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

Oranjestad, Aruba

05 October 2023

## **The Procaribe+ Project at a Glance**

*For reasons of economy and the environment, Delegates are kindly requested to bring their copies of the Working and Information documents to the Meeting, and not to request additional copies.*

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## **Conference Room Paper to be presented at the IGM20/COP17 of the Cartagena Convention**

*The purpose of this paper is to inform contracting parties and other meeting participants that the new phase of the CLME+ initiative, the UNEP/GEF Procaribe+ Project, has been initiated, and to provide an update on the operationalization of the regional Ocean Coordination Mechanism for the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems (wider Caribbean region).*

### **The Procaribe+ Project at a Glance**

The UNDP/GEF Project “**Protecting and Restoring the Ocean’s natural Capital, building Resilience and supporting region-wide Investments for sustainable Blue socio-Economic development**” (PROCARIBE+) is a 5-year project (co-)funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF-ID 10800, May 2023 - April 2028) that aims to protect, restore and harness the natural coastal and marine capital of the region, to catalyze investments in a climate-resilient, sustainable Blue Economy, through strengthened regional coordination and collaboration, and wide-ranging partnerships.

It will seek to achieve this by enabling and supporting the development of sustainable and resilient ocean-based (blue) economies, through, for example, the upscaling of actions on Marine Spatial Planning, marine conservation (MPA’s, OECM’s), Blue Carbon, sustainable fisheries, community grants, and through enhanced regional ocean governance (including capacity building efforts and enhanced marine data, information and knowledge management, strategic planning and environmental and socio-economic reporting). In doing so, the project will take into account cross-cutting issues such as climate change, gender and post-covid recovery.

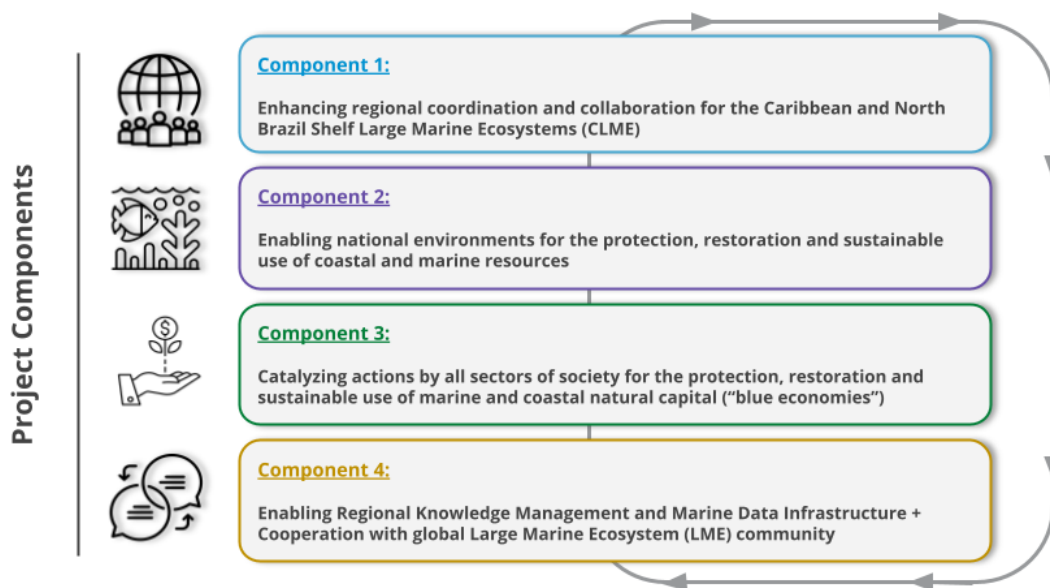
The Project will build on the results from the preceding UNDP/GEF CLME (2009-2014) and CLME+ (2015-2021) Projects, and catalyze the next iteration of key regional processes such as the development of updated Transboundary Diagnostic Analyses/State of the Marine Environment & Economies Reports (TDA/SOME) and a new holistic, 10-year Strategic Action Programme (SAP) on the Marine Environment and the Blue Economy.

In support of the aforementioned, the project will play a global pioneering role as it will support the operationalization of a region-wide “Coordination Mechanism to Support Integrated Ocean Governance in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems” (the “Ocean Coordination Mechanism”, or “OCM”). This “OCM” will seek to enhance cross-sectoral collaboration and coordination among the region’s many countries, and the numerous Intergovernmental Organizations (IGO’s) with an oceans-relevant mandate.

In addition to its contribution towards the delivery of enhanced regional governance in the CLME+ region, the Procaribe+ Project will also help safeguard the important extensions of coral reefs, mangrove forests and seagrass meadows in the region, together with other key marine and coastal habitats, playing a key role in the supporting climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Overall, activities under the PROCARIBE+ Project are meant to support ocean-based socio-economic development, recovery, and resilience (Covid-19, hurricanes) and the progressive delivery on international targets in the fields of marine conservation and climate change, notably those under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

The project is structured around the following four components:



**Figure 1: Structure of the Procaribe+ Project**

Under **Component 1**, the project will work towards the coordinated, collaborative, and synergistic implementation of regional, sub-regional and national (Strategic) Action Programmes and Plans in support of the CLME+ Vision, enabled through an OCM and partnerships, and a regional programmatic approach for the preparation of the new SAP.

The proposed activities under Component 1 are:

- Operationalize a regional OCM and support for (a) wide-ranging ocean partnership(s)
- Continue to support, and monitor the implementation of the 2015-2024 "CLME+ SAP" and associated action plans
- Development of the new 2025-2034 multi-stakeholder SAP

Under **Component 2**, the project will work on supporting national-level capacity, enabling conditions and commitments for Ecosystem-based Management/Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EBM/EAF) and marine-based, climate and disaster-resilient "green-blue" socio-economic development.

The following activities are proposed for Component 2:

- Advocacy for National Inter-sectoral Committees (NICs), adequately connected to the regional OCM, and supporting relevant national processes
- Development of National-level Blue Economy Scoping Studies and/or Report on status of marine environment and associated economies (SOME) and/or support for Natural Capital Accounting
- Training & Capacity Building
- Support efforts to upscale the mainstreaming of marine and coastal natural capital in the 2025 Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)

**Component 3**, will seek to catalyze actions by all sectors of society, at different spatial scales, for the protection, restoration, and sustainable use of marine and coastal natural capital (“blue economies”).

Under Component 3, the following activities are being proposed:

- Support the implementation of key regional/national ocean instruments (SAPs, RSAPs, marine/coastal component of NDCs,...) through Civil Society and MSME action through the use of micro-financing schemes
- Create enabling conditions to implement, in future, a carbon credits-based sustainable financing instrument for seagrasses and tropical peatlands in Panama. Three pilot sites were identified for conducting carbon stocks assessments and developing management plans to enhance the protection of the pilot sites’ biodiversity.
- Expand and integrate regional and national efforts that support the “Blue Economy (BE)”, Marine Spatial Planning (MPSP) and conservation measures (through Marine Protected Areas / Other Effective Conservation Measures (MPA/OECM)). The following lines of work and intervention sites are being proposed in support of the BE, MSP, MPA/OECM under Component 3:
  - Dominican Republic: Designation of fishery replenishment areas (no-take zones), increased protection and/or extension for existing MPAs and support for MSP processes.
  - Colombia: Implementation of new MPAs, and development of MPA management plans and a multi-sectoral MSP process
  - Mesoamerican Reef Region (Belize, Guatemala, Honduras): Designation of fishery replenishment areas (no-take zones) and development of a proposal for the designation of a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) under the International Maritime Organization (IMO)
  - Trinidad and Tobago: Multi-sectoral MSP in the Gulf of Paria
  - Venezuela: Multi-sectoral MSP in the Gulf of Paria
- Reduce the impacts of unsustainable fishing on the marine resources and habitats of the CLME+ region through enabling traceability systems for spiny lobster, queen conch and shrimp across the Wider Caribbean/WECAFC region and region-wide reduction of ghost fishing and habitat impacts in spiny lobster fisheries. Honduras was selected as the pilot country for the implementation of on-the-ground solutions to reduce ghost fishing.

Under **Component 4**, the project will build the basis for the development of a well-articulated marine data, information, and knowledge management infrastructure/network, (a) providing a science-policy interface; (b) supporting the development/updating, implementation and M&E of regional Action Programmes and Plans; (c) boosting and increasing the impacts of marine & coastal investments. The project will also work towards increasing regional and global impacts from GEF IW investments through global dissemination and sharing of experiences, and by forging synergies with other Regional Seas/LME/Regional Fisheries programmes and the wider community of International Waters/Ocean practitioners & stakeholders.

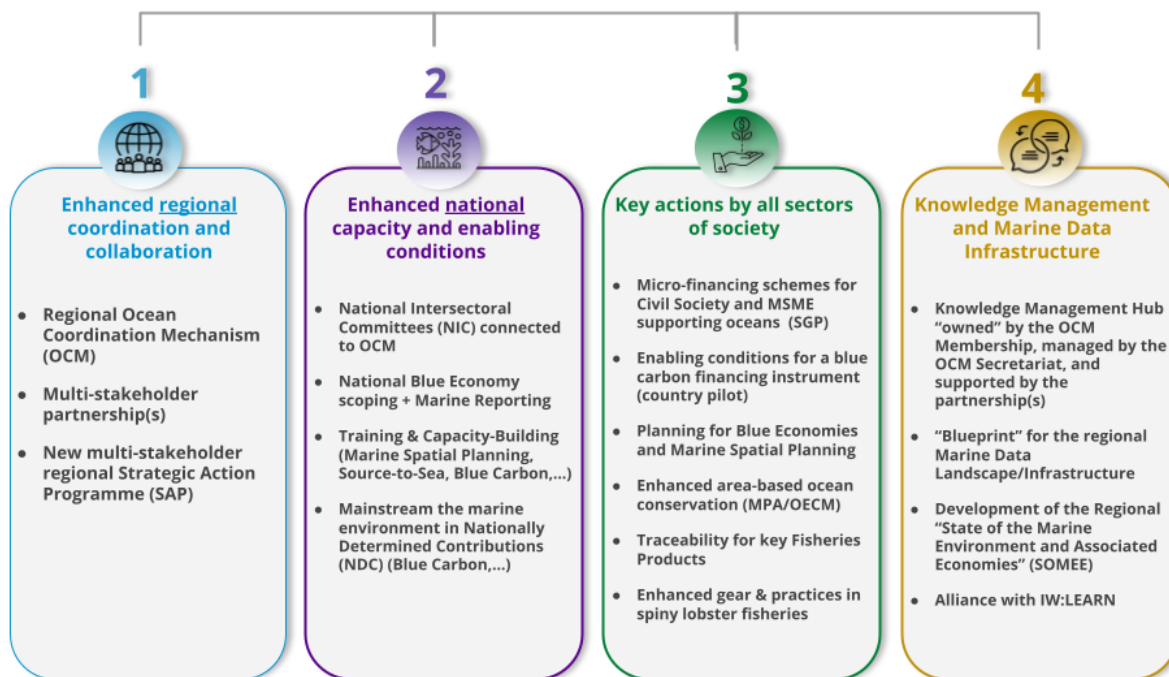
The proposed activities under Component 4 are:

- Knowledge Management Platform of the OCM
- Blueprint for the regional Marine Data Management Landscape & Infrastructure

- Fully developed and updated regional "State of" SOMEE
- Support for global learning exchanges, through (a.o.) IW: LEARN

**The full text of the Procaribe+ GEF CEO Endorsement Letter can be found on the GEF webpage at the following [link](#).**

The following presents the key outputs to be implemented under each component of the Procaribe+ Project.



**Fig 2. Key outputs of the Procaribe+ Project**

### **The Coordination Mechanism to Support Integrated Ocean Governance in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems**

Collective and coordinated efforts for enhanced ocean governance are needed in order to support the achievement of commitments under the SDGs and the new Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, including the achievement of protecting 30% of our oceans by 2030. In effect, the GBF specifically calls for enhanced collaboration, cooperation and synergies between the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Protocols, other biodiversity-related conventions, other relevant multilateral agreements and international organizations and processes in order to promote the efficient and effective implementation of the Framework.

In the wider Caribbean region, considering the fragmentation of ocean-related efforts and the fact that the CLME+ Strategic Action Programme (2015-2025) identified weaknesses in ocean

governance as one of the main root causes of ongoing degradation of the marine environment, efforts to protect, restore and sustain the region's marine and coastal natural capital should be integrated and effectively coordinated. To this effect, the CLME+ SAP called for the establishment and operationalization of such a regional "ocean coordination mechanism" in the region.

Following five years of preparations and regional negotiations on the matter, the constituting Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that will enable the creation of an Ocean Coordination Mechanism (OCM) for the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems (wider Caribbean) was finalised at the last UNDP/GEF CLME+ Project Steering Committee Meeting in October of 2021, marking an end to the negotiations and paving the way for the region to improve the coordination of actions on the marine environment.

The OCM will support the region with a multi-stakeholder platform that will allow to convene and discuss, plan and collaborate to restore and protect the region's marine assets, in support of sustainable ocean-based economies and climate-resilient development. It is also envisaged that the OCM will enable greater efficiency and effectiveness in the implementation of the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols (including its regional role vis-a-vis the KM-GBF), providing a platform and constituting a lever for enhanced synergies among the mechanism's membership.

The new Procaribe+ Project will provide financial support for the operationalization of the OCM and its activities throughout the project's lifespan. With a view to ensure the long-term sustainability of the operations of the OCM, one of the proposed outputs under the Procaribe+ project is to develop, adopt and implement a long-term sustainable financing strategy and long-term Secretariat solution for the mechanism.

For the OCM to become operational, signatures from a minimum of 17 States or Territories and 6 Inter-Governmental Organizations (IGO's) with a mandate relevant to the region's marine environment (listed in Annex I) must be collected.

The purpose and objectives of the regional Ocean Coordination Mechanism (OCM) and of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) calling for its creation have been defined as follows:

*Noting that the politically endorsed regional "Strategic Action Programme for the Sustainable Management of shared Living Marine Resources in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems" (CLME+ SAP) under its Strategy 3 calls for the creation of a regional (long-term) coordination mechanism for the protection of the marine environment and to promote sustainable fisheries in the CLME+ region, and*

*Noting that the prospective Signatories to this Memorandum of Understanding ("MoU") share common objectives and recognize the importance of coordinating their actions through a mechanism that facilitates and strengthens the coordinated implementation of existing initiatives and actions in the region and thereby supports IGO Signatories in achieving their respective mandates, creating synergies and avoiding duplication of efforts by the Signatories.*

## **PURPOSE OF THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MoU)**

The purpose of the MoU is to create a Coordination Mechanism to Support Integrated Ocean Governance (“Coordination Mechanism”) by strengthening collaboration among countries and among IGO’s in the MoU Area as part of the efforts by the MoU Signatories to achieve and safeguard healthy marine and coastal ecosystems as a key driver for human wellbeing and thriving sustainable ocean-based economies.

The MoU clarifies that it is not a legally binding instrument, and it does not impose, nor does it intend to impose, any legal obligations or commitments on the MoU Signatories, nor does it give rise to any legally binding rights.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE COORDINATION MECHANISM**

The objectives of the Coordination Mechanism are:

- to support regional collaboration towards a coordinated approach to the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal ecosystems and their goods and services;
- to support coordinated and interactive ocean governance in support of attaining ocean-based sustainable development;
- to promote actions towards the achievement of the long-term vision articulated in the CLME+ SAP, and other ocean-related international and regional goals and commitments of the MoU Signatories; (editor’s comment: the particular relevance of this objective in the context of the, and thus this High-Level Ministerial Session is herewith highlighted)
- to promote partnerships with stakeholders from civil society and the private sector to facilitate and enhance efforts for the ecosystem based conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal resources and to support intersectoral coordination and collaboration.

## **FUNCTIONS OF THE COORDINATION MECHANISM**

The Coordination Mechanism is to promote and facilitate regional cooperation by enhancing communication and collaboration among MoU Signatories for the conservation and sustainable use of coastal and marine resources and their ecosystems.

The Coordination Mechanism is to function to avoid duplication, create or enhance synergies and enable greater efficiency and effectiveness in the work of the MoU Signatories.

(Kindly note that the Core and Complementary Functions of the Coordination Mechanism are described in greater detail in the MoU text - click [here](#) for the English, Spanish and French versions of the final MoU text including its Annex 1)

## **OPERATIONALIZING THE COORDINATION MECHANISM**

On 12 October 2021 and with a total of 98 participants representing 25 States and Territories and 15 Organizations, the Special Meeting of the UNDP/GEF CLME+ Project Steering Committee saw the text of 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” and its associated “Annex 1: Potential Country & IGO Signatories” being provisionally finalized.

The Meeting further:

- decided that the MoU was to be opened for Signature, subject to the completion of a language reconciliation of the different language versions (English, Spanish and French) of the MoU text
- encouraged all IGO’s listed in Annex 1 to the MoU to subsequently and formally inform their Constituents, at their earliest convenience and as applicable, of the Opening for Signature of the MoU
- acknowledged the relevance of swiftly operationalizing the coordination mechanism, and invited States, Territories and IGO’s listed in Annex 1 to sign the MoU as soon as possible after the MoU is open for signature to ensure its prompt commencement

**It is now noted that a final language reconciliation of the MoU text was conducted by the Division of Conference Services of the United Nations Office Nairobi and concluded on 29 September 2023. The OCM MOU will be officially opened for signature at the occasion of the 6 October High-Level Segment held in association with the Cartagena Convention Conference of the Parties (IGM20/COP17), in Aruba**

**As per the final MoU text, the Coordination Mechanism MoU is expected to commence on the date that a minimum of twenty-three (23) potential Signatories, including no fewer than seventeen (17) States or Territories and six (6) IGOs, have signed the MoU.**

### **Potential areas of collaboration between the Procaribe+ Project and the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols**

The PROCARIBE+ Project is the third in a series of regional GEF-supported projects on the marine environment in the Wider Caribbean that have strongly partnered with the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols and will again in this new phase seek to support the Objectives/Strategy of the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols, as well as the implementation of its Work Programme. The project will also be an important pillar for the region to meet its commitments towards the implementation of the KMGBF.

While many (potential areas) of collaboration exist between the PROCARIBE+ Project and the Cartagena Convention and its protocols, of particular importance (in addition to the previously



mentioned Ocean Coordination Mechanism) is the development of a regional State of the Marine Environment and Associated Economies Report (SOME). As part of its work, the OCM is meant to “provide a platform for cyclical Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis/Strategic Action Programme (“TDA/SAP”) processes, including the coordination of the periodic assessment of and reporting on the state of the marine environment and associated economies in the MOU Area and the monitoring, periodic evaluation and revision of MoU Area Strategic Action Programmes”. As such, it can be anticipated that the OCM will seek to give continuity to the efforts undertaken during the CLME+ project to develop a regional SOME, which catalysed the development of the first ever “State of the Convention Area (SOCAR) Reports” on Land-Based Sources of Pollution and on Coastal and Marine Habitats, responding to reporting requirements and needs under the Cartagena Convention’s LBS and SPAW Protocols, respectively.

The project will also continue developing a regional, collaborative online platform, initiated under the CLME+ project, providing and connecting access to information, knowledge, resources and tools to support all people and organizations working towards a healthier marine environment in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem. It is anticipated that this Knowledge Management Hub will be hosted by the OCM and partnership(s) and will serve as a single, convenient gateway which links up with other, well-established platforms and data and information sources important for all ocean stakeholders in the region. It is also anticipated that the OCM Hub can serve as an interactive platform for SOME and other regional processes related to the marine environment.

In combination with the HUB, the region requires a solid regional Marine Data Management Landscape and Infrastructure (MDI), capable of underpinning efforts towards achieving the regional Vision as articulated under e.g. the Cartagena Convention Strategy and the CLME+ SAP. PROCARIBE+ will therefore assist the region in developing and progressively putting into place, through the OCM and wider-ranging partnerships, a solid regional MDI that is capable of underpinning the regional and national-level ocean governance, management and decision-making and coordination processes that are needed to advance the regional ocean agenda. The PROCARIBE+ Project will seek to support the development and adoption by the OCM and its Membership of a detailed “blueprint” for such regional marine data management landscape and infrastructure. Through collaborative action among the OCM, this “MDI blueprint” will seek to (a) sustainably harness and connect existing global, regional and national data management efforts, while (b) articulating the means to put in place the key missing elements of such regional MDI.

The MDI is meant to support the development of SOME and other regional reporting efforts, and to underpin regional decision-making and management measures, through improved data flows and associated baseline information for standardized, integrated reporting and decision-making.

In addition to the aforementioned potential areas of collaboration, another area of mutual interest identified in the Procaribe+ project document is capacity-building where it is anticipated that the Procaribe+ Project will partner with other projects, organizations and initiatives to jointly develop and deliver (selected) training and capacity-building activities on a number of thematic areas to be

pursued under the project, potential topics include remote sensing for the marine environment, marine spatial planning, blue economy, blue carbon and NDCs etc..

**For consideration of the 17th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Cartagena Convention:**

- The Cartagena Convention Secretariat and the PROCARIBE+ Project Management and Coordination Unit (PMCU) to jointly work, during the PROCARIBE+ inception phase, towards the integration of relevant elements of PROCARIBE+ into the biennial work programme(s) of the Convention and its Protocols, as appropriate, with clear indication of targets, responsibilities and budget, and (where relevant) for inter-sessional consideration/approval by the Parties.
- Parties to provide guidance to the Secretariat as to its potential/desirable role in the Procaribe+ Project.
- The Secretariat and Parties to support the prompt operationalization of the OCM.
- The Secretariat and Parties to pursue the use of the OCM as a regional platform and key lever to enhance delivery on the UNEP CEP Strategy and on the objectives of the Convention and its Protocols (including the Convention Secretariat's (to be) agreed upon role in the context of the implementation of the new KM-GBF, a.o.)