

DRAFT REGIONAL STRATEGY 2026–2030

Summary of Comments Received and Secretariat Responses

*Prepared for the Virtual Intersessional Meeting of National and Protocol Focal Points (Virtual)
18–19 August 2026*

Purpose and Mandate

- Accompanies the clean and track changes versions of the Strategy; summarises how 94 comments (50 distinct issues) were addressed, without requiring a paragraph-by-paragraph review.
- Comments were received from several Contracting Parties. Secretariat conducted internal quality-assurance review against COP 18 Decision UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/4.
- Part One (this section) covers resolved issues; Part Two covers items recommended for Intersessional discussion.
- The Strategy under review is a revision of the draft presented to COP 18 (October 2025); the document name remains as presented there until a formal revision is endorsed/approved.

COP 18 Decision III requested the Secretariat to finalise the draft Regional Strategy, share it with Contracting Parties intersessionally for final review, and convene an intersessional meeting no later than the end of 2026 for possible endorsement, pending available resources. This Virtual Intersessional Meeting is convened to fulfil that mandate. Endorsement depends on Parties reaching agreement on the text, including the items set out in Part Two; formal adoption will follow, guided by the Bureau.

Scope of the Review

94

comments &
responses recorded

50

distinct issues
raised

12

Themes resolved

8

items recommended for
Intersessional discussion

Every issue received a response of either a textual amendment or a clarifying explanation.

Twelve groups of issues addressed

- 1 Decision-verb accuracy vs. COP 18 Decisions
- 2 Terminology
- 3 Heading & cross-reference accuracy
- 4 Status/endorsement language for strategies list
- 5 Scope: linking external frameworks to the Convention
- 6 Drafting precision (dangling text, duplication)
- 7 Framing of hazards & technical scope
- 8 Indicator & output-level precision
- 9 Communications & reporting refinements
- 10 Background section precision & citations
- 11 Confirmations & clarifying questions
- 12 Climate-stressor terminology consistency

Getting the decision language right

The issue

Work Plans and Budgets were repeatedly described as “adopted” and “endorsed” where the actual COP 18 Decision text uses “approved” or “noted.” Similarly, not every regional strategy or action plan in the reference list was formally endorsed by the COP. Some were only noted, and others predate COP 18 entirely.

How it was resolved

A control check was conducted against the wording of COP 18 Decisions UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/4. “Approved” is now used consistently for Work Plans and Budgets; the Resource Mobilization Strategy and Knowledge Management Strategy now correctly read as “noted.” The strategies list uses differentiated language rather than one uniform verb.

Terminology, drafting and background precision

Terminology & naming

Acronyms revisited; “arrears” standardised to “unpaid/outstanding voluntary contributions” to match how the IGM record itself describes CTF contributions.

Drafting precision

A dangling sentence was completed, a duplicated paragraph reworded, unclear passages clarified, and a redundant qualifying phrase removed.

Background & citations

“Area” replaces “surface”; “among” added to the largest/smallest States comparison; a supporting reference added for background statistics; document numbers added to the Foreword for two companion strategies.

Scope, communications and remaining refinements

Scope & external frameworks

References to external obligations and global processes (e.g. under SPAW) now link explicitly back to the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols.

Hazards, indicators & communications

Hazard framing corrected; communications now reflect tailoring to different audiences; national reporting template changes flagged as a COP decision.

Confirmations & questions

A small number of comments confirmed existing national alignment or asked a clarifying question which was acknowledged directly, with no textual change required.

PART TWO

Substantive Comments for Discussion at the Intersessional Meeting

Eight items raise policy or programmatic questions that go beyond drafting. Rather than resolve these unilaterally, the Secretariat recommends they be discussed by Contracting Parties.

Governance and Financing: one objective, or two?

Comment received

“Governance and financing are two different and equally important objectives ... in governance, how national frameworks are strengthened; in financing, how alliances and country readiness for investment are built.”

Secretariat reflection

Strategic Objective 4 has moved through several formulations from Sustainable Blue Economies, to Governance, to today’s combined framing. Governance and financing are substantively distinct workstreams with different actors and success measures. This is a discussion for Contracting Parties, not a drafting fix.

Recommended for discussion at the Intersessional meeting

A prevention indicator for marine litter

Comment received

Current indicators track collection and recovery of marine litter, but not prevention — e.g. a reduction in bulky waste found during initiatives.

Secretariat reflection

The indicator framework deliberately favoured qualitative, process-type measures, since quantitative tracking depends on country-level monitoring the Secretariat does not control. The Secretariat is prepared to propose a quantitative prevention indicator, but this commits Parties to a specific monitoring burden that should be agreed, not assumed.

Recommended for discussion at the Intersessional meeting

Priority species indicator wording

Comment received

Proposed reframing to a true outcome measure — e.g. “favourable trend in the status of priority species populations” rather than a count-based measure.

Secretariat reflection

To be finalised with the SPAW technical team and put to Parties; not yet settled.

Recommended for discussion at the Intersessional meeting

Defining “effective coastal zone management”

Comment received

Reviewers asked what this indicator actually means in practice.

Secretariat reflection

Believed to align with a related global indicator; definition and source to be verified and confirmed with Parties.

Recommended for discussion at the Intersessional meeting

Strengthening MPA network protection and consistency

Comment received

A reviewer proposed adding an activity to strengthen the protection level and consistency of the MPA network.

Secretariat reflection

A reasonable addition with resource and work-plan implications for the SPAW sub-programme; the Secretariat can propose language once technical advice confirms scope.

Recommended for discussion at the Intersessional meeting

MPA effectiveness scoring methodology

Comment received

Several methods exist to compute an MPA effectiveness score; reviewers asked how this one is computed and what prior evaluations exist.

Secretariat reflection

Some prior work exists; this could become a proper indicator if Parties agree work should be initiated, linked to established regional procedures.

Recommended for discussion at the Intersessional meeting

Linkage with the Inter-American Sea Turtle Convention

Comment received

A reviewer proposed explicitly linking this activity to the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles.

Secretariat reflection

Not all Contracting Parties are Party to that Convention. A general reference to cooperation with relevant regional and global conventions may work better. Exact scope to be determined by Parties.

Recommended for discussion at the Intersessional meeting

Joint-initiatives effectiveness indicator

Comment received

A count of joint initiatives under SPAW does not measure how effective those partnerships actually are.

Secretariat reflection

The Secretariat agrees. Designing a genuine effectiveness measure needs Parties' input on what “effective” means here and how it can practically be assessed.

Recommended for discussion at the Intersessional meeting

Items recommended for further discussion

Area	Item
Objective structure	Governance vs. Financing as one or two Strategic Objectives
SO1 indicator	Marine litter prevention indicator
SO2 indicator	Priority species indicator wording
SO2 indicator	Definition of “effective coastal zone management”
SO2 activity	MPA network protection level & consistency
SO2 methodology	MPA effectiveness scoring methodology
SO2 scope	Sea turtle convention linkage
SO2 indicator	Joint-initiatives effectiveness measure

NEXT STEPS

- The clean and critical-comments versions of the Strategy are circulated alongside this summary.
- Twelve groups of comments and edits were addressed for acceptance.
- Eight items are recommended for Contracting Parties' discussion and guidance at this meeting.
- Endorsement depends on Parties reaching agreement on those eight items, with formal adoption to follow under the Bureau's guidance.