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Sixth Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP) to the
Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land-Based
Sources and Activities (LBS) in the Wider Caribbean
Region

Oranjestad, Aruba, 04 –05, October 2023

REPORT OF THE MEETING

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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ACRONYMS

ACP MEA	African, Caribbean and Pacific States, Multilateral Environmental Agreements Project
AMEP	Assessment and Management of Environmental Pollution
CEP	Caribbean Environment Programme
CETA	Communication, Education, Training and Awareness
CTF	Caribbean Trust Fund
COP	Conference of Parties
CIMAB	Centre of Research and Environmental Management of Transport
CLME+	Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystems+ project
CRew+	Caribbean Regional Fund for Wastewater Management+ project
EU	European Union
GCFI	Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GPA	Global Programme of Action
HOD	Head of Delegation
HQ	Headquarters
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IGM	Intergovernmental Meeting
IMA	Institute of Marine Affairs
IWEco	Integrating Water, Land and Ecosystems Management in Caribbean Small Island Developing States
LBS	Land-Based Sources of Pollution
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
OEWG	Open-Ended Working Group
RAC	Regional Activity Centre
RAN	Regional Activity Network
REMPEITC	The Regional Marine Pollution Emergency, Information and Training Centre
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SOCAR	State of the Convention Area
SPAW	Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife
STAC	Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
USA	United States of America

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REPORT OF THE MEETING

INTRODUCTION

1. The Secretariat of the Cartagena Convention is responsible for convening meetings of the Contracting Parties to the Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land-Based Sources (LBS) and Activities (LBS Protocol) in accordance with Article XV of the LBS Protocol.
2. In accordance with the Workplan and Budget for 2021-2022, endorsed by the Nineteenth Intergovernmental Meeting, the Sixth Meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP) to the LBS Protocol was held in hybrid mode in **Oranjestad, Aruba on 04 and 05 October 2023**.

Meeting Objectives

3. The objectives of the Sixth LBS COP Meeting were to:
 - Review the implementation of the LBS Protocol and the effectiveness of actions taken pursuant to it, including a review of the Decisions of the Fifth LBS COP and the relevant Decisions of the Nineteenth Intergovernmental Meeting and Sixteenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties of the Cartagena Convention;
 - Review the implementation of projects and activities by the Secretariat and the LBS Regional Activity Centres (RACs) within the Assessment and Management of Environmental Pollution (AMEP) sub-programme during the period 2021-2022;
 - Take appropriate action regarding the recommendations of the Scientific, Technical and Advisory Committee (STAC) resulting from the 6th LBS STAC held from February 1 to 3, 2023;
 - Assess the status of ratification and/or implementation of the LBS Protocol in member countries and take appropriate action to facilitate increased ratification and/or implementation;
 - Approve the AMEP Workplan and Budget for the 2023-2024 biennium for subsequent submission to and endorsement by the 20th Intergovernmental Meeting and 17th Meeting of Contracting Parties of the Cartagena Convention to be held in Aruba on 04/05 October 2023; and
 - Conduct other business as appropriate.

AGENDA ITEM 1: OPENING OF THE MEETING.

1.1 Welcome

4. Mr. Christopher Corbin, Coordinator of the Secretariat to the Cartagena Convention chaired the Opening Ceremony. He welcomed all delegates attending in person and virtually. He acknowledged Focal Points, Heads of Delegations, Host Governments, Contracting and Non-Contracting Parties, and Observers. He advised that plans were

at an advanced stage in having a dedicated Programme Manager in place for marine pollution.

5. He then invited Mr. Johan Robinson, UNEP's Head of the Ecosystems Integration Branch in Nairobi, Kenya to give remarks.

1.2 Remarks from UNEP Headquarters by Johan Robinson

6. Mr. Johan Robinson expressed pleasure on behalf of the UNEP Executive Director to bring opening remarks to the 6th Conference of Parties for the LBS Protocol.
7. He thanked the Government of Aruba and the Kingdom of the Netherlands for hosting the Conference and for their financial support. He also thanked Chris (Corbin) and the team (at the Secretariat) for their work in organizing the conference.
8. Noting that this was a time of change and transition for the Secretariat especially as UNEP, governments globally and in the Caribbean had started the slow economic recovery from the impacts of COVID-19, he underscored the urgent need to address the negative impact of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss while managing the devastating economic, environmental, and social consequences of wars, fires, floods, and droughts.
9. He observed that for the wider Caribbean, due to its high vulnerability to climate change and disasters and a significant dependence on tourism, its economic recovery had been challenged by floods, hurricanes, droughts, and earthquakes. "As we try to set new ambitious targets to address pollution, the work of the Cartagena Convention and particularly its protocols on oil spills and land-based sources of marine pollution remains critical."
10. He cited reasons why the work of UNEP and Cartagena Convention Secretariat in support of the LBS protocol was important noting that this was one of the 3 planetary crises that UNEP had identified and that must be addressed as a global community. "Through the global partnership on wastewater, nutrients, and marine litter, (for which UNEP is the Secretariat) we are expanding to enable more countries' actions on the ground. The Regional Seas Programme including the Cartagena Convention, and its protocols are well placed to enable such action." he stated.
11. In seeking to surmount the challenges contracting parties to the Cartagena Convention have already developed and endorsed a regional marine litter action plan and strategy and established a regional marine litter node through the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI).
12. He said ongoing work to support community-based activities in reducing marine litter such as implementing proper waste management and circular economy approaches to provide new alternative livelihood earning opportunities including increased private sector collaboration demonstrated advancements made as a region on this matter.
13. He highlighted the Secretariat's work in developing and endorsing the regional nutrients pollution reduction and strategy action plan including national case studies in Barbados and Jamaica that were aimed at reducing pollution from domestic

wastewater and agro-chemical run off. He cited the development of the region's first state of marine pollution report (SOCAR).

14. "With your support the Secretariat has been successful in developing new projects and enhancing partnerships with academic institutions, private sector, NGOs, and development banks. This collaboration is very pleasing and provides opportunities to share valuable lessons and experiences."
15. He recalled the signing of the LBS Protocol in 1999 and that back then it was the first legal binding agreement signed on marine pollution. Today it remains the only binding legal instrument for addressing marine pollution.
16. Regarding UNEP's support for the future, he observed that "there are many lessons learnt, best practices and innovations, that you have by your own actions and efforts at the local level to address marine pollution which we can share at the global level so others can learn of your experiences and successes."
17. He encouraged the Secretariat to participate actively in the discussion regarding the new Plastics Agreement to ensure that concerns and priorities of the region were reflected. They should also take full advantage of projects implemented by UNEP, including those by the Secretariat as "we work to promote the sustainability of ocean resources." He also pledged his own support to the important work being done in the region and valuable discussions.
18. Mr. Corbin thanked Mr. Robinson and other UNEP representatives from Headquarters.

AGENDA ITEM 2: ELECTION OF OFFICERS

19. The Meeting elected from among the Parties Bureau Members - a President, two Vice Presidents, and a Rapporteur for the conduct of the Meeting following proposals for nominations received and submitted by the Secretariat. They were all elected by acclamation.
 - **President** – Dominican Republic
 - **Vice Presidents**
 - ✓ 1st Vice President – Barbados
 - ✓ 2nd Vice President – USA
 - **Rapporteur** – Costa Rica
20. Mr. Corbin thanked delegates for their willingness to work on the protocol during the next biennium and warmly welcomed the new Bureau Members to the head table.
21. The President assumed the Chair for the meeting with support from the Secretariat.

2.1 Opening Remarks of the President

22. The President warmly greeted everyone. She expressed appreciation for this honour of chairing the conference. She thanked Aruba and the Government of the Netherlands for hosting the meeting and expressed the hope that the meeting would be successful and

that all objectives would be achieved. She looked forward to everyone's support and a fruitful session. She outlined the rules of procedure and organization of work for the conference.

AGENDA ITEM 3: ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

3.1 Rules of Procedure

23. The rules of procedure for meetings of the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena Convention) as contained in (UNEP 2010) and adopted pursuant to Article 20 of the Cartagena Convention were applied for the conduct of the Meeting.

3.2 Organization of the work

24. English, French, and Spanish were the working languages of the Meeting. Simultaneous interpretation in these languages was provided for the Meeting. The working documents of the Meeting were available in all three languages.
25. The Secretariat proposed to convene the Meeting in plenary sessions, with the assistance of working groups. The President may also establish other working groups. Simultaneous interpretation would be available for the working groups.
26. The President encouraged full collaboration in all decision-making.

AGENDA ITEM 4: ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

27. The President pointed delegates to the provisional agenda and invited comments from the plenary. There being no recommendations for adjustments, the agenda was adopted without amendment. (The Provisional Agenda is contained in document UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.47/1 and the Provisional Annotated Agenda in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.47/2.)

AGENDA ITEM 5: REVIEW OF PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE PERIOD 2021-2022

28. The President invited Mr. Christopher Corbin of the Secretariat to present the AMEP Status of Activities for the 2021-2022 biennium.

5.1 Review of Status of Ratification and Accession to the Land-Based Sources of Marine Pollution Protocol (LBS Protocol)

29. Mr. Corbin introduced his presentation by indicating that there were no new ratifications of the LBS protocol during the biennium, although there was significant interest from several contracting parties to the Convention, as well as efforts being taken at national levels. He invited non-contracting parties to provide any updates or statements to the meeting regarding their status of ratification and advised that the Secretariat was ready

to provide them with technical support and any other assistance they may need in the ratification process.

30. He then presented the status report for 2021-2022 which included an overview of the work done and highlights of key achievements.

5.1.1 Objectives

31. He outlined the protocol objectives which were to reduce pollution by setting emission and effluent limitations and/or through best management practices and to exchange information on land-based pollution through cooperation in monitoring and investigation.

5.1.2 New Appointments

32. Mr. Corbin announced 2 new appointments for the LBS Protocol Regional Activity Centres (RACs) in Trinidad and Tobago (IMA) and Cuba (CIMAB). They were Dr. Ava Maxam, expert in coastal and environmental management, sustainable development, and spatial business solutions development who joined the Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA) and assumed duties on 4th September 2023; and Dr. Luis Garcia Abreu whose PH.D. was in Environment and Transport and joined the Centre of Research and Environmental Management of Transport (CIMAB) in December 2022.

5.1.3 Summary of Work Programme

33. Mr. Corbin presented a summary of the work programme which covered 5 areas
 - i. Programme Coordination & Management
 - ii. Land & Marine Based Sources of Pollution
 - iii. Monitoring & Integrated Ecosystem Assessment
 - iv. Ecosystem-Based Management Approaches
 - v. Knowledge Management & Communications
34. He shared how the Secretariat responded to some of the decisions of the fifth COP to the LBS Protocol, and recommendations of the 6th LBS STAC.

5.2 Programme Coordination & Management

35. He provided the status of the responses to Decisions of the 5th Conference of Parties to the LBS Protocol underscoring those that had been completed/implemented. They were:
 - Endorsement of the Medium-Term Strategic Plans presented by RAC IMA and RAC CIMAB and request the development of biennial work plans by the LBS RACs- Decision 5
 - LBS RACs support to the Secretariat in resource mobilization and provision of technical support and advice to Contracting Parties for implementing the LBS Protocol, and to Non-Contracting Parties for ratification of the LBS Protocol- Decision 6

- Establishment of four thematic sub-groups of the OEWG to consider issues of importance for the further development of the LBS Protocol- Decision 9
- Continued efforts of the Secretariat to promote the work of the RAC REMPEITC-Caribe and encourage greater collaboration among all the RACs of the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols-. Decision 12
- Enhanced efforts of the Secretariat to finalize the host agreement with the Government of Cuba for the formal recognition of RAC CIMAB as an LBS RAC- Decision 13
- Secretariat's implementation of measures to make it easier for Contracting Parties to complete and submit national reports including establishing a fixed deadline for submission of these reports- Decision 15

5.3 Ongoing Activities

- He highlighted the Secretariat's engagement in partnerships with NGOs and private sector entities to support the implementation of the LBS Protocol- Decision 1
- Adoption of the Regional Nutrients Pollution Reduction Strategy and Action Plan (RNPSAP) and request of the OEWG to provide technical support and oversight for its phased implementation at national and regional levels- Decision 7
- Secretariat's strengthening of the integration between the LBS and SPAW Working Groups, including the cross-representation of experts- Decision 11

5.4 Implementation through Partnerships RACs and RANs

36. The Secretariat adopted a more streamlined approach to the involvement of the Regional Activity Centers (RACs). During the last COP, two of them presented medium-term strategic plans for which comments were included. He announced that for the first time regional strategic plans were developed for all four RACs, which was a great achievement.
37. The Secretariat developed formal small-scale funding agreements with RACs. The Centers were providing direct technical support and training during the biennium and would continue in the ensuing year.
38. There was a recognition that the work to address oil spills as a source of pollution was extremely important, and that many contracting parties, particularly those who represented either the Marine Biodiversity or Marine Pollution Protocol, were unaware of the excellent work being done by the RAC for Oil Spills.
39. He noted that implementation through partnerships with the (RACs) and Regional Activity Network (RAN) was underway.
40. There were synergies with Global Decades, MEAs, UNEP Global Programme of Action, Regional Seas, and UNEP Regional & Sub- Regional Offices. He expressed appreciation

for the support of UNEP Headquarters, particularly through Regional Seas, with co-financing from the GEF/CRew+ project.

41. He advised that for the first time the annual meeting of Regional Seas would be held in the Caribbean, specifically Barbados at the end of November. It presented an opportunity for the two sub programs to work more closely together on common themes. He noted the issues of sargassum, and eutrophication allowed for more integration across the two sub programs. He also highlighted the importance of working groups and engaging regional partners.
42. **Regarding regional coordination, collaboration, and synergies**, he noted that new cooperation agreements were signed with partners, such as LBS RACs, and OSPAR. Discussions continued with International Atomic Energy Agency/INVEMAR and efforts to promote greater cooperation among environmental laboratories through – RAN – REMARCO were ongoing.
43. **In terms of partnerships**, he cited discussions held with Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation which was interested in supporting the work in the Caribbean on wastewater management; and the World Economic Forum which had expressed an interest in working on nutrients.
44. He noted other Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) that had been engaged regarding pollution such as the Nature Conservancy and the World Resources Institute (WRI). Some related projects included those funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and the Caribbean Regional Fund for Wastewater Management. Other sources of funding included, through the Government of Sweden, the Government of Norway, the Global Partnership for Nutrients Management; and the European Union funded African Caribbean and Pacific Project which focused on multilateral environmental agreements.
45. He advised of the strategic action plan on water resources management and climate change focusing on small Caribbean islands and that the The Global Water Partnership Caribbean had been promoting treated wastewater reuse and integrated water resource management.

5.5 Support for Ratification of the LBS Protocol

46. The Secretariat organized virtual workshops for all non-contracting parties in English and Spanish, which aimed to identify critical needs to support them in the ratification process. It also provided technical guidance to Suriname, Saint Kitts-Nevis, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

5.6 Project Development and Approval

47. **GEF International Waters (IW): GEF Gulf of Mexico Large Marine Ecosystem (GoM LME) Project.** He reported that The Secretariat was working on the Gulf of Mexico project. It was supporting GEF to learn the mechanism for facilitating exchanges and

experiences among all international water projects as this would be an opportunity to highlight experiences relating to pollution in the region alongside other regions.

48. **GEF LAC Cities.** The Secretariat was successful in getting approval for the GEF funded, Latin American and Caribbean Cities project, which focused on plastics and the circular economy. It held the first project steering committee meeting in Panama. That project will be implemented in two cities in each of the participating countries of Panama, Colombia, and Jamaica.
49. **GEF CReW+.** The Secretariat worked with 18 countries in Central America, South America, and the Caribbean to provide training on wastewater management. Under the GEF CReW+ project, young people and the media were trained in wastewater management. The Secretariat offered a small scholarship opportunity to raise awareness about the importance of wastewater management. In collaboration with the Global Water Partnership Caribbean, the Secretariat issued a call for small grant proposals that would be implemented during the upcoming biennium.

5.7 Monitoring of Water Quality/Regional and National Monitoring Systems

50. Mr. Corbin noted that the Secretariat continued to identify opportunities for strengthening regional and national monitoring systems. The most recent one was the development of a regional environmental monitoring data portal for small island developing states, particularly those from the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). This project was funded through the GEF IWEco Project.
51. He advised that efforts were underway to strengthen national water information systems in Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada, Saint Lucia, and Costa Rica. The Secretariat completed the development of a regional environmental monitoring platform with the support of the University of Geneva and funding from the GEF CReW+ project.

5.8 ACP MEAs III Project

52. The Secretariat was able, through funding from the ACP project, to work with the Government of Barbados to strengthen their national contingency plan and oil spills dispersant policy. Work was also being advanced on marine protected areas, community-based water, and wastewater management in the Dominican Republic, St Vincent and the Grenadines, and Antigua, and Barbuda.

5.8 Plastics Management

53. The Secretariat was successful in mobilizing funding from the government of Germany, to provide support to plastics management in five countries- the British Virgin Islands, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Suriname and Saint Kitts and Nevis.

5.9 LBS: Oil Spills, Marine Litter & Nutrients

54. He advised that one of the most significant achievements of the last COP was the adoption of the region's first Regional Nutrient Pollution Reduction Strategy and Action

Plan. That plan served as a roadmap for the Secretariat to work with contracting parties to identify added resources that could help address the issue of nutrient contamination from domestic wastewater, and from agrochemical runoff.

55. He stated it was an opportunity for the region to have more targeted activities focused on nutrient reduction and noted that contracting parties requested that additional working groups be established. To this end, the Secretariat invited all contracting parties for nominations.
56. He expressed pleasure with co-financing from the UNEP Global Marine Litter Partnership to provide support to the development of a marine litter plastics reduction strategy and action plan for Saint Lucia.
57. Efforts continued to identify ways to support the implementation of the recently adopted regional Nutrient Pollution Reduction Strategy. The governments of Jamaica and Barbados received support to develop case studies regarding nutrient management.
58. The Secretariat collaborated with other regional seas programs within the framework of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter to host technical sessions at the seventh International Marine Debris Conference held in Busan, South Korea.
59. Through the global partnership, it received support for a national UN volunteer for one year who helped to develop outreach materials.
60. With support from the ACP, the Secretariat received over \$USD100,000 in small grants to support three marine litter community-based projects, as well as three hybrid community-based projects based on plastic reduction, reuse, and reporting which was implemented in partnership with the GCFI.

5.10 Special Publications on Marine Litter

61. He highlighted 3 UNEP publications on marine litter produced in collaboration with ACP MEA's Caribbean Environment Programme and the Cartagena Convention Secretariat. These publications focused on "**Addressing Marine Litter in the Wider Caribbean Region through Regional and Global Partnerships;**" "**Compendium on Waste Management;**" "**Solid Waste and Marine Litter.**"

5.11 Monitoring & Integrated Ecosystem Assessment

62. He noted that ecosystem-based management was at the heart of many of the projects at country levels. He cited the project funded by the UN Human Security Trust Fund for Jamaica which sought to promote integrated water resource management, and solutions to address the issues of wastewater pollution and waste as an example. Some rehabilitation of septic systems was done to reduce contamination from wastewater discharge in schools, and to promote simple reuse of treated wastewater to reduce the pressures on potable water systems.
63. An ecosystem-based project was also undertaken in Guyana, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago and a video and case study produced to highlight that effort. The Secretariat

continued to work in several countries such as Saint Kitts and Nevis to support livelihood development through mentoring, coaching, and macro and micro grants.

5.12 Knowledge Management

64. Knowledge products produced included the State of Convention Area Report on Marine Pollution (SOCAR), Regional Nutrients Pollution Reduction Strategy - Synergies with the State of Habitat Reports & RSAP. The report is available at <https://www.unep.org/cep> (English, Spanish and French).
65. He reminded delegates that one of the decisions of the last COP was to develop more targeted communications material for specific audiences, and to find ways to have knowledge management and communications products represent the full spectrum of work of the Convention.
66. He said the report on marine pollution was voluminous (over 200 pages) of technical information, and the Secretariat was yet to complete distribution to all the contracting parties.
67. He said he was satisfied with producing these reports in the three languages of the Convention and looked forward to the support of delegates and focal points in helping with the dissemination of the material.
68. Four short videos which were produced on sargassum were launched in January 2023.

5.13 Challenges

69. Mr. Corbin concluded by sharing several challenges including outstanding and timely contributions to the Trust Fund, ratification of the LBS Protocol, and maximizing support available through projects (ACP MEAs III) based on requests from contracting countries. Regarding delays with the GEF/CRew+ project, he advised that an extension was being sought to continue the effective implementation of activities during the next biennium. He then provided an overview of the expenditures for the biennium.
70. Based on the implementation of activities during the biennium, a list of possible draft decisions for consideration by LBS COP6.
71. In closing, Mr. Corbin thanked all contracting parties, RACs and the many partners who contributed to the delivery of these activities over the last biennium.
- 72. The President invited the meeting to comment and/or seek clarification on the activities implemented during the biennium**
73. **The Secretariat** received high commendations for the excellent report /presentation from several of the delegations and for the tremendous amount of work done. Delegates endorsed the work of the Secretariat and thanked the Government of Aruba and the Kingdom of the Netherlands for hosting the conference.
74. **Jamaica** encouraged other parties who had not yet done so to come on board as soon as possible, as the work that was being done under the protocol was especially important to protect the Caribbean waters.

75. **Saint Lucia** reported that it had created and activated its first Marine Litter Management Action Plan to address issues related to land based sources of pollution. The plan included the training of customs officers at ports of entry regarding banned plastic items, especially single-use plastics. They also had plans to address returnable containers. They developed various knowledge products in support of the protocol to increase education and awareness, change attitudes and practices at the national level. They offered to share links to some of these products including public service announcements with the Secretariat for the benefit of parties and to support distribution efforts.
76. **France** observed that there was a growing momentum on the international scene regarding the treatment of marine litter, especially plastic pollution. They opined that the regional conventions were the right framework to address these issues citing the one scheduled for Barbados in November 2023 and Antigua and Barbuda in 2024 and at which French actions and concrete solutions could be shared.
77. **Barbados** advised that it had completed its Integrated Solid Waste Management Policy. Under the GEF/CReW+ project, they developed a national communications strategy and implementation plan to re-use wastewater. They conducted a feasibility assessment to develop a sustainable financial mechanism for integrated water and wastewater management. They passed the Water Reuse Act (2023), which established a framework for licensing and managing wastewater treatment plants; a Planning and Development Act (2019) and developed Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations. They were also on track to finalize the Marine Pollution Control Discharge Regulations (2023).
78. Barbados also revealed that their effort to protect its marine waters included plans to source financing to upgrade its two municipal sewage treatment plants to use and reuse treated effluent for agriculture and aquifer discharge. The country was also looking forward to forging new partnerships with other Member States. Barbados reassured the meeting that given that the Caribbean Sea was the single most important livelihood resource for most of the Convention area parties, it had taken the necessary steps to protect this resource and welcomed the opportunity to learn more about similar initiatives being undertaken by other Member States.
79. **Dominican Republic** highlighted a few of the initiatives which they developed in the past biennium from which it had benefited. They revised and updated their water sewage system regulation (the Plans Act) and in February 2023 published a National Plan for Integrated Management (the Economic Partnership Agreement with the US). They also called on other countries who had not yet ratified the protocol to do as they could benefit from various programmes.
80. **Panama** stated that they were conducting efforts to remove plastics and plastic waste and had approved several related laws.
81. **Grenada** recommended the need to explore synergies, and opportunities for joining forces to undertake activities wherever possible for example in sargassum

management which provided opportunities for energy, agriculture, and sustainable buildings whilst being mindful of related health risks.

82. **Trinidad and Tobago** advised that they had benefited from the EU project related to sargassum-using it as seedling substrate on abandoned quarry sites to encourage reforestation, address LBS pollution, and climate change. They supported the collaborative approaches for public education and underscored the role of the Secretariat in harvesting and using data for crucial decision making.
83. **The USA** supported the call for countries who had not yet signed onto the agreement to do so and stated its support for cooperation in dealing with issues such as sargassum management. USA also recommended that work be done to identify standards for nitrogen management.
84. **Mexico** highlighted the issue of biodiversity and residue management such as agrochemicals which were often dumped into the oceans. They stressed the need for the Global Plastics Initiative that was being negotiated to include plastics of all kinds, as well as collaboration for knowledge management and transfer geared towards behaviour change. They also called for the next meeting of the INC to be held in Nairobi, Kenya. They highlighted the Gulf of Mexico project which aimed to strengthen the monitoring of water quality in the Gulf and part of the Yucatan Peninsula.
85. **United Kingdom and the Virgin Islands** reflected on the impact of Hurricane Philippe in the Virgin Islands and noted that as small island developing states (SIDS) moving to land-based solutions was very prevalent especially as “everything that happens in the mountains ends up in our oceans.” They were keen on learning best practices to deal with the dumping of pollutants, receiving grants and participating in workshops which they recommended could be held in the Virgin Islands, Anguilla, Turks and Caicos or Bermuda.

5.13.1 Secretariat's response

86. Chris Corbin of the Secretariat expressed appreciation for the favorable feedback from contracting parties. He noted that the presentation reflected a significant amount of work by a small team which he commended. He also recognized the support by various project managers including those affiliated to the GEF/CReW+ project, and the Secretariat's management assistance in the office.
87. He acknowledged that the work being done had value; the calls to strengthen synergies, knowledge management, sharing experiences; and the harvesting and use of data. He opined that in relation to the status of the British Virgin Islands as regards the Convention, contracting parties could help in the process of ratification. He concurred that maximizing the opportunities to ratify the protocol would make the work of the Secretariat easier as contracting parties and focal points would also become champions. He encouraged countries to share their best practices on pollution management with the Secretariat for wider dissemination.

AGENDA ITEM 6: RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SIXTH SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING TO THE PROTOCOL CONCERNING POLLUTION FROM LAND-BASED SOURCES AND ACTIVITIES (6TH LBS STAC) IN THE WIDER CARIBBEAN

88. The President invited Mr. Corbin to present the recommendations of the 6th LBS STAC Meeting to the Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities in the Wider Caribbean as contained in document (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.44/5).
89. Mr. Corbin provided an overview of the 6th LBS STAC Recommendations, and the actions taken to date. Mr. Corbin pointed out that there was an expectation that there may have been some significant technical topics, including changes to the protocol text, considerations of amendments and several other substantive issues. He cited some delays which impacted the process and advised that many of recommendations made at the 6th LBS STAC were operational in nature and gave the Secretariat guidance on how it could further enhance the protocol's work. He also provided updates on those actions taken after the 6th LBS STAC and before the 6th LBS COP.
90. The President invited the meeting to review and endorse the recommendations, as appropriate, and make any other decisions pursuant to these recommendations.
91. The Foundation for Planning and Development commented on the recommendation to integrate the state of the Pollution Report and the state of the Marine Habitat Report in the future. It inquired whether in the absence of funds to facilitate the integration it was possible that as part of the uptake of the report of the Third World Ocean Assessment, that the UN body dealing with Law of the Sea may be approached to review the integration process.
92. In his response, Chris Corbin of the Secretariat advised that respective governments may have been involved in negotiating and presenting these recommendations, so there would be an endorsement in principle. This would be important to both contracting and non-contracting parties.
93. He advised that the Secretariat could work over the next couple of hours on language that would reflect an endorsement of contracting parties. He added that the Secretariat should have a role in the world ocean assessment and opined that the work done at the regional level could feed into some of these global reports. This would ensure that the region's information was well documented and encourage the mobilization of resources through these global efforts to support regional seas assessments.
94. He noted other issues, such as governance and fisheries, that would allow a more comprehensive analysis to be done. This could be achieved in collaboration with other regional bodies who had the relevant mandate.

AGENDA ITEM 7: REVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REGIONAL ACTIVITY CENTRES (RACS) IN SUPPORT OF LBS PROTOCOL AMENDMENTS.

95. The President invited the Secretariat to present the work of the LBS RACs on the preliminary findings on nutrient standards and the classification of recreational waters and propose recommendations for consideration.
96. The President invited the Secretariat to introduce the Information Document on the initial findings from the work of the LBS RACs relating to nutrient standards and classification of Recreational Waters and to summarize recommendations for further consideration by the COP. (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.44/INF.16 and UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.44/INF.17).
97. The President also advised that during the lunch break two side events, SPAW Consortium and Car-Wen will take place.

7.1 Recommendations of the RACs in support of LBS Protocol Amendments

98. Two of the RACs presented recommendations in support of the LBS Amendments – the IMA and CIMAB.
99. They reported that a Small-Scale Funding Agreement (SSFA May 2022) was forged with UNEP & RAC IMA & RAC CIMAB for USD 300,000 embracing nine projects.

7.1.1 Objectives

100. The main objectives were to:
 - Strengthen the cooperation between RACs IMA and CIMAB and the Cartagena Convention Secretariat through implementation of specific activities under the EU-funded ACP MEAs III and GEF CReW+ Projects
 - Assist in the Environmental Pollution Assessment and Management (AMEP) subprogram of Cartagena Convention Secretariat to prevent, reduce and control marine pollution and to assist countries in the implementation of the LBS Protocol.
101. **They highlighted 4 of the 9 projects of the SSFA 2023/2024 workplan as follows: -**
 - Develop guidelines for classification of waters according to the LBS Protocol. (Supported by RAC CIMAB.)
 - Establish regional criteria and standards for N and P loads in domestic and industrial wastewater discharges. (Supported by RAC CIMAB.)
 - Support RAC-CIMAB in the development of recommendations for amendments to the LBS Protocol to facilitate increased reuse of domestic wastewater including adoption of new criteria or standards for domestic wastewater discharges.
 - Review, analyze and report on developing a new strategy or protocol on the management of freshwater resources within the framework of the Cartagena Convention with a focus on source to sea and integrated watershed management

7.1.2 Status of Project Activities of SSFA

102. They advised that a questionnaire was developed with specific information on policy documents, plan, projects, environmental legislation at a country level and shared with LBS focal points through the Cartagena Convention Secretariat which informed the reports and further verification by countries.

7.1.3 Preliminary Findings by RAC IMA re Guidelines for classification of waters (Activity 1.)

103. They reported that 60% of Contracting Parties had a legislative framework in line with the LBS Protocol. 40% were yet to establish water classification and/or had not incorporated LBS Protocol into their legislative framework.

7.1.4 Preliminary Findings by RAC Cimab re guidelines for classification of waters

104. The Spanish speaking countries evaluated for the analysis of the classification criteria of the coastal zones were Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Panamá, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Colombia, and Mexico
105. Of the ten (10) countries analyzed, / (100%) had standards or regulations that defined maximum permissible limits of the different internationally recognized environmental quality indicators. However, it was recognized that they were outdated; half of the countries (50%) had regulations that were more than 10 years old.
106. Seven (7) of the countries/ (70%), had legislated a system of coastal zones classification according to their use (or were in the preparatory phase). They were Colombia, Cuba, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Dominican Republic, and Venezuela.
107. Only in four (4) of the countries evaluated (40 %) the standards for discharges to coastal marine areas differentiated from the maximum permissible limits of the environmental quality indicators according to the respective classifications of said bodies of water as wastewater receptors. These countries were Nicaragua, Cuba, Colombia, and Dominican Republic.

7.1.5 Guidelines for the Classification of Coastal Marine Waters.

108. They suggested that the classification of the coastal and marine receiving areas should be established according to the most used criteria-actual and prospective uses and environmental quality of the water bodies. Regarding the standards or limits for discharges they recommended that the maximum permissible discharge limits of the different environmental quality indicators included in the discharge standards be established according to the classifications of the receiving bodies. They also suggested applying the principle of graduality, i.e., defining discharge limits progressively over time and including dates or periods to update or at least establish conditions for such a process.
109. They recommended that further work be done to develop guidelines for classification of waters according to the LBS Protocol. This work should include: -

- A structured approach to ensure consistency of methodology.
- Incorporation and/or updating of existing legislative framework (**support of the countries was needed**).
- Evaluation of water bodies for categorisation and/or designation by use
- Establishment of mixing zones/ability of receiving bodies to assimilate waste.
- Establishment of protected areas.

7.1.6 Recommendation to COP

110. They raised the matters of freshwater management and integrated watershed management as matters to be considered for the framework of the Cartagena Convention.
111. They recommended LBS RACs to continue to work and report to the LBS STAC7 and LBS COP7 for further review, recommendation, and decision as appropriate.
- 112. The President invited the meeting to discuss the findings to date and make decisions and/or recommendations to the 20th IGM and 17th COP to the Cartagena Convention, as appropriate.**
113. **Jamaica** supported the recommendation related to integrating freshwater management given that it was one of the larger islands which had rivers leading directly to the Caribbean Sea, as opposed to some others where rivers ran to inland lakes. They highlighted that rivers were the recipients of agricultural runoff and wastewater discharges and needed to be effectively managed or it would affect marine space. They supported the recommendation to manage rivers to ensure that targets are met under the LBS protocol.
114. **Jamaica** also supported the call for regional standards for nutrients. However, given the range of individual issues within territories they recommended that a minimum standard should be considered rather than a fixed standard for the entire Caribbean.
115. **The USA** proposed the need to consider influences on pollution in the marine environment such as those that may come from freshwater resource sources given the close link between surface and groundwater, which convey pollutants directly into the coastal and marine environment. They observed that based on their work on projects such as the GEF CReW and the GEF/CReW+ which focused on wastewater management, they had to embark on a more integrated water resource management approach, especially when considering for example, the treatment or the reuse of treated wastewater as an option for dealing with wastewater pollution.
116. They also cited related challenges such as human, health, sociocultural, and technological, and opined that the RACs work with contracting parties to see how these issues could be addressed.

7.1.7 Response from Secretariat to USA

117. Mr. Corbin said given the work of the (RACs), the major recommendation was for greater engagement and involvement of focal points across the Convention to provide input data, verify the results of findings and comment on them.
118. The Secretariat would be able to mobilize some resources for an initial, more technical oriented meeting of focal points in English and Spanish. The RACs could then present the results of the ongoing work and get detailed discussions underway.
119. Should there be recommendations from this engagement process, the Secretariat could move to resource mobilization at a policy level to determine how these recommendations could be realized.
120. **Grenada** stated that a more deliberate form of assistance was needed by countries, which could be achieved in a harmonious way recognizing the common but differential realities in the region.

AGENDA ITEM 8: DRAFT WORKPLAN AND BUDGET FOR AMEP SUB-PROGRAMME FOR THE 2023-2024 BIENNIUM

121. The President invited the Secretariat to present the “Draft Workplan of the AMEP Sub-programme for the 2023-2024 Biennium”. The document was prepared based on the recommendations of previous STAC and COP Meetings and on the outcome of activities of the 2021-2022 Workplan for LBS.
122. The Secretariat presented the Draft Workplan and Budget for AMEP sub-programme for the 2023- 2024 biennium as contained in document UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.44/3 Rev.1. The workplan was prepared based on input received from Governments and organizations, the two LBS RACs, and following a review and endorsement by the 6th LBS STAC. Specific technical recommendations from the 6th LBS STAC were incorporated into the draft workplan and budget presented.
123. Mr. Corbin advised that the work of the Assessment and Management of Environmental Pollution sub program covered two of the protocols under the Cartagena Convention, the Oil Spills Protocol, and the (LBS) of Marine Pollution Protocol. The focus of the work plan was related to LBS of Marine Pollution.
124. He explained how different protocols were reflected within the Convention's overall framework and the process for the development of regional and subregional strategies and action plans that either focused on a pollution issue or a species issue and how they related to each other.
125. He indicated that the Secretariat was very conscious of the demands to organize a series of intergovernmental meetings within a year and expressed the hope that contracting parties may wish to consider an extraordinary decision which would allow the Secretariat to continue implementation from 2024 to 2025 which would facilitate getting back on track regarding the timing of STACs and COPs.

126. He emphasized the continued focus on project development and implementation, and supporting non-contracting parties in the ratification of the protocol, the implementation of regional strategies and action plans, and working with contracting parties to develop national action plans and strategies. He advised that the work plan reflected continued efforts by the Secretariat to identify opportunities where it could provide more support in the ratification process, and on the ground activities.
127. He observed that whilst priority support was given to the LBS Protocol contracting parties, some projects also had dedicated support for facilitating the ratification process and promoting exchange of experiences.
128. Regarding projects he highlighted the importance of new partnerships and suggested that an update of the existing RAC and RAN guidelines would provide more clarity and structure for how the Secretariat engages with new partners.
129. With the significant increase in projects, the Secretariat recognized the actual cost (financial and human resources) to supporting their execution.
130. He requested contracting parties to help identify priorities for the focus of the Secretariat given the constraints of external donor support, particularly as it related to projects financed by the GEF.
131. He welcomed recommendations of regional capacity workshops in country, even if they were being funded through external projects.
132. He said the work plan reflected a significant focus on monitoring and assessment activities and recognized the importance of building a stronger science-based decision-making process to reflect more integrated assessments within the framework of the protocol itself.
133. He highlighted the role of the importance of the OEWG and subgroups to continue to provide guidance on the work that was being done through the RACs for the LBS protocol, including reviewing issues of criteria and standards and the opportunity to make inputs for an updated draft work plan and facilitate a technical regional meeting.
134. He highlighted three projects in which the Secretariat was fully involved as either an executing or co executing agency- The Latin American Caribbean Cities Project, Caribbean Regional Fund for Wastewater and the Integrated Water Ecosystem Water, Land and Ecosystems Management Project. The GEF LAC Cities project will continue into 2027. He stated that the Promar project would continue until 2026 and that the Procaribe+ project had just started.
135. He said the Secretariat had been working with the government of Trinidad and Tobago, in having an expression of interest approved under the new GEF Healthy Oceans program. It continued to work closely through the Regional Seas Unit in Nairobi to identify opportunities where through UNEP's program of work, there could be direct support to the implementation of decisions made by contracting parties.
136. He indicated that several projects would end in 2024 which meant a significant amount of effort would have to be made by the Secretariat to facilitate the execution of these

projects. Given the heavy demands, the Secretariat would like contracting parties of the Convention to consider extension of the 2023-2024 Work Plan until the end of 2025, which would allow enough time for the Secretariat to effectively plan and convene the next set of intergovernmental meetings.

137. He noted that one of the most important activities proposed for this biennium, and which would be funded through the ACP MEA project, related to the strengthening of regional and national governance measures for ensuring compliance with the LBS protocol and how best to provide support for that effort.
138. He noted that meetings were costly and, whilst normally should be funded through the contributions made to the Trust Fund, the reality was that for recent meetings of the LBS STAC and COP, reliance was on the generous donation of governments. This remains a concern.
139. He reported that the Regional Seas Unit would be fully funding the annual Regional Seas meeting, and the Secretariat's cost would be for travel of one staff member to support the meeting.
140. He noted that there were activities under ongoing and new projects to strengthen laws, policies, develop regional guidelines, national strategies, and action plans, including hosting capacity building workshops. Hopefully, this would also help to identify some of those new and emerging land-based pollutants. He highlighted that efforts were ongoing to develop a suite of common Regional Seas indicators which would enable the Secretariat to have a more results-based approach.
141. He said they were reviewing mapping and identifying emerging issues in collaboration with other regional agencies. He noted the Regional Nutrient Reduction Strategy, which provided a framework that would allow the Secretariat to continue to work very closely with contracting parties to address the issue of nutrients, which represented a major pollutant from domestic wastewater, and agrochemical runoff.
142. He indicated that through the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management, there may be financial support available for countries interested in developing national nutrient reduction strategies. He invited nominees from the Caribbean.
143. He said the Secretariat continued to work with contracting parties to strengthen their national water quality monitoring programs, including classification of waters, strengthening regional and national databases relating to monitoring as well as facilitating monitoring workshops. However, there may be a need for more groundwork to verify some of the modeling as it related to nutrient discharge.
144. There was also the need for regional training on microplastics monitoring. The Secretariat previously highlighted the collaboration with the Association of Caribbean States for a five-day webinar on the status of microplastic pollution in the wider Caribbean region.
145. A concern expressed by contracting parties was the difficulty in monitoring the impact of poor land use practices and non-point runoff for which external expertise may be

needed for support. He raised other issues such as ballast water management, the impacts of ship generated waste, anti-fouling panes and offshore dredging, all of which were maritime related and could affect nearshore environments across the region and may be of interest to contacting parties.

8.1 Ecosystem Based Management

146. He advised of the GEF CReW+ ecosystem-based management projects and activities in Panama, Costa Rica, Cuba, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Grenada. Ten countries will be supported with national projects expected to be completed during 2023. For the GEF IWEco Project, national activities are expected to conclude in Cuba, Dominican Republic, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Jamaica by the end of 2023.
147. Visits were undertaken during the first part of the year (2023) to Cuba and the Dominican Republic to document the experiences of the project there, and currently agreements were being finalized with the governments of Suriname and Guyana to implement two ecosystem-based management projects with support from the EU ACP MEA Project.

8.2 Funds Allocation Across Projects

148. The Secretariat presented a breakdown of the funds and allocation for projects for this biennium, particularly related to land and marine-based pollution program coordination, monitoring, and assessment and an ecosystem-based assessment. He also shared the framework as to how much was being spent on activities such as pollution monitoring, ecosystem-based management, and coordination.
149. Summary budget of the 2023-2024 AMEP Work Plan Program and Associated Projects.

Thematic Areas	CTF	ACP MEAs III	GEF IWEco	GEF CReW+	GEF LAC Cities	Promar	Total
Project Coordination	545,000.00	144,595.50	470,000.00	215,571.50	245,000.00	199,754.47	1,819,921.47
Land and Marine-Based Pollution	-	160,245.34	760,738.00	5,024,276.00	2,590,000.00	284,450.00	8,819,709.34
Monitoring and Assessment	-	42,250.00	2,028,655.92	382,600.00	-	400,000.00	2,853,505.92
Ecosystems-based Management	-	98,563.00	-	-	-	-	98,563.00
Knowledge Management	-	42,000.00	20,000.00	379,000.00	115,000.00	109,250.00	665,250.00
Total	545,000.00	487,653.84	3,279,393.92	6,001,447.50	2,950,000.00	993,454.47	14,256,949.73

150. He advised that the core funding of the Trust Fund was unable to support activities and communication. All knowledge management work was being funded through projects. All other activities were being funded directly to the member states of the Cartagena

Convention. He noted that through several of these projects the Secretariat was able to have activities that would either support project management costs or support other costs that related to project coordination.

151. He closed his presentation on the proposed draft work plan and budget for the 2023 - 2024 (2025) biennium, by inviting comments, recommendations, and concerns.

8.3 Comments from the Floor

152. **Costa Rica – The Rapporteur from Costa Rica** agreed with the plan whilst stating that it was “incredibly ambitious” They emphasized the importance of generating sufficient constructive collaboration throughout the region to make sure that it works.
153. **France** observed that the work plan reflected little emphasis on chemical pollution which could impact the sensitive habitats throughout the Caribbean. They indicated an interest in this area and one they would like to develop through capacity building and strengthening partnerships with some international organizations that had an interest and record of accomplishment in this area.
154. They remarked on emerging contaminants, revealed by some French studies which had an impact on food safety and the importance of the management of water resources, more generally not considered by the regional conventions. As such despite the interest, they opined that given the limited resources of the Secretariat, it could prove a work burden and premature to suggest to the Secretariat and within the Convention to handle this matter.

8.3.1 Secretariat’s response to France

155. Mr. Corbin thanked delegates for their focus on chemical pollution and how they impacted species, coastal, and marine biodiversity, noting that traditionally the emphasis had been the impact of pollutants on human health.
156. He noted that emerging contaminants was an area that allowed for greater synergies between working groups and between the Marine Biodiversity and Marine Pollution Protocol and that concrete recommendations could be determined to present to the next STAC and COP.
157. He addressed the concern of parties about the Secretariat, perhaps even over extending itself and stated that if the scope of the plan were maintained in its current context it would enable the Secretariat to remain faithful to what the protocol expects it to do and refrain from getting involved into fresh water as a core focus area.
158. **The Planning and Development Foundation**, spoke of environmental justice on water related issues, especially pollution and cited a few cases where water treatment facilities malfunctioned and governments collected taxes to deal with these problems, yet still they remain unaddressed, and their discharges affect the health of communities. They remarked that such emerging issues needed to be flagged for attention to the extent that the protocol addressed them/or for the attention of other body.

159. **Mexico** asked for consideration of the issue of circular economies for the contracting parties, a management problem that could be an area of cooperation. They also inquired about how these agreements were going to be implemented and raised for consideration the matter of co-financing, which could involve the public and private sector and serve as an option for those countries that may have difficulties.

8.3.2 Secretariat's response

160. Mr. Corbin thanked delegates, contracting parties and observers for their feedback.

161. He said environmental justice was a theme that was important to UNEP especially as it related to the control, reduction, and prevention of pollution, as an end of pipe treatment, and other related issues such as the promotion of waste. Wastewater as a resource, for the extraction of nutrients, energy and other areas providing alternative livelihoods was especially important.

162. This approach was reflected in the new draft strategy for 2023 to 2030 and was at the core of at least three of the projects mentioned. The GEF LAC Cities project aimed to promote circular economy approaches in plastics management, as was the German funded Promar Project, while the GEF CReW+ project on wastewater promoted the use of nature -based solutions and reuse of treated wastewater.

163. At the last technical meeting of the STAC and the Fifth LBS COP, the OEWG was to have examined and established a specific subgroup to review emerging contaminants. He indicated that the Secretariat had also held talks with the Global Wastewater Initiative that had identified emerging contaminants, particularly in wastewater discharges, as an area of concern.

164. **The Meeting was invited to consider new project proposals that were developed and/or approved during the biennium and which formed part of the 2023-2024 Work Plan and Budget.**

165. This Work Plan and Budget would be forwarded to the Twentieth Intergovernmental Meeting on the Action Plan for the Caribbean Environment Programme and the Seventeenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties for endorsement as contained in (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.47/INF.4 and UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.47/INF.5).

166. The Secretariat was thanked for the comprehensive and ambitious work plan presented and it was adopted.

AGENDA ITEM 9: OTHER BUSINESS

167. The President invited delegates to raise any other issue not covered by the preceding Agenda items, but relevant to the scope of the Meeting however no other pertinent issues were raised.

168. The President invited Member Governments to indicate their interest in hosting the upcoming LBS STAC7 and/or COP18. However, no offers were received, and it was

agreed that the Secretariat engage in bilateral discussions with interested Governments.

AGENDA ITEM 10: ADOPTION OF THE DECISIONS OF THE MEETING

169. The President invited The Rapporteur of the Meeting to present the draft decisions further to which they were adopted.

AGENDA ITEM 11: CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

170. The Meeting was closed on Thursday 05 October 2023 by the President of the Meeting and Coordinator of the Secretariat.

Annex I: Provisional Agenda

Annex II: Provisional List of Documents

Annex III: Recommendations of the Meeting

Annex IV: List of Participants

Rapporteurs notes