



Distr. LIMITED

UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.46/3  
3 October 2023

Original: ENGLISH

Twelfth Meeting of the Contracting  
Parties (COP) to the Protocol  
Concerning Specially Protected Areas  
and Wildlife (SPAW) in the Wider  
Caribbean Region

Oranjestad, Aruba  
3 October 2023

## DRAFT DECISIONS OF THE MEETING

The Contracting Parties:

**Having convened** the Twelfth Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP) to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA) in the Wider Caribbean Region;

**Recalling** the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, and **welcoming** Goal 14 calling for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development;

**Recognizing** that ecosystem restoration is a complement to conservation activities and that priority should be given to conserving biodiversity and preventing the degradation of natural habitats and ecosystems by reducing pressures and maintaining ecological integrity and the provision of ecosystem services,

**Recognizing** the inundation of Sargassum can be a challenging issue and how it might affect the implementation of the Convention and its protocols.

**Recognizing** the importance of the Parrotfish as a species in the Wider Caribbean Region

**Noting** the invitation to the United Nations General Assembly by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity at its fourteenth meeting, in its decision 14/30, to designate the decade 2021–2030 the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration,

**Noting** the invitation to the United Nations General Assembly by the Conference of the Parties in its resolution A/RES/72/73 to designate the decade 2021–2030 the United Nations Ocean Science for Sustainable Development,

**Taking note** of the “Status of Activities of the SPA Sub-programme for 2021-2022” (*includes status of STAC9 Recommendations and COP11 Decisions*) (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.5) and “Report of the SPA Regional Activity Centre (SPA- RAC) in Guadeloupe: Operations and Budget for the period 2021-2022” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.6);

**Taking note** the Update of the Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals (MMAP) in the Wider Caribbean Region: 5 Year Action Plan(UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.31/Rev. 1);

**Acknowledging** the work of the Secretariat and SPA-RAC to address emerging issues such as Sargassum influx and the incidence of the SCTL, as well as the continued work on conservation of coral reefs, mangroves, seagrasses, herbivorous fishes, sharks and marine mammals;

**Having reviewed** the “Recommendations of the Tenth Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee to the SPA Protocol”, Virtual, 30 January -1 February contained in the Report of the Meeting (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/4);

**Having reviewed** the “Draft Workplan and Budget of the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA) Sub-programme for the 2023-2024 Biennium” (UNEP (DEPI)/CAR WG.43/3 Rev.1);

**Considering** the current budgetary challenges, the Secretariat is facing that must be considered in implementing the 2023-2024 Workplan;

**Decide to:**

1. Endorse the SPA STAC Recommendations with changes as appropriate.

2. Adopt the SPAW Protocol work plan and budget, including priority unfunded projects.
3. Encourage increased ratification and implementation of the SPAW Protocol obligations.
4. Encourage the Contracting Parties to designate experts with scientific and/or technical competence to the SPAW STAC Ad Hoc Working Groups.
5. Provide guidance on the proposal of the SPAW Consortium to support the implementation of the Cartagena Convention and the SPAW Programme.
6. Decide on the proposals for the uplisting of the whale shark, giant ray manta and hammerhead sharks from Annex III to Annex II of the SPAW Protocol, noting the lack of consensus of the Contracting Parties on the submitted proposals.
7. Provide Guidance on the work on Sargassum considering the proposal presented by SPAW RAC.
8. Adopt the endorsed submitted proposals on the uplisting of the Oceanic Whitetip Shark and Lesser Antillean Iguana from Annex III to Annex II and the inclusion of all Parrotfishes and the Caribbean reef shark in Annex III.
9. Recognize the contribution of the creation of new MPAs to the accomplishment of Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework
10. Invite the Protected Areas Working Group to review the “Guidelines and Criteria for the Evaluation of Protected Areas to be Listed Under the SPAW Protocol” and prepare suggestions to simplify and streamline the process.
11. Recommend to the Cartagena Convention COP on approaches for further development of Blue Economy approaches given links to Marine Pollution, Biodiversity and Innovative Conservation Finance.
12. Recommend to Cartagena Convention COP Decision on the continued integration of AMEP and SPAW subprogrammes in the 2023-2024 biennium, integration of thematic linkages such as between Eutrophication and Sargassum as well as the impacts of Nutrient Pollution on Marine Biodiversity and RAC/RAN coordination.
13. Decides that the Bureau will commit to actively outreach to Contracting Parties on the contents and decision-making of Bureau meetings, with the aim to reflect the positions of all Contracting Parties in meetings of the Bureau. The Bureau can in its first meeting decide on the manner in which it will decide to inform and include other Contracting Parties.
14. Decide to request the Secretariat to perform an assessment on the improvement of the functioning of the Working Groups and identify possible alternative solutions to improve the technical and scientific basis on which the STAC can make recommendations.
15. Recommend to the Cartagena Convention COP to consider the request for the Cartagena Convention Secretariat to conduct further research on the vulnerability of the whale shark due to the lack of available data in the region.
16. Endorse the reestablishment of the training-of-trainer workshops to strengthen MPAs and MEAs
17. Urge the Secretariat to prioritise addressing challenges and to support Contracting Parties to strengthen implementation of the Protocol (through national reporting).
18. Urge the Secretariat to provide the Bureau with a clear mandate to actively reach out to the other Parties and to guide the work of the Secretariat in the implementation of its workplan.
19. Urge the Secretariat to facilitate the collaboration of the three (3) bureaus to work efficiently to the benefit of the Secretariat.
20. Urge the Secretariat and the Contracting Parties to determine the roles both can play in addressing the issue of Sargassum.
21. Adopt the SPAW Regional Activity Centre Strategic Plan 2023-2028.
22. Approve the inclusion of Parc Naturel Marin de Martinique, proposed by the Government of France, in the list of protected areas under the SPAW Protocol.