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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

REPORT OF THE MEETING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Eighteenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Cartagena Convention, held 13–16 October 2025 in Kingston, Jamaica reviewed the implementation of the 2023–2025 Workplan, adopted decisions of the SPAW and LBS Protocol COPs, and approved the 2026–2027 Workplan and Budget.

Opening statements emphasized growing regional pressures from climate change, pollution, biodiversity loss, and the need for strengthened cooperation, financing, and implementation of the Convention. Delegates highlighted progress in ratifications, capacity building, wastewater management, biodiversity conservation, sargassum response, and knowledge management improvements.

The Secretariat presented performance under AMEP and SPAW programmes, the Resource Mobilization Strategy, Knowledge Management Strategy, and strategic regional frameworks. The Meeting underscored financing gaps, the critical importance of predictable contributions, and opportunities for expanded partnerships.

Strategic discussions covered the Regional Medium-Term Strategy (2023–2030), Sargassum Action Plan, RAC/RAN guidelines, working group functioning, the State of Convention Area Report, and collaboration with the Ocean Coordination Mechanism. Delegates supported streamlining processes, improving reporting systems, enhancing technical capacity, and increasing engagement with civil society and youth.

Key decisions included adoption of the Sargassum Action Plan, establishment of an integrated SOCAR subgroup, advancing RAC/RAN guideline revisions, improving national reporting systems, and endorsing the 2026–2027 Workplan and Budget. The Meeting acknowledged the closure of RAC/REMPEITC Caribe in Curaçao and welcomed expressions of interest for hosting the centre.

Presentations under Any Other Business included CBD GBF updates, CARICOM Ocean Policy development, youth engagement, and Project Tangaroa on shipwreck risks. Delegates emphasized transboundary cooperation, sustainable financing, and science-driven approaches.

The Meeting closed with acknowledgments to outgoing officers, RAC/REMPEITC leadership, SPAW MPA expansion in Aruba, and all Contracting Parties and partners for their continued commitment to protecting the Wider Caribbean Region.

ACRONYMS

ACP MEA	African, Caribbean and Pacific States, Multilateral Environmental Agreements Project
AMEP	Assessment and Management of Environmental Pollution
BBNJ	Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction
BVI	British Virgin Islands
CBF	Caribbean Biodiversity Fund
CAMPAM	Caribbean Marine Protected Area
CEFAS	Centre for Environment Fisheries and Aquacultural Science
CEP	Caribbean Environment Programme
COP	Conference of Parties
CIMAB	Centre of Research and Environmental Management of Transport
CRew+	Caribbean Regional Fund for Wastewater Management+ project
EU	European Union
GBF	Global Biodiversity Framework
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GPA	Global Programme of Action
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IMA	Institute of Marine Affairs
IMO	International Maritime Organization
IWEco	Integrating Water, Land and Ecosystems Management in Caribbean Small Island Developing States
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
LBS	Land-Based Sources of Pollution
MARPOL	International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships
MPA	Marine Protected Area
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
MOD	Ministry of Defence
OCM	Ocean Coordinating Mechanism
NGO	Non-Government Organization
OEWG	Open-Ended Working Group
PPW	Potentially Polluting Wrecks

RAC	Regional Activity Centre
RAN	Regional Activity Network
REMPEITC	The Regional Marine Pollution Emergency, Information and Training Centre
RMS	Resource Mobilization Strategy
SOCAR	State of the Convention Area
SPAW	Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife
STAC	Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee
SOMEE	State of the Marine Environment and Associated Economies
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNOC	United Nations Ocean Conference
USA	United States of America
WCR	Wider Caribbean Region

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Secretariat of the Cartagena Convention is responsible for convening meetings of the Contracting Parties to the Convention and its Protocols in accordance with Article 16 of the Convention.
2. In accordance with the Workplan and Budget for 2023-2025, approved by the Seventeenth Meeting of Contracting Parties to the Cartagena Convention, the Eighteenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region took place in hybrid mode on 13, 15 and 16 October 2025 at the Jamaica Pegasus Hotel in Kingston, Jamaica.

MEETING OBJECTIVES

3. The Eighteenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region was held under the theme "Uniting for a Resilient Caribbean Sea: Strengthening Cooperation, Action, and Impact."
4. The Secretariat, on behalf of the Contracting Parties to the Cartagena Convention, convened the Meeting to:
 - Evaluate the projects and activities implemented during the period 2023-2025;
 - Review the progress made in the implementation of the Decisions of the Seventeenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region, held in Aruba, 5th October 2023;
 - Review and adopt the Decisions of the Thirteenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP) to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) in the Wider Caribbean Region, held on 14 October 2025 in Kingston, Jamaica;
 - Review and adopt the Decisions of the Seventh Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP) to the Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities (LBS) in the Wider Caribbean Region, held on 13 October 2025 in Kingston, Jamaica;
 - Review and approve the Workplan and Budget for the Cartagena Convention Secretariat for the 2026-2027 Biennium, including activities of the Regional Activity Centres (RACs); and
 - Decide on the composition of the Bureau and any other Committees, where required, for the 2026-2027 Biennium
5. National focal points or their designated representatives of all States and Territories participating in the Caribbean Environment Programme (CEP) and the Commission of the European Union were invited to attend the Meeting. Other States that demonstrated concern for the protection of the marine environment of the Wider Caribbean Region, the United Nations (UN) and regional and international organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), donors, and private sector representatives participating in or interested in the CEP were invited to attend as Observers. Regional and international experts were also invited to make presentations to the Meeting in accordance with the provisional agenda.

AGENDA ITEM 1: OPENING OF THE MEETING

6. The Eighteenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Cartagena Convention was opened on **13 October 2025 at 9:00 a.m.** in Kingston, Jamaica. The Opening Ceremony was chaired by **Mr. Christopher Corbin**, Coordinator of the Cartagena Convention Secretariat, and attended by delegates, observers, youth representatives, invited guests, and members of the media.
7. Opening statements were delivered by:
 - **Mr. Alberto Pacheco Capella**, Head, Regional Seas Branch, UNEP
 - **H.E. Dr. Erja Askola**, Ambassador of the European Union to Jamaica, Belize and The Bahamas
 - **H.E. Marianne Ziss**, Ambassador of France to Jamaica
 - **The Hon. Matthew Samuda**, Minister for Water, Environment and Climate Change, Jamaica
8. Mr. Corbin, Coordinator of the Secretariat to the Cartagena Convention, welcomed delegates and acknowledged Jamaica's long-standing role as host of the Secretariat. He highlighted major achievements of the biennium, including the development of the Resource Mobilization Strategy, strengthened wastewater management under GEF CReW+, expansion of the SPAW MPA network, and training of over 1,000 practitioners. He emphasized the need for stronger financial commitments to the Caribbean Trust Fund to sustain regional cooperation and action.
9. Mr. Pacheco Capella, Head, Regional Seas Branch, UNEP Headquarters, underscored the unprecedented pressures on Caribbean marine ecosystems from pollution, climate change, and biodiversity loss. He urged Parties to accelerate implementation of Convention obligations, integrate the protocols into national policy frameworks, expand marine protected areas, and secure long-term financing to safeguard the region's marine environment.
10. H.E. Dr. Erja Askola, Ambassador, Delegation of the European Union to Jamaica, highlighted the EU's commitment to ocean protection, climate resilience, and sustainable blue economies through partnerships with ACP States and UNEP. She emphasized the importance of balancing economic development with marine conservation.
11. H.E. Marianne Ziss, Ambassador of France to Jamaica, briefed the Meeting on France's co-chairing of the Third UN Ocean Conference (UNOC 3), noting increased global attention to ocean governance and multilateral action, including commitments on the High Seas Treaty, plastic pollution, and climate-ocean integration.
12. Hon. Matthew Samuda MP, Minister for Water, Environment and Climate Change in Jamaica, reaffirmed Jamaica's commitment to regional ocean governance, referencing the country's imminent ratification of the SPAW Protocol. He urged Parties to act as stewards of the Caribbean Sea in the face of the triple planetary crisis—climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution.
13. The Opening Ceremony concluded with appreciation expressed to all dignitaries and delegates for their continued partnership in protecting the marine environment of the Wider Caribbean Region.

AGENDA ITEM 2: ORGANISATION OF THE MEETING

2.1 Rules of Procedure

14. The Rules of Procedure for the Meetings of the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena Convention) (UNEP, 2010) were applied *mutatis mutandis* for the conduct of the Meeting.

2.2 Election of Officers

15. The Meeting elected the following Bureau Members by acclamation, based on nominations submitted by the Secretariat:
 - **President** – Grenada
 - **1st Vice President** – United States
 - **2nd Vice President** – British Virgin Islands
 - **Rapporteur** – Saint Lucia
16. These officers will serve until the Nineteenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties. The newly elected President acknowledged the leadership of the outgoing Bureau President, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and thanked Parties for their confidence in Grenada to preside over this meeting and to serve as President for the upcoming 2026-2027 Biennium.

2.3 Organisation of Work

17. English, French, and Spanish were the working languages of the Meeting. Simultaneous interpretation in these languages was provided by the Secretariat for the plenary sessions. The working documents of the Meeting were made available in all working languages.
18. The Meeting adopted the hours of work and other organizational arrangements. The Provisional List of Documents of the Meeting (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/INF.1) was presented to the meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 3: ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

19. The Meeting reviewed the Provisional Agenda and Annotated Agenda circulated by the Secretariat (documents UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/1 and UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/2). The Secretariat advised that three requests had been received for brief presentations under *Any Other Business* and two conference room papers summarizing pre-COP discussions on Regional Activity Guidelines (CRP.1) and National Reports (CRP.2) and selected observer presentations were included under Agenda Item 6.
20. The Meeting adopted the agenda as presented, incorporating the proposed amendments.

AGENDA ITEM 4: REPORT OF THE OUTGOING PRESIDENT OF THE BUREAU OF CONTRACTING PARTIES

21. The outgoing President of the Bureau, representing the **Kingdom of the Netherlands**, presented the **Report for the 2023–2025 biennium**, as contained in **UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/INF.4**. The report highlighted:
 - Significant progress in advancing science, policy, and capacity-building mandates;
 - Successful mobilization of external resources despite financial constraints;

- Strengthened partnerships with more than 30 organizations;
 - Progress on ratifications, including those by Saint Kitts and Nevis for the LBS and SPAW Protocols;
 - Improvements in communication, knowledge management, and digital engagement;
 - Capacity-building initiatives that trained hundreds of professionals;
 - Governance reforms, including updates to RAC/RAN guidelines;
 - Technical advancements in addressing sargassum, nutrient pollution, and discharge limits for nitrogen and phosphorus.
22. The report also acknowledged ongoing challenges such as financing gaps, environmental hazards, limited national implementation capacity, and transboundary threats including marine litter and plastic pollution. Priorities for the next biennium include strengthening predictable financing, expanding technical assistance, enhancing digital monitoring tools, and deepening regional partnerships. The Netherlands reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the Convention.
23. The President thanked the Government of the Netherlands for their report, work and dedication over the past two years.
24. The Meeting was invited to seek clarification and/or make comments on the President's Report as appropriate. There were no comments on the report of the Outgoing President of the Cartagena Convention Bureau.

AGENDA ITEM 5: REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF UN ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORK PLAN AND BUDGET OF THE CARTAGENA CONVENTION SECRETARIAT (2023-2025) – UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/INF.3.

25. The President invited the Secretariat to present the Report of the Executive Director of UNEP on the implementation of the Work Plan and Budget for the 2023–2025 biennium, as contained in document UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/INF.3.

5.1 Update on Ratifications

26. Colombia, as Depositary of the Cartagena Convention, reported ratifications during the biennium, noting the accession of Saint Kitts and Nevis to both the LBS and SPAW Protocols. The President welcomed this progress and encouraged additional updates from Parties. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines informed the Meeting of ongoing national efforts toward ratifying the LBS Protocol.

5.2 Secretariat Overview

27. Mr. Christopher Corbin presented the Secretariat's progress in implementing COP17 decisions, highlighting:
- Consolidated reporting across AMEP and SPAW programmes.
 - Major achievements in wastewater management, marine litter reduction, biodiversity conservation, and governance initiatives.
 - Improved knowledge management, strengthened partnerships, and advancement of regional strategies and technical tools.

- Ongoing integration of communication and resource mobilization work streams to support implementation.

5.3 Financial Update

28. Mr. Caspah Lidiema, Associate Finance and Budget Officer, reported:
- 2025 contributions totaled USD 681,000, slightly above projections, while expenditures reached USD 825,000, requiring the use of reserves.
 - Recruitment and operational costs increased financial pressure, with only 11 Parties having consistently honored pledges over the past decade.
 - For 2023–2024, 76% of assessed contributions were received, but current trends indicate rising deficits.
 - He emphasized adherence to Article 24 on financial rules and urged timely payment of contributions to sustain core Secretariat functions.

5.4 AMEP Programme Update

29. Ms. Laverne Walker reported progress under the LBS and Oil Spills Protocols, including:
- Continued oil spill preparedness work with IMO and interested governments regarding the relocation of RAC REMPEITC Caribe.
 - Increased LBS ratifications and targeted workshops in Cuba and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.
 - Advancements in wastewater, nutrients, microplastics, and sargassum through technical working groups.
 - Launch of regional monitoring platforms and support for two water quality initiatives supported by US EPA and the United Kingdom.

5.5 SPAW Programme Update

30. Mrs. Susana Perera Valderrama highlighted:
- Strengthened MPA management and regional coordination through ACP MEA III.
 - Expanded CAMPAM training initiatives, small grants, and outreach campaigns.
 - Collaboration with regional and international organizations on coral reef restoration, ecosystem-based management, and species conservation.
 - SPAW-RAC leadership in small grants, coral reef monitoring, and sargassum initiatives.
 - Ongoing projects such as Blue Growth through Green Restoration and targeted GBF implementation support.

5.6 Knowledge Management and Communications

31. Mr. Corbin reported improvements in digital engagement, social media visibility, newsletter relaunch, and strengthened partnerships. An MOU with the IAEA on plastic pollution was under review. He requested Party feedback to guide 2026–2027 priorities.

Interventions from Delegates

32. Intervention from the Delegates were as follows:

- Several countries commended Jamaica for hosting COP18 and praised the Secretariat for efficiency, strong reporting, timely document publication, and effective coordination.
- Several Parties referenced financial challenges, pledged to settle arrears, or emphasized the need for innovative or increased resource mobilization to sustain activities.
- Parties expressed support for the Protocols, celebrated new ratifications, or explained constraints preventing ratification.
- Strong calls were made for enhanced cooperation, technical assistance, capacity building, and regional integration to advance environmental governance.
- Parties highlighted key environmental priorities such as managing sargassum inundations, tackling marine pollution under the LBS Protocol, protecting biodiversity under SPAW and developing early warning systems (e.g., oil spills).
- Several Parties linked Convention efforts to the broader blue economy agenda, emphasizing sustainable development, economic resilience, and national survival.
- Some Parties suggested administrative improvements such as earlier invoicing and reminders, better alignment of timelines with national agendas and the incorporation of national reporting systems to strengthen implementation:
- Historic integration of the SPAW and LBS COPs into the main Cartagena COP was noted.

33. The Secretariat welcomed the comments, reaffirmed its commitment to supporting Parties, and noted priority needs in reporting, sargassum, resource mobilization, and strategic communication.

34. The President thanked delegates and adjourned COP18 temporarily to allow the formal convening of LBS COP7 and SPAW COP13, announcing that the Cartagena Convention COP would reconvene on 15 October to resume discussions under Agenda Item 6.

AGENDA ITEM 6: STRATEGIC ISSUES OF RELEVANCE FOR THE DRAFT WORK PLAN AND BUDGET 2026-2027

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

35. The Secretariat presented the revised Draft Regional Strategy for the Protection and Development of the Wider Caribbean Region 2023–2030, contained in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.41/INF.22 Rev.3. The Strategy replaces the outdated 1990–1995 plan and responds to mandates from COP15. It aims to modernize the Cartagena Convention’s strategic direction in line with emerging regional and global ocean challenges, including marine litter, sargassum influxes, and ocean acidification.

36. The Secretariat outlined the Strategy’s four programmatic pillars:

- Pollution Control – promoting circular economy approaches and nature-based solutions.
- Biodiversity Conservation – strengthening ecosystem-based management across the Wider Caribbean Region.

- Knowledge and Communication – enhancing the science–policy interface and improving data access and outreach.
 - Governance (relating to Blue Economy) – supporting integrated governance, partnerships, and financing mechanisms.
37. The Strategy is intended to guide biennial workplans, strengthen coordination across the Convention's subprogrammes, and support resource mobilization and partnerships.
38. Interventions from Delegates were as follows:
- France expressed strong support for the Strategy's ecosystem-based approach and requested clarification on the Secretariat's role within the governance structure of the Ocean Coordination Mechanism (OCM). They also sought information on the role of the independent working group.
 - United States supported the Strategy's core objectives and pillars but indicated they could not endorse the full document in its current form due to concerns about the frequency and framing of references to climate change and the 2030 Agenda. They supported continued collaboration between the Secretariat and RACs/RANs in developing future workplans.
 - Haiti expressed support for the Strategy and noted ongoing capacity building projects that align with its objectives.
 - Barbados commended the Secretariat and Working Groups for advancing the Strategy over nearly a decade and endorsed the document, noting alignment with national priorities.
39. The Secretariat thanked delegates for their feedback, acknowledged differing levels of readiness to endorse the Strategy, and emphasized flexibility in refining the language to ensure broad acceptance. Parties were invited to provide written recommendations to address concerns and support effective regional implementation.

6.2 Presentation of the Resource Mobilization Strategy (RMS)

40. The Secretariat presented the Resource Mobilization Strategy (RMS), as outlined in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/INF.10, along with the updated Communications Strategy (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/INF.7 Rev.1). The RMS forms a central component of the Convention's medium-term planning and responds to recommendations from the functional review and previous COP decisions.
41. The RMS was presented as a key element of the medium-term plan that seeks to:
- address financial challenges and ensure long-term stability
 - diversify funding, strengthen donor engagement
 - support both the Secretariat's draft strategy and regional action plans.
42. The Secretariat emphasized that current reliance on a narrow donor base and inconsistent contributions threatens the sustainability of core functions. The RMS responds to functional review recommendations and COP decisions, proposing actions such as:
- improving internal capacity, including donor tracking and reporting systems
 - expanding the donor pool to include bilateral donors, foundations, and private-sector partners

43. Promoting full payment to the Caribbean Trust Fund and explore options for oversight through a working group or the Bureau was suggested.
44. The President invited the meeting to provide comments and additional recommendations for these documents, which will be used as an internal guide for the Secretariat during the implementation of the 2026-2027 Work Plan. Interventions from the Delegates were as follows:
 - United States welcomed efforts to diversify funding and supported the RMS's four pillars of action. Given the Strategy's operational nature, they recommended that Parties note the document rather than formally endorse it.
 - Saint Lucia echoed the position of the U.S., recognizing the chronic financial shortfalls affecting the Secretariat and emphasizing that the RMS should be acknowledged as an important internal working document.
 - Barbados acknowledged the document and highlighted the critical importance of resource mobilization for the functioning of both the Secretariat and the Convention. They recommended periodic reporting—either intersessionally or through the Bureau—on RMS effectiveness and implementation methodology.

6.3 Knowledge Management Strategy

45. The President invited the Secretariat to present the updated Knowledge Management. The Secretariat presented the updated Knowledge Management and Communications Strategy, as contained in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/INF.7 Rev.1. The Secretariat emphasized the need for a more integrated, impact-driven approach to communication and knowledge sharing to enhance visibility, strengthen donor engagement, and support resource mobilization.
46. A central shift in the new strategy is the move from general awareness-raising to targeted, results-oriented communication, highlighting concrete achievements of the Cartagena Convention and its Contracting Parties. Key elements include:
 - Development of donor-ready communication materials aligned with resource mobilization efforts.
 - Increased use of social media, digital platforms, and events to raise the Convention's profile.
 - Strengthening internal capacity for communication and knowledge management.
 - Improved monitoring systems to assess outreach effectiveness through measurable KPIs.
 - Enhanced coordination with national focal points and alignment of regional and national communication strategies.
47. The President thanked the Secretariat for the informative presentation and invited the meeting to provide comments and additional recommendations on the Knowledge Management Strategy. The interventions were as follows:
 - United States welcomed the focus on donor engagement and resource mobilization, and—recognizing its operational nature—expressed support for the Strategy's objectives and key initiatives.

- Dominican Republic supported the Strategy and emphasized the importance of strengthening national communication frameworks, noting the value of regional strategies that complement national efforts.
 - Saint Lucia commended the Secretariat's heightened visibility and the integration of communication with resource mobilization. They underscored the need for dedicated budgetary support for communication activities.
 - Trinidad and Tobago echoed support and recommended establishing a special fund to support permanent communication staff, given the importance of this function.
 - Antigua and Barbuda endorsed the Secretariat's efforts and requested clarity on the reporting mechanisms for assessing the Strategy's effectiveness.
 - Youth Observer (Ocean Science and Governance Youth Network) praised the Secretariat's enhanced outreach, noting its alignment with youth-led efforts on plastic pollution and ocean conservation, and encouraged deeper youth engagement.
 - Haiti raised questions about regional programme participation and highlighted challenges related to resource mobilization under difficult socio-economic conditions.
48. The Secretariat welcomed Haiti as an Observer, noting that Haiti and Suriname remain the only States yet to accede to the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols. Over the biennium, the Secretariat conducted a series of engagement activities including webinars, bilateral meetings, and presentations to Haiti's Ministry of Environment to encourage progress toward accession. While challenges persisted, the Secretariat remained optimistic about Haiti's eventual membership. Support for Haiti's participation has been facilitated through initiatives such as the ACP MEA III project. The Secretariat reaffirmed its commitment to continued collaboration with Haiti, providing access to all relevant materials and maintaining close engagement to advance full membership and strengthen regional integration.
49. The President thanked the Secretariat for its clear intervention.

6.4 Functioning of Working Groups

50. The President invited the Secretariat to present the summary of recommendations on improving the functioning of Working Groups, as outlined in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.9. The presentation emphasized the importance of Working Groups as core mechanisms supporting technical work under the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols.
51. Key recommendations included:
- Streamlining group structures and strengthening coordination across LBS and SPAW technical areas.
 - Establishing clear objectives, outputs, and timelines for each Working Group.
 - Improving accessibility through interpretation services and multilingual orientation materials.
 - Holding periodic in person meetings, where funding permits, to advance sensitive or complex issues.
 - Enhancing operational efficiency through timely meeting notices, defined deadlines, and improved communication tools.

- Developing an implementation plan for future Working Groups and inviting Parties to nominate technically qualified members.

52. Interventions from the Meeting were as follows:

- Dominica called for greater inclusion of civil society, youth, and indigenous groups in Working Group activities, noting youth expertise in communication and the relevance of indigenous knowledge for issues such as sargassum management.
- Trinidad and Tobago recommended creating and regularly updating a document listing national focal points and experts to improve transparency and participation.
- France highlighted the need for adequate time to configure Working Groups and emphasized the importance of appointing technically qualified experts, supported by translation services.
- RAC CIMAB stressed that Working Groups are essential for efficiently advancing technical mandates and encouraged Parties to respond promptly to Secretariat calls for participation.
- Colombia echoed the need for appropriate expertise and noted that SPAW STAC discussions have refined terms of reference concerning membership, language, and observer participation.
- Haiti requested access to relevant documents to support its participation in regional marine-related Working Groups.

53. The Secretariat thanked Delegates for their contributions and reaffirmed the critical role of Working Groups in supporting decision-making across the Convention's governance processes.

6.5 Guidelines for the Establishment and Operations of Regional Activity Centres (RACs) and Regional Activity Networks (RANs)

54. The President invited the Secretariat to present the updated Guidelines for the Establishment and Operations of Regional Activity Centres (RACs) and Regional Activity Networks (RANs), as contained in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.24/CRP.9 Rev.4, reflecting comments from the LBS and SPAW STACs and Pre-COP discussions.

55. The Secretariat summarized key points from the review process:

- The need to clarify strategic objectives, functions, and responsibilities of RACs and RANs to avoid duplication and ensure streamlined operations.
- Broad agreement that the guidelines should remain non-binding and avoid legal language.
- Requests for clearer procedures for proposal submission, communication channels, and coordination with national focal points.
- Three short-term options were proposed for handling new RAC/RAN proposals, with emerging consensus to allow interested organizations to submit proposals to the Secretariat for review by Contracting Parties.
- A proposed way forward: the Secretariat would present a revised, streamlined version of the guidelines by December 2025, and an intersessional Open-Ended Working Group would be established to finalize them, potentially for virtual endorsement to reduce costs.

56. Interventions from the Delegates were as follows:
- Antigua and Barbuda supported keeping the current guidelines in force until updated modalities are agreed. They endorsed establishing a Working Group to assess the revised guidelines and committed to submitting written comments.
 - Dominica sought clarity on whether the new guidelines would outline procedures for transitioning from old to new RACs/RANs and how Parties could seek support from these mechanisms.
 - Colombia supported revising the guidelines, stressing the importance of RACs and RANs using proper communication channels with national focal points, and acknowledged financial limitations regarding translation.
 - United States suggested aligning timelines so that the Working Group is established after the Secretariat submits the revised guidelines in December 2025. They recommended virtual endorsement, if feasible.
 - France agreed that endorsement could occur intersessionally and welcomed receiving the revised guidelines.
57. The Secretariat reaffirmed the urgency of finalizing the updated guidelines and plans to convene the Working Group by December 2025, inviting early nominations. In the interim, Parties were encouraged to evaluate new RAC proposals using existing 2008–2010 guidelines while considering updates reflected in recent drafts.

6.6 State of Convention Area Reports on Marine Pollution and Marine Biodiversity Reports and the Open-Ended Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment

58. The President invited the Secretariat to present proposals for advancing the State of Convention Area Reports (SOCAR) on marine pollution and marine biodiversity, as outlined in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/INF.5. The report fulfils the requirements of Article 16(2) of the Cartagena Convention and Article 12 of the LBS Protocol for periodic environmental assessments.
59. The Secretariat proposed that the existing Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) on Assessment and Monitoring established under COP15 be mandated to form a dedicated subgroup to develop an integrated SOCAR covering both marine pollution and marine habitats. This subgroup would include:
- LBS and SPAW Contracting Parties
 - LBS and SPAW RACs/RANs
 - SOME Working Group members
 - Regional experts ensuring equal focus on biodiversity conservation and pollution reduction
60. Key tasks could include:
- Establishing objectives and a methodological framework
 - Aligning the SOCAR with the SOME assessment model
 - Reviewing draft chapters
 - Integrating a special chapter on sargassum impacts across the Wider Caribbean Region

61. Parties were invited to participate in the subgroup by December 2025 and to begin sharing national data to support SOCAR development.
62. The interventions were as follows:
 - Antigua and Barbuda fully supported the OEWG's continued role and asked for clarification on engagement with the SOME process.
 - The United States welcomed progress and endorsed the proposed approach, encouraging broader Party participation to address data gaps.
 - Trinidad and Tobago (Chair of the OEWG) requested clarity on the reporting interval, noting the first SOCAR covered 2009–2014. They suggested defining a fixed periodic cycle (5 or 10 years).
 - Barbados endorsed establishing the subgroup and encouraged Parties to nominate academic and technical experts, not only government delegates.
 - RAC-CIMAB supported the proposal, emphasizing the value of expert participation and virtual accessibility.
 - Haiti asked whether they could participate and requested access to relevant documents.
 - The Foundation for Development Planning (Observer) recommended a 10-year reporting cycle to better reflect long-term trends and impacts.
63. The Secretariat thanked the OEWG Chair for leadership, welcomed the suggestions and clarified that the specifics on the methodological process and alignment with the State of the Marine Environment and Socio-Economies Report (Revision 3) will be determined by the Working Group. The Secretariat proposed a six-year cycle as a balanced approach and encouraged Haiti's technical experts to participate.

6.7 Draft Sargassum Action Plan

64. The President invited the Secretariat to present the Draft Cartagena Convention Sargassum Action Plan, as contained in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.27 Rev.1 incorporating feedback from the LBS and SPAW COPs and the Pre-COP discussions.
65. The proposed Action Plan establishes a coordinated regional framework for addressing increasingly severe sargassum inundation events and is structured around five components:
 - Cooperation and Coordination
 - Governance
 - Research and Response
 - Communication and Awareness
 - Sustainable Financing
66. COP18 was invited to approve the Action Plan as the regional coordination mechanism for sargassum management.

67. The Secretariat also presented a potential recommendation for Parties to actively engage in discussions on the draft Sargassum Resolution submitted by the Dominican Republic for UNEA-7 and consider co-sponsoring the resolution as appropriate.
68. Interventions from the Meeting were as follows:
- The United States supported adoption of the Action Plan and expressed interest in contributing to its implementation.
 - UNESCO-IOCARIBE encouraged strong collaboration with existing regional groups working on sargassum science and management and expressed readiness to support the Secretariat and Member States.
 - Antigua and Barbuda emphasized the severity of sargassum impacts and supported broadening Working Group membership, including scope of work already done in the region. They stressed the need for environmentally-sound harvesting practices and encouraged Parties to review the Dominican Republic's UNEA-7 proposal.
 - France supported the establishment of the Working Group.
 - The United States requested additional time to review the Dominican Republic's proposal and suggested removing any prescriptive language regarding co-sponsorship.
 - The Dominican Republic expressed appreciation for support and hoped Parties would consider endorsing its UNEA-7 proposal.
 - Saint Lucia supported advancing the Action Plan and agreed with expanding the Working Group. They noted that sargassum management falls under their Ministry of Fisheries and suggested that "co-sponsorship" may be better framed as an option rather than a requirement.
 - Colombia supported adoption of the Action Plan but also requested additional time to review the UNEA-7 proposal.
 - Panama stated that the working group will strengthen cooperation between the Parties by effectively implementing monitoring, mitigating and managing the sargassum issue. They also supported establishment of the working group and emphasized the role of national fisheries authorities in coordinating sargassum responses.
 - The United States proposed that the COP note the submission of the Dominican Republic, recognizing the work invested while avoiding prescriptive language.
 - Antigua and Barbuda acknowledged the extensive effort by the Dominican Republic and reiterated the importance of continued cooperation on sargassum.
69. The Secretariat confirmed its intention to prepare non-prescriptive language recognizing the UNEA-7 submission by the Dominican Republic, encouraging interested Contracting Parties to engage with the Dominican Republic for details.
70. The President thanked the Secretariat and delegates for their inputs.

6.8 Barcelona Convention Secretariat

71. The President invited the Secretariat to introduce the discussion on the proposed online reporting template for the Secretariat and a presentation by a representative of the Barcelona Convention Secretariat. UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/INF.16.

72. The Secretariat introduced the proposed online reporting template for the Cartagena Convention Secretariat, supported by Conference Room Paper 2, which summarizes national reports submitted by Contracting Parties. The Secretariat underscored the importance of standardized, consistent reporting under Article 4 of the Cartagena Convention and the related Protocols to:
- monitor national implementation,
 - identify challenges and technical gaps,
 - strengthen data comparability, and
 - inform regional work planning.
73. The Secretariat recalled that the reporting template was initially adopted at COP12 (2012) and updated at COP16 (2021), with the intention to transition to an online format. However, due to security and technical and security limitations at the time, Parties continued submitting reports in hard copy. The Secretariat reviewed the content of the national reports received, noting progress in legal frameworks, policy integration and monitoring.
74. Common challenges included insufficient financing, limited enforcement capacity, coordination and technical capacity.
75. The Secretariat stressed the need for tailored support, regional cooperation, and strengthened interagency coordination. It also invited Parties to support development of an updated online reporting mechanism and emphasized the value of partnering with the Barcelona Convention's Regional Activity Center (INFO/RAC), which has long standing expertise with digital reporting systems.

6.9 Barcelona Convention's Online Reporting System.

76. The Secretariat invited Mr. Arthur Pascale to present the Barcelona Convention's online reporting system as a model for strengthening reporting under the Cartagena Convention.
77. Mr. Pascale outlined key features of the Barcelona system, which integrates multiple databases covering legal, administrative, and monitoring data. The platform enables Contracting Parties to:
- submit biennial national reports across all Protocols through a secure, structured web interface
 - access tutorials and metadata support
 - benefit from centralized data storage and enhanced visualization improved transparency,
 - support decision-making and strengthen regional cooperation.
78. He noted similarities between the Barcelona and Cartagena Conventions' reporting needs and encouraged collaboration to adapt best practices.
79. Interventions from Delegates were as follows:
- Antigua and Barbuda strongly supported improving the reporting system and emphasized integrating national reporting outputs into SOCAR processes for institutional and environmental trend analysis.
 - Jamaica endorsed working with the Barcelona Convention to enhance efficiency and modernize reporting.

- Dominican Republic welcomed the presentation and highlighted the value of synergy between both Regional Seas Conventions.
 - Colombia expressed interest in future collaboration and benefiting from the Barcelona model.
 - Barbados supported the proposed improvements, noting persistent challenges with data analysis, and recommended periodic automated summaries and the reinstatement of reporting highlights at meetings.
 - United States supported development of an online mechanism and requested that any changes to reporting templates be subject to Contracting Party approval.
80. The Secretariat expressed appreciation for the strong support received and acknowledged the longstanding relationship with the Barcelona Convention and INFO/RAC. Parties were reminded of the importance of robust reporting—especially under the Oil Spills Protocol—and encouraged to remain engaged as the Secretariat advances the new online format.

6.10 RAC/REMPEITC Caribe

81. The President invited the Secretariat to present an update on the status of RAC/REMPEITC Caribe, including recommendations from the 12th Steering Committee Meeting (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/INF.11). The Secretariat noted that several recommendations were now outdated and/or no longer implementable due to the closure of the Centre in Curaçao in January 2025 and the pending selection of a new host country.
82. The Secretariat:
- Acknowledged the long-standing support of Curaçao, contributing governments, and partners, including IMO.
 - Highlighted the importance of maintaining regional capacity for oil spill preparedness and response under the Oil Spills Protocol.
 - Requested guidance from Parties on evaluating proposals for hosting a new Centre.
 - Confirmed that relevant Steering Committee recommendations, particularly those related to strategic planning, staffing, and work programme continuity should be adopted.
 - Extended special recognition to Ms. Carla Bicker, outgoing Acting Head of REMPEITC, for her decades of service.
83. Interventions from Delegates:
- Dominica supported continued collaboration with regional partners and encouraged use of the IMO Assistance Portal to address pollution and oil spill challenges.
 - Jamaica expressed appreciation to Curaçao and Ms. Bicker for their contributions and affirmed readiness to collaborate with the future host country.
 - Barbados thanked Curaçao, participating governments, and Ms. Bicker, noting the significant benefits received. They supported creating a working group dedicated to advancing oil spill management in the region.

- United States supported adopting the relevant Steering Committee recommendations and proposed evaluating hosting proposals intersessionally to ensure timely selection of a new host.
 - Belize shared positive experiences using REMPEITC tools and training, including updates to its national oil spill plan, and reaffirmed its commitment to the Protocol.
 - Trinidad and Tobago announced its formal expression of interest to host the new REMPEITC Centre in Port of Spain, supported by national agencies already working on technical and logistical requirements.
 - Antigua and Barbuda supported the working-group concept proposed by Barbados, thanked REMPEITC for its contributions, and welcomed Trinidad and Tobago's offer to host.
 - United Kingdom (Observer – Maritime Coast Guard Agency) outlined ongoing capacity-building efforts in UK Overseas Territories and invited participation in an upcoming training workshop in Miami.
 - UNESCO-IOC commended the region's strong progress under the Oil Spills Protocol, congratulated Curaçao, the U.S., and Trinidad and Tobago for leadership, and pledged ongoing technical cooperation.
 - Jamaica welcomed Trinidad and Tobago's expression of interest and inquired whether the COP should formally endorse it.
84. The Secretariat concluded by highlighting opportunities for future training and partnerships—including engagement with the IMO–IPIECA Global Initiative—and encouraged Parties to liaise with national maritime and oil spill authorities to explore these opportunities.

6.11 IMO-IPIECA

85. The Secretariat introduced an online presentation by International Maritime Organisation (IMO) IPIECA on opportunities for the Cartagena Convention to collaborate with the IMO–IPIECA Global Initiative for the Wider Caribbean. IPIECA's presenter, Polly Hill, highlighted rising oil spill risks in the region and recommended strengthening preparedness through the Global Initiative Program, referencing successes from the GI WACAF partnership in Africa.
86. Trinidad and Tobago emphasized the need for stronger partnerships with industry to secure resources and expressed concern over shipwrecks and abandoned vessels contributing to spill risks.
87. IPIECA noted that more information would be shared in an upcoming presentation on shipwrecks and Project Tangaroa.
88. The Secretariat acknowledged the opportunities presented and encouraged countries to engage with their national focal points and consider attending upcoming training activities, including a session scheduled for December in Miami, USA.

6.12 UNEP Regional Seas Strategic Directions (2026-2029) and Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans

89. The President invited the representative from UNEP Headquarters, Mr. Alberto Pacheco, to present the new UNEP Regional Seas Strategic Directions (2026–2029) and share other developments relevant to Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans. This presentation was expected to assist Contracting

Parties in identifying opportunities for enhanced collaboration and alignment with broader global initiatives.

90. Mr. Alberto Pacheco emphasized the critical moment currently facing global ocean governance, highlighting progress stemming from the Third UN Ocean Conference and the ratification of the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement by 74 parties. He described the evolution of UNEP's Regional Seas Programme, established over 50 years ago and now the largest ocean governance mechanism, comprising 18 conventions that involve 146 countries.
91. He explained that the programme supports cooperation, knowledge sharing, and alignment between regional and global ocean governance frameworks. The Strategic Directions for 2026–2029 position Regional Seas as key connectors between science, policy, and on-the-ground action. They aim to tackle biodiversity loss, pollution, and climate change while strengthening coastal resilience. Priorities include holistic approaches to the triple planetary crisis, enhanced knowledge management, and strengthened science–policy interfaces. These directions complement existing mandates, promote synergies across conventions, and support global commitments such as the UN Ocean Decade, biodiversity frameworks, and climate agreements—ensuring that regional priorities inform global outcomes and vice versa.
92. Following the presentation, the Secretariat informed the Meeting of upcoming participation in an indicators workshop and involvement in a UNEA side event highlighting regional achievements. These activities aim to elevate global visibility of the Cartagena Convention and reinforce linkages with other multilateral environmental agreements.

6.13 Ocean Coordination Mechanism (OCM) for the Wider Caribbean Region

93. The President invited the Secretariat to introduce the agenda item and invited Mr. Patrick Debels, Chair of the Ocean Coordination Mechanism (OCM) for the CLME+ Region, to deliver his presentation.
94. Mr. Debels explained that the OCM provides a platform for integrated ocean governance, bringing together 20 countries and nine intergovernmental organizations to harmonize regional ocean initiatives. Its priorities include:
 - Advancing the State of the Marine Environment and Associated Economies (SOME) process;
 - Supporting a Marine Data Blueprint for improved data access and integration;
 - Strengthening engagement with civil society, academia, and the private sector;
 - Supporting the development of regional tools such as the Sargassum Knowledge Hub;
 - Ensuring alignment with Cartagena Convention mandates through funding provided by the GEF PROCARIBE+ Project (through 2028).
95. A draft decision invited Parties, who had not yet done so, to sign the OCM's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) where appropriate and participate actively in OCM activities to enhance synergy with the Cartagena Convention.
96. Interventions from Delegates were as follows:
 - France supported the decision in principle and recommended making some elements of the draft more concise.

- Panama expressed strong support for the OCM, recognizing its importance for strengthening regional marine governance. They encouraged active collaboration between the OCM, the Secretariat, and Contracting Parties.
 - United States appreciated the presentation but noted that not all Contracting Parties had signed the OCM MOU. They recommended softening prescriptive language—for example, replacing “calling on” with “inviting”—and requested the opportunity to hold reservations on two forward-leaning decision points.
97. The Secretariat acknowledged the general support for the OCM and confirmed willingness to adjust the draft decision to ensure consistency, avoid over-commitment, and respect the differing membership statuses of Parties. The Secretariat proposed using the existing draft text as a basis while refining wording to reflect the broad spirit of collaboration.

AGENDA ITEM 7: DRAFT WORKPLAN AND BUDGET FOR THE CARTAGENA CONVENTION FOR THE 2026-2027 BIENNIUM 24.

98. The Secretariat presented the Draft Workplan and Budget for the Cartagena Convention for 2026–2027, as contained in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/3. The presentation highlighted the strategic direction and financial requirements needed to advance the Convention and its Protocols over the next biennium.

7.1 Key Elements of the Draft Workplan

- The Workplan prioritizes activities across the Convention’s core programmes:

7.2 Pollution Control (AMEP / LBS & Oil Spills Protocols)

- Strengthening marine water quality monitoring and nutrient reduction initiatives.
- Advancing marine litter and plastics management through national and regional strategies.
- Supporting wastewater management reforms and pollution control measures.
- Enhancing oil spill preparedness, early warning tools, and capacity-building for response.

7.3 Biodiversity Conservation (SPAW Protocol)

- Improving management effectiveness of marine protected areas.
- Supporting species conservation, ecosystem restoration (coral reefs, mangroves, seagrass), and regional biodiversity monitoring.
- Expanding partnerships and technical assistance for SPAW implementation.

7.4 Cross-Cutting Priorities

- Capacity-building for integrated monitoring and environmental assessments.
- Strengthening knowledge management and communication tools.
- Advancing sargassum response measures, integrated assessments, and technical working groups.

7.5 Resource Mobilization and Financial Considerations

99. The President invited the Secretariat to present on resource mobilization and financial considerations. The Secretariat emphasized:
- Nearly USD 20 million in externally funded projects are currently being leveraged to benefit Contracting Parties.
 - Core operational activities depend heavily on stable Caribbean Trust Fund contributions, while technical work relies primarily on project funding—creating sustainability risks.
 - Predictable, timely contributions are essential to maintain staffing, support regional meetings, and deliver mandated activities.
 - Proposals for reviewing voluntary contribution scales will be brought to COP19 to promote fairness and long-term financial stability.
 - Unfunded Workplan items may serve as a basis for targeted resource mobilization and partnerships, including greater use of Regional Activity Centres for delivery.
100. The Secretariat reaffirmed its commitment to transparent reporting, results-based budgeting, and close collaboration with Parties in implementing the biennial Workplan.
101. Interventions from Delegates were as follows:
- Mexico commended the Secretariat and emphasized the need for greater transparency and impact-based measurement, proposing systems to evaluate real environmental and institutional outcomes beyond operational metrics.
 - Saint Lucia recognized the scope and complexity of the Workplan and stressed the need for additional staffing and budgetary support, urging the Secretariat to engage UNEP Headquarters for enhanced resources.
 - The United States welcomed the prioritization of core activities and endorsed the zero-growth budget, commending efforts to achieve efficiencies.
 - The Secretariat, in response, reiterated ongoing efforts to strengthen results-based frameworks and acknowledged the need for clearer indicators to measure environmental and programmatic impacts.
 - Colombia expressed appreciation for the structured Workplan and supported the development of a system to track the impact and effectiveness of planned activities.

AGENDA ITEM 8: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

102. The President invited the Meeting to raise matters not covered under previous agenda items. Observers were also invited to deliver short presentations. The Secretariat informed delegates that the sequence of presentations under this item had been adjusted.

8.1 Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

103. Mr. Joe Appiot (CBD Secretariat) presented an overview of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), adopted in 2022. He noted:

- The GBF integrates marine issues across nearly all targets, including spatial planning, protected areas, sustainable harvesting, aquaculture, species conservation, and removal of harmful subsidies.
- Parties are updating their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and setting national targets.
- National reports are due in February 2026, feeding into a global review at CBD COP17 in Armenia.
- Funding to support implementation is increasing through the GBF Fund and the Kunming Biodiversity Fund.
- Timely reporting and ambitious implementation will be essential for accelerating ocean-related biodiversity action.

104. Interventions were as follows:

- Colombia welcomed the presentation, noting the Framework's ambition and the need for strong regional participation through the Cartagena Convention.
- The Secretariat confirmed ongoing efforts to mobilize resources to support SPAW implementation and GBF alignment.
- The Foundation for Development Planning (Observer) asked whether the reporting format would include civil society input.
- Mr. Appiot clarified that while national reports remain primary, complementary inputs from organizations are permitted.

8.2 CARICOM

105. Mr. Karim Sabir (CARICOM Secretariat) outlined progress toward a Regional Ocean Policy to strengthen governance, resilience, and sustainable ocean management. Four priority pillars were highlighted:

- Blue Economy Cooperation
- Capacity Building
- Knowledge Management and Ocean Literacy
- Governance for Regional and International Engagement

106. The work is supported by UK FCDO funding, with regional consultations, technical reviews, and stakeholder surveys already underway.

107. The Secretariat welcomed the update and highlighted opportunities for synergy with the Cartagena Convention.

8.3 Caribbean Youth Climate Council

108. Mr. Mario Gilbert (Caribbean Youth Climate Council) emphasized the role of youth in advancing marine protection and climate action. Key priorities included:

- Combating IUU fishing

- Strengthening environmental education
 - Supporting ratification of the High Seas Treaty (BBNJ)
 - Advocating for a moratorium on deep-sea mining
 - Promoting accountability in plastic production
109. The President commended the youth contribution, noting its importance for long-term regional stewardship.
110. Discussions followed on an integrated approach to considering Protocol decisions. The Secretariat reported that UNEP's legal guidance had been sought regarding the integration process, including the development of flexible, cost-effective language and the formulation of options to be presented at the next COP, pending Bureau oversight and the agreement of Contracting Parties
- Antigua and Barbuda supported the integrated model as more efficient.
 - United States sought clarification on process and preferred maintaining traditional procedures for the current meeting.
111. The Secretariat confirmed that while integration concepts would be explored for the next COP, decision-making for the current meeting would follow established separate procedures.
112. The President thanked the Secretariat for the clarification and advised that at the appointed time, the three Rapporteurs would take the meeting through the respective decisions.

8.5 Project Tangaroa (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/INF.8)

113. The President then invited Benjamin Ferrari of Lloyds Register Foundation to present on Project Tangaroa regarding shipwrecks.
114. Mr. Benjamin Ferrari presented on global risks from Potentially Polluting Wrecks (PPWs) and opportunities to integrate PPW management into marine planning. Key points:
- Over 8,500 wrecks pose pollution risks; many contain hazardous fuels, munitions, and chemicals.
 - PPWs require coordinated management, including monitoring technologies and international cooperation.
 - Work is ongoing with IMO to develop standards for PPW assessment.
115. Interventions:
- Antigua and Barbuda, Panama, Honduras, Dominican Republic, Aruba, and others expressed strong interest, citing national concerns and the need for regional cooperation and funding.
 - Trinidad & Tobago inquired about resources for managing derelict vessels and hazardous infrastructure.
116. Mr. Ferrari indicated his commitment to facilitating connections with researchers, including the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, and noted ongoing Caribbean wreck documentation efforts.

8.6 British Virgin Islands (BVI) - Shipwrecks

117. BVI highlighted the historical and ecological significance of the RMS Rhone, a Royal Mail Steam Packet Company ship that sank off the coast of Salt Island, in the BVI, on 29 October 1867, and is now part of a national marine park.

8.7 Special Presentation to Carla Bicker from RAC REMPEITC Caribe

118. The Secretariat formally recognized Ms. Carla Bicker for over two decades of service, presenting a token of appreciation (received on her behalf by Aruba). She had been at the Center since its inception, where she served as Administrative Assistant prior to assuming the role of Head of the Center supporting the Secretariat and Contracting Parties.

8.8 Announcement of Aruba's new SPAW MPA

119. The Secretariat recognized Aruba on the latest addition of the Parke Marino Aruba to the SPAW list of Marine Protected Areas (MPA). This announcement was met with applause from the Meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 9: ADOPTION OF THE DECISIONS OF THE MEETING

120. The Rapporteurs for the three COPs—LBS COP7 (France), SPAW COP13 (Saint Kitts and Nevis), and the Cartagena Convention COP18 (Saint Lucia)—presented the Draft Decisions of the Meeting contained in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/4 for the review and adoption of the Contracting Parties.
121. The Decisions comprised:
- Decisions of the Seventh Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the LBS Protocol,
 - Decisions of the Thirteenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the SPAW Protocol, and
 - Decisions of the Eighteenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Cartagena Convention,
- reflecting all inputs, amendments, and clarifications discussed during the intergovernmental sessions and technical Working Groups.
122. The Meeting reviewed the Decisions and adopted them with amendments and corrections as appropriate.
123. The Secretariat thanked the Rapporteurs for their efficient presentation of the Decisions, expressed appreciation to all delegates for their constructive interventions and acknowledged the Secretariat team, interpreters, and support personnel for ensuring the success of the COPs.
124. The President announced that the Decisions of the 18th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Cartagena Convention would be translated and shared in Spanish and French for final review.

AGENDA ITEM 10: CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

125. Upon completion of discussions under all agenda items, the Meeting proceeded to its formal closure. Final statements were delivered by the Presidents of the LBS COP7 and SPAW COP13, UNEP Regional Seas Head, the Coordinator of the Caribbean Environment Programme and Secretariat of the Cartagena Convention, respectively.
126. President to the CCS COP18 applauded the meeting for the work done. The Meeting closed at 5:44 p.m. GMT-05:00.

ANNEX I: AGENDA

AGENDA

1. Opening of the Meeting
2. Organization of the Meeting
 - 2.1. Rules of Procedure
 - 2.2. Election of Officers
 - 2.3. Organization of work
3. Adoption of the Agenda
4. Report of the Outgoing President of the Bureau of Contracting Parties
5. Report of the Executive Director of UNEP on the Implementation of the Work Plan for the Cartagena Convention Secretariat (2023-2025)
6. Strategic Issues relevant to the Draft Work Plan and Budget 2026-2027
 - 6.1. Draft Strategy for the Cartagena Convention Secretariat (2023-2030)
 - 6.2. Resource Mobilization Strategy
 - 6.3. Communications and Marketing Strategy
 - 6.4. Regional Activity Centres (RACs) and Regional Activity Networks (RANs)
 - 6.5. Cartagena Convention Working Groups
 - 6.6. State of Convention Area Report on Marine Pollution and Marine Biodiversity
 - 6.7. Draft Sargassum Action Plan
 - 6.8. Reporting on the Cartagena Convention
 - 6.9. RAC REMPEITC Caribe and Collaboration with IMO
 - 6.10. Ocean Coordinating Mechanism
 - 6.11. UNEP Regional Seas Strategy Directions (2026-2029)
7. Draft Workplan and Budget for the Cartagena Convention Secretariat for the 2026-2027 biennium
8. Any Other Business
9. Adoption of the Decisions of the Meeting
10. Closure of the Meeting

ANNEX II: LIST OF DOCUMENTS

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Symbol	Title
<u>Working Documents</u>	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/1	Provisional Agenda
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/2/Rev. 1	Provisional Annotated Agenda
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/3	Draft Workplan and Budget for the Cartagena Convention Secretariat for the 2026-2027 biennium
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/4	<i>Decisions of the Eighteenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (to be prepared during the Meeting)</i>
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/5	<i>Report of the Eighteenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (to be prepared during the meeting)</i>
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.41/INF.22 Rev.4	Draft Strategy for the Cartagena Convention Secretariat 2023-2030
<u>Information Documents</u>	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/INF.1/Rev 1	Provisional List of Documents
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/INF.2	Provisional List of Participants
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/INF.3	Report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme on the Implementation of the 2023-2025 Work Plan and Budget of the Cartagena Convention Secretariat
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/INF.4	Report of the President of the Bureau of Contracting Parties
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG 49/INF 5	Proposal towards an integrated State of Convention Area Report on marine pollution and marine habitats
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/INF 6	Capacity Building for Sustainable Seas Supporting the Implementation of the London Protocol through Education and Collaborative Research (SMART-C LC/LP)
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/INF.7/Rev 1	Communications Strategy of the United Nations Environment Caribbean Environment Programme for 2025-2027
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/INF.8	Report on Project Tangorua on Polluting Shipwrecks
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/INF.9	RAC/REMPEITC-Caribe Report of Activities for 2023- 2024
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/INF.10	Cartagena Convention Secretariat Resource Mobilization Strategy
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/INF.11	Recommendations of the 11th Ordinary RAC-REMPEITC- Caribe Steering Committee Meeting
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/INF.12	Proposal for the Cartagena Convention to engage with the Eighteenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection & Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region

Symbol	Title
	International Maritime Organization-Ipieca Global Initiative for the Wider Caribbean Region (GI Caribbean)
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/INF.13	Status and Progress of the Wider Caribbean Ocean Coordination Mechanism (OCM), its Work Programme and Linkages with the Cartagena Convention.
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/INF.14	Proposal for a Cartagena Convention Established Working Group on Sargassum
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/INF.15	Status of ratifications
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.9	Analysis of the Functioning of the Cartagena Convention Working Groups and Recommendations for Improvement
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.24/CRP.9 Rev.4	Final updated Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of Regional Activity Centres and Regional Activity Networks for the Cartagena Convention
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.46/5	Recommendations of the Seventh Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) to the Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land-based Sources and Activities in the Wider Caribbean
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.46/INF.4	Status of Activities of the Assessment and Management of Environmental Pollution (AMEP) Sub-programme for 2023-2025
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.46/INF.5	Report of Activities for the LBS Regional Activity Centres – IMA (Trinidad and Tobago) and CIMAB (Cuba) for 2023-2025
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.46/INF.6	Report of the Open-Ended Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment 2023-2025
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.46/INF.8	Report on the work on the Caribbean Node for Marine Litter Management (2023-2025)
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.4	Status Of Activities Of The Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas And Wildlife (SPAW) Sub-Programme For The 2023–2024(2025) Biennium
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.5	Report of the SPAW Regional Activity Centre (SPAW-RAC) in Guadeloupe with regard to RAC operations and budget for the period 2023-2024(2025)
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.48/INF.6	RAC/REMPEITC-Caribe Report of Activities for 2023–2024
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.48/3/Rev.2	Workplan and Budget for the Cartagena Convention Secretariat for the 2023-2025 biennium
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.48/4	Decisions of the Twentieth Intergovernmental Meeting on the Action Plan for the Caribbean Environment Programme and the Seventeenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention

Symbol	Title
	for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.48/5	Report of the Seventeenth 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.47/3	Recommendations of the Sixth Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP) to the Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land- Based Sources and Activities (LBS Protocol) in the Wider Caribbean Region
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.47/4	Report of the Sixth Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP) to the Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities in the Wider Caribbean Region
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.46/3	Decisions of the Twelfth Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP) to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA) in the Wider Caribbean Region
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.46/4	Report of the Twelfth Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP) to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA) in the Wider Caribbean Region

Reference Documents

UNEP, 2025	Regional Seas Strategic Directions (2026-2029)
UNEP, 2025	Directory of Focal Points of the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols
UNEP, 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
UNEP, 2010	Rules of Procedure for the Meetings of the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena Convention)
UNEP, 2010	Financial Rules for the Cartagena Convention, its Caribbean Environment Programme and Terms of Reference for the Caribbean Trust Fund
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.41/INF.8	State of the Convention Area (SOCAR) Report for the Wider Caribbean Region
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.41/INF.10 Rev.1	Regional Nutrients Pollution Reduction Strategy
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.41/INF.25	Revised Template for national reporting on the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.41/4a Rev.1	Strategy and Workplan for LBS RAC IMA 2021- 2026
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.41/4b Rev.1	Strategy and Workplan for LBS RAC CIMAB 2021-2026

Symbol	Title
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.40/INF.3	An Overview of the Report on the State of Marine Habitats in the Wider Caribbean and the Regional Strategy and Action Plan for the Valuation, Protection and/or Restoration of Key Marine Habitats in the Wider Caribbean 2021 -2030
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.36 CRP.1	Amendment to the Financial Rules for the Cartagena Convention
UNEP(DEC)/CAR IG.24/CRP.9/Rev.1	Guidelines for Establishment and Operation of Regional Activity Centres and Regional Activity Networks for the Cartagena Convention

ANNEX III: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

ANNEX IV: LBS COP7 DECISIONS

DECISIONS OF THE SEVENTH MEETING OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES (COP) TO THE PROTOCOL CONCERNING POLLUTION FROM LAND-BASED SOURCES AND ACTIVITIES (LBS PROTOCOL) IN THE WIDER CARIBBEAN REGION

The Contracting Parties:

Having convened the Seventh Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land-based Sources and Activities (LBS COP7) in the Wider Caribbean Region in Kingston, Jamaica on 13 October 2025;

Taking note of the Draft Work Plan and Budget for the Sub-Programme on the Assessment and Management of Environmental Pollution (AMEP) for 2026-2027 as contained in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.46/3/Rev.1 and the Draft Work Plans and Budgets for the Regional Activity Centres for the LBS Protocol (LBS RACs) in Cuba and Trinidad and Tobago for the period 2026-2027 as contained in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.46/4a/Rev 1 and UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.46/4b/Rev 1.

Recognizing the efforts taken by the Secretariat to increasingly integrate the work of the AMEP and SPAW sub-programmes,

Further Recognizing the importance of partner agencies in forming part of the Regional Activity Network (RAN) for supporting priority action on wastewater, nutrients and marine litter pollution including through the work of UNEP Global Partnerships on these pollutants;

Having reviewed the Recommendations of the Seventh Meeting of the Scientific, Technical and Advisory Committee to the Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land-based Sources and Activities (LBS STAC 7) in the Wider Caribbean Region contained in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.46/5;

Decide to:

DECISION I

WORKPLAN AND BUDGET

1. **Adopt** the LBS STAC7 Recommendations contained in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.46/5 as applicable.
2. **Adopt** the 2026-2027 Draft Workplan and Budget as outlined in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.46/3 Rev.1.

DECISION II

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.

DECISION III

MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT

State of Convention Area Report on Marine Pollution

1. **Request** COP18 endorse the establishment of a sub-group of the OEWG to support the development of the integrated State of Convention Area report on marine pollution and marine habitats.
2. **Request** that the proposed sub-group be open to all Contracting Parties from the Cartagena Convention and its protocols and regional experts, as necessary.
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. **Request** the Secretariat identify potential partner organizations that could provide supplementary data on coastal water quality to inform the integrated SOCAR.

Sargassum Inundation

1. **Acknowledge** the contributions of the OEWG and the Pre COP to advancing the draft Cartagena Convention Action Plan on Sargassum Inundation.
2. **Request** the Cartagena Convention COP consider endorsing **UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.27 Rev.3** draft Cartagena Convention Action Plan on Sargassum Inundation taking note of any additional amendments made during SPAW COP13 and Cartagena Convention COP18.
3. **Request** the Cartagena Convention COP consider the recommendation as outlined in **UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/INF.14** in relation to the establishment of a Convention Working Group on Sargassum.
4. **Encourage** Contracting Parties to participate in the proposed Convention Working Group on Sargassum

DECISION IV

LBS PROTOCOL RATIFICATION

1. **Urge** Non-Contracting Parties to the LBS Protocol to **expand their efforts** towards ratification and to take advantage of external project funding and outreach materials available to support national ratification processes.

DECISION V

INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

1. **Request** the Cartagena Convention COP consider the establishment of a new working group, open to the Convention Contracting Parties 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 report its findings to the Cartagena Convention COP 19

DECISION VI

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.

ANNEX V: SPAW COP13 DECISIONS

**DECISIONS OF THE THIRTEENTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES (COP) TO
THE PROTOCOL CONCERNING SPECIALLY PROTECTED AREAS AND WILDLIFE (SPA) TO THE
CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT
OF THE WIDER CARIBBEAN REGION**

The Contracting Parties:

Having convened the Thirteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA) to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region, held in Kingston, Jamaica, on 14 and 16 October 2025,

Recognizing the valuable technical and financial contributions of the Regional Activity Centres (RACs), Regional Activity Networks (RANs), Contracting Parties, and partner organizations in advancing the implementation of the SPA Protocol,

Acknowledging the outcomes and recommendations of the Eleventh Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee to the SPA Protocol (STAC11), the Seventh Meeting of the Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities (LBS) STAC, and the related Pre-COP consultations,

Emphasizing the importance of strengthening regional cooperation, governance, and resource mobilization to enhance effective implementation of the SPA Protocol, and to address emerging and cross-cutting environmental challenges,

Having reviewed the “Workplan for the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA) Sub-Programme for the 2026-2027 Biennium” (UNEP (DEPI)/CAR WG.45/3 Rev.5);

The Meeting decides as follows:

DECISION I STATUS OF ACTIVITIES

1. RAC/RAN Guidelines

The Meeting decides to request the Eighteenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (COP18) to:

- a) **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.
- b) **Request** that an inter-sessional Open-Ended Convention Working Group be established by December 2025 to finalize the revision of the Region Activity Centre (RAC)/Regional Activity Network (RAN) Guidelines by March 2026.
- c) **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.
- d) **Request** that any new proposals for RACs and RANs in the short term be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by Contracting Parties.

2. Marine Mammal Regional Activity Network (MMRAN)

The Meeting decides to:

- a) **Acknowledge** with appreciation the expressions of interest received in support of the establishment of a 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;
- b) **Request** the Secretariat, in coordination with SPAW-RAC, to review and consolidate all proposals once the submission process has been completed;
- c) **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.

3. Working Groups

The Meeting decides to:

- a) **Note** the analytical findings in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.9.
- b) **Request** the Secretariat, in consultation with RACs and Focal Points, to prepare an implementation plan for onboarding materials, expert skills registry, meeting lead-time standards, and language access (EN/ES/FR), subject to resources.
- c) **Request** the Secretariat and the RACs to support periodic in-person WG sessions when feasible and funds permit.

4. SPAW Consortium

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

DECISION II PROTECTED AREAS

The Meeting decides to:

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 III SPECIES

The Meeting decides to:

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 12th Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC 12).

2. **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 IV SARGASSUM

The Meeting decides to:

1. **Request** the COP18 to endorse the Cartagena Convention Action Plan on Sargassum Inundation (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.27 Rev.3);
2. **Request** COP18 to mandate the Secretariat to oversee the preparation of an integrated State of the Convention Area Report, linking considerations on the status of marine pollution and marine and coastal ecosystems within the Convention Area, and including a dedicated chapter on Sargassum;
3. **Request** COP18 to 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;
4. **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;
5. **Further request** the Sargassum Working Group to update the Sargassum White Paper, incorporating new data, best practices, and policy recommendations for consideration by the relevant STACs and COPs.

DECISION V SPAW 2026-2027 WORKPLAN

The Meeting decides to:

1. **Approve** the *Workplan for the SPAW Sub-Programme for the 2026–2027 Biennium* (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG. WG.45/3 Rev.5), as a framework to guide the implementation of the SPAW Protocol and its priority activities across the Wider Caribbean Region;
2. **Acknowledge** the support provided by the project "Blue Growth through Green Restoration: Cartagena Regional Seas Convention's Capacity Building on Seagrass Ecosystems" to the implementation of the SPAW Protocol and its 2026-2027 Work Plan.
3. **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;

4. **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.
5. **Endorse** the joint draft workplan between the Secretariat under the SPAW Subprogramme and the International Whaling Commission (IWC) as contained in Annex 1 to UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.34.

DECISION VI COASTAL WETLANDS

The Meeting decides to:

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 VII STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

The Meeting decides to:

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 Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Food and Agriculture 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.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MEETING

Having convened the Eleventh Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) in the Wider Caribbean Region, Panama City, Panama, from 30 June 2025 to 3 July 2025,

The Meeting recommends,

RECOMMENDATION I STATUS OF ACTIVITIES

Having reviewed the documents on the RAC/RAN Guidelines, the Marine Mammals Regional Activity Network, the Functioning of the Cartagena Convention Working Groups and Recommendations and the SPAW Consortium

RAC/RAN Guidelines

1. The Secretariat **host a session with** Contracting Parties after SPAW STAC11 and LBS STAC7 and before COP13 of the SPAW Protocol, COP7 of the LBS Protocol, COP18 of the Cartagena Convention/IGM21, through a dedicated drafting group to revise the Updated Guidelines for the establishment and operation of Regional Activity Centres (RACs) and Regional Activity Networks (RANs) for the Cartagena Convention (UNEP(DEPI)CAR IG.24_CRP.9 Rev.4), with the goal of having a finalized, adoptable document ready for these meetings. The Secretariat will provide interpretation subject to the availability of funds.

Marine Mammals RAN (MMRAN)

1. Request the Secretariat to initiate a call for nominations for institutions interested in hosting and/or directing a (MMRAN) and work with Contracting Parties following IGM21/COP18 to elaborate next steps to develop a process to review and potentially approve a proposal during an intersessional period.
2. The Secretariat or SPAW-RAC **hold** a series of webinars on the revised marine mammal action plan adopted at SPAW COP12, and **invite** Contracting Parties, observers and others to present on relevant actions taken that support the implementation of the Action Plan and **identify** needs and responsibilities for further implementation of the action plan.

Working Group

Having reviewed the “Analysis of the Functioning of the Cartagena Convention Working Groups and Recommendations for Improvement” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.9),

1. The Secretariat and/or SPAW-RAC, as appropriate, **develop** training materials for new working group members.
2. The Chairs of the working group **announce** meetings and deadlines well in advance and distribute meeting reports promptly.
3. The Secretariat and/or SPAW-RAC **continue** to provide interpretation for the Working Groups, as funding permits. Request for interpretation should be made 15 days in advance.
4. The Secretariat and/or SPAW-RAC, as appropriate, **organize** a listening session with Contracting Parties and experts to discuss barriers to participation in the working groups.
5. The Secretariat and/or SPAW-RAC, as appropriate, **create** a database of experts who would be willing to answer specific questions or otherwise contribute to specific working group tasks.
6. The Secretariat **encourage** Contracting Parties and **invite** observers to designate experts with scientific and/or technical competence to the working groups, in accordance with the Terms of Reference for the SPAW STAC Ad Hoc Working Groups.

SPAW Consortium

1. The Secretariat, in its engagement in the Ocean Coordination Mechanism (OCM), **note** that the SPAW Consortium has demonstrated how the effort of civil society can enhance regional collaboration, information sharing, and alignment of marine and coastal biodiversity initiatives.
2. Noting information paper UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.17 by the SPAW Consortium “Expanding Civil Society Participation in the Caribbean Environment”, the Secretariat **develop** a strategy for civil society engagement.

RECOMMENDATION II PROTECTED AREAS

Having reviewed the “Report of the STAC Protected Area Working Group” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.10),

Having reviewed 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),

Having reviewed the “Report on the development of a regional support program for protected area managers in the Wider Caribbean Region” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.12),

Having reviewed the SPAW Protected Area Managers Network (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.11),

Taking note of the request from Contracting Parties to provide comments and technical input on certain documents before they are presented to the Thirteenth SPAW COP (COP13) and Twenty-First Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM21) for consideration as appropriate,

1. Contracting Parties **propose** new protected areas to be listed under the SPAW Protocol within the first year following each SPAW Conference of the Parties.
2. The Secretariat and/or SPAW-RAC, as appropriate, **develop** a concise checklist covering the mandatory criteria for a protected area to be added to the SPAW List of Protected Areas, subject to the SPAW COP13’s **review** of

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), and the Protected Areas Working Group **provide** feedback before the draft checklist is presented to the SPAW STAC12.

3. The Secretariat and/or SPAW-RAC, as appropriate, **invite** Contracting Parties to provide comments by 21 July 2025, ensuring that all feedback is transparently reviewed and effectively integrated and that the Secretariat and/or SPAW-RAC, as appropriate, **address** comments from Contracting Parties prior to submitting the documents to SPAW COP13:
 - 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), and the “Report on the development of a regional support program for protected area managers in the Wider Caribbean Region” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.12)
 - the SPAW Protected Area Managers Network (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.11)
4. The Protected Areas Working Group **develop** a proposal for a mechanism by which Contracting Parties would report information on protected areas within their jurisdiction that are on the SPAW List of Protected Areas for consideration at SPAW STAC12, and possible consideration at SPAW COP13. The proposal should take into account the relevant provisions of the SPAW Protocol, including Articles 15(2), 19, and 22(2)(e).
5. SPAW COP13 **welcome** the proposal from the Kingdom of the Netherlands to include Parke Marino Aruba in the SPAW list of Protected Area.

RECOMMENDATION III SPECIES

Having reviewed the “Report of the SPAW STAC Species Working Group” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.14)

Having reviewed the “Report on the conservation of Nassau Grouper (*Epinephelus striatus*)” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.15),

Having reviewed the “Recommendation for conservation of Sawfish Survey” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.16)

Having reviewed the “Report of conservation and management recommendations for the whale shark (uplisted in Annex II), Giant manta ray (uplisted in Annex II) and hammerhead sharks (annex III) in the wider Caribbean region (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.18)

1. SPAW COP13 **encourage** Contracting Parties to consider the recommendations in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.15 in the context of national actions to promote the conservation of Nassau grouper and the Secretariat and SPAW-RAC, as appropriate and upon request, support Contracting Parties in their implementation.
2. Following the presentation by a sawfish expert on the species’ biology, ecology, and conservation needs (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.16), the Contracting Parties wish to **underscore** the critical importance of continuing efforts to prevent the extinction of sawfish in the region.
3. The Species Working Group **continue** to assist the Secretariat and SPAW RAC to support relevant Contracting Parties in implementing the recommendations for the conservation of sawfish in UNEP(DEPI) CAR WG. 43/INF.25.

4. SPAW COP13 **encourage** Contracting Parties to consider the recommendations in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.18 in the context of national actions to promote the conservation and management of Whale Shark, Giant Manta Ray, and Hammerhead Sharks, as outlined in and the Secretariat and SPAW-RAC, as appropriate and upon request, support Contracting Parties in their implementation.

RECOMMENDATION IV EXEMPTIONS

Having reviewed the “Report of the SPAW STAC Exemption Working Group” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.19),

1. The Exemptions Working Group **develop** a prioritized list of recommendations to encourage Contracting Parties to report exemptions in a facilitative, non-confrontational manner. Such recommendations should focus on identifying activities that would support Contracting Parties by simplifying or streamlining reporting processes and raising awareness of reporting obligations under SPAW Protocol Article 11(2).
2. SPAW COP13 **consider** whether Curaçao can provide additional information to justify its proposed activity under the three categories of pertinence. If such information is submitted, the Exemptions Working Group and STAC12 may reassess the proposal. In this case, the STAC could conduct an intersessional review with support from the Exemptions Working Group.
3. SPAW COP13 **request** that Curaçao submit a post-assessment report outlining how the decision of non-pertinence will be integrated into the planning and implementation of the proposed beach enhancement project.
4. Contracting Parties are encouraged to **utilise** the adopted reporting format for Article 11(2), as appropriate, to ensure consistency and completeness in exemption submissions.
5. Parties are encouraged to consider reporting exemptions prior to the commencement of the proposed activity, as appropriate and when practicable.

RECOMMENDATION V SARGASSUM

Noting the impact of Sargassum inundations on communities, the economy, biodiversity and species,

Having reviewed the “STAC Sargassum Working Group Updated Action Plan Proposal and Sustainable Financing Resources” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.27),

Having reviewed the “Contracting Parties 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-Survey analysis” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.26),

Having reviewed the “Report of the STAC Sargassum Working Group” UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.25),
Taking note of the “Report of the Joint Monitoring and Assessment Open Ended Working Group and Sargassum Working Group Meeting/Workshop” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.31), including the description of “Sargassum inundation” therein,

1. The Secretariat and/or SPAW-RAC, as appropriate, **invite** Contracting Parties to provide comments on the “STAC Sargassum Working Group Updated Action Plan Proposal and Sustainable Financing Resources” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.27) by 21 July 2025, ensuring that all feedback is transparently reviewed and effectively integrated, and call for an intersessional meeting, if needed, and the Secretariat provide interpretation depending on availability of funds.
2. The Sargassum Working Group be at the level of the Convention Parties to facilitate participation by both the SPAW and LBS Protocols Contracting Parties.
3. The Secretariat **provide** additional information to SPAW COP13, LBS COP7 and IGM21/COP18 regarding how an integrated State of the Convention Area Report could be developed, beginning with a dedicated chapter on Sargassum. The terms of reference of this report should include:
 - The proposed institutional mechanisms and coordination processes required for its development;
 - The roles and responsibilities of relevant stakeholders;
 - A suggested timeline and methodology for compiling and validating the report; and
 - The process for presenting the final report to the Contracting Parties for review and endorsement.
4. The Secretariat **provide** additional information regarding how a Convention-level working group on Sargassum could operate, including how it could be tasked and how any products it may develop could be considered by the governing bodies of the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols.

RECOMMENDATION VI SPAW 2026-2027 WORKPLAN

Having reviewed the Draft Workplan as contained in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/3,

Draft workplan for 2026-2027 biennium

1. The Secretariat **prioritise** activities that support the implementation of the SPAW Protocol and identify resources for same.
2. The Secretariat and/or SPAW-RAC, as appropriate, **invite** Contracting Parties to provide comments on the “Draft Workplan for the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) Sub-Programme for the 2026-2027 Biennium” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/3) by 21 July 2025, ensuring that all feedback is transparently reviewed and effectively integrated.
3. The Small Grants Programme (SGP) be maintained and further strengthened to expand its reach and impact, recognizing its value in supporting implementation of SPAW objectives.

Compliance

1. The Secretariat **conduct** a systematic assessment of Contracting Parties’ needs and challenges related to compliance with the SPAW Protocol, to inform targeted support and resource allocation.
2. The Secretariat **develop** and **deliver** tailored capacity-building activities to strengthen national abilities to implement and report on SPAW Protocol obligations effectively.
3. The Secretariat **prepare** and **distribute** a clear, practical checklist outlining SPAW Protocol obligations to guide Parties in self-assessment, planning, and reporting processes.

International Whaling Commission (IWC)

1. SPAW COP13 **consider** the draft workplan between SPAW and IWC as stated in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.34.

ANNEX VI: COP18 DECISIONS

**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**

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 11th 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 17th and 18th 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 19th 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 7th 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 SOME 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.46/5 as 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 12th 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.

ANNEX VII: YOUTH STATEMENT

Good day everybody,

I'm Mario Galbert from Jamaica speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Youth Climate Council.

Firstly, I thank you all for the continuous engagement with stakeholders and welcome the recommendation for a stakeholder engagement strategy for the Cartagena Convention. Caribbean Youth Climate Council is championing meaningful youth engagement in multilateral processes.

Let me bring us back just a little, at UNEA7 member states adopted the Ocean Affairs resolution which requested UNEP to strengthen its regional seas programme, which enables the support of the secretariat to each Convention and action plan including the Cartagena Convention.

A strategy for engagement with stakeholders is a catalyst for the strengthening of the regional seas Convention. I can also say that the Ocean Science and Governance Youth Network and CYCC, we are happy to engage in this process.

On Substantive matters, Children and Youth Major Group to UNEP which established the Ocean Science and Governance Youth Network partnered with the Caribbean Youth Climate Council to host the Caribbean Youth Environment and Climate Change Conference held in Jamaica from September 09-12, 2025.

The major outcome document for this meeting is the Caribbean Youth Declaration on Environment and Climate Justice, which focused on 6 thematic areas but for the purpose of this convention and its associated protocols, I will be focusing on the 1) Ocean Conservation and Biodiversity Protection and 2) Plastic Pollution and Waste Management.

We have made it clear as young people from across the region that the Caribbean Sea is vital to the sustainable development of our region. Any actions that threaten the marine environment, food security, cultural heritage, and the livelihoods of indigenous, vulnerable, and local communities must be reversed through strong policy and action. The ocean contributes to our tourism, fisheries, and the sustainable blue economy that underpins our economies and identities.

We want to look at that we must find ways to strengthen Marine Protection and Fisheries across our region.

- The can only be done through enforcement and through advanced monitoring technology, regional cooperation which the Cartagena Convention facilitates, and penalties for violations which should be recorded in reporting measures. This must be matched with sustainable fisheries management based on science, community co-management, and decisive action against illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. This must be looked at from the national level but also at regional level.

As young people we see the need for Environmental Education and awareness and as you all can see the issue of knowledge management and communication was brought up by the secretariat as is also highlighted by us.

- We look at Emphasizing the critical importance of mandatory environmental education from nursery to tertiary levels, embedding ocean and climate literacy across curricula and preparing youth for climate-smart careers.

It is also important to note that this convention is one of the longest and most pertinent one for our region as it relates to environmental multilateralism. It has proven over and over the benefits for many of our countries. One thing we must look at how it is interrelated to other legal frameworks within our region. We have what is considered as the Escazu Agreement which allows our states to engage with stakeholders including through providing information and getting access to environmental information.

- Reinforcing the vital urgency for inclusive and transparent public consultation on blue economy agreements, with adequate time and accessible processes for meaningful community participation before government commitments.

On the matter of Coastal Resilience:

- The immediate requirement to support locally led coastal restoration, mangrove and seagrass conservation, and reef protection is crucial but as we can see there are for more discussions across the region as it regards to Sargassum. There are various views as it relates to its benefits and its negative implications with persons also making reference to valorization. These natural defences which we have made references including mangrove restoration reef restoration must be integrated into national adaptation plans, supported by regional funding mechanisms that reduce external dependency and ensure long-term resilience. We have to do this through blended finance mechanisms.

Additionally, we must take into consideration the role of other institutions including the Private Sector we sometime forget, they can play a crucial role.

On the matter of sustainable blue economy,

- We must develop sustainable blue economy initiatives that prioritize nature-based businesses, innovative financing mechanisms, and research and development. These efforts must build the capacity of local communities, women, and Indigenous peoples to participate equitably in ocean governance and benefit from ocean-based opportunities.

We, as young people, have reiterated overtime that special attention should be placed on the Cartagena Convention and its associated protocols, especially on ways in which our region can enhance cooperation and strengthen these frameworks to address the gaps in ocean governance at the regional level. We also

believe that the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework is very important and provides an opportunity for us to get access to resources but also to things such as benefits sharing which is considered as very controversial but also we do see that there is great and we urge countries to look at issues such as deep sea new and emerging industries which may have negative impacts on the environment such as deep seabed mining. Some may not agree or disagree as to what impacts this may have but we must affirm that the seabed is a common heritage of humankind.

International Governance and Multilateral Affairs

Calling for all islands to implement policies that support reaching the 30x30 goals under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. We further call on Caribbean states to ratify and implement the High Seas Treaty (BBNJ), ensuring fair participation of local and youth experts in monitoring and enforcement. Finally, we urge all Caribbean governments to support the call for a moratorium on deep seabed mining through their representation at the International Seabed Authority and other multilateral fora, affirming the seabed as the common heritage of Humankind.

On the issue of plastic pollution,

- We continue to ask that there be research and innovation that supports leveraging apps, data and technology that tracks waste, mapping hotspots and informs smarter decision making. We must ensure that activities in the region aligned with national plans and international obligations.
- We must ensure that we hold manufacturers accountable by requiring product return and recycling initiatives and/or extended producer responsibility exploring linkages with Carbon credits which some may agree or disagree with, and enforce polluters to pay for emissions.

Young people are playing our part and we believe that we have a role to play. We thank member states who have supported the view that we should be included in the working groups and discussions of this meeting and also, if possible, in the different working groups.

I, thank you.