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Twentieth Intergovernmental Meeting on the Action Plan for the Caribbean Environment Programme and 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, 5 October 2023

Virtual Session, 30 November and 1 December 2023

DECISIONS OF THE TWENTIETH INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETING ON THE ACTION PLAN FOR THE CARIBBEAN ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME AND SEVENTEENTH MEETING OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT OF THE WIDER CARIBBEAN REGION

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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DECISIONS OF THE SEVENTEENTH CONFERENCE OF PARTIES TO THE CARTAGENA CONVENTION

The Meeting:

Having convened the Twentieth Intergovernmental Meeting on the Action Plan for the Caribbean Environment Programme and the Seventeenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region;

Considering the Report of the Executive Director of the Cartagena Convention on the Implementation of the Workplan of the Cartagena Convention Secretariat (2021-2022) as presented in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.48/INF.4;

Having reviewed the Draft Workplan and Budget for the Cartagena Convention Secretariat (2023-2024) as presented in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.48/3;

Having also reviewed the Decisions of the Twelfth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) in the Wider Caribbean Region, adopted at Oranjestad, Aruba, 5 October 2023 and as presented in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.46/3;

Having further reviewed the Decisions of the Sixth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities in the Wider Caribbean Region, adopted at Oranjestad, Aruba, 5 October 2023 and as presented in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.47/3;

Noting the Report of the Recommendations of the Sixth Meeting of the Scientific, Technical and Advisory Committee to the Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities in the Wider Caribbean Region, held virtually, 1st February 2023 – 2nd February 2023, as contained in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.44/5;

Further Noting the Recommendations of the Tenth Meeting of the Scientific, Technical and Advisory Committee (STAC) to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) in the Wider Caribbean Region, held virtually from 30th January 2023 to 1st February 2023, as contained in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/4;

Having Reviewed the Report of Activities for 2021-2022 by the Regional Activity Centre/Regional Marine Pollution Emergency, Training, and Information Centre- Caribbean (RAC/REMPEITC-Caribe) and the Recommendations of the 10th Ordinary RAC-REMPEITC-Caribe Steering Committee Meeting as contained in documents UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.48/INF.6 and UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.48/INF.9 respectively;

Recognizing the continued 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;

Further Recognizing the contribution of IMO Seconded experts from the Governments of Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and the USA to RAC REMPEITC Caribe for implementation of its 2021-2022 workplan;

Welcoming the efforts by the Secretariat to provide updates to the Draft Regional Strategy for the Cartagena Convention as contained in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.41/INF.22/Rev.2;

Noting the importance of having a broad regional strategy that provides strategic guidance for the work of the Cartagena Convention Secretariat in the future while also noting the need for some further improvements;

Having recognized the need to raise awareness about the work of the Convention and the Protocols with new country Focal Points (FPs);

Having welcomed the report from the Depository of the Convention and acknowledging that one country deposited an instrument of ratification during the 2021-2022 biennium (Government of Nicaragua for the SPAW Protocol);

Taking note of the status of contributions to the Caribbean Trust Fund (CTF) by the States and Territories of the Wider Caribbean Region for 2021-2022;

Noting the presentation to the Meeting by The Nature Conservancy and welcoming additional information from the organization regarding regional nature conservation efforts and opportunities for partnerships;

Noting the ongoing efforts by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to enhance collaboration among related Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) including Regional Agreements such as the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols, as appropriate and within respective mandates, and opportunities to support reporting by countries on various regional and/or global targets; and

Having convened the resumed virtual session of the Twentieth Intergovernmental Meeting on the Plan of Action for the Caribbean Environment Programme and the Seventeenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region on 28 November and 1 December 2023, to conclude the deliberations and take decisions thereon:

Decides to:

DECISION I WORKPLAN AND BUDGET

1. **Approve** the Draft Workplan and Budget for the Cartagena Convention Secretariat for the biennium 2023-2024 and the extension of the period to be covered by the Workplan and Budget through 2025 including changes made by Contracting Parties during the meeting and as presented in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.48/3 Rev.2.
2. **Urge** the Secretariat to continue to leverage resources and expertise from other organisations and projects to help achieve the objectives of the Convention and its Protocols and in the implementation of the 2023-2024/2025 Workplan including for unfunded activities.

DECISION II DECISIONS OF THE PROTOCOL COPs

1. **Endorse** the decisions of the Twelfth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife in the Wider Caribbean Region (SPAW COP12) (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.46/3).
2. **Endorse** the decisions of the Sixth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities in the Wider Caribbean Region, (LBS COP6) (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.47/3).

DECISION III RAC/REMPEITC-Caribe

1. **Endorse** the Recommendations of the 10th Ordinary Meeting of the Steering Committee, as presented in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.48/INF.9.
2. **Encourage** Contracting Parties to support RAC IMA's monitoring effort in the Eastern and Southern Caribbean and invite those Contracting Parties in areas currently without an oil spill monitoring programme to engage with the COSTA programme to consider establishing one in collaboration with RAC IMA and RAC REMPEITC Caribe.
3. **Request** the Secretariat, in collaboration with RAC REMPEITC Caribe, to develop partnership agreements or MOUs with RAC IMA and Contracting Parties, as appropriate, for the expansion of the COSTA programme.

DECISION IV REGIONAL STRATEGY FOR CARTAGENA CONVENTION SECRETARIAT

1. **Request** the Secretariat to convene an Open-Ended Working Group of Contracting Parties to conduct a final review of the Draft Regional Strategy for the Cartagena Convention (2023-2030) focussing on additional recommendations received during the meetings of the LBS and SPAW Protocol Conference of Parties and this meeting and **subsequently request** the Secretariat to present a revised version to Contracting Parties for intersessional review and approval.

DECISION V GOVERNANCE

1. **Request** the Secretariat to work with Contracting Parties, as well as existing RACs and RANs, to update the 2008 “Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of Regional Activity Centres and Regional Activity Networks for the Cartagena Convention”, taking into account relevant decisions of the SPAW and LBS Contracting Parties relating to the roles of RACs, RANs and working groups, and present proposed revisions to IGM21/COP18 for further consideration and possible adoption.

DECISION VI FOCAL POINTS INITIATION

1. **Request the Secretariat to** develop an “Onboarding/Welcome Kit” for new Focal Points providing historical background on the work and processes of the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols and the role of Convention and Protocol Focal Points.

DECISION VII RATIFICATION OF THE CARTAGENA CONVENTION AND/OR ITS PROTOCOLS

1. **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.
2. **Invite** Non-Contracting Parties to provide an update during the next meetings of the Cartagena Convention Conference of Parties on their domestic ratification efforts, including any impediments identified.

DECISION VIII OCEAN COORDINATION MECHANISM

1. **Request** the Secretariat to work with the PROCARIBE+ Project Coordination Unit (PCU) to identify potential opportunities for the Secretariat to serve as a partner executing agency for activities that would support the implementation of the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols and in collaboration with Contracting Parties to develop and present a draft plan for any proposed Secretariat engagement to Contracting Parties for their intersessional review and approval.
2. **Note** the opening for signature of the “Memorandum of Understanding Enabling the Creation of an Ocean Coordination Mechanism to Support Integrated Ocean Governance in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems” (“the MOU”).
3. **Request** the Secretariat through UNEP to consider signing the MOU and participating in the Executive Group and encourage Contracting Parties to sign the MOU, as appropriate considering national circumstances, and participate in the Steering Group.

DECISION IX SARGASSUM

1. **Request** the Secretariat to facilitate communication and coordination, as appropriate, across the Convention and its Protocols on Sargassum inundation, including by working with the RACs and RANs.
2. **Request** the Secretariat in collaboration with the RACs and RANs, to support efforts on regional coordination within the Wider Caribbean region on Sargassum, including doing an analysis of ongoing activities by other regional and international agencies on this issue, and that the results of such analysis be reported to the Contracting Parties in a timely manner.
3. **Request** the Secretariat to present a draft action plan developed in response to Recommendation VI of SPAW STAC10, subject to approval by SPAW COP13, to the Cartagena Convention COP18 for decision.
4. **Recognize** that Sargassum inundation extends beyond the Wider Caribbean Region and request the Secretariat to continue communication and collaboration, as appropriate, with other relevant organizations, including other affected Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, such as the Abidjan Convention.

DECISION X 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.

DECISION XI DATA AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

1. **Request** the Secretariat and the RACs to increase efforts to promote the sharing of best practices, lessons learned, guidelines, manuals and other knowledge management products in the three working languages of the Convention, to enhance science-based decision-making and alignment of monitoring efforts.
2. **Request** the Secretariat in collaboration with other regional and international partners, as appropriate, to support efforts to strengthen national and regional capacity for data and information management including monitoring coastal and marine resources in the Wider Caribbean Region.

DECISION XII COLLABORATION WITH GLOBAL MEAs

1. **Request** the Secretariat to continue to explore opportunities for collaboration on activities of the Cartagena Convention with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, as appropriate and within respective mandates, and to advise Contracting Parties on the opportunities to support the implementation of the Cartagena Convention that this helps to identify.
2. **Request** the Secretariat to work with UNEP to further identify tools and guidance that could support Contracting Parties' collaborative approaches to implementing Multilateral Environmental Agreements at the national level, as appropriate and within respective mandates, including at the 6th United Nations Environment Assembly which will take place from 26 February to 1 March 2024.
3. **Invite** Contracting Parties to establish close collaboration between Convention focal points and the focal points of other relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements to align approaches in implementation, as appropriate and within respective mandates, to increase efficiency and effectiveness.
4. **Further invite** Contracting Parties to include strategies and actions relevant to the Cartagena Convention in National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, and in associated knowledge management and reporting, as appropriate and within respective mandates.
5. **Invite** Contracting Parties to explore the benefits of using the Data Reporting tool for MEAs (DaRT) developed by the United Nations Environment Programme as a tool to support national reporting on Multilateral Environmental Agreements including through sharing of experiences with Contracting Parties of the Cartagena Convention who are already using this tool.