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Eighteenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the  
Convention for the Protection and Development of the  
Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region

Hybrid  
October 13 & 16, 2025, Kingston, Jamaica

**DECISIONS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CONFERENCE OF PARTIES TO THE  
CARTAGENA CONVENTION, THIRTEENTH MEETING OF THE SPECIALLY  
PROTECTED AREAS AND WILDLIFE PROTOCOL, AND SEVENTH MEETING OF  
THE CONFERENCE OF PARTIES TO THE LAND BASED SOURCES OF MARINE  
POLLUTION PROTOCOL**



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**The Meetings:**

**Having convened** the Eighteenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region;

**Having convened** the Thirteenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife;

**Having also convened** the Seventh Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities;

**Considering** the Report of the Executive Director of the Cartagena Convention on the Implementation of the Workplan of the Cartagena Convention Secretariat (2023-2025) as presented in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/INF.3;

**Having reviewed** the Draft Workplan and Budget for the Cartagena Convention Secretariat (2025-2026) as presented in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/3;

**Having reviewed** the Recommendations of the 11<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Regional Marine Pollution Emergency, Information and Training Centre–Caribe (RAC-REMPEITC Caribe) Steering Committee Meeting as contained in document UNEP(DEPI)CAR IG.49/INF.11;

**Recognizing** the contributions of the Host Governments of France, Cuba, Trinidad and Tobago and Curacao (Kingdom of the Netherlands) in hosting the four Regional Activity Centres of the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols;

**Further recognizing** the contribution of IMO Seconded experts from the Governments of Trinidad and Tobago and the United States of America to RAC/REMPEITC-Caribe for implementation of its 2023-2024 workplan;

**Taking note of** the efforts by the Secretariat to provide updates to the Draft Regional Strategy for the Protection and Development of the Wider Caribbean Region 2023-2030 as contained in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.41/INF.22 Rev.4;

**Further welcoming** the efforts needed to raise awareness about the work of the Convention and the Protocols;

**Having welcomed** the report from the Depository of the Convention and acknowledging that one country deposited an instrument of ratification during the 2023-2025 biennium (Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis for the LBS and SPAW Protocols respectively);

**Taking note** of the status of contributions to the Caribbean Trust Fund (CTF) by the States and Territories of the Wider Caribbean Region for 2023-2025;

**Acknowledging** the importance of work to revise the Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of Regional Activity Centres and Regional Activity Networks (RAC/RAN Guidelines) in supporting and guiding the work of new and existing Regional Activity Centres and Regional Activity Networks;

**Welcoming** the development of an “Onboarding/Welcome Kit” for new Focal Points providing background on the work and processes of the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols and the role of the Bureau and focal points;

**Having convened** a virtual Pre-Conference of Parties on 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> September 2025 (Pre-COP) to advance discussions on revisions to the RAC/RAN Guidelines and Action Plan on Sargassum Inundation as reflected in: UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49 CRP.1

**Decides to:**

#### **DECISION I: WORKPLAN AND BUDGET**

1. **Approve** the Draft Workplan and Budget for the Cartagena Convention Secretariat for the biennium 2026-2027 including any changes suggested by Contracting Parties during the meeting and as presented in Document UNEP(DEPI)/CAR 49/3, with due consideration of the approved workplan and budget for the protocols (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.46/3 Rev.1 and UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/3 Rev.4).
2. **Note with appreciation** the Resource Mobilization, and Knowledge Management and Communications Strategies, and **encourage** the Secretariat to use them in mobilizing financial resources and expertise to help respond to COP Decisions and in the implementation of the 2026-2027 Workplan.
3. **Request** UNEP to extend the Caribbean Trust Fund until the convening of the 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Cartagena Convention scheduled for the last quarter of 2027.
4. **Encourage** the Secretariat to work with UNEP HQ to help identify how best to cover the cost of project execution by Secretariat staff.
5. **Request** the Secretariat, with support from UNEP HQ, to compile the approaches being used for facilitating voluntary contributions to UNEP Trust Funds for further consideration by Contracting Parties.

## DECISION II: FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

1. **Request** Contracting Parties to honour their financial commitments to the Caribbean Trust Fund and make their annual contributions as early as possible to enable adequate planning and budgeting by the Secretariat.
2. **Further request** Contracting Parties to advise of any changes in focal points and contact details for receipt of invoices.
3. **Request** the Secretariat to send annual invoices as early as possible to Parties and to send periodic reminders during the year.
4. **Encourage** the Secretariat to engage in bilateral discussions with Contracting Parties on their contribution status and continue efforts to develop payment plans for outstanding payments and assess timing for receipt of contributions.

## DECISION III: CROSS-CUTTING SECRETARIAT STRATEGIES

### Draft Regional Strategy for the Protection and Development of the Wider Caribbean Region 2023-2030

1. **Note with appreciation** the draft Regional Strategy for the Protection and Development of the Wider Caribbean Region Cartagena Convention 2023–2030 as contained in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.41/INF.22 Rev.4 (“draft regional strategy”) as a framework for the Secretariat.
2. **Request** the Secretariat to provide an updated version of the draft regional strategy by December 2025.
3. **Request** that an inter-sessional Open-Ended Convention Working Group be established by December 2025 to finalize the revision of the draft regional strategy by March 2026.
4. **Request** the Secretariat to share the final version of the draft regional strategy with Contracting Parties inter-sessionally for final review and convene an extraordinary meeting no later than the end of 2026 for possible endorsement, pending available resources.
5. **Support** the core objectives and four strategic pillars outlined in the draft Strategy.
6. **Request the** Secretariat and RACs to develop future biennial integrated work plans with the core objectives and strategic pillars of the Strategy as a guide.

### Resource Mobilization Strategy (RMS)

1. **Note** the Resource Mobilization Strategy (RMS) as contained in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/INF.10 as an internal management tool, welcoming its four pillars of action.
2. **Request** the Secretariat to begin implementation of the RMS and provide periodic reports to the Expanded Bureau of Contracting Parties on progress.
3. **Request** the Secretariat to continue its efforts to identify indicators for monitoring the use and impact of funds received and to include this in future reporting to the COPs.

### Communications and Knowledge Management Strategy

1. **Note** the Communications and Knowledge Management Strategy as contained in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/INF.7 Rev.1 and endorse its objectives for enhancing the work of the Cartagena Convention Secretariat.
2. **Request** the Secretariat to establish Key Performance Indicators to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of the Strategy.

### **DECISION IV: RAC/RAN GUIDELINES**

1. **Request** the Secretariat to provide an updated version of the RAC/RAN Guidelines by December 2025 aligned with the comments shared during the Pre-COP, as well as written comments submitted by delegates after the Pre-COP discussions.
2. **Request** that an inter-sessional Open-Ended Convention Working Group be established by December 2025 to finalize the revision of the RAC/RAN Guidelines by March 2026.
3. **Request** the Secretariat to share the final version of the RAC/RAN Guidelines with Contracting Parties inter-sessionally for final review and convene an extraordinary meeting no later than the end of 2026 for possible endorsement, pending available resources.
4. **Request** that any new proposals for RACs and RANs in the short term be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by Contracting Parties.

### **DECISION V: RAC/REMPEITC**

1. **Acknowledge** the previous hosting of RAC/REMPEITC-Caribe by the Government of Curacao, the contributions by Governments of Trinidad and Tobago and the United States of America and continued importance of the partnership of the Cartagena Convention Secretariat with the International Maritime Organization (IMO).
2. **Further acknowledge** the support and contribution of Ms. Carla Bikker to RAC/REMPEITC Caribe.
3. **Welcome** the interest expressed by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in hosting RAC/REMPEITC-Caribe and look forward to the receipt of a formal proposal.
4. **Encourage** Parties and the Secretariat to take advantage of capacity building opportunities being provided to strengthen oil spill response capacity in the region.

### **DECISION VI: SARGASSUM**

1. **Endorse** the Cartagena Convention Action Plan on Sargassum Inundation as contained in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.27 Rev.3.
2. **Invite** Contracting Parties to engage with the Dominican Republic, as appropriate, to obtain additional information regarding their draft submission to the 7<sup>th</sup> United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-7) on Sargassum.

## DECISION VII: WORKING GROUPS

### General

1. **Note** the recommendations in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.9 and encourage working groups to consider them in their future work.
2. **Encourage** Contracting Parties to identify and nominate experts with the required technical expertise to participate in Working Groups of the Convention and its Protocols.
3. **Request** the Secretariat and the RACs to support periodic in-person working group sessions when feasible and funds permit.
4. **Request** the Secretariat, subject to the availability of funds, to provide interpretation to the Working Groups and translate relevant technical documents to encourage wide participation by Contracting Parties.

### Sargassum Working Group

1. **Establish** a Cartagena Convention-level Sargassum Working Group, to facilitate participation from the Contracting Parties of the Cartagena Conventions and the SPAW and LBS Protocols.
2. **Request** the Sargassum Working Group to support the implementation of the Cartagena Convention Action Plan on Sargassum Inundation, ensuring alignment with activities under the SPAW and LBS Protocols.
3. **Further request** the Sargassum Working Group to update the Sargassum White Paper (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG 40/INF.8), incorporating new data, best practices, and policy recommendations for consideration by the relevant STACs and COPs.

### Integrated State of Convention Area Report (SOCAR) Sub-Group under OEWG

1. **Endorse** the establishment of a sub-group under the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on Monitoring and Assessment to support the development of the integrated State of Convention Area report on marine pollution and marine habitats, and including a dedicated chapter on Sargassum.
2. **Encourage** Contracting Parties to the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols, the LBS and SPAW RACs, the Ocean Coordination Mechanism, the State of Marine Ecosystems and Associated Socio-Economies (SOME) Working Group, and regional experts to indicate interest in participating in the new OEWG Subgroup by December 2025.
3. **Encourage** Contracting Parties to submit requested data and information to be used to inform the integrated SOCAR on marine pollution and marine habitats.
4. **Consider** ongoing work being advanced by the Regional Seas Programme on indicators, as appropriate.

### IWRM Working Group

1. **Establish** a new working group to further investigate how Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) could be addressed within the context of the Cartagena Convention and its protocols by December 2025.

2. **Request** the Working Group to report its findings to the Cartagena Convention COP19.

### **DECISION VIII: RATIFICATION OF THE CARTAGENA CONVENTION AND/OR ITS PROTOCOLS**

1. **Welcome** the announcement by the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines of its intention to ratify the LBS Protocol.
2. **Call upon** eligible Non-Contracting Parties to the Cartagena Convention and/or its Protocols to accelerate their efforts towards ratification and, as appropriate, to request assistance from the Secretariat and/or the RACs to assist in their national ratification processes.
3. **Invite** Non-Contracting Parties to provide an update during the next meeting of the Cartagena Convention Conference of Parties on their domestic ratification efforts, including any impediments identified.

### **DECISION IX: OCEAN COORDINATION MECHANISM (OCM)**

1. **Call** on the Secretariat in implementing the 2026-2027 work plan to identify synergies with the OCM work programme 2025-2028 with priority focus on: the marine data and information blueprint, the SOMEER report, the OCM knowledge hub, and the next Strategic Action Programme and report on opportunities to leverage these efforts to advance the objectives of the Cartagena Convention and its protocols to COP19.
2. **Invite** Contracting Parties that have not yet signed the “Memorandum of Understanding Enabling the Creation of a Coordination Mechanism to Support Integrated Ocean Governance in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems” to consider signing.

### **DECISION X: STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS – Project Tangaroa**

1. **Welcome** the presentation on Project Tangaroa to address the threat of Potentially Polluting Shipwrecks in the Caribbean.
2. **Invite** interested Contracting Parties to further explore opportunities for engaging with Project Tangaroa on the issue of Potentially Polluting Shipwrecks, as appropriate.

### **DECISION XI: INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETINGS OF THE CARTAGENA CONVENTION AND ITS PROTOCOLS**

1. **Request** the Secretariat, in its efforts to continue to streamline intergovernmental meetings of the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols, to engage with UNEP headquarters to obtain additional legal guidance on how such streamlining could take place and report to COP19 on the result of these discussions.

Endorse the following:

## DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE 7TH MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE LBS PROTOCOL (COP7)

### DECISION XII: LBS STAC7 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Adopt** the LBS STAC7 Recommendations contained in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.46/5as applicable.

### DECISION XIII: MARINE POLLUTION

#### Nutrient Management and Wastewater Discharges

1. **Encourage** Contracting Parties and Non-Contracting Parties to the Protocol Concerning Land Based Sources of Pollution to **participate** in ongoing activities by the LBS RACs relating to Nutrient Management and classification of receiving waters as required under the LBS Protocol.
2. **Encourage** the LBS RACs to **continue** their work in the ongoing activities and report to the LBS STAC8 and LBS COP8 for further review; recommendation; and decision as appropriate.

#### Water Classification

1. **Request** the Secretariat, dependent on the availability of resources, and in collaboration with the RACs and the Nutrients and Wastewater Subgroup of the OEWG, advance a study to assess and document the effectiveness of national marine, coastal, and estuarine water classification schemes, with a focus on regulatory implementation and alignment with the LBS Protocol.
2. **Request** the Secretariat present the findings and recommendations, including proposed best practices to LBS STAC8 and COP8 for consideration.

## DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE 13TH MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE SPAW PROTOCOL (COP13)

### DECISION XIV: SPAW STAC11 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Adopt** the Recommendations of the Eleventh Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC11) to the SPAW Protocol as contained in UNEP/(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/4 with the following amendment:

#### Recommendation I. STATUS OF ACTIVITIES. Marine Mammals RAN (MMRAN)

1. The Secretariat open a call for nominations for institutions interested in hosting and/or directing a MMRAN. The Secretariat should work with Contracting Parties following IGM21/COP18 to elaborate next steps, including a process for review and possible intersessional approval of a nomination.

### DECISION XV: MARINE MAMMAL RAN

1. **Acknowledge with appreciation** the expressions of interest received in support of the establishment of a Marine Mammal Regional Activity Network (MMRAN) under the SPAW Protocol, and request those entities, as well as other interested organizations, to submit formal proposals outlining their envisaged contributions to the implementation of the SPAW Protocol and the implementation of the Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals in the Wider Caribbean Region (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.31) and their roles in the Network.
2. **Request** the Secretariat, in coordination with SPAW-RAC, to review and consolidate all proposals once the submission process has been completed.
3. **Request** the Secretariat to submit recommendations to Contracting Parties during the intersessional period for provisional endorsement of the consolidated proposals prior to the next intergovernmental meetings, pending their formal consideration by the relevant bodies of the Convention.

### DECISION XVI: SPAW CONSORTIUM

1. **Request** the Secretariat and SPAW-RAC to continue engagement with Civil Society Organizations, in particular through the SPAW Consortium.

### DECISION XVII: PROTECTED AREAS

1. **Establish** the SPAW Protected Area Managers Network, as proposed in document UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.12 Rev.4 to enhance collaboration, knowledge exchange, and technical cooperation among SPAW-listed sites and other protected areas in the Wider Caribbean Region.
2. **Approve** the proposal from the Kingdom of the Netherlands to include Parke Marino Aruba in the SPAW List of Protected Areas.
3. **Endorse** the “Updated Procedure Through Which Contracting Parties Can Propose New Protected Areas to be Listed as SPAW Sites” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.13 Rev.2), as a framework to guide future nominations and ensure transparency and consistency in the SPAW listing process.

### DECISION XVIII: SPECIES

1. **Request** the Species Working Group to develop conservation and management recommendations for the Silky Shark (*Carcharhinus falciformis*) and the Oceanic Whitetip Shark (*Carcharhinus longimanus*), to be presented to the 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (SPAW STAC12).
2. **Endorse** the joint draft workplan between SPAW and the International Whaling Commission (IWC) as contained in Annex 1 to UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.34.
3. **Request** the Secretariat to promote synergies with other relevant regional and global platforms and agreements that support the conservation of species relevant to the implementation of the SPAW Protocol and its work plan, including the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), where appropriate.

### DECISION XIX: COMPLIANCE

1. **Request** the Secretariat to initiate the process for the consideration of the development of a SPAW Implementation and Compliance Mechanism through a concept note that focuses on facilitative, nonpunitive, and cooperative arrangements for promoting implementation and compliance, for consideration by the next meeting of the Contracting Parties.
2. **Recommend** that the Secretariat, with support from the SPAW-RAC as appropriate, propose activities that support the implementation of and compliance with the SPAW Protocol in a facilitative, nonpunitive, and cooperative manner to inform this process.

### DECISION XX: COASTAL WETLANDS

1. **Encourage** Contracting Parties to **consider strengthening national frameworks** for the protection, restoration, and sustainable management of coastal wetlands, consistent with ongoing work under the SPAW Protocol and relevant global commitments, where appropriate.
2. **Encourage** Contracting Parties to **consider enhancing institutional arrangements and scientific capacity** to address existing knowledge gaps and improve data collection, assessment, and monitoring of these ecosystems.
3. **Request** the Secretariat, in collaboration with Parties and relevant partners, to review the Regional Strategy and Action Plan for the Valuation, Protection and/or Restoration of Key Marine Habitats in the Wider Caribbean (2021–2030) and **update it as needed** to reflect new priorities, scientific developments, and synergies with national and regional initiatives, before it is presented to the SPAW STAC12 for review and potential decisions.

### DECISION XXI: STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

1. **Invite** Contracting Parties to consider:
  - a) **Participating** in regional collaborative frameworks, including the Neotropical Songbirds Collaborative Group (NSCG), and the Caribbean Wildlife Enforcement Network (CAR-WEN), by designating national focal points as appropriate;
  - b) **Participating** in governmental review of the draft Memorandum of Understanding to establish and operate the CAR-WEN as appropriate;
  - c) **Enhancing** collaboration with relevant organizations, including the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Secretariat, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), and others, to advance the identification, description, and management of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs) and Other Effective Area Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) within the Wider Caribbean Region in support of mutual goals of the SPAW Protocol, where appropriate;
  - d) **Mobilising** technical assistance and supporting planning and fundraising for priority national actions as appropriate.

2. **Request** the Secretariat, in collaboration with relevant partners, to:
  - a) **Facilitate** coordination among the aforementioned initiatives to maximize synergies, avoid duplication, provide and promote joint fundraising and implementation efforts;
  - b) **Facilitate** regular communication and coordination with the Caribbean Biological Corridor (CBC) to facilitate progress towards common objectives and jointly address emerging environmental issues within the scope of the CBC and the SPAW Protocol.