migratory pathways and to mitigate threats.

619. WWF believed that taking a regional cooperative approach to designing marine connectivity, conservation strategies and solutions for the WCR served to meet the identified objectives of the SPAW protocol and the SPAW-RAC, namely, to enhance regional collaboration and communication on marine mammal conservation and management.

620. The concept of blue corridors was not new as it underscored the importance of connectivity between MPAs, which had already been identified and recognised as strategically important to ensure the protection of marine habitats and species beyond their geographical borders. Thus, the blue corridor

approach was a strategy that could achieve the existing objectives and recommendations as stipulated in the updated marine Mammal Action Plan.

621. The Blue Corridor report and approach presented several opportunities for the conservation of cetaceans in the WCR. It addressed the need for enhanced regional coordination and collaboration between Caribbean countries to address the emerging environmental issues, in particular, the need for sharing resources was also highlighted in the draft SPAW Work plan 2023-2024.
622. Mapping whale superhighways for the WCR by compiling migratory routes and other critical habitats based on existing marine mammal data could serve as a framework to support the creation of a network of MPAs, or sister sanctuaries, along migratory routes, as identified by the Marine Mammal Action Plan.
623. Implementing the blue corridors approach offered opportunities for synergies with the recently announced CAMAC project. And lastly, the blue corridor approach offered opportunities to explore this collaborative approach for other migratory megafauna. WWF shared an example of a map that could be created for the WCR.
624. The President thanked WWF and requested the KNL take the floor.
625. The KNL stated that two recommendations were developed. The first one acknowledged the need for mapping of these whale superhighways and also the request for data so that Contracting Parties could provide data in order to develop these whale superhighways. The second one was to acknowledge that the blue corridor approach could be seen as a conservation approach.
626. The recommendation would request Contracting Parties to acknowledge the need for the mapping the whale migration routes based on existing data and Contracting Parties to make available the existing relevant data they have or to reach out to NGO's or scientific organisations in their respective countries to make this data available and or to participate in a mapping effort.
627. The President thanked the KNL for their comments and invited Contracting Parties to take the floor.
628. The Head of Delegation of the US thanked to the KNL for bringing this report to attention of the STAC and thanked WWF for the presentation. The US noted the report and welcomed the work of the authors.
629. They reiterated their commitment to marine mammal conservation and, in particular, the conservation of whales. It was recognised that much of the information necessary to support this effort did not exist in the WCR. The updated Marine Mammal Action Plan, for many of the threats, called upon Contracting Parties to assess the marine mammals within their waters and map these threats.
630. The US continued to support mapping marine mammal distributions and threats as an important tool for marine mammal conservation and management and believed that the updated Marine Mammal Action Plan adequately addressed this issue. The US hoped this idea could be covered through the Marine Mammal Action Plan.
631. The observer of CCS supported the approach presented by the WWF offered to share their data from the last two years, especially data from St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia and all their island from the OECS where the data was lacking.
632. The CCS had available data for distribution of all cetaceans and would continue this work and maybe further surveying would be conducted in other islands of the WCR in the year ahead.

633. *The CCS provided an intervention in the chat:* Caribbean Regional Data base was also now starting to be implemented to gather data on threats as well as analysis of photo ID: <https://www.ccs-ngo.com/threats-result>.
634. The Secretariat brought to the attention of the SPAW Contracting Parties and particularly, given the comments about the lack of data and information, that in the presentation on the SPAW work plan reference was made to an ongoing effort by the Secretariat to develop a regional data and information platform that would serve as a repository for information generated both on marine pollution and marine biodiversity.
635. The idea was that this would be presented more formally during the COP. As was mentioned, because the monitoring and assessment working group of the LBS Protocol had provided some technical input into the design of that platform, it will also be shared with LBS Contracting Parties at the LBS STAC that week.
636. It did offer an opportunity for the information that was so important for monitoring the movement of cetaceans and generally on marine biodiversity. It was made available for Contracting Parties to enable a more informed decision-making process.
637. The Secretariat also advised the meeting of the networking discussions with the Contracting Parties who were involved with the Caribbean biological corridor. This was an activity which was being coordinated through UNEP and through our regional office in Panama and involved Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Cuba and Puerto Rico.
638. They highlighted several the activities that they were working on and also that while their initial work had focused more on terrestrial biological corridors, they were going into a phase now that would also look at marine biological corridors. The Secretariat advised them that as their work continued, they could showcase two Contracting Parties of the wider Cartagena Convention as a possible model.
639. The Secretariat was not involved with the implementation but thought it was important for Contracting Parties, and in particular the parties involved with the initiative, for the continuation of synergies.
640. The Head of Delegation of France thanked the Secretariat, WWF, US and KNL for their comments and expressed that the French Agency for Biodiversity was interested in working on this topic.
641. Meeting participants were invited to raise any other issues not covered by the preceding agenda items, but which were relevant to the scope of the Meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 11: ADOPTION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MEETING

642. The Rapporteur of the Meeting presented the draft recommendations of the Meeting (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/4). The Meeting was invited to adopt the recommendations, with amendments and corrections to be introduced as appropriate. Following considerable discussion related to recommendations I, IV, VI and IX, the recommendations were approved and will be made available to the SPAW COP12 in April 2023 for adoption.
643. The President reminded delegates that the recommendations would be circulated for further review and comment following the STAC after which it would be finalized by the drafting group.

AGENDA ITEM 12: CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

644. The Secretariat thanked the Contracting parties and the observers for their comprehensive analysis of the status report, the draft work plan and the documents submitted for consideration. There was a short time provided for in-depth discussion on a number of technical issues and proposals and the Secretariat expressed appreciation for the effort by Contracting Parties to achieve consensus, especially on issues where there were diverging views.
645. Appreciation was expressed to the delegation of the KNL who joined the meeting in person and to the President for his guidance, particularly through the recommendations for the meeting.
646. The Head of Delegation of the US thanked the Secretariat and the Bureau for a successful meeting as well as Contracting Parties and observers that were present.
647. The Head of Delegation of Colombia thanked the work of the Contracting Parties and observers and expressed their commitment to continue work on conservation of all ecosystems in the WCR.
648. The Meeting closed on Wednesday 1 February 2023 at 2:32 p.m. by the President of the Meeting.

ANNEX I - PROVISIONAL AGENDA

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. Opening of the Meeting
2. Organisation of the Meeting
 - 2.1. Rules of Procedure
 - 2.2. Election of Officers
 - 2.3. Organisation of Work
3. Adoption of the Agenda
4. Status of activities of the SPAW Sub-Programme for the period 2021-2022, including activities of the Regional Activity Centre for SPAW (SPAW-RAC) in Guadeloupe, and review of the Decisions of the 11th Conference of Parties to the SPAW Protocol.
5. Report from the Protected Areas Working group
6. Report from the Species Working group
7. Report from the Exemptions Working group
8. Emerging Issues
9. Draft Work Plan for the SPAW Sub-Programme for the 2023-2024 biennium.
10. Other Business
11. Adoption of the Recommendations of the Meeting
12. Closure of the Meeting

ANNEX II - LIST OF DOCUMENTS

PROVISIONAL LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Symbol	Title	Agenda Item
<u>Working Documents</u>		
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/1	Provisional Agenda	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/2	Provisional Annotated Agenda	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/3	Draft Work plan of the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) Sub-programme for the 2023-2024 Biennium	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/4	<i>Recommendations of the Tenth Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) of the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) in the Wider Caribbean Region (to be prepared during the meeting)</i>	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/5	<i>Report of the Tenth Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) of the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) in the Wider Caribbean Region (to be prepared after the meeting)</i>	

Symbol	Title	Agenda Item
<u>Information Documents</u>		
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.1	Provisional List of Documents	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.2	Provisional List of Participants <i>(to be finalised during the meeting)</i>	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.3	Status of Ratification of the SPAW Protocol	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.4	Overview of Procedural Deadlines under the SPAW Protocol	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.5	Draft Status of Activities of the SPAW Sub-programme for 2021- 2022 (includes status of STAC9 Recommendations and COP11 Decisions)	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.6	Report of the SPAW Regional Activity Centre (SPAW-RAC) in Guadeloupe: operations and budget for the period 2021-2022	

Symbol	Title	Agenda Item
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.7	SPAW Regional Activity Centre Strategic Plan	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.8	Exploring the feasibility of implementing recommendations identified in CaMPAM effectiveness assessments	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.9	Exploring the feasibility of implementing recommendations identified in the evaluation of the connectivity among MPAs of the Wider Caribbean	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.10	Rationale and Information Paper on CaMPAM and Development of an Ecological Network of SPAW-listed Protected Areas	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.11	Report on WIDECASST Activities: 2021-2022	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.12	Report of the STAC Protected Areas Working group	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.13	Review of Aruba's proposal for listing of "Parke Marino Aruba" under the SPAW Protocol	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.14	Review of France's proposal for listing of the "Parc Naturel Marin de Martinique" under the SPAW Protocol	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.15	Proposal of the "Parc Naturel Marin de Martinique" for listing under the SPAW Protocol	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.16	Report of the STAC Working group on the Listing of Species under the Annexes to the SPAW Protocol	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.17	Proposal by the Republic of France and the Kingdom of Netherlands for the inclusion of all parrot fishes (Perciformes: Scaridae) in Annex III of the SPAW Protocol	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.18	Proposal by the Republic of France and the Kingdom of Netherlands for the uplisting of Oceanic whitetip shark (<i>Carcharhinus longimanus</i>) from annex III to annex II of the SPAW protocol	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.19	Proposal of the Republic of France and the Kingdom of Netherlands for the inclusion of the whale shark <i>Rhincodon typus</i> in Appendix II of SPAW Protocol	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.20	Proposal of the Republic of France and the Kingdom of Netherlands for the inclusion of 3	

Symbol	Title	Agenda Item
	hammerhead shark <i>Sphyrna mokarran</i> in Appendix II of the SPAW Protocol	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.21	Proposal by the Kingdom of the Netherlands for the listing of the Lesser Antillean Iguana (<i>Iguana delicatissima</i>) from Appendix III to Appendix II of the SPAW Protocol.	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.22	Proposal by the Kingdom of Netherlands for the inclusion of the Caribbean reef shark (<i>Carcharhinus perezii</i>) in Appendix III of the SPAW Protocol	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.23	Proposal by the Republic of France and the Kingdom of Netherlands for the inclusion of the Giant manta ray species <i>Manta birostris</i> in Appendix II of the SPAW Protocol	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.24	Recommendations for the protection and recovery of the Caribbean Sea Turtles	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.25	Recommendations for the conservation of sawfish (Pristidae) in the Wider Caribbean Region	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.26	Recommendations for conserving Nassau Grouper in the Wider Caribbean Region	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.27	Summary of the Caribbean Node of the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN – Caribbean) Activities 2021-2022	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.28	SPAW-RAC 2021 Call for proposals report	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.28 Add1	SPAW-RAC 2021 Call for proposals all reports	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.29	Cari'Mam: final report	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.30	Carib-coast: final report (January 2019-December 2022)	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.31	Update on the Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals (MMAP) in the Wider Caribbean and recommendations	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.32	Potential costs, benefits, and operational framework of a Marine Mammal Regional Activity Network (RAN)	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.33	Report of the STAC Exemptions Working group	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.34	United States Exemptions Report to the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife Protocol of the Cartagena Convention for 2021	

Symbol	Title	Agenda Item
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.35	Report for considering ways to facilitate reporting of exemptions / Recommendations for STAC10 to Facilitate the Reporting of Exemptions	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.36	Project under development: Caribbean Marine Megafauna and Anthropogenic Activities (CAMAC)	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.37	Proposal by the French Republic on Sargassum	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.38	Review of Operations, Functioning, and Financing of Regional Activity Centres and Regional Activity Networks of the Cartagena Convention: RAC/RAN Review Work plan 2022/2023	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.39	Project Document: Implementation of the Strategic Action Program of the Gulf of Mexico Large Marine Ecosystem	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.40	Progress Report: ACP MEA III Project Small Scale Funding Agreement with the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.41	ACP MEAs III Project Half Yearly Reports: January 2021 to June 2022	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.42	Information Paper on "Protecting Blue Corridors" An international collaborative project co-designing marine connectivity conservation strategies and solutions for whales with opportunities for the Wider Caribbean Region	
UNEP(DEPI)/CARWG.42/INF.7 Add.1	Assessment of the Impact and Effectiveness of the Caribbean Marine Protected Area Network and Forum (CaMPAM)	
UNEP(DEPI)/CARWG.42/INF.10	Developing an Ecological Network between the SPAW-listed MPAs of the Wider Caribbean	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.11	Proposal of the "Parke Marino Aruba" for listing under the SPAW Protocol	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.12/Rev.1	Terms of Reference for the SPAW STAC Ad Hoc Working groups	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.35/Rev.1	Sargassum White Paper 2021	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/9	Report of the Ninth Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) to	

Symbol	Title	Agenda Item
	the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife in the Wider Caribbean	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/8	Recommendations of the Ninth Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) in the Wider Caribbean Region	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/3 Rev.1	Work plan and Budget of the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) Sub-programme for the 2021-2022 Biennium	
UNEP (DEPI)/CAR IG.43/INF.3	Protecting and Restoring the Ocean's natural Capital, building Resilience and supporting region-wide Investments for sustainable Blue Socio-Economic development (PROCARIBE+) PIF	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.44/4	Report of the Eleventh Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP) to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) in the Wider Caribbean Region, 27 July 2021	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.44/3	Decisions of the Eleventh Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP) to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) in the Wider Caribbean Region	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.45/6	Report of the Nineteenth Intergovernmental Meeting of the Action Plan for the Caribbean Environment Programme and Sixteenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.45/5	Decisions of the Nineteenth Intergovernmental Meeting on the Action Plan for the Caribbean Environment Programme and Sixteenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region	
Symbol	Title	Agenda Item
<u>Reference Documents</u>		

Symbol	Title	Agenda Item
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.4	Report of the SPAW Regional Activity Centre (SPAW-RAC) in Guadeloupe: operations and budget for the period 2019-2020	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.7	Update on The Caribbean Marine Protected Areas Management Network and Forum (CAMPAM) and its Major Activities During the 2019-2020 Biennium	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.8 Rev1	Strategic Directions and Plan for CaMPAM	
UNEP(DEPI)/CARWG.42/INF.19	Protected Areas Management Effectiveness (PAME) of SPAW Sites	
UNEP(DEPI)/CARWG.42/INF.20	"The U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Efforts to Address Ocean Acidification in the Caribbean."	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.24 Add.2	Proposal for the inclusion of the whale shark <i>Rhincodon typus</i> in Appendix II of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW Protocol)	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.24 Add.3	Proposal for the inclusion of the Giant manta ray species <i>Manta birostris</i> in Appendix II of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW Protocol)	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.24 Add.4	Proposal for the Uplisting of the Great Hammerhead Shark <i>Sphyrna Mokarran</i> from Annex III to Annex II of the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW Protocol)	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.24 Add.5	Proposal for the Uplisting of the Smooth Hammerhead Shark <i>Sphyrna Zygaena</i> from Annex III to Annex II of the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW Protocol)	
UNEP(DEPI)/CARWG.42/INF.24 Add.1	Proposal for the inclusion of the Oceanic whitetip shark <i>Carcharhinus longimanus</i> in Appendix II of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW Protocol)	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.24	Effective National Legal Protection and Region wide Management of Sharks and Rays	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.25	Recommendations for preventing sawfish extinction	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.29	Implementation highlights of the Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals (MMAP)	

Symbol	Title	Agenda Item
	in the Wider Caribbean and recommendations	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.29 Add.1	Implementation of the Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals (MMAP): A Scientific and Technical Analysis	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.38	Recommendations for conserving the Nassau Grouper	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.39	Recommendations for the protection and recovery of the Caribbean Sea turtles	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.40/INF.10	Updating CaMPAM MPA Database - Product of a consultant agreement with GCFI	
UNEP(DEPI)/CARWG.38/INF.6	Evaluation of CaMPAM Activities and Recommendations for Improvement - An analysis of the last 15 years	
UNEP CEP, 2022	Review of Operations, Functioning, and Financing of Regional Activity Centres and Regional Activity Networks of the Cartagena Convention	
UNEP CEP, 2021	How to Conduct a Protected Areas Management Effectiveness Assessment	
UNEP CEP, 2021	Manual for the ecological restoration of mangroves in the Mesoamerican Reef System and the Wider Caribbean	
UNEP CEP, 2021	White Paper on Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease	
UNEP CEP, 2021	Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2022-2025	
UNEP CEP, 2020	SPAW Protected Areas of the Wider Caribbean: A comprehensive Booklet	
UNEP CEP, 2020	UNEP CEP Technical Report No. 1: The State of Nearshore Marine Habitats in the Wider Caribbean	
UNEP CEP, 2020	UNEP CEP Technical Report No. 2: Regional Strategy Action Plan for the Valuation, Protection and/or Restoration of Key Marine Habitats in the Wider Caribbean 2021–2030	
UNEP CEP, 2012	Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region, Protocol Concerning Cooperation in Combating Oil Spills, Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife and the Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities	

Symbol	Title	Agenda Item
UNEP CEP, 2010	Rules of Procedure for the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena Convention)	
UNEP CEP, 2010	Financial Rules for the Cartagena Convention, its Caribbean Environment Programme and Terms of Reference for the Caribbean Trust Fund	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.36 CRP.1	Amendment to the Financial Rules for the Cartagena Convention	
UNEP CEP, 2010	Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of Regional Activity Centres and Regional Activity Networks for the Cartagena Convention	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.32/ INF.9 Rev.3	Template for National Reporting on the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols	
UNEP CEP, 2008	Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals (MMAP) in the Wider Caribbean Region. United Nations Environment Programme – Caribbean Environment Programme, Kingston, Jamaica. 2008. (English and Spanish)	
UNEP, 2022	Harmful Marine Extractives: Understanding the risks & impacts of financing non-renewable extractive industries Deep-Sea Mining	
UNEP, 2022	Environmental Aspects of Minerals and Metals Management	
UNEP, 1991	Final Act of the Conference of Plenipotentiaries for the Adoption of the Annexes to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife in the Wider Caribbean Region	
UNEP, 1990	Final Act of the Conference of Plenipotentiaries Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife in the Caribbean Region	

ANNEX III – RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MEETING

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MEETING

Having convened the Tenth Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) in the Wider Caribbean Region virtually from 30 January 2023 – 1 February 2023.

The Meeting recommends,

(1) Prior to the Convening of the Twelfth SPAW Conference of the Parties (COP12) and Twentieth Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM20)

RECOMMENDATION I

Review of Documents

Taking note of the request from Contracting Parties to provide comments and technical input on certain documents before they are presented to the Twelfth SPAW COP (COP12) and Twentieth Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM20) for approval as appropriate;

Recommends that:

1. Contracting Parties provide additional comments on the “Draft Work Plan for the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife Sub-Programme for the 2023-2024 biennium” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/3), no later than February 15, for submission to SPAW COP12 for approval.
2. If needed, the Secretariat convene Contracting Parties in a drafting group to review and address the comments submitted on the Draft Work Plan and circulate the revised Draft Work Plan to Contracting Parties prior to submission to SPAW COP12.
3. Contracting Parties provide comments on the “SPAW Regional Activity Centre Strategic Plan 2023-2028” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.7) to the SPAW-RAC by, 28th February 2023, to be addressed prior to the submission of the Strategic Plan to SPAW COP12 for approval.
4. Contracting Parties provide comments to the Secretariat on the Update of the Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals in the Wider Caribbean Region (UNEP(DEPI)CAR WG.43/INF.31) by February 15 for review, revision, and submission to SPAW COP12 for approval.
5. The Secretariat convene Contracting Parties in a drafting group to review and address the comments submitted on the Update of the Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals in the Wider Caribbean Region (UNEP(DEPI)CAR WG.43/INF.31) and circulate the revised Action Plan to Contracting Parties prior to submission to SPAW COP12.
6. Considering the extenuating circumstances regarding the Parke Marino Aruba proposal, SPAW STAC10 request the Protected Areas Working group to assess the response of Aruba representing the Kingdom of the Netherlands on three key points in their nomination of Parke Marino Aruba:
 - i. The nomination document should include more references to publications, documents and all relevant sources of information provided on ecological and cultural/ socio-

- economic aspects.
- ii. A Management Plan must be elaborated and validated in consultation with a broad range of stakeholders then implemented prior to submitting the application.
 - iii. An evaluation framework to monitor the success of the management must be established.

The response of Aruba to the key points must be sent to the Secretariat as timely as possible but before February 15, in order to allow the Working group to give the proper attention to the assessment and to facilitate that the outcomes of the assessment could be presented to STAC 10 for advice regarding whether the nomination fulfills the “Guidelines and Criteria for the Evaluation of Protected Areas to be Listed Under the SPAW Protocol” (2010 Guidelines) before the presentation to SPAW COP12 consistent with relevant deadlines.

(2) To the Twelfth SPAW Conference of Parties (COP12) and Twentieth Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM20)

RECOMMENDATION II
Programme Coordination and Management

Recommends that:

1. SPAW STAC10 notes the SPAW Consortium Concept Brief as presented in (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/CRP.1) and recognize the contribution of non-governmental organizations to the implementation of the Cartagena Convention, in particular to the SPAW Programme, and further recommends SPAW COP12 notes the same.
2. SPAW COP12 notes with interest the Information Paper on Protecting Blue Corridors (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/CRP.1) and the importance of the information for the Wider Caribbean Region.

RECOMMENDATION III
Programme of Work and Budget 2023-2024

Recommends that:

1. SPAW COP12 acknowledge the involvement of the SPAW-RAC in the CAMAC project (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.36), which promotes the implementation of the SPAW programme and the achievement of the SPAW objectives.
2. SPAW COP12 encourage the SPAW-RAC to include interested Contracting Parties to the extent possible and identify opportunities for CAMAC to support such interested Contracting Parties in achieving SPAW objectives, including those outlined in the Update of the Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals in the Wider Caribbean Region.

RECOMMENDATION IV

Protected Areas

Having reviewed the Report of the STAC Protected Areas Working group and (UNEP(DEPI)/CARWG.43/INF.12) and the following information documents UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.13 and UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.14;

Welcoming the proposal by the Government of the France to nominate the Martinique Marine Nature Park as a SPAW-listed site;

Welcoming and noting the proposal by the Government of Aruba as part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to nominate the Parke Marino Aruba as a SPAW-listed site;

Recognizing the contribution from the SPAW-RAC and the experts participating in the Protected Areas Working group;

Taking note of the review by the Protected Areas Working group and the report under the coordination of SPAW-RAC (UNEP(DEPI)/CARWG.43/INF.12);

Recommends that:

1. The Secretariat and SPAW-RAC, as appropriate, work with Contracting Parties, including managers of SPAW-listed protected areas, and other relevant partners, as appropriate, to develop a proposal for the creation of a network for SPAW-listed protected areas coordinated by the Secretariat or SPAW-RAC with the purpose of understanding and addressing the needs of protected area managers to improve protected area effectiveness. The proposal should include a suggested strategic vision, work plan, institutional structure, and budget and should be presented to SPAW STAC11 and COP13 for consideration.
2. SPAW COP12 recognize that the creation or establishment of additional protected areas in the Wider Caribbean Region may contribute to achieving Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.
3. The SPAW-RAC continue to maintain, improve and update the database related to the protected areas listed under the SPAW Protocol directly on the SPAW-RAC website (<https://www.car-spaw-rac.org/?Protected-Areas>).
4. The Secretariat invite Contracting Parties to prepare and submit nominations according to the “Guidelines and Criteria for the Evaluation of Protected Areas to be Listed Under the SPAW Protocol” using the “Annotated Format for the Presentation Reports for the Areas Proposed for Inclusion in the SPAW List” approved by SPAW Contracting Parties at the 6th SPAW COP (UNEP(DEC)/CAR WG.29/4Rev.13), available on the SPAW-RAC website.
5. SPAW COP12 approve the inclusion of Parc Naturel Marin de Martinique, proposed by the Government of France, in the list of protected areas under the SPAW Protocol.
6. The Protected Areas Working group review the “Guidelines and Criteria for the Evaluation of Protected Areas to be Listed Under the SPAW Protocol” (2010 Guidelines), building on earlier discussions and preliminary recommendations, and prepare suggestions to simplify and streamline the process, including possible modifications to the 2010 Guidelines, for consideration at SPAW STAC11 and COP13.
7. Contingent upon intersessional review and positive advice by the STAC, SPAW COP12 include Parke Marino Aruba in the list of protected areas under the SPAW Protocol.

RECOMMENDATION V

Exemptions Reports

Having reviewed the Report of the STAC Exemptions Working group (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.33)

Welcoming and noting the United States Exemptions Report (2018-2021) (contained in document UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.34);

Recommends that:

1. SPAW COP12 endorse the recommendations of the Report of the Exemptions Working group (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.33).
2. The Secretariat and SPAW-RAC support capacity building for improved reporting of exemptions including through Peer-to-Peer exchanges and assessments of Contracting Parties' needs.

RECOMMENDATION VI

Sargassum

Recommends that:

1. Contracting Parties engage in and contribute to relevant fora, as appropriate, including the Sargassum Information Hub and the Sargassum Working group coordinated by the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) Blue Planet Initiative, as well as the IOC of UNESCO Sub-Commission for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions (IOCARIBE), as well as, as appropriate, the SARGCOOP Program.
2. Upon request, the Secretariat and SPAW-RAC, as appropriate, continue coordination and collaboration with relevant regional and global initiatives to study the causes of and promote synergies and solutions to coastal Sargassum influxes, within the scope of the SPAW Protocol and the Cartagena Convention, and provide information on SPAW and its work to such fora.
3. The Sargassum Working group survey Contracting Parties on their needs related to managing Sargassum influx and how such influx may affect their implementation of obligations under the SPAW Protocol and Cartagena Convention, as well as the LBS Protocol, as appropriate.
4. Taking into account the findings of the survey and consultations, as well as any consultations with additional experts as appropriate, the Sargassum Working group update and prioritize the proposed action plan of the Sargassum Working group in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/7 for consideration by SPAW STAC11 and COP13.

RECOMMENDATION VII

Working groups

Recommends that:

1. The SPAW-RAC invite Contracting Parties to designate experts with scientific and/or technical competence to the SPAW STAC Ad Hoc Working groups, in accordance with the Terms of Reference, within two months following SPAW COP12.

RECOMMENDATION VIII

Emerging Issues

Recommends that:

1. The Secretariat and SPAW-RAC, as appropriate, continue to engage with the Ocean Acidification Community of Practice and communicate with the regional sub commission of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOCaribe) regarding any potential future work on ocean acidification, including sharing announcements of related funding calls for the region.
2. With regard to the issue of Deep Seabed Mining and potential implications for Contracting Parties, Contracting Parties and the Secretariat are encouraged to share relevant information about the SPAW Protocol through the existing mechanisms for the ongoing International Seabed Authority negotiations.

RECOMMENDATION IX

Species

Recommends that:

1. SPAW COP12 decide on the proposals for the uplisting of the whale shark, giant ray manta and hammerhead sharks from Annex III to Annex II of the SPAW Protocol, noting the lack of consensus of the Contracting Parties on the submitted proposals.
2. SPAW COP12 adopt the recommendations for the conservation of Sawfishes (Pristidae) in UNEP (DEPI) CAR WG.43/INF.25, paragraphs 6-11, and requests the Species Working group to assist the Secretariat and SPAW-RAC with implementation of the recommendations, as appropriate.
3. SPAW COP12 request the Secretariat and SPAW-RAC to report to STAC 11 on the progress implementing the recommendations for the conservation of Sawfishes (Pristidae), in UNEP(DEPI)CAR WG.43/INF.25.
4. SPAW COP12 adopt the recommendations in UNEP(DEPI)CAR WG.43/INF.26, paragraphs 12- 14, for the conservation of Nassau Grouper (*Epinephelus striatus*), and invite Contracting Parties, the Secretariat, and SPAW-RAC to report on progress implementing these

recommendations to STAC 11.

5. The Species Working group and Protected Areas Working group undertake the joint task in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.26, paragraph 15, for the conservation of Nassau Grouper (*Epinephelus striatus*), and report progress and make recommendations, as appropriate, to STAC 11.
6. SPAW COP 12 adopt the recommendations in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.24, paragraphs 4-12, and request the Secretariat and SPAW-RAC to work with WIDECASST and other experts, as appropriate, to implement the recommendations, subject to availability of resources.
7. SPAW COP12 requests the Secretariat and SPAW-RAC to report to STAC 11 on the progress implementing the recommendations in UNEP (DEPI) CAR WG.43/INF.24.
8. SPAW COP12 adopt the endorsed submitted proposals on the uplisting of the Oceanic Whitetip Shark and Lesser Antillean Iguana from Annex III to Annex II and the inclusion of all Parrotfishes and the Caribbean reef shark in Annex III.
9. The Species Working group develop a set of prioritized recommendations for the conservation and management of parrotfish in the Caribbean, using UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.15 as the basis for such recommendations, and that SPAW COP 12 invite the Secretariat and SPAW-RAC to support interested Contracting Parties in the implementation of conservation and management measures for parrotfish, as appropriate. In the development of recommendations and implementation of conservation and management measures, the Secretariat, SPAW-RAC and Species Working group could consider, inter alia:
 - i. The possible development of a regional management plan for parrotfish in the Caribbean.
 - ii. Developing recommendations to protect and enhance existing populations by reducing the negative effects of overexploitation and unsustainable fishing methods.
 - iii. Developing recommendations to improve the status of the marine habitats on which parrotfish depend and prevent further degradation of these habitats.
 - iv. Opportunities to improve the understanding of the status of parrotfish by supporting fisheries-independent research into the physiology, life history and ecology of parrotfish.
 - v. The possible creation of a fishery-dependent data collection programme to better record fisheries and landings data to determine the effects of fishing on parrotfish populations.
 - vi. Conducting socio-economic assessments to understand the role of parrotfish in local economies.
 - vii. Opportunities to strengthen outreach, communication and public awareness.
 - viii. Opportunities to support programmes to facilitate the transition of fishers to alternative livelihoods.
10. The Secretariat work with Contracting Parties, with input from the SPAW-RAC as appropriate, to further elaborate and evaluate the legal and institutional mechanisms to establish a potential Marine Mammal Regional Activity Network (RAN), taking into consideration the various options outlined in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.32, including the proposed RAN architecture described in section 3.2. The resulting report should be prepared within one year of SPAW COP12 and should include a review of the legal and institutional considerations related to a potential RAN's governance structure.

11. The updated Marine Mammal Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals in the Wider Caribbean Region, taking into account comments made during STAC10 and during the subsequent review period referenced in recommendation I, be presented to SPAW COP12 for adoption as a set of recommended actions and compilation of relevant resources to address the priority threats to marine mammals in the region.
12. Subject to the adoption of the updated Marine Mammal Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals in the Wider Caribbean Region, that STAC10 recommends that, upon request, the Secretariat and SPAW-RAC assist SPAW Contracting Parties in its implementation, as appropriate and subject to the availability of resources.
13. The Secretariat and SPAW-RAC report to STAC11 on their activities in support of implementation of the Action Plan.

ANNEX IV - LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

List of Participants

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