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

14 & 16 October 2025
Kingston, Jamaica

REPORT OF THE MEETING

Table of Contents

Acronyms	iii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
AGENDA ITEM 1: OPENING OF THE MEETING	1
AGENDA ITEM 2: ORGANISATION OF THE MEETING	2
AGENDA ITEM 3: ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA	3
AGENDA ITEM 4: REVIEW OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ELEVENTH MEETING OF THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (STAC11) TO THE SPAW PROTOCOL.....	3
AGENDA ITEM 5: REVIEW OF THE DRAFT WORKPLAN AND BUDGET OF THE SPAW SUBPROGRAMME FOR THE 2026-2027 BIENNIUM.....	13
AGENDA ITEM 6: ANY OTHER BUSINESS	16
AGENDA ITEM 7: Adoption of the Decisions of the Meeting.....	21
ANNEX I. AGENDA.....	1
ANNEX II. LIST OF DOCUMENTS	1
ANNEX III. DECISIONS OF THE MEETING	1
ANNEX IV. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS	1

Acronyms

BVI	British Virgin Islands
CAMAC	Caribbean Marine Megafauna and Anthropogenic Activities Project
CaMPAM	Caribbean Marine Protected Areas Managers Network and Forum
CAR-WEN	Caribbean Wildlife Enforcement Network
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CCS	Caribbean Cetacean Society
COP	Conference of the Parties
CMS	Convention on Migratory Species
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IGO	Inter- Governmental Organizations
IWC	International Whaling Commission
JNCC	Joint Committee on Nature Conservation
LBS	Protocol Concerning Land-Based Sources of Pollution
MMRAN	Marine Mammal Regional Network
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPA	Marine Protected Area
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions
NSCG	Neotropical Songbirds Collective Group
NGO	Non-Government Organizations
OECMS	Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures
OCM	Ocean Coordination Mechanism
PA	Protected Area
RAC	Regional Activity Centre
RAN	Regional Activity Network
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SOCAR	State of Convention Area Report
SPAW	Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife in the Wider Caribbean Region
STAC	Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
US	United States
WEN	Wildlife Enforcement Network (<i>e.g. CAR-WEN – Caribbean Wildlife Enforcement Network</i>)
WIDECAST	Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network

INTRODUCTION

1. The Conference of Plenipotentiaries on Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA) in the Wider Caribbean Region held in Kingston, 15 to 18 January 1990, adopted the SPA Protocol to the Cartagena Convention, which came into force on 18 June 2000. Article 23 of the SPA Protocol provides for the convening and functioning of the Meetings of the Parties and calls for these ordinary meetings to be held in conjunction with the Ordinary Meetings of the Parties to the Cartagena Convention. In light of the above, this Meeting was convened by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Cartagena Convention Secretariat by means of an in person and online meeting, on October 14th and 16th, 2025 held concurrently with the Eighteenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean, 13-16 October, 2025.
2. The main objectives of this Thirteenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP13) to the SPA Protocol were to:
 - **Review** and **adopt** the Recommendations of the Eleventh Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC11) to the SPA Protocol, Hybrid Meeting, 30 June -3 July, Panama City, Panama;
 - **Review** and **approve** the 2026-2027 Workplan and Budget of the SPA Subprogramme for subsequent approval by the Eighteenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region;
 - **Review** and **approve** the reports on protected areas presented by Parties for listing under the SPA Protocol;
3. The nineteen Contracting Parties to the SPA Protocol were invited to nominate their respective representatives to participate in the Meeting. Representatives of governments that are non-Contracting Parties and of international, regional, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations were also invited to attend the Meeting as Observers. The Provisional List of Participants was presented in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.51/INF. 2 and is included in [Annex IV](#) of this report.

AGENDA ITEM 1: OPENING OF THE MEETING

4. Mrs Susana Perera Valderrama, SPA Programme Officer of the Cartagena Convention Secretariat, opened the meeting at 8:37 a.m. She thanked the governments and organizations that contributed in a special way to the implementation of the SPA Protocol in recent years, notably the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the European Union, the government of France, and the Global Environment Facility.

AGENDA ITEM 2: ORGANISATION OF THE MEETING

2.1 Rules of Procedure

5. The Rules of Procedure for the Meetings of the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena Convention) (UN Environment, 2012) were applied, *mutatis mutandis*, for the conduct of the Meeting. Rule 26 pertaining to quorum. (See Reference Document UNEP, 2012).
6. The Secretariat confirmed that a quorum was established. There were 13 parties in person and 2 online: Honduras and Trinidad and Tobago.
7. Mrs. Susana Perera Valderrama warmly welcomed all participants.

2.2 Election of Officers

8. The Meeting was invited to elect from among the representatives of the Contracting Parties to the SPAW Protocol at the meeting and in accordance with Rule 19 of the Rules of Procedure; the President, a first Vice-President, a second Vice-President and the Rapporteur for the conduct of the Meeting. Following consultations with Contracting Parties, nominations were received as follows:
 - **President:** Panama
 - **First Vice-President:** France
 - **Second Vice-President:** The Kingdom of the Netherlands
 - **Rapporteur:** Saint Kitts and Nevis
9. There were no objections to nominations. The meeting was invited to endorse the Bureau by acclamation with a round of applause.
10. The Secretariat congratulated the Bureau and thanked the meeting delegates.

2.3 Organization of Work

11. English, French and Spanish were the working languages of the Meeting. Simultaneous interpretation in these languages was provided for the Meeting, and the Working Documents were available in all the working languages. The Provisional List of Documents of the Meeting was presented in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.51/INF.1 Rev. 4 and is included in [Annex II](#) of this report.
12. The Secretariat proposed convening the Meeting in plenary sessions, with the assistance of working groups, if necessary, which may be established by the Chairperson. No simultaneous interpretation was available for the working groups. Participants were reminded that, given the length of the Meeting, breaking into working groups might not be feasible. Participants were therefore expected to come prepared, having reviewed all

relevant working documents, to provide concrete input during the discussions.

13. The organization of work was adopted as proposed by the Secretariat.

AGENDA ITEM 3: ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

14. The Meeting was invited to adopt the Agenda of the Meeting proposed by the Secretariat as presented in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.51/1 and the Provisional Annotated Agenda in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.51/2 Rev.1.
15. The agenda was adopted with one amendment, allowing for the inclusion of recommendations under relevant items. The Secretariat also noted that two documents related to the Marine Mammals Regional Activity Network would be discussed. These were Advancing Marine Mammal Conservation in the Wider Caribbean Region: Expression of Interest in Support of the Future Marine Mammal Regional Activity Network (MMRAN) UNEP (DEPI)/CAR IG.51/CRP.1 by the Florida International University and the Caribbean White Orca Project and Proposal for the Establishment of the Marine Mammal Regional Activity Network (MMRAN) UNEP (DEPI)/CAR IG.51/CRP.2 by the Caribbean Cetacean Society.
16. The agenda, which was adopted with the recommended amendment, is included in [Annex I](#) of this report.

AGENDA ITEM 4: REVIEW OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ELEVENTH MEETING OF THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (STAC11) TO THE SPAW PROTOCOL

17. The President invited the Secretariat to present the Recommendations of the SPAW STAC11 in the Wider Caribbean Region as contained in document UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/4. During the presentation of the Recommendations, the Secretariat provided updates on those actions taken following the 11th SPAW STAC and before the convening of the 13th SPAW COP.

4.1 RAC/RAN Guidelines

18. The Secretariat introduced the item, explaining that the **RAC/RAN Guidelines** had been reviewed during STAC11 and at the Pre-COP. The objective was to refine procedures for the establishment and operation of **Regional Activity Centres (RACs)** and **Regional Activity Networks (RANs)**.
19. The Secretariat noted that the revised document sought to:
 - Clarify processes for the designation and redefinition of RACs and RANs.
 - Differentiate between existing and new entities.

- Improve sections on functioning, communication, and reporting; and
 - Establish a small inter-sessional working group to finalize revisions and ensure coherence.
20. **The United States** expressed appreciation for the Secretariat's efforts and the productive Pre-COP meeting. They also acknowledged France's continued support of the SPAW RAC. They largely agreed with the recommended actions but emphasized that final endorsement of the updated RAC/RAN guidelines should occur during an official meeting rather than via intersessional email, citing the importance and longevity of these documents.
21. **Colombia** thanked the Secretariat and working groups for their dedication, highlighting progress on protected areas, sargassum management, and species conservation. They expressed gratitude to France for their ongoing support of the SPAW protocol and commended the Parke Marino Aruba team for their efforts toward SPAW listing. They stressed the need to adopt the work plan to ensure continuity and coherence despite funding challenges.
22. **Colombia** supported updating the sargassum action plan and called for optimizing project design by leveraging existing knowledge to avoid duplication. They also underscored the importance of transparency and effectiveness through SPAW compliance instruments, such as concept notes and roadmaps.
23. **Colombia** acknowledged the significant work on updating the RAC/RAN guidelines and urged continued dialogue to reach consensus, reaffirming its commitment to constructive engagement.
24. **The Secretariat** thanked the delegates for their feedback and comments.

4.2 Marine Mammal Regional Activity Network (MMRAN)

25. The Secretariat presented the recommendation to establish a **MMRAN** in the Wider Caribbean Region, as proposed by STAC11. This would involve inviting institutions to express interest in hosting or coordinating the network and developing a review and approval process for nominations.
26. The Secretariat explained that a consultancy led by Ms. Juliana Chaparro had reviewed governance structures and proposed an inclusive model featuring a host institution, a steering committee, thematic focal points, and an advisory council. The design drew inspiration from successful regional models such as **WIDECAST** (the Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network).
27. The proposal emphasized:

- Geographic inclusivity, representing the diversity of the Wider Caribbean;
 - Coordination with existing RACs/RANs to avoid duplication;
 - Involvement of local communities and NGOs; and
 - A gradual, resource-mobilization strategy for implementation.
28. **France** strongly supported stricter protection of marine mammals in the Caribbean, citing their historic commitment through the Agoa Sanctuary. France emphasized the need for transparent governance and consensus among regional cooperation bodies, including scientific communities, when selecting partners for the network.
29. **The United States** supported the creation of a MMRAN and proposed that its designation should not be contingent on finalizing RAC/RAN guidelines, given their non-binding nature. The U.S. recommended an intersessional process where the Secretariat would first invite institutions, interested in hosting a marine mammal RAN to submit proposals, and subsequently work with Contracting Parties, following the COP, to review proposals and consider the possible intersessional approval or designation of a RAN prior to the next COP, independent of any pending guideline revisions.
30. The United States also proposed an amendment to the SPAW STAC11 recommendations to clarify that an intersessional process regarding such a MMRAN does not need to be contingent on adoption of new RAC/RAN guidelines.
31. **The Dominican Republic** expressed full support for the MMRAN, highlighting ongoing national efforts through NGOs and the Ministry of Environment. They announced their readiness to collaborate and thanked France and Germany for their assistance in advancing marine mammal conservation.
32. **Colombia** agreed with the initiative but requested clarification on procedural steps for approving the MMRAN and related proposals submitted by the University of Miami and the Caribbean Cetacean Society.
33. **Barbados** sought confirmation on whether existing guidelines would remain in force and asked about applicable criteria.
34. **The Secretariat** suggested that once the US proposals have been validated, the Secretariat would work with SPAW RAC and confirmed that the process could proceed in parallel with guideline updates to avoid delays. RANs are informal collaborations with fewer reporting requirements than RACs, and guidelines are non-mandatory. Proposals will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
35. **The President** thanked all Parties for their contributions, and reminded them to submit

recommendations via email, and noted that the discussion would move forward based on consensus and Secretariat guidance.

36. **Caribbean Cetacean Society (CCS)**, speaking on behalf of nine partner organizations, reaffirmed their strong interest in establishing and operationalizing the Marine Mammal Regional Activity Network (MMRAN) under the SPAW Protocol. They emphasized that marine mammals are a shared natural and cultural heritage of the Caribbean, hosting over 30 species that face transboundary threats such as ship strikes, bycatch, and noise pollution. The coalition proposed to formalize existing collaborations rather than create something new, ensuring an inclusive, multilingual, and regionally representative structure. CCS offered to serve as the coordinating host, reporting to SPAW STAC and COP, with regional co-hosts to ensure balanced representation.
37. **The CCS** outlined a multi-layered governance framework including:
 - Regional subcommittees (Greater/Lesser Antilles, Central and South America)
 - A Council of Parties (government representatives)
 - Expert steering groups and thematic committees (strandings, bycatch, whale watching, education, pollution reduction).
38. The coalition requested formal recognition of the MMRAN and asked the Secretariat to initiate the nomination and evaluation process for hosts and co-hosts. They stressed the importance of readiness, organization, and unity to ensure the Caribbean spoke with one voice for marine mammal protection.
39. **The Caribbean Wild Orca Project**, led by Jaime Bolaños, described a 15-year informal collaboration network comprising approximately 70 scientists and citizen contributors across the Caribbean. They reported that it had generated substantial scientific data on cetacean distribution and had been published extensively. It further indicated that an expression of interest had been submitted to the Secretariat, co-developed with Florida International University, to contribute to the establishment of a Marine Mammal RAN. The Project also offered its network and expertise to support Contracting Parties and NGOs in advancing the proposal and expressed its readiness to collaborate fully and to prepare a formal proposal for the operation of the RAN once the relevant guidelines are finalized.
40. **The Animal Welfare Institute**, a co-founder and steering group member of the SPAW Consortium, expressed full support for establishing the Marine Mammal Regional Activity Network (MMRAN). They welcomed the commitment from organizations with expertise and interest in hosting the network in alignment with forthcoming RAC/RAN guidelines. The Institute emphasized the importance of coordination and collaboration

under the guidance of the Secretariat and Contracting Parties, leveraging synergies to strengthen marine mammal conservation efforts across the region.

41. The Secretariat concluded that following discussion and acceptance of the U.S. amendment, the COP approved the recommendation on the Marine Mammal RAN, specifying that its establishment shall not be dependent on the adoption of new RAC/RAN Guidelines.

4.3 Functioning of SPAW Working Groups

42. The Secretariat introduced recommendations to strengthen the functioning of SPAW Working Groups, referencing document UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.9. Key proposals included:

- Developing training materials for new Working Group members;
- Announcing meetings and deadlines well in advance;
- Distributing reports promptly;
- Continuing to provide interpretation services where funding allows;
- Organizing listening sessions to identify participation barriers;
- Creating an expert database to support technical queries; and
- Encouraging Parties to designate qualified experts to the groups.

43. The Secretariat summarized findings from a consultancy led by Ms. Olga Kubrak, which recommended:

- **Optimizing institutional structures**, including the possible consolidation of Working Groups with thematic subgroups;
- **Enhancing participation**, such as partnerships with universities and incentives for experts; and
- **Strengthening multilingual communication**, ensuring documents and meetings are accessible in English, Spanish, and French.

44. **The United States** welcomed the report but stated it could not endorse all recommendations at this stage. The U.S. supported the six priority recommendations as outlined in SPAW STAC11 Recommendation I (also highlighted in the Secretariat's intervention as key proposals) for near-term implementation, with others to be reconsidered later. They noted that other recommendations may require additional time to consider, modify, or implement and welcomed feedback from other parties.

45. The President invited Parties to indicate if they had any objections. There were no further

comments. The COP approved the recommendation in part, adopting the priority actions highlighted by the U.S. and the Secretariat. The Secretariat and SPAW RAC were invited to develop an implementation plan addressing training, expert databases, meeting standards, and linguistic accessibility.

4.4 SPAW Consortium Recommendation

46. The COP adopted the recommendations on the SPAW Consortium, recognizing its role in improving regional collaboration and information sharing on marine and coastal biodiversity initiatives.

4.5 Protected Areas

47. **The Secretariat** presented recommendations on **Protected Areas**.
48. **The United States** expressed appreciation to the Protected Areas Working Group and proposed adopting the updated procedure document for SPAW site nominations (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.13 Rev.2), contingent on acceptance of U.S. edits (as shown in the track-changes version online).
49. The COP also considered two related documents: the Protected Area Managers' Network Paper (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.11) and the report on the development of a regional support program for protected area managers in the Wider Caribbean Region (CARICAP) UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.12.
50. **The United States** clarified that many of its edits were stylistic, with substantive changes focused on replacing general references to climate change with specific environmental threats such as sea-level rise and disaster resilience.
51. **France** requested to review each proposed modification to ensure clarity, particularly regarding the deletion of climate change references. France suggested retaining mention of the effects of climate change, including sea level rise, ocean acidification and coastal erosion, even if the term "climate change" itself were omitted. They also noted prescriptive elements limiting participation in activities and requested clearer, reinforced paragraphs to ensure flexibility and inclusivity in implementation
52. **The United States** thanked France for their comments and clarified its position on climate change references. The U.S. did not support broad, policy-level mentions of climate change in the document and instead recommended focusing on specific environmental threats, such as sea-level rise or changing ocean conditions. They expressed willingness to discuss edits during the session or review written proposals at a later time, depending on the group's preference.
53. **The Secretariat** proposed that delegations from France, the United States, and other interested Parties meet informally (with the SPAW RAC) to reconcile the text before final endorsement. The COP agreed to pause final approval of the document until consensus was reached.

4.6 Species

54. The Secretariat presented recommendations on **species conservation**.
55. **The Dominican Republic** supported the recommendations and suggested that the Working Group on Species strengthen synergies with other international conventions, such as the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), and include species like manta rays and hammerhead sharks in future work programmes.
56. The COP adopted the recommendations on species.

4.7 Exemptions

57. The Secretariat presented recommendations on **exemptions**.
58. **Colombia** thanked the Secretariat and the Working Group for their efforts, noting that the summary report had been uploaded to the website and reviewed at STAC11. They also expressed appreciation to the United States, Bonaire, and Curaçao for their work in developing the exemption reporting format and recognized Curaçao's persistence in submitting its report.
59. **Colombia** reiterated the importance of having all working documents available in the three official languages—English, Spanish, and French—to ensure equitable participation of all Parties. Given the technical nature and length of exemption-related documents, Colombia stressed that translation was crucial for accurate understanding and analysis.
60. **The Secretariat** expressed appreciation for Colombia's comments and confirmed its commitment to providing multilingual access as far as possible. However, the Secretariat explained that financial constraints often limited its ability to translate lengthy documents (some exceeding 50–100 pages). As a compromise, the Secretariat proposed producing executive summaries in all three languages and invited Parties to provide financial or in-kind support to facilitate translations.
61. The COP **adopted the recommendations on** exemptions endorsing the approach proposed by the Secretariat.

4.8 Sargassum

62. The Secretariat introduced the **Cartagena Convention Action Plan on Sargassum Inundation** (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.27 Rev.3) and invited comments from the Parties.
63. **France** thanked the Secretariat for the presentation and endorsed the Sargassum Action

Plan, underscoring the importance of strengthening scientific research and information sharing. France emphasized that governance mechanisms should be given priority and recommended that human health-related concerns also be reflected in the governance section. France advised on its ongoing research missions on Sargassum and expressed willingness to assist other countries in sharing data and best practices.

64. **Colombia** supported the plan, highlighting its relevance given Colombia's recent experiences with significant Sargassum influxes on both its insular and continental coasts. The delegation referred to the constructive exchanges held during the virtual Pre-COP and stressed the need to ensure synergies with other regional projects, including GEF-supported initiatives. Colombia urged efforts to avoid duplication and ensure alignment between ongoing projects and the regional plan.
65. **The Dominican Republic** supported Colombia's position, calling for coordination among regional mechanisms and platforms that address Sargassum impacts. The delegation encouraged aligning the Action Plan's activities with existing programmes and strategies already under discussion.
66. **The United States** thanked the SPAW RAC and the Secretariat for their extensive work, commending the coordination between the SPAW and LBS Protocols. The U.S. expressed strong support for adopting the Action Plan, noting it exemplified cross-protocol collaboration under the Cartagena Convention.
67. **Grenada** expressed strong support for the Sargassum Action Plan, describing it as a strategic and timely instrument that captures the challenges facing the region. The delegation emphasized that the plan aligns with national and regional goals and would guide ongoing and future projects. Grenada congratulated the Secretariat and the Contracting Parties for their collaboration.
68. **Trinidad and Tobago** supported the plan and recalled that, during the Pre-COP, participants recommended viewing Sargassum as an opportunity, particularly through its valorisation and reuse. Trinidad and Tobago proposed including a recommendation in the Action Plan to treat Sargassum waste as a potential resource for economic or environmental benefit.
69. **Belize** expressed appreciation to the Secretariat and the Government of Jamaica for hosting the meeting. The delegation described the severe impacts of Sargassum in Belize, including the recent event that affected the Blue Hole, drawing global attention. Belize expressed support for both the Action Plan and the creation of a Convention-level Working Group on Sargassum, committing to active participation in its implementation.
70. **Barbados** supported the adoption of the Action Plan and thanked the Secretariat for the regional coordination efforts. Barbados emphasized the shared impact of Sargassum inundations across the Caribbean and reiterated the importance of joint, productive solutions.

71. **Saint Lucia** also expressed support for the Action Plan, highlighting Sargassum as a continuing regional priority. The delegation emphasized the need to move from discussion to action, warning against duplication and competition among similar initiatives. Saint Lucia called for strengthened regional coordination and implementation capacity, noting that communities and biodiversity continue to suffer while fragmented projects proliferate.
72. **PROCARIBE+ Project (Patrick Debels)** reported that the **Ocean Coordination Mechanism (OCM)**, established in December 2024, includes 20 countries and 9 intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) with marine-related mandates, including the Cartagena Convention. He encouraged the Convention to use its role within the OCM to help reduce fragmentation of Sargassum-related efforts and ensure coherence among regional programmes. The PROCARIBE+ project offered financial support to integrate SPAW's work into the OCM's knowledge management hub and assist in developing the **SOCAR report** chapter on Sargassum.
73. **IOC-UNESCO IOCARIBE (Dr. Lorna Iniss)** congratulated the Secretariat for the plan's comprehensiveness and pledged IOCARIBE's full cooperation. She noted that IOCARIBE's dual mandate—generating ocean knowledge and facilitating its transfer to member states—aligns closely with the plan's objectives. Dr. Iniss proposed that IOCARIBE and SPAW integrate their Sargassum workstreams, suggesting reciprocal participation in each other's working groups. She also cautioned that while Sargassum valorisation holds promise, it must be managed carefully to avoid harming marine biodiversity, particularly juvenile species.
74. **Saint Kitts and Nevis** commended the Secretariat and SPAW RAC for their leadership, recognizing the growing crisis posed by Sargassum to coastal ecosystems, tourism, and fisheries in Small Island Developing States (SIDS). They strongly supported the plan as a coordinated and science-based framework for monitoring, response, and sustainable use.
75. **Saint Kitts and Nevis** identified three key priorities:
 - Early warning and data sharing through regional observation systems;
 - Technical and financial assistance to strengthen local management and valorisation capacity; and
 - Integration of the Action Plan with the LBS Protocol and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.
76. **They** also expressed strong support for the UNEA Resolution on Sargassum, currently under development, which would elevate the issue to the global level and mobilize resources for affected countries.
77. **British Virgin Islands (BVI)** presented its draft policy proposal on managing Sargassum landings in the territory. The proposal outlines a proactive approach using deflection

booms, workboats, conveyor systems, and beach-cleaning rigs to enhance efficiency and reduce costs. They expressed interest in sharing their experience and aligning its national policy with the regional Sargassum Action Plan.

78. **The Secretariat** thanked the BVI for its presentation and confirmed that national efforts, such as the BVI's, would be integrated into the Regional Sargassum Action Plan, once formally adopted by the Parties.
79. **The Secretariat** further clarified that the **SOCAR (State of Convention Area Report)** on marine pollution and habitats will include a chapter on Sargassum, integrating contributions from SPAW Contracting Parties. The Secretariat also noted that elements from the SPAW and LBS discussions would be consolidated into a comprehensive Convention-level decision for adoption.
80. **The United States** sought clarification on the reference to updating the "white paper" on Sargassum.
81. **The Secretariat** clarified that the "Sargassum White Paper" was a technical report prepared and endorsed at SPAW COP11 (2021), compiling existing research and analyses on Sargassum influxes in the Caribbean. The update would incorporate new findings from the past four years and serve as a living document.
82. **Antigua and Barbuda** inquired whether the White Paper had been developed by the University of the West Indies (UWI).
83. **The Secretariat** confirmed that the 2021 White Paper was produced under the Secretariat's coordination and initially presented at **STAC8 (2018)** before being published in 2021. It aimed to consolidate background information and best practices, and its update would be informed by ongoing regional research, including by the UWI.
84. **Suriname** expressed appreciation to the Government and people of Jamaica for hosting the Cartagena Convention COPs and for their warm hospitality. They indicated their desire to be aligned with the statements made by the other Contracting Parties in support of the Draft Cartagena Convention Action Plan on Sargassum Inundation.
85. **Suriname** recognized that sargassum influxes were a regional challenge affecting our coasts, biodiversity, and local communities. They therefore supported stronger regional cooperation, enhanced scientific research, and improved access to financing to help countries manage and utilize sargassum in a safe and sustainable manner.
86. The Cartagena Convention Action Plan on Sargassum Inundation was adopted, with agreement to:
 - Integrate national and partner initiatives under the plan;
 - Include recommendations on Sargassum valorisation ;

- Align the plan with the OCM's regional framework; and
- Support the forthcoming UNEA Resolution on Sargassum.

4.9 2026-2027 SPAW Workplan and Budget

87. The Secretariat proposed postponing the adoption of the Work Plan and Budget until after its presentation under Agenda Item 5.

AGENDA ITEM 5: REVIEW OF THE DRAFT WORKPLAN AND BUDGET OF THE SPAW SUBPROGRAMME FOR THE 2026-2027 BIENNIUM

88. The Secretariat presented the “Draft Workplan and Budget of the SPAW Sub-programme for the 2026-2027 Biennium” (contained in document UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/3 Rev.3), developed following decisions of previous COP Meetings, to address relevant and emerging global and regional biodiversity issues and initiatives, and to continue the development of strategic alliances.
89. The Secretariat's presentation of the **Draft Workplan and Budget for the 2026–2027 biennium**, noted that the structure aligned with the Cartagena Convention's overall programme of work and financial framework. The presentation highlighted both pending approval activities (in red highlights) - namely, the RAC/RAN Guidelines approval, as well as activities ready for implementation (in green highlights).
90. The Secretariat commented that the draft **Work Plan and Budget** for the **SPAW Sub-Programme** for 2026-2027, is aiming to expand and improve protected area management and conserve threatened species in the wider Caribbean.
91. The **\$3.46 million** plan, detailed in document UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/3 Rev.3 , focused on four areas:
- **Program Coordination and Strategic Partnerships:** Including protocol ratification, project implementation (e.g., PROCARIBE+), fund-raising (e.g., Global Biodiversity Framework Fund), and policy integration.
 - **Strengthening Protected Areas:** Operationalizing the protected area managers' network and capacity building.
 - **Conservation of Species:** Emphasizing marine megafauna conservation.
 - **Ecosystem Conservation, Restoration, and Sustainable Use:** Focusing on coral reefs, sargassum management, and coastal ecosystems.
92. The COP was asked to approve the plan to guide Protocol implementation.
93. **The President** invited comments.
94. **Dominica** sought clarification on the integration of work on sargassum and marine pollution under the LBS Protocol.

95. **The Secretariat** thanked Dominica and explained efforts to integrate work on sargassum and marine pollution under the Cartagena Convention. During this biennium, collaboration between the SPAW Protocol and Land-Based Sources (LBS) Protocol working groups advanced, including a successful meeting in Trinidad and Tobago.
96. **The Dominican Republic** welcomed the proposed Workplan but noted that certain activities remained on hold. They sought clarification on how such items would be addressed, especially regarding the RAC/RAN Guidelines and compliance mechanisms.
97. **Colombia** thanked the Secretariat for the work plan and budget, emphasizing adequate resource allocation. They urged proactive collaboration to address unfunded items, optimize resources, and ensure sustainability. Colombia highlighted the need for geographical balance in projects and true gender equity in all actions, supported by national focal points.
98. **The United States** thanked the Secretariat and SPAW RAC for the work in drafting the 2026-2027 work plan and budget, as well as for coordinating the intercessional comment period. They highlighted that there was an edit during the intercessional period which they were unable to support. Specifically, the reference to nationally determined contributions or NDCs. The U.S. would support approving the draft work plan and budget if this reference is deleted.
99. **The Dominican Republic** sought clarification on the accepted correction as the document excluded the opinion /suggestion of the United States. They requested that this be clearly referenced in the final version of the Workplan.
100. **The Secretariat** advised that they were reviewing references to the National Determined Contributions (NDC) in the document. They proposed broadening the language to include other multilateral frameworks, allowing countries to align with various national plans. This correction will be added before approval and uploaded online, ensuring flexibility in implementing the SPAW Protocol.
101. **The President** thanked the Secretariat for consulting the Contracting Parties to agree with this inclusion and their recommendation in this regard.
102. **Venezuela** supported a more open, future-oriented approach. They praised the Secretariat's work and plan, as well as expressed confidence in fair, equitable budget distribution.
103. **The United States** supported efforts to improve implementation of and compliance with the SPAW Protocol through facilitative, cooperative and nonpunitive actions. They

encouraged the Secretariat and SPAW-RAC to prioritize activities that support this type of approach through three categories of work: (1) Activities to help assess Contracting Parties' needs so as to better utilize and encourage existing reporting obligations under the SPAW protocol; (2) Activities to help build Contracting Parties' capacities; and (3) Activities aimed at simplifying reporting processes. While the United States supported work related to improving implementation and compliance, they did not support the creation of a new compliance mechanism at this time.

104. **The United States**, on a separate note, emphasized that Parties should have opportunities to provide input on Letters of Intent (LOIs) and that joint activities should be reflected in the SPAW budget to ensure budget implications are appropriately considered by the Contracting Parties, including work with external organizations such as the International Whaling Commission (IWC).
105. **The Dominican Republic** expressed concern about the absence of tools or mechanisms to track national progress on compliance. The delegation proposed developing a standardized template for biennial reporting, as not all countries had the capacity to submit detailed reports. DR noted that the SPAW Strategic Vision (2023–2030) did not yet have a mechanism to translate objectives into national-level indicators.
106. **The Secretariat** referred to an information document (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.7) containing recommendations to promote reporting and compliance, echoing the interventions of the United States and the Dominican Republic. Options such as listening sessions, a compliance review mechanism, expansion of the mandate of the exemptions working group, or creation of a monitoring and evaluation group were proposed. Emphasis was placed on cooperative, non-punitive approaches.
107. **The Secretariat** encouraged Parties to test existing tools before developing new mechanisms.
108. **Colombia** agreed that national activities could be strengthened in collaboration with other organizations, such as the International Whaling Commission (IWC), particularly through initiatives like the CAMAC project, which focuses on marine mammal conservation.
109. **The United States** reiterated that no new compliance mechanism was needed at this time. They emphasized the importance of ensuring any future mechanism would be fit for purpose and resource efficient. They clarified that it was premature to create a new compliance mechanism or to expand the mandate of an existing working group, such as the working group on exemptions, to cover compliance. They cautioned against reusing structures designed for different purposes, noting that any future mechanism might require different memberships and functions.
110. **France and the United States** offered to provide background information on the edits

relating to climate change and site management proposed in the documents UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.12 Rev.4 and UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.13 Rev.2.

111. **France** noted that some language referencing climate change in the draft document may need refinement to ensure precision.
112. **The United States** suggested addressing these points later, once Parties had reviewed the proposed edits.
113. **The Secretariat** underscored the importance of finalizing the documents (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.12 Rev.4 and UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.13 Rev.2) before proceeding with full endorsement of the Workplan and Budget, to ensure consistency.
114. There being no further requests the President invited Contracting Parties to approve the 2026-2027 draft SPAW Workplan and Budget, incorporating the correction proposed by the Secretariat regarding references to NDCs. As there were no objections, the work plan was adopted.
115. The Workplan and Budget will be presented to the Eighteenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region, as part of the Workplan and Budget for the Caribbean Environment Programme for the 2026-2027 Biennium, for its final adoption.

AGENDA ITEM 6: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

116. The participants of the Meeting were invited to raise any other issue not covered by the preceding Agenda items, but relevant to the scope of the Meeting.
117. The President invited requests from member governments or observer organizations to make brief presentations at the Meeting. The presentations included recommendations for review and adoption. The presentations were as follows:

Presentation by the Government of Panama – Panama Coastal Wetlands and NDC Concept Note (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.51/INF.5)

118. Panama presented its concept note on coastal wetlands, emphasizing their ecological, economic, and climate benefits as vital carbon sinks and nature-based solutions. The objectives include integrating wetlands into Nationally Determined Contributions, advancing conservation, restoration, and sustainable management under the Cartagena Convention. Key commitments are mapping seagrasses and coral reefs, restoring 1,800 hectares of mangroves, and updating wetland inventories. Main recommendations call for strengthening national protection frameworks, improving scientific and institutional

arrangements to close knowledge gaps, and developing a regional strategy for mangrove and seagrass conservation in collaboration with the Convention Secretariat and partners to align efforts and scale best practices.

119. **The Secretariat** expressed appreciation to Panama for the initiative and emphasized its relevance to SPAW objectives.
120. **The Foundation for Development Planning Inc.** suggested aligning these recommendations with the existing Regional Strategy and Action Plan for the Valuation, Protection and/or Restoration of Key Marine Habitats in the Wider Caribbean 2021 – 2030 as a baseline.
121. **The President** welcomed this linkage and, seeing no further comments, confirmed the adoption of the decisions.

Presentation- Government of The Bahamas - CAR-WEN Briefing Paper for SPAW including MOU and Technical Note to the MOU (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.51/INF.4)

122. **The Caribbean Wildlife Enforcement Network (CAR-WEN)** aimed to combat escalating wildlife crime (trafficking, poaching) that threatens the region's biodiversity and security. Special objectives include strengthening enforcement, monitoring, and intelligence-sharing. Proposed decisions urged governments to approve the draft MOU, participate in the Working Group, and provide funding/technical support for its establishment and operations.
123. **The Dominican Republic** advised that internal consultations were underway, and they were unable to confirm national support for CAR-WEN recommendations. They suggested the use of less imperative language.
124. **The United States** could support some of the recommendations however they recommended striking 'financial and' in the last bullet.
125. **France, Grenada, Colombia and Barbados** all expressed general appreciation of the presentation and welcomed the initiative. They also advised that internal reviews were still underway and expressed that they needed more time before formalizing their position.
126. **The Secretariat** proposed revising language to encourage Contracting Parties to explore participation rather than committing. They suggested revisiting the recommendation later in the week once additional comments were received.

127. **The President** agreed to record the positions of the Contracting Parties and supported the approach to use softer language. She submitted to Contracting Parties the proposal of the Secretariat to lower the tone of the recommendations so that less commitment is established and with a language of encouragement to the Parties. The President also proposed to evaluate a recommendation with a different language and defer same for adoption until Thursday, aiming for consensus with less binding language.

Presentation -Government of Guyana - Safeguarding Neotropical Songbirds: A Collaborative Approach A Briefing Paper (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.51/INF.3)

128. This presentation gave an overview of the Neotropical Songbirds and the International Collaborative Group (NSCG) that is working to protect and address the crisis of threatened species. It also proposed decisions for the support of the NSCG, a coordinated regional scientific review and mobilization of resources to address the problem in the Wider Caribbean. They raised a question on the proposed listing of new species under Annexes of the SPAW Protocol, noting that any addition must follow the established formal review process.
129. **The United States** objected to specific wording of the draft decision.
130. **Colombia** shared information on the progress of their biodiversity plan, but expressed concern about financing mechanisms.
131. **The Dominican Republic** welcomed the initiative but requested more time for internal evaluation, cautioning against rushing adoption. They also noted that the proposal could set a precedent for species group listings without sufficient evaluation. They highlighted ongoing national efforts to develop a new biodiversity strategy and requested more time to study the proposal.
132. **The Secretariat** acknowledged the comments and proposed revising the recommendation to reflect the discussions. The Secretariat committed to preparing a new formulation that would note the risks faced by specific species; recognize ongoing national and regional work; and provide a basis for collaboration without pre-empting a formal listing proposal.
133. **The President** noted no further objections and confirmed that discussions on the document will continue, with delegations having until the next day to review and reach a final decision.
134. **The Secretariat** proposed revising the language to make it less binding and more encouraging. Overall, countries favored continued dialogue before committing to specific measures.

Presentation on SPAW–Caribbean Biological Corridor - Complementarity in Strengthening MPAs and OECMs (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.51/INF.6)

135. José Luis Gerhartz, representing the Caribbean Biological Corridor (CBC), reaffirmed CBC’s commitment to supporting Cartagena Convention and SPAW Protocol objectives. The CBC’s 2030 strategic plan aligns with global “30 by 30” goals, focusing on marine conservation priorities, new protected areas, and effective area-based measures, especially in pelagic and deep-sea habitats. CBC offers technical coordination, research, training, and knowledge-sharing to strengthen regional capacity for biodiversity protection. It also promotes cooperation among member countries and partners to accelerate marine conservation, mitigate threats, and implement decisions adopted by the Conference of the Parties.
136. **The Secretariat** highlighted the importance of its collaboration with the Caribbean Biological Corridor, noting mutual participation in technical meetings and meetings of the Conference of the Parties. It further noted that several countries were already Parties to the SPAW Protocol and expressed appreciation for the presentation.
137. **The President** expressed appreciation for the presentation.
138. **Colombia** advised that internal consultations on joining the Caribbean Biological Corridor were underway. They highlighted progress with the Beata Reserve and ongoing work on area-based measures (EBSAs and OMECs), noting challenges in defining these mechanisms nationally.
139. **The Dominican Republic** emphasized its long-standing involvement in the Corridor, the recent inclusion of Jamaica, and efforts to broaden the concept regionally, including marine conservation. They also shared progress toward legalizing OECMs for protection beyond marine protected areas.
140. **The President** acknowledged these contributions, and suggested revisiting proposed decisions on the final day due to time constraints.

Presentation on Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs), and Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.51/INF.7)

141. The President invited the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity to introduce the presentation on the Ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs), and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.51/INF.7).

142. This presentation highlighted key aspects of the revised **Handbook for describing Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs)**. It outlined the updated scientific and technical process for identifying these vital marine areas in accordance with CBD guidelines. This EBSA process provides a crucial, non-legal scientific foundation for governments to guide marine conservation efforts, prioritize the establishment of Marine Protected Areas, and implement Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs).
143. **Colombia** confirmed ongoing national work related to Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs). Colombia stated that work was also ongoing to identify Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) and that these were under national analysis.
144. **The Dominican Republic** added that the concept of ecological corridors could be expanded to reflect broader connectivity across the Wider Caribbean. They also explained that since 2012, they have used definitions consistent with OECMs but lack a full regulatory framework. Work was underway to strengthen legislation in this area.

Presentation on the Blue Growth through Green Restoration Project

145. The President invited the Joint Committee on Nature Conservation (JNCC) to present on the **Blue Growth through Green Restoration** initiative.
146. The JNCC presented the **Blue Growth through Green Restoration** initiative, which will promote seagrass restoration initiatives in Jamaica and the Dominican Republic, emphasizing nature-based solutions to support sustainable blue economies. Key recommendations include restoring coastal habitats to enhance ecosystem services, improve water quality, and boost blue carbon storage. The project promotes technical assistance under the Cartagena Convention, supports small island states, and encourages community involvement. It also explores voluntary carbon markets and evidence-based strategies to link restoration with livelihoods and climate resilience.
147. **The Secretariat** explained that the Blue Growth Project originated from COP12's call for additional funding and requested its inclusion in the work plan, citing alignment with SPAW Protocol and Cartagena Convention objectives. The Secretariat also confirmed that the project had recently been approved for funding. The COP approved inclusion of the project in the 2026–2027 Workplan.
148. **The President** expressed appreciation to the Secretariat for the clarification.

149. **The Dominican Republic** expressed no objections and supported approving the Secretariat's recommendation.

150. **The President** thanked delegates and noted pending issues for Thursday's session.

Update on bilateral discussion moderated by SPAW RAC

151. **The Secretariat then invited the SPAW RAC, which facilitated a bilateral discussion on one of the pending issues, for the SPAW Protocol COP, to provide an update.**

152. **The SPAW RAC** reported that, as announced during the COPs, they facilitated a meeting between the Contracting Parties the United States, France and Aruba. They discussed and reached an arrangement on the themes that could pose a problem. The SPAW RAC expressed special appreciation to the Parties for their proposal, which was very flexible, enabling them to reach an arrangement very quickly.

AGENDA ITEM 7: Adoption of the Decisions of the Meeting

153. The Rapporteur presented the draft Decisions of the Meeting (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.51/3). The Meeting was invited to adopt the decisions, with amendments and corrections to be introduced, as appropriate.

154. The decisions were presented to the Eighteenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (COP18) for final endorsement.

155. The decisions of the meeting were reviewed and adopted with amendments and corrections as appropriate and included in [Annex III](#) of this report.

AGENDA ITEM 8: Closure of the Meeting

156. The Thirteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the SPAW Protocol concluded its deliberations at 5:54 p.m. on 16 October 2025.

157. The Secretariat and the President of the Meeting thanked all Contracting Parties, Observers, and Partners for their constructive participation and reiterated their appreciation to the Government of Jamaica for hosting the meeting.

ANNEX I AGENDA

1. Opening of the Meeting
2. Organisation of the Meeting
 - 2.1. Rules of Procedure
 - 2.2. Election of Officers
 - 2.3. Organisation of Work
3. Adoption of the Agenda
4. Draft Workplan and Budget of the SPAW Subprogramme for the 2026-2027 Biennium
5. Review of the Recommendations of the Eleventh Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC11) to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) in the Wider Caribbean Region (30 June – 3 July 2025)
6. Any Other Business
7. Adoption of the Decisions of the Meeting
8. Closure of the Meeting

ANNEX II. LIST OF DOCUMENTS

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Symbol	Title	Agenda Item
<u>Working Documents</u>		
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.51/1	Provisional Agenda	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.51/2 Rev.1	Provisional Annotated Agenda	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/3 Rev. 5	Workplan and Budget of the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA) Sub-programme for the 2026-2027 Biennium	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/4	Recommendations of the Eleventh Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) of the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA) in the Wider Caribbean Region (to be prepared during the meeting)	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/5 Rev.1	Report of the Eleventh Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) of the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA) in the Wider Caribbean Region (to be prepared after the meeting)	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.51/3	<i>Decisions of the Thirteenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP) to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA) in the Wider Caribbean Region, (to be prepared during the meeting)</i>	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.51/4	<i>Report of the Meeting</i>	

Symbol	Title	Agenda Item
<u>Information Documents</u>		
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.51/INF.1 Rev.4	List of Documents	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.51/INF.2	Provisional List of Participants (<i>to be finalised during the meeting</i>)	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.51/INF.3	Safeguarding Neotropical Songbirds: A Collaborative Approach A Briefing Paper	

Symbol	Title	Agenda Item
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.51/INF.4	CAR-WEN Briefing Paper for SPAW including MOU and Technical Note to the MOU	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.51/INF.5	Panama Coastal Wetlands and NDC Concept Note	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.51/INF.6	Caribbean Biological Corridor Strategic Plan towards 2030 - Executive Summary	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.51/INF.7	Handbook for describing Ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs), and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs)	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.51/INF.8	Blue Growth through Green Restoration: Cartagena Regional Seas Convention's Capacity Building on Seagrass Ecosystems project.	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.3 Rev.1	Status of Ratification of the SPAW Protocol	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.4	Status of Activities of the SPAW Subprogramme for 2023- 2024(2025) (includes status of STAC10 Recommendations and COP12 Decisions)	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.5	Report of the SPAW Regional Activity Centre (SPAW-RAC) in Guadeloupe: operations and budget for the period 2023-2024(2025)	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.6	SPAW-RAC 2022 and 2023 Call for proposals Short-Term Small Grants: Final Report	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.6 Addendum 1	SPAW-RAC 2023 Call for proposals Short-Term Small Grants: Final Report ADDENDUM	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.7	Implementation and Compliance Issues within the SPAW Protocol: Briefing Paper	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.8	Revision of the legal and governance structure for a new Marine Mammals RAN	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.9	Analysis of the Functioning of the Cartagena Convention Working Groups and Recommendations for Improvement	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.10	Report of the STAC Protected Areas Working Group 2023-2024	

Symbol	Title	Agenda Item
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.11 Rev.1	Report on the SPAW protected area manager network 2023-2024	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.12 Rev.1	Report on the development of a regional support program for protected area managers in the Wider Caribbean Region	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.13	Report on Updated procedure through which Contracting Parties can propose new Protected Areas to be listed as SPAW sites	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.13 Rev.1	Report on Updated procedure through which Contracting Parties can propose new Protected Areas to be listed as SPAW sites (<i>with tracked changes</i>)	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.14	Report of the STAC Working Group on the Listing of Species under the Annexes to the SPAW Protocol	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.15	Report on the conservation of Nassau Grouper (<i>Epinephelus striatus</i>)	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.16	Recommendations for the conservation of Sawfishes (Pristidae) in the Wider Caribbean Region-report	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.17	SPAW Consortium: Expanding Civil Society Participation in the Caribbean Environment Programme. Briefing Paper	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.18	Conservation and management recommendations for the Whale Shark (Uplisted in Annex II), Giant Manta Ray (Uplisted in Annex II) and Hammerhead Sharks (Annex III) in the Wider Caribbean Region	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.19	Report of the STAC Exemptions Working Group	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.20	United States Exemptions Report to the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife Protocol of the Cartagena Convention for 2022-2024	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.21	Bonaire exemption report (crocodile)	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.22	Curacao exemption report (hotel) Re	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.23	Half Yearly Report of the ACP MEAs III Programme July 2024 to December 2024	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.24	SARGCOOP II project proposal	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.25	Sargassum working group report	

Symbol	Title	Agenda Item
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.26	Contracting Parties needs related to managing Sargassum influx and how such influx may affect their implementation of obligations under the SPAW Protocol and Cartagena Convention, as well as the LBS Protocol, as appropriate	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.27/Rev.3	Cartagena Action Plan on Sargassum Inundation (formerly STAC Sargassum Working Group Updated Action Plan Proposal)	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.28	Report of GCRMN – Caribbean network activities for the period 2023-2024, project for a new regional and global report	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.29	Report of WIDECASST Activities	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.30	Camac phase 1: final report	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.31	Report of the Joint Monitoring and Assessment Open Ended Working Group and Sargassum Working Group Meeting/Workshop	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.32	Letter of Intent – Inter-American Sea Turtle Convention	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.33	Letter of Intent – International Whaling Commission	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.34	SPAW and the International Whaling Commission: A Strategic Partnership for Marine Mammal Conservation	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.35	Saltwatta Initiative	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.36	Project Document: Protecting and Restoring the Ocean’s natural Capital, building Resilience and supporting region-wide Investments for sustainable Blue Socio-Economic development (PROCARIBE+)	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.24/CRP.9 Rev.4	Final updated Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of Regional Activity Centres and Regional Activity Networks for the Cartagena Convention.	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.11	Proposal of the “Parke Marino Aruba” for listing under the SPAW Protocol	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.39	Project Document: Implementation of the Strategic Action Program of the Gulf of Mexico Large Marine Ecosystem	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG. WG.43/3 Rev .1	Workplan and Budget of the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) Sub-programme for the 2023-2024 Biennium	

Symbol	Title	Agenda Item
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/4	Recommendations of the Tenth Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA) in the Wider Caribbean Region	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/5	Report of the Tenth Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife in the Wider Caribbean	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.32	Potential costs, benefits and operational framework for the establishment of a Marine Mammal Regional Activity Network (RAN)	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.46/4	Report of the Twelfth Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP) to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA) in the Wider Caribbean Region, 27 July 2021	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.46/3	Decisions of the Twelfth Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP) to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA) in the Wider Caribbean Region	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.48/4	Decisions of the Twentieth Intergovernmental Meeting of 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	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.48/5	Report 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 (to be prepared after the Meeting)	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.49/INF. 5	Proposal towards an integrated State of Convention Area Report on marine pollution and marine habitats	
UNEP(DEPI) CAR IG.49/INF.6	Capacity-Building for Sustainable Seas: Supporting the Implementation of the London Protocol through Education and Collaborative	

Symbol	Title	Agenda Item
	Research (SMART-C LC/LP)	
UNEP(DEPI) CAR IG.49/INF.14	Proposal for a Cartagena Convention Established Working Group on Sargassum	

Symbol	Title	Agenda Item
<u>Reference Documents</u>		
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.4	Overview of Procedural Deadlines under the SPAW Protocol	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.7	SPAW Regional Activity Centre Strategic Plan	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.12/Rev.1	Terms of Reference for the SPAW STAC Ad Hoc Working Groups	
UNEP(DEPI) CAR WG.41/INF.22/Rev.2	Strategy for the Cartagena Convention Secretariat 2023-2030	
UNEP(DEPI)/CARWG.38/INF.6	Evaluation of CaMPAM Activities and Recommendations for Improvement - An analysis of the last 15 years	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.36 CRP.1	Amendment to the Financial Rules for the Cartagena Convention Rules of Procedure for the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena Convention)	
UNEP(DEC)/CAR IG.20/4	Structure and Scope of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) of the SPAW Protocol	
CBD/COP/DEC/16/6	Decision adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity on 30 October 2024	
UNEP CEP, 2025	Cartagena Convention Secretariat (CCS) Resource Mobilization Strategy	
UNEP CEP, 2022	Review of Operations, Functioning, and Financing of Regional Activity Centres and Regional Activity Networks of the Cartagena Convention	
UNEP CEP, 2020	UNEP CEP Technical Report No. 1: The State of Nearshore Marine Habitats in the Wider Caribbean	
UNEP CEP, 2020	UNEP CEP Technical Report No. 2: Regional Strategy Action Plan for the Valuation,	

Symbol	Title	Agenda Item
	Protection and/or Restoration of Key Marine Habitats in the Wider Caribbean 2021–2030	
UNEP CEP, 2012	Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region, Protocol Concerning Cooperation in Combating Oil Spills, Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife and the Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities	
UNEP CEP, 2010	Rules of Procedure for the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena Convention)	
UNEP CEP, 2010	Financial Rules for the Cartagena Convention, its Caribbean Environment Programme and Terms of Reference for the Caribbean Trust Fund	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG.36 CRP.1	Amendment to the Financial Rules for the Cartagena Convention	
UNEP CEP, 2010	Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of Regional Activity Centres and Regional Activity Networks for the Cartagena Convention	
UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.41/INF.25 Rev.1	Revised Template for National Reporting on the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols	
UNEP CEP, 2008	Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals (MMAP) in the Wider Caribbean Region. United Nations Environment Programme – Caribbean Environment Programme, Kingston, Jamaica. 2008. (English and Spanish)	
UNEP, 1991	Final Act of the Conference of Plenipotentiaries for the Adoption of the Annexes to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife in the Wider Caribbean Region	
UNEP, 1990	Final Act of the Conference of Plenipotentiaries Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife in the Caribbean Region	

ANNEX III. DECISIONS OF THE MEETING

The Contracting Parties:

Having convened the Thirteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA) to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region, held in Kingston, Jamaica, on 14 and 16 October 2025,

Recognizing the valuable technical and financial contributions of the Regional Activity Centres (RACs), Regional Activity Networks (RANs), Contracting Parties, and partner organizations in advancing the implementation of the SPA Protocol,

Acknowledging the outcomes and recommendations of the Eleventh Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee to the SPA Protocol (STAC11), the Seventh Meeting of the Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities (LBS) STAC, and the related Pre-COP consultations,

Emphasizing the importance of strengthening regional cooperation, governance, and resource mobilization to enhance effective implementation of the SPA Protocol, and to address emerging and cross-cutting environmental challenges,

Having reviewed the “Workplan for the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA) Sub-Programme for the 2026-2027 Biennium” (UNEP (DEPI)/CAR WG.45/3 Rev.5).

The Meeting decides as follows:

DECISION I STATUS OF ACTIVITIES

1. RAC/RAN Guidelines

The Meeting decides to request the Eighteenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (COP18) to:

- a) **Request** the Secretariat to provide an updated version of the RAC/RAN Guidelines by December 2025 aligned with the comments shared during the Pre-COP, as well as written comments submitted by delegates after the Pre-COP discussions.
- b) **Request** that an inter-sessional Open-Ended Convention Working Group be established by December 2025 to finalize the revision of the Region Activity Centre (RAC)/Regional Activity Network (RAN) Guidelines by March 2026.
- c) **Request** the Secretariat to share the final version of the RAC/RAN Guidelines with Contracting Parties inter-sessionally for final review and convene an extraordinary meeting no later than the end of 2026 for possible endorsement, pending available resources.

- d) **Request** that any new proposals for RACs and RANs in the short term be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by Contracting Parties.

2. Marine Mammal Regional Activity Network (MMRAN)

The Meeting decides to:

- a) **Acknowledge** with appreciation the expressions of interest received in support of the establishment of a MMRAN under the SPAW Protocol, and request those entities, as well as other interested organizations, to submit formal proposals outlining their envisaged contributions to the implementation of the SPAW Protocol and the implementation of the Action Plan for the conservation of Marine Mammals in the Wider Caribbean Region (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/INF.31) and their roles in the Network;
- b) **Request** the Secretariat, in coordination with SPAW-RAC, to review and consolidate all proposals once the submission process has been completed;
- c) **Request** the Secretariat to submit recommendations to Contracting Parties during the intersessional period for provisional endorsement of the consolidated proposals prior to the next intergovernmental meetings, pending their formal consideration by the relevant bodies of the Convention.

3. Working Groups

The Meeting decides to:

- a) **Note** the analytical findings in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.9.
- b) **Request** the Secretariat, in consultation with RACs and Focal Points, to prepare an implementation plan for onboarding materials, expert skills registry, meeting lead-time standards, and language access (EN/ES/FR), subject to resources.
- c) **Request** the Secretariat and the RACs to support periodic in-person WG sessions when feasible and funds permit.

4. SPAW Consortium

- a) **Request** the Secretariat and SPAW-RAC to continue engagement with Civil Society Organizations, in particular through the SPAW Consortium.

DECISION II PROTECTED AREAS

The Meeting decides to:

1. **Establish** the SPAW Protected Area Managers Network, as proposed in document UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.12 Rev. 4, to enhance collaboration, knowledge exchange, and technical cooperation among SPAW-listed sites and other protected areas in the Wider Caribbean Region;
2. **Approve** the proposal from the Kingdom of the Netherlands to include Parke Marino Aruba in the SPAW List of Protected Areas;

3. **Endorse** the “Updated Procedure Through Which Contracting Parties Can Propose New Protected Areas to be Listed as SPAW Sites” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.13 Rev.2), as a framework to guide future nominations and ensure transparency and consistency in the SPAW listing process.

DECISION III SPECIES

The Meeting decides to:

1. **Request** the Species Working Group to develop conservation and management recommendations for the Silky Shark (*Carcharhinus falciformis*) and the Oceanic Whitetip Shark (*Carcharhinus longimanus*), to be presented to the 12th Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC 12).
2. **Request** the Secretariat to promote synergies with other relevant regional and global platforms and agreements that support the conservation of species relevant to the implementation of the SPAW Protocol and its work plan, including the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), where appropriate

DECISION IV SARGASSUM

The Meeting decides to:

1. **Request** the COP18 to endorse the Cartagena Convention Action Plan on Sargassum Inundation (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.27 Rev.3);
2. **Request** COP18 to mandate the Secretariat to oversee the preparation of an integrated State of the Convention Area Report, linking considerations on the status of marine pollution and marine and coastal ecosystems within the Convention Area, and including a dedicated chapter on Sargassum;
3. **Request** COP18 to establish a Cartagena Convention-level Sargassum Working Group to facilitate participation from the Contracting Parties of the Cartagena Conventions and the SPAW and LBS Protocols;
4. **Request** the Sargassum Working Group to support the implementation of the Cartagena Convention Action Plan on Sargassum Inundation, ensuring alignment with activities under the SPAW and LBS Protocols;
5. **Further request** the Sargassum Working Group to update the Sargassum White Paper, incorporating new data, best practices, and policy recommendations for consideration by the relevant STACs and COPs.

DECISION V SPA W 2026-2027 WORKPLAN

The Meeting decides to:

1. **Approve** the *Workplan for the SPAW Sub-Programme for the 2026–2027 Biennium* (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR IG. WG.45/3 Rev.5), as a framework to guide the implementation of the SPAW Protocol and its priority activities across the Wider Caribbean Region;
2. **Acknowledge** the support provided by the project "Blue Growth through Green Restoration: Cartagena Regional Seas Convention's Capacity Building on Seagrass Ecosystems" to the implementation of the SPAW Protocol and its 2026-2027 Work Plan.
3. **Request** the Secretariat to initiate the process for the consideration of the development of a SPAW Implementation and Compliance Mechanism through a concept note, that focuses on facilitative, nonpunitive, and cooperative arrangements for promoting implementation and compliance for consideration by the next meeting of the Contracting Parties;
4. **Recommend** that the Secretariat, with support from the SPAW-RAC as appropriate, propose activities that support the implementation of and compliance with the SPAW Protocol in a facilitative, nonpunitive, and cooperative manner to inform this process.
5. **Endorse** the joint draft workplan between the Secretariat under the SPAW Subprogramme and the International Whaling Commission (IWC) as contained in Annex 1 to UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.34.

DECISION VI COASTAL WETLANDS

The Meeting decides to:

1. **Encourage** Contracting Parties to consider **strengthening national frameworks** for the protection, restoration, and sustainable management of coastal wetlands, consistent with ongoing work under the SPAW Protocol and relevant global commitments, where appropriate;
2. **Encourage** Contracting Parties to consider **enhancing institutional arrangements and scientific capacity** to address existing knowledge gaps and improve data collection, assessment, and monitoring of these ecosystems;
3. **Request** the Secretariat, in collaboration with Parties and relevant partners, to review the Regional Strategy and Action Plan for the Valuation, Protection and/or Restoration of Key Marine Habitats in the Wider Caribbean (2021–2030) and **update it as needed** to reflect new priorities, scientific developments, and synergies with national and regional initiatives, before it is presented to the SPAW STAC12 for review and potential decisions.

DECISION VII STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

The Meeting decides to:

1. **Invite** Contracting Parties to consider:
 - a) **Participating** in regional collaborative frameworks, including the Neotropical Songbirds Collaborative Group (NSCG), and the Caribbean Wildlife Enforcement Network (CAR-WEN), by designating national focal points as appropriate;
 - b) **Participating** in governmental review of the draft Memorandum of Understanding to establish and operate the CAR-WEN as appropriate;
 - c) **Enhancing** collaboration with relevant organizations, including the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and others, to advance the identification, description, and management of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs) and Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) within the Wider Caribbean Region in support of mutual goals of the SPAW Protocol, where appropriate;
 - d) **Mobilising** technical assistance and supporting planning and fundraising for priority national actions as appropriate.
2. **Request** the Secretariat, in collaboration with relevant partners, to:
 - a) **Facilitate** coordination among the aforementioned initiatives to maximize synergies, avoid duplication, provide and promote joint fundraising and implementation efforts;
 - b) **Facilitate** regular communication and coordination with the Caribbean Biological Corridor (CBC) to facilitate progress towards common objectives and jointly address emerging environmental issues within the scope of the CBC and the SPAW Protocol.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MEETING

Having convened the Eleventh Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) in the Wider Caribbean Region, Panama City, Panama, from 30 June 2025 to 3 July 2025,

The Meeting recommends,

RECOMMENDATION I STATUS OF ACTIVITIES

Having reviewed the documents on the RAC/RAN Guidelines, the Marine Mammals Regional Activity Network, the Functioning of the Cartagena Convention Working Groups and Recommendations and the SPAW Consortium

RAC/RAN Guidelines

1. The Secretariat **host a session with** Contracting Parties after SPAW STAC11 and LBS STAC7 and before COP13 of the SPAW Protocol, COP7 of the LBS Protocol, COP18 of the Cartagena Convention/IGM21, through a dedicated drafting group to revise the Updated Guidelines for the establishment and operation of Regional Activity Centres (RACs) and Regional Activity Networks (RANs) for the Cartagena Convention (UNEP(DEPI)CAR IG.24_CRP.9 Rev.4), with the goal of having a finalized, adoptable document ready for these meetings. The Secretariat will provide interpretation subject to the availability of funds.

Marine Mammals RAN (MMRAN)

1. Request the Secretariat to initiate a call for nominations for institutions interested in hosting and/or directing a (MMRAN) and work with Contracting Parties following IGM21/COP18 to elaborate next steps to develop a process to review and potentially approve a proposal during an intersessional period.
2. The Secretariat or SPAW-RAC **hold** a series of webinars on the revised marine mammal action plan adopted at SPAW COP12, and **invite** Contracting Parties, observers and others to present on relevant actions taken that support the implementation of the Action Plan and **identify** needs and responsibilities for further implementation of the action plan.

Working Group

Having reviewed the “Analysis of the Functioning of the Cartagena Convention Working Groups and Recommendations for Improvement” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.9),

1. The Secretariat and/or SPAW-RAC, as appropriate, **develop** training materials for new working group members.
2. The Chairs of the working group **announce** meetings and deadlines well in advance and distribute meeting reports promptly.

3. The Secretariat and/or SPAW-RAC **continue** to provide interpretation for the Working Groups, as funding permits. Request for interpretation should be made 15 days in advance.
4. The Secretariat and/or SPAW-RAC, as appropriate, **organize** a listening session with Contracting Parties and experts to discuss barriers to participation in the working groups.
5. The Secretariat and/or SPAW-RAC, as appropriate, **create** a database of experts who would be willing to answer specific questions or otherwise contribute to specific working group tasks.
6. The Secretariat **encourage** Contracting Parties and **invite** observers to designate experts with scientific and/or technical competence to the working groups, in accordance with the Terms of Reference for the SPAW STAC *Ad Hoc* Working Groups.

SPAW Consortium

1. The Secretariat, in its engagement in the Ocean Coordination Mechanism (OCM), **note** that the SPAW Consortium has demonstrated how the effort of civil society can enhance regional collaboration, information sharing, and alignment of marine and coastal biodiversity initiatives.
2. Noting information paper UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.17 by the SPAW Consortium “Expanding Civil Society Participation in the Caribbean Environment”, the Secretariat **develop** a strategy for civil society engagement.

RECOMMENDATION II PROTECTED AREAS

Having reviewed the “Report of the STAC Protected Area Working Group” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.10),

Having reviewed the “Updated Procedure through which Contracting Parties Can Propose New Protected Areas to be Listed as SPAW Sites” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.13),

Having reviewed the “Report on the development of a regional support program for protected area managers in the Wider Caribbean Region” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.12),

Having reviewed the SPAW Protected Area Managers Network (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.11),

Taking note of the request from Contracting Parties to provide comments and technical input on certain documents before they are presented to the Thirteenth SPAW COP (COP13) and Twenty-First Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM21) for consideration as appropriate,

1. Contracting Parties **propose** new protected areas to be listed under the SPAW Protocol within the first year following each SPAW Conference of the Parties.

2. The Secretariat and/or SPAW-RAC, as appropriate, **develop** a concise checklist covering the mandatory criteria for a protected area to be added to the SPAW List of Protected Areas, subject to the SPAW COP13's **review** of the "Updated Procedure through which Contracting Parties Can Propose New Protected Areas to be Listed as SPAW Sites" (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.13), and the Protected Areas Working Group **provide** feedback before the draft checklist is presented to the SPAW STAC12.
3. The Secretariat and/or SPAW-RAC, as appropriate, **invite** Contracting Parties to provide comments by 21 July 2025, ensuring that all feedback is transparently reviewed and effectively integrated and that the Secretariat and/or SPAW-RAC, as appropriate, **address** comments from Contracting Parties prior to submitting the documents to SPAW COP13:
 - the "Updated Procedure through which Contracting Parties Can Propose New Protected Areas to be Listed as SPAW Sites" (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.13), and the "Report on the development of a regional support program for protected area managers in the Wider Caribbean Region" (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.12)
 - the SPAW Protected Area Managers Network (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.11)
4. The Protected Areas Working Group **develop** a proposal for a mechanism by which Contracting Parties would report information on protected areas within their jurisdiction that are on the SPAW List of Protected Areas for consideration at SPAW STAC12, and possible consideration at SPAW COP14. The proposal should take into account the relevant provisions of the SPAW Protocol, including Articles 15(2), 19, and 22(2)(e).
5. SPAW COP13 **welcome** the proposal from the Kingdom of the Netherlands to include Parke Marino Aruba in the SPAW list of Protected Area.

RECOMMENDATION III SPECIES

Having reviewed the "Report of the SPAW STAC Species Working Group" (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.14)

Having reviewed the "Report on the conservation of Nassau Grouper (*Epinephelus striatus*)" (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.15),

Having reviewed the "Recommendation for conservation of Sawfish Survey" (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.16)

Having reviewed the "Report of conservation and management recommendations for the whale shark (uplisted in Annex II), Giant manta ray (uplisted in Annex II) and hammerhead sharks (annex III) in the wider Caribbean region (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.18)

1. SPAW COP13 **encourage** Contracting Parties to consider the recommendations in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.15 in the context of national actions to promote the

conservation of Nassau grouper and the Secretariat and SPAW-RAC, as appropriate and upon request, support Contracting Parties in their implementation.

2. Following the presentation by a sawfish expert on the species' biology, ecology, and conservation needs (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.16), the Contracting Parties wish to **underscore** the critical importance of continuing efforts to prevent the extinction of sawfish in the region.
3. The Species Working Group **continue** to assist the Secretariat and SPAW RAC to support relevant Contracting Parties in implementing the recommendations for the conservation of sawfish in UNEP(DEPI) CAR WG. 43/INF.25.
4. SPAW COP13 **encourage** Contracting Parties to consider the recommendations in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.18 in the context of national actions to promote the conservation and management of Whale Shark, Giant Manta Ray, and Hammerhead Sharks, as outlined in and the Secretariat and SPAW-RAC, as appropriate and upon request, support Contracting Parties in their implementation.

RECOMMENDATION IV EXEMPTIONS

Having reviewed the “Report of the SPAW STAC Exemption Working Group” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.19),

1. The Exemptions Working Group **develop** a prioritized list of recommendations to encourage Contracting Parties to report exemptions in a facilitative, non-confrontational manner. Such recommendations should focus on identifying activities that would support Contracting Parties by simplifying or streamlining reporting processes and raising awareness of reporting obligations under SPAW Protocol Article 11(2).
2. SPAW COP13 **consider** whether Curaçao can provide additional information to justify its proposed activity under the three categories of pertinence. If such information is submitted, the Exemptions Working Group and STAC12 may reassess the proposal. In this case, the STAC could conduct an intersessional review with support from the Exemptions Working Group.
3. SPAW COP13 **request** that Curaçao submit a post-assessment report outlining how the decision of non-pertinence will be integrated into the planning and implementation of the proposed beach enhancement project.
4. Contracting Parties are encouraged to **utilise** the adopted reporting format for Article 11(2), as appropriate, to ensure consistency and completeness in exemption submissions.
5. Parties are encouraged to consider reporting exemptions prior to the commencement of the proposed activity, as appropriate and when practicable.

RECOMMENDATION V SARGASSUM

Noting the impact of Sargassum inundations on communities, the economy, biodiversity and species,

Having reviewed the “STAC Sargassum Working Group Updated Action Plan Proposal and Sustainable Financing Resources” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.27),

Having reviewed the “Contracting Parties needs related to managing Sargassum influx and how such influx may affect their implementation of obligations under the SPAW Protocol and Cartagena Convention, as well as the LBS Protocol-Survey analysis” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.26),

Having reviewed the “Report of the STAC Sargassum Working Group” UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.25),

Taking note of the “Report of the Joint Monitoring and Assessment Open Ended Working Group and Sargassum Working Group Meeting/Workshop” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.31), including the description of “Sargassum inundation” therein,

1. The Secretariat and/or SPAW-RAC, as appropriate, **invite** Contracting Parties to provide comments on the “STAC Sargassum Working Group Updated Action Plan Proposal and Sustainable Financing Resources” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.27) by 21 July 2025, ensuring that all feedback is transparently reviewed and effectively integrated, and call for an intersessional meeting, if needed, and the Secretariat provide interpretation depending on availability of funds.
2. The Sargassum Working Group be at the level of the Convention Parties to facilitate participation by both the SPAW and LBS Protocols Contracting Parties.
3. The Secretariat **provide** additional information to SPAW COP13, LBS COP7 and IGM21/COP18 regarding how an integrated State of the Convention Area Report could be developed, beginning with a dedicated chapter on Sargassum. The terms of reference of this report should include:
 - The proposed institutional mechanisms and coordination processes required for its development;
 - The roles and responsibilities of relevant stakeholders;
 - A suggested timeline and methodology for compiling and validating the report; and
 - The process for presenting the final report to the Contracting Parties for review and endorsement.
4. The Secretariat **provide** additional information regarding how a Convention-level working group on Sargassum could operate, including how it could be tasked and how any products it may develop could be considered by the governing bodies of the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols.

RECOMMENDATION VI SPAW 2026-2027 WORKPLAN

Having reviewed the Draft Workplan as contained in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/3,

Draft workplan for 2026-2027 biennium

1. The Secretariat **prioritise** activities that support the implementation of the SPAW Protocol and identify resources for same.
2. The Secretariat and/or SPAW-RAC, as appropriate, **invite** Contracting Parties to provide comments on the “Draft Workplan for the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) Sub-Programme for the 2026-2027 Biennium” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/3) by 21 July 2025, ensuring that all feedback is transparently reviewed and effectively integrated.
3. The Small Grants Programme (SGP) be maintained and further strengthened to expand its reach and impact, recognizing its value in supporting implementation of SPAW objectives.

Compliance

1. The Secretariat **conduct** a systematic assessment of Contracting Parties’ needs and challenges related to compliance with the SPAW Protocol, to inform targeted support and resource allocation.
2. The Secretariat **develop** and **deliver** tailored capacity-building activities to strengthen national abilities to implement and report on SPAW Protocol obligations effectively.
3. The Secretariat **prepare** and **distribute** a clear, practical checklist outlining SPAW Protocol obligations to guide Parties in self-assessment, planning, and reporting processes.

International Whaling Commission (IWC)

1. SPAW COP13 **consider** the draft workplan between SPAW and IWC as stated in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.45/INF.34.

ANNEX IV. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

CONTRACTING PARTIES				
Country	First Name	Last Name	Organization	Email Address
Aruba (Kingdom of the Netherlands)	Gisbert	Boekhoudt	Directorate of Nature and Environment	gisbert.boekhoudt@dnm-aruba.org
Barbados	Anthony	Headley	Environmental Protection Department	anthony.headley@epd.gov.bb
Barbados	Jamilla	Sealy	Ministry of Environment	jamilla.sealy@barbados.gov.bb
Belize	Celi	Cho	Department of the Environment	chocc@gobmail.gov.bz
Belize	Kenrick	Gordon	Department of the Environment	Girdonkd@gobmail.gov.bz
Colombia	Ana María	Gonzalez	Minambiente colombia	amgonzalez@minambiente.gov.co
Curacao (Kingdom of the Netherlands)	Javier	Diaz	Ministry of Health, Environment and Nature - Curaçao	javier.diaz@gobiernu.cw
Dominican Republic	Nina	Lysenko	Ministerio de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales	nina.lysenko@ambiente.gob.do
Dominican Republic	Ramón Joel	Espinal Acevedo	Ministerio de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales	respinal@ambiente.gob.do
France	Gabrielle	Larricq	Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs	gabrielle.larricq@diplomatie.gouv.fr
France	David	Elkaim	Ministère de l'écologie	david.elkaim@developpement-durable.gouv.fr
Grenada	Nigel	Gibbs	Ministry of the Blue Economy and Marine Affairs	fisheries.officer1@fisheries.gov.gd
Guyana	Alona	Sankar	Guyana Wildlife Conservation and Management Commission	alona.sankar@wildlife.gov.gy
Honduras	Joel	McLaughlin	Dirección General Marina Mercante	Dolandmc@gmail.com
The Kingdom of the Netherlands	Melissa	Van Hoorn	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature	m.k.vanhoorn@minlnv.nl

The Kingdom of the Netherlands	Thyra	Balborda	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature	t.m.balborda1@minlnv.nl
Panama	Digna	Barsallo	Ministerio de Ambiente	dbarsallo@miambiente.gob.pa
Panama	Melvys Jacqueline	Vega Quintero	Ministerio de Ambiente	mvega@miambiente.gob.pa
Sint Maarten (Kingdom of the Netherlands)	Ildiko	Gilders	Government of Sint Maarten	Ildiko.Gilders@sintmaartengov.org
St. Kitts and Nevis	Randel	Thompson	Government of St. Kitts and Nevis	randel.thompson@gov.kn
St. Lucia	Thomas	Nelson	Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries	thomas.nelson@govt.lc
St. Lucia	Nereus	Mitchel		nereusmitchel@gmail.com
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	Tyshana	Thomas	Sustainable Development Unit	tyssthomas@gmail.com
The Bahamas	Ebone	Blyden	Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources	eblyden@depp.gov.bs
United States	Taryn	Laubenstein	United States Department of State	laubensteintd@state.gov
United States	Stephanie	Murphy	United States Department of State	murphysa@state.gov
United States	Daniela	Wojtalewicz	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	Wojtalewicz.Daniela@epa.gov
United States	Karin	Kizer	United States Department of State	KizerKL@state.gov
Venezuela	Luz	Tirado	Ministerio del Poder Popular para el Ecosocialismo (MINEC)	gardesanchez24@gmail.com

NON CONTRACTING PARTIES				
Country	First Name	Last Name	Organization	Email Address
Antigua and Barbuda	Linroy	Christian	Department of Analytical Services	linroy.christian@ab.gov.ag
Dominica	Nawana	Shillingford	Government of Dominica	maritimeadmin@dominica.gov.dm
Great Britain	Alison	Leighton	Maritime and Coastguard Agency	aision.leighton@mcga.gov.uk
Guatemala	José Juan	Ochoa Quezada	Ministerio de Ambiente y Recursos Naturales	jjochoa@marn.gob.gt
Guatemala	Jose	Vasquez	Ministerio de Ambiente y Recursos Naturales	jgvasquez@marn.gob.gt
Guatemala	María Fernanda	Ramírez Posadas	Ministerio de Ambiente y Recursos Naturales de Guatemala	mframirez.marn@gmail.com
Jamaica	Carla	Gordon	National Environment and Planning Agency	cgordon@nepa.gov.jm
Jamaica	Lisa	Kirkland	National Environment & Planning Agency	lkirkland@nepa.gov.jm
Jamaica	Richard	Nelson	National Environment & Planning Agency	rnelson@nepa.gov.jm
Jamaica	Dayton	Thomas	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade	dayton.thomas@mfaft.gov.jm
Jamaica	Toni-Ann	Miller	Ministry of Water, Environment and Climate Change	toni-ann.miller@megjc.gov.jm
Jamaica	Monique	Curtis	National Environment and Planning Agency	monique.curtis@nepa.gov.jm
Mexico	Topiltzin Tlacaetl	Flores Jaramillo	SECRETARIA DE MARINA ARMADA DE MEXICO	toptlac07@hotmail.com
Suriname	Iemdaad	Rodjan	Ministry of Oil, Gas and Environment	nasserrodjan@gmail.com
Turks and Caicos	Arthur	Been	Turks and Caicos Islands Government	abeen@gov.tc
Turks and Caicos	Carey	Skippings	Maritime Department	Cskippings@gov.tc
Turks and Caicos	Samantha	Charles	Department of Maritime and Shipping	scharles@gov.tc
Turks and Caicos	Deja	Charles	Department of Environment and Coastal Resources	dcharles@gov.tc

OBSERVERS				
Organization	First Name	Last Name	Country	Email Address
Animal Welfare Institute	Susan	Millward	United States	susan@awionline.org
Animal Welfare Institute	Georgia	Hancock	United States	georgia@awionline.org
Asociación Interamericana para la Defensa del Ambiente (AIDA)	Sara	Zelaya	Honduras	szelaya@aida-americas.org
Asociación Interamericana para la Defensa del Ambiente (AIDA)	María Paula	Conrado	Colombia	mpconrado@aida-americas.org
BahWen	Stanley	Pitt	The Bahamas	sirsbpitt67@gmail.com
Caribbean Cetacean Society	Stacey	Mac Donald	Martinique	stacey.macdonald@ccs-ngo.com
Caribbean Natural Resource Institute	Nicole	Brown	Jamaica	nicolebrown@canari.org
Caribbean-Wide Orca Project (CWOP)	Jaime	Bolanos	Colombia	bolanos.jimenez@gmail.com
CARICOM Secretariat	Kareem	Sabir	Guyana	kareem.sabir@caricom.org
Center for Biological Diversity	Dianne	DuBois	United States	ddubois@biologicaldiversity.org
CYEN Jamaica	Sheri-Lee	Chen	Jamaica	Chensherilee17@gmail.com
CYEN Jamaica	Romario	Simpson	Jamaica	rrsimpson@live.com
CYEN Jamaica	Sasha-Gay	Luke	Jamaica	sashagayluke@yahoo.com
Foundation for Development Planning, Inc.	Lloyd	Gardner	US Virgin Islands	Lloyd.Gardner@fdpi.org
Global Water Partnership-Caribbean (GWPC)	Kerron	Martinez	Grenada	kerron.martinez@gwp-caribbean.org
Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute	Fadilah	Ali	United States	fadilah.ali@gcfi.org
HD Caribbean	Ricardo	James	St. Lucia	Ricjames94@gmail.com
High Seas Alliance	Leneka	Scott	Jamaica	leneka@highseasalliance.org
International Whaling Commission	Imogen	Webster	Great Britain	imogen.webster@iwc.int
International Whaling Commission	Rebecca	Austin	Great Britain	rebecca.austin@iwc.int
INVEMAR	Paola	Obando	Colombia	paola.obando@invemar.org.co

International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation Association (IPIECA)	Polly	Hill	Great Britain	polly.hill@ipieca.org
Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)	Joe	Kenworthy	Great Britain	joe.kenworthy@jncc.gov.uk
Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)	Cristina	Vina-Herbon	Great Britain	cristina.herbon@jncc.gov.uk
Lightkeepers Foundation	Courtney	Vail	United States	courtney@lightkeepersfoundation.com
Monitor Caribbean	Monica	Borobia	Brazil	m_borobia@yahoo.com
Ocean Science and Governance Youth Network	Mario	Galbert	Jamaica	mario.galbert15@gmail.com
Operadora Ambiental México	Oam	OAM	Mexico	mexico.oam@gmail.com
Pew Charitable Trusts	Kate	Meyer	United States	Kmeyer@pewtrusts.org
Pew Charitable Trusts	Peter	Edwards	United States	pedwards@pewtrusts.org
SeaLife Law	Olga	Koubrak	Canada	okoubrak@sealifelaw.org
Sustainable Innovation Initiatives	Mark	Gibson	United States	mgibson@sii-inc.org

UN ORGANIZATIONS/OBSERVERS				
Organization	First Name	Last Name	Country	Email Address
Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)	Joseph	Appiott	Canada	joseph.appiott@un.org
IOC-UNESCO (IOCARIBE)	Lorna	Inniss	Colombia	l.inniss@unesco.org
UNEP-CBC	Andrea	Camacho	Colombia	andrea.camacho@un.org
UNEP-CSRO	Deirdre	Shurland	Jamaica	deirdre.shurland@un.org
UNEP	Christopher	Cox	Panama	christopher.cox@un.org
UNEP	Juan	Duque	Panama	juan.duque@un.org
UNOPS	Margarita	Garcia	Mexico	margaritag@unops.org

REGIONAL ACTIVITY CENTRES				
Organization	First Name	Last Name	Country	Email Address
Institute of Marine Affairs	Maurice	Narcis	Trinidad and Tobago	maurice.narcis@ima.gov.tt
Institute of Marine Affairs	Darryl	Banjoo	Trinidad and Tobago	darryl.banjoo@ima.gov.tt
RAC CIMAB	Marlen	Perez Hernandez	Cuba	mp420ale@gmail.com
SPAW RAC	Lucie	LABBOUZ	Guadeloupe (France)	lucie.labbouz@developpement-durable.gouv.fr
SPAW-RAC	Lucile	ROSSIN	Guadeloupe (France)	lucile.rossin@developpement-durable.gouv.fr
SPAW-RAC	Auriane	Petit	Guadeloupe (France)	auriane.petit@developpement-durable.gouv.fr
SPAW RAC	Géraldine	Conruyt	Guadeloupe (France)	geraldine.conruyt@developpement-durable.gouv.fr
SPAW RAC	Amelie	Tagliaferro	Guadeloupe (France)	amelie.tagliaferro@developpement-durable.gouv.fr

SECRETARIAT United Nations Environment Programme Cartagena Convention 14-20 Port Royal Street Kingston, Jamaica Tel: +876-922-9267 / Fax: +876-922-9292 E-mail: unep-cartagenaconvention@un.org			
First Name	Last Name	Title	Email Address
Christopher	Corbin	Coordinator	christopher.corbin@un.org
Caspah	Lidiema	Funds Management Officer	lidiema@un.org
Laverne	Walker	Programme Management Officer (AMEP)	laverne.walker@un.org
Susana	Perera Valderrama	Programme Management Officer (SPAW)	Susana.pereravalderrama@un.org
Maydene	Campbell	Staff Assistant	maydene.campbell@un.org
Donna	Henry-Hernandez	Programme Management Assistant	donna.hernandez@un.org
Jhenelle	Barrett Cohen	Programme Management Assistant (AMEP)	jhenelle.barrett@un.org
Tamoy	Singh Clarke	Programme Management Assistant (SPAW)	tamoy.singh@un.org
Issa Oscar	Kigongo	IT Assistant	ioscar007@yahoo.com
Alicia	Uylett	Finance and Budget Assistant	alicia.uylett@un.org
Danasha	Gibbison	Team Assistant	danasha.gibbison@un.org
Alejandra	Gámez	UN Volunteer	alejandra.gamez@un.org
Alison	Christie	Consultant	alison.christie@un.org
Millie	Adams	Intern	millie.adams@un.org