**REPORT OF THE STAC SARGASSUM WORKING GROUP**

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**WORK PLAN PROPOSAL AND SUSTAINABLE FINANCING RESOURCES**

**INTRODUCTION**

1. Specific tasks of the sargassum working group recommended by STAC10, as expressed in the 2024-2025 Tasks and Chairs of the of the SPAW a*d hoc* Working Groups Annex paragraph 4, are to:

* Survey Contracting Parties on their needs related to managing Sargassum influx and how such influx may affect their implementation of obligations under the SPAW Protocol and Cartagena Convention, as well as the LBS Protocol, as appropriate.
* Taking into account the findings of the survey and consultations, as well as any consultations with additional experts as appropriate, update and prioritize the proposed action plan of the Sargassum Working Group in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/7 for consideration by SPAW STAC11 and COP 13.

**SPAW WORK PLAN PROPOSAL**

1. Goal: Improve regional cooperation and capacity to effectively manage sargassum proliferation and coastal accumulation in the Cartagena convention marine and coastal ecosystems.
2. This action plan applies to the Contracting Parties of the SPAW Protocol. The Sargassum working group recommends this action plan to be presented at the next LBS STAC and COP and Cartagena IGM.
3. The action plan is primarily guided by the Survey Results (Survey Report in Appendix X) with inputs from the Sargassum working groups and the mandate from the SPAW STAC with the participation from LBS open-ended working group members. (List of Experts involved in the Action plan elaboration in Appendix X).

| **Component** | **Objectives** | **Lines of Action** | **Outputs** | **Priority**  (High, Medium, Low) | **Link with the survey report** (§ + page number) | **Level of action & Potential funding** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Governance** | **Objective 1** Strengthen cooperation between the SPAW and LBS Protocol Sub-Programme and regional agencies coordinating implementation of relevant regional plans and initiatives addressing sargassum | * Coordinate efforts across the region to manage sargassum. MOUs/Statements of Cooperation between CAR/RCU SPAW Sub-programme and key agencies * Coordinated integrated work plans of SPAW and LBS, strategies, plans, policies addressing Sargassum at regional level * Develop regionally coherent protocols and guidelines for use of sargassum biomass and products to protect safety of biodiversity and human health. | * Sargassum regional coordination mechanisms supported or created. * Increase in number of countries benefiting from threat-reduction initiatives * Recognition of the proliferation and coastal accumulation of sargassum by UNEA | MEDIUM | §… |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Objective 2:** Support and facilitate coordination among government organizations at the national level and strengthen links with private sector to develop/implement sargassum management plans and action to help mitigate impacts on coastal ecosystems and biodiversity | y  -Support national governmental institutions on coordinating with private sector.  -Capacity building  -Support for national management plan development and/or update and implementation. |  | HIGH | Regarding the survey respondents |  |
| **Research** | **Objective 3** Facilitate/support scientific research to address current priority gaps in knowledge to inform better management of sargassum inundations | -Research to improve understanding of the impacts of different sargassum management actions (e.g. beach clearing, use of in-water barriers, in-water harvesting, sinking, storage, disposal, use of sargassum products, disposal of by-products) on biodiversity  -Research to improve understanding of impacts of sargassum on biodiversity and ecosystems (especially heavy metalloids, adsorbed pesticides, associated microplastics and alien species, toxic gases, leachates)  -Research to improve predictions, movement and tracking of sargassum inundation / beaching events at a meaningful scale for managers (e.g. model local currents and wind patterns and couple with existing open ocean based sargassum forecasts) to improve preparedness for mitigation of damage to coastal marine ecosystems and biodiversity.  -Identification of good practice models to address sargassum inundation.  -Research to explore whether or not there are local drivers (e.g. nutrients or other pollutants) in the Cartagena Convention area that are causing further proliferation of sargassum and/or an increase in adsorption of toxic chemicals by sargassum and/or of solid waste (e.g. garbage, microplastics) associated with/ carried by sargassum rafts.  -Heavy metal testing in sargassum products to ensure safety on biodiversity and public health. | * Research papers finding answers to knowledge gaps needed to improve sargassum management in the Wider Caribbean published in peer reviewed literature and key messages broadly shared with regional stakeholders * Updated Sargassum White Paper, “Sargassum Outbreak in the Caribbean: Challenges, Opportunities and Regional Situation,” peer reviewed * Plain language report/website summarising current knowledge on heavy metals contamination associated with sargassum for stakeholders * Plain language report/website summarising current knowledge of sargassum management action best practices | HIGH | pg 8 , 3rd paragraph link to heavy metal testing |  |
| **Management** | **Objective 4.** Promote planning and coordinated actions at national level. | * Field testing of best management practices and impacts evaluation on biodiversity * Capacity building activities at regional and national levels to mitigate | * 3 pilot projects at national level * 2 webinars with best practices * One online regional workshop with experts * National sargassum responses integrate good-practice models across the region | HIGH |  |  |
| **Objective 5.** Promote best management practices and capacity building based on scientific evidence, adaptive management and traditional knowledge | * Improve science-based decision-making and use of local/traditional knowledge in management of sargassum * Field testing of best management practices and impacts evaluation on biodiversity * Capacity building on laboratory heavy metal testing * Capacity building activities at regional and national levels to mitigate and use sargassum | * Sargassum response * guidelines completed by 202 * One guideline with best management practices and lessons learned |  |  |  |
| **Communication and awareness** | **Objective 6.**  Increase awareness, knowledge and understanding about the sargassum challenge in the wider Caribbean. | * Support development of a website including:  1. *sargassum early warning system in collaboration with partners* 2. *Online Discussion List in coordination with other existing fora* 3. *Best Management Practices repository* 4. *Regional Calendar of Relevant Activities* 5. *Research Papers and documents virtual Library* 6. *Distribution Map* 7. *Fact Sheets*  * Quarterly Newsletter * Webinar, panels * Civil society engagement and online reporting * Database | Identify key stakeholders and partners   * One website at regional level (Sargassum Information Hub, SargCoop II project) * Partnership with Universities (GeoBlu Planet, SFU, Texas A & M, UWI) * Active Online Discussion and Coordination among experts at regional level * At least 2 Webinars before STAC 11 * 1 fact sheet finalized * At least 1 Newsletter before STAC 11 * Sharing the results from the research programmes | LOW |  |  |
| **Objective 7:** Presentation of action plan to Scientific Committees of International Conventions or MoUs / MoCs that are SPAW partners | -Virtual participation to International conventions (E.g., Sea Turtle convention, etc.) |  | MEDIUM |  |  |
| **Sustainable financing resources** | **Objective 7.**  Enhance access to sustainable financing resources for sargassum research and management by Contracting Parties, other stakeholders, and the CEP Secretariat. | * Identification of funding resources for use by Contracting Parties, other stakeholders, and CEP * Identification of regional funding gaps * Coordination between potential donors, project implementers, and resource managers * Development of a financial sustainability plan/strategy for CEP’s engagement on sargassum | * One resource guide on sustainable financing options for Contracting Parties and other stakeholders * One workshop to promote coordination/exchanges between potential donors, project implementers (including researchers), and resource managers. * One concept note including at least 3 of the components of a financial sustainability plan. * At least two donors identified * One budget prepared * General strategy created to achieve the goals outlined in CEP’s financial sustainability plan | MEDIUM |  |  |

1. **Several Points to further develop** *(Highlighted by Samantha Dowdell)***:**

* Broaden the regional focus in the “Governance” and/or “Communication and Awareness” sections to leave room for cooperation/coordination with agencies and partners in West Africa
* How would SPAW lead the coordination effort?
* As a starting point for coordinated and prioritized research, it may be beneficial to first update/summarize what has been already done and to identify potential research gaps and needs. This could be done in partnership with GEO Blue Planet, who is working to describe research efforts for the Sargassum Information Hub.
* Develop the database and its outputs and determine why would it be separate from the website?
* Select one country that has a large influx and help that country with concrete targeted actions?
* Monitor the influx centrally for all Caribbean Islands and inform local coordinators when inflex is expected.
* Connect with earlier initiatives: [Resembid](https://sargassumhub.org/transforming-sargassum-challenges-into-opportunities-for-caribbean-success/) and continue on that effort, or connect with other UN or other initiatives eg. Ocean Research Decade.

**Additions to the sustainable financing component**

1. **Goals**:

* Identify sustainable financing resources for managing sargassum
* Explore funding opportunities for Contracting Parties to improve research and responses on the ground. (Ex: Ireland’s new SIDS Partnership strategy, including a section on sargassum management in the Caribbean)

1. Potential funding opportunities and resources could include:

* Sustainable financing session at the Guadeloupe international sargassum conference presentations by banks (BNP) for lending
* SargCoop - for the OECS (INTERREG)
* Greenclimatefund
* INTERREG - European Union program to maximize return on European Regional Development Fund investments; co-finances up to 85% of interregional cooperation project activities; supports research and innovation, SME competitiveness, low-carbon economy, and environment and resource efficiency
  + *see INTERREG website for new calls for proposals (total FEDER funding available = 180 001 104,23 €) at* [*http://www.interreg-caraibes.fr/*](http://www.interreg-caraibes.fr/) *or* [*https://www.linkedin.com/posts/interreg-caraibes-a2b1b7164\_fiche-pre-projet-activity-6675956292936359936-VA5r*](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/interreg-caraibes-a2b1b7164_fiche-pre-projet-activity-6675956292936359936-VA5r)*)*
* BPI-France – French agency for innovation; supports microbusinesses and SMEs
* Agence Française de Développement (AFD)
* Horizon Europe
* Global Environment Facility Small Grants Program
* Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
* Global Programme of Action for the protection of the marine environment from land-based activities Strategy 2017-2021
* Bilateral funding agreements

*Given the different status of Contracting Parties (SIDS, European, independent, territories, etc.), each option does not cover all Contracting Parties*