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**The Establishment and Operation of a Caribbean Wildlife Enforcement
Network (CAR-WEN)**

A Briefing Paper

By

The CAR-WEN Working Group

Version 2025.08

The Establishment and Operation of a Caribbean Wildlife Enforcement Network (CAR-WEN)

A Briefing Paper by the CAR-WEN Working Group

Executive Summary

The Caribbean, a region celebrated for its rich biodiversity and vibrant ecosystems, faces an escalating threat from wildlife crime, including illegal fishing, trafficking, and poaching, which undermine conservation efforts, disrupt ecosystems, and threaten regional security. Addressing these challenges requires enhanced coordination, crime and enforcement monitoring, and strengthened enforcement mechanisms.

This briefing paper prepared by the CAR-WEN Working Group updates the version presented previously at SPAW COP12. It details progress toward the establishment of a CAR-WEN and the renewed momentum toward regional cooperation which includes a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) ready for review and approval by governments, a draft strategic plan to guide formal network operations once established, a dedicated website to improve regional enforcement communications and knowledge-sharing, and a draft toolkit on rapid assessment for Caribbean wildlife enforcement. As wildlife crime continues to increase in scale and sophistication, the need for immediate action is more critical than ever for the Wider Caribbean region (WCR).

A fully operational CAR-WEN will strengthen regional enforcement, improve compliance with wildlife laws, and enhance monitoring and intelligence-sharing to counter transnational wildlife crime. Therefore, to advance the CAR-WEN's formalisation and operational capacity, the CAR-WEN Working Group calls on Parties to the SPAW Protocol to take decisive action through five actions: 1) Participate in the CAR-WEN Working Group, 2) Support the MOU Review and Approval, 3) Support Funding and Technical Assistance for Regional Wildlife Crime and Enforcement Monitoring, 4) Support Funding and Technical Assistance for CAR-WEN Establishment and Operations, and 5) Propose and Adopt Recommendations at the SPAW Protocol.

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1. Introduction

This briefing paper prepared by the Caribbean Wildlife Enforcement Network (CAR-WEN) Working Group outlines the critical need for the establishment and operation of a CAR-WEN in the WCR. It builds on an earlier version presented at the 12th COP (COP12) to the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) Protocol, highlighting the CAR-WEN's evolution and most recent developments. This initiative, with the continued support of the SPAW Protocol, will significantly enhance the enforcement of wildlife laws in the wider Caribbean region (WCR).

The Parties to the SPAW Protocol can support the establishment of a CAR-WEN through five actions: 1) Participate in the CAR-WEN Working Group, 2) Support the MOU Review and Approval, 3) Support Funding and Technical Assistance for Regional Wildlife Crime and Enforcement Monitoring, 4) Support Funding and Technical Assistance for CAR-WEN Establishment and Operations, and 5) Propose and Adopt Recommendations at the SPAW Protocol. By taking these actions, Parties to the SPAW Protocol can play a pivotal role in strengthening the region's response to wildlife crime, enhancing enforcement mechanisms, and supporting a coordinated approach to biodiversity protection and regulatory compliance in the WCR.

2. What are WENs?¹

Wildlife Enforcement Networks (WENs) are collaborative organisations that strengthen the implementation and enforcement of laws concerning undomesticated flora and fauna ("wildlife") (ICCWC, 2020). These networks unite agencies, departments, and other organisations at sub-national, national, regional, and global scales, thereby fostering collective action to address the complexities of wildlife law enforcement. Because of their potential to catalyse change, WENs have been broadly endorsed by various intergovernmental and multilateral organisations, including the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC), which is the collaborative effort of five inter-governmental organisations: the CITES Secretariat, INTERPOL, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the World Bank and the World Customs Organization (WCO) all of which collectively and individually support the establishment and operation of national and regional WENs through the provision of supporting tools and services (ICCWC, n.d.-b). For a comparative overview of existing WENs, see Annex A.

The structure of a WEN can vary widely depending on the jurisdiction and needs. For instance, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) WEN in Southeast Asia was built within an existing intergovernmental organisation for regional political and economic integration (This Nation, 2021). In comparison, the Network for Observance and Application of Wildlife

¹ Other similar concepts to WENs include Environmental Enforcement Networks (EENs) (Pink, 2015) and Networks on Environmental Security and Terrorism (NESTs) (White, 2016). These concepts are largely overlapping in their purposes to foster cooperation and information exchange.

Regulations (ROAVIS)² in Central America and the Dominican Republic was created through a network of prosecutors (Palacios Gutiérrez, 2016). In other regions and countries, the functions of a WEN may already be served by more general intergovernmental enforcement organisations, such as Europol in Europe (Europol, 2022). Rarely, a WEN may be entirely run by civil society organisations (CSOs) operating in partnership with government agencies, such as is the case with the Eco Activists for Governance and Law Enforcement (EAGLE) Network in western, central, and eastern Africa (EAGLE, 2023).

Though publicly available data is limited, WENs appear to vary widely in the strategies used to guide their operations. Nevertheless, some strategies and projects seem to be standard among WENs. The strategies of ‘enforcement capacity-building’ and ‘joint enforcement operations’ may be the most commonly implemented, while other strategies like ‘legal and regulatory reform’ and ‘intelligence sharing and analysis’ are commonly espoused but only occasionally implemented. Common types of capacity-building projects include training manuals (Freeland, 2016), legal compendiums (ROAVIS, 2020), databases (EU-TWIX, n.d.), and mobile apps for species identification (Freeland, 2022). Meanwhile, specific joint operations may be organised within a given WEN, across multiple WENs, or by multilateral organisations working with one or more WENs (ICCWC, n.d-a.; INTERPOL, 2022).

The successes of WENs stand out as proof of their potential to curb illegal wildlife trade and foster a sustainable coexistence between humans and wildlife. For instance, the ASEAN WEN’s Operation Cobra significantly disrupted wildlife smuggling syndicates across multiple countries in multiple regions, resulting in 139 arrests and more than 247 seizures of illicit wildlife products such as elephant ivory, rhino horns and pangolins, marking a major victory in the global fight against wildlife crime (UNODC, 2015). In Africa, the Wildlife Enforcement Monitoring System (WEMS) implemented by the Lusaka Agreement Task Force has proven remarkably effective, facilitating the uniform collection and analysis of wildlife and forest crime data (WEMS, 2020). As of 2014, WEMS resulted in the identification of 540 cases across borders and significant enforcement actions in countries such as Congo, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, thus strengthening regional environmental governance and law enforcement responsiveness. Meanwhile, in Argentina, the Jaguar Network has deployed a coexistence guide based on restorative justice and normative compliance principles to mediate conflicts between jaguars and livestock (Lodeiro Ocampo & Nigro, 2022). This has minimised human-wildlife conflict and helped reshape traditional attitudes towards wildlife, paving the way for healthier human-wildlife relations. These successes underscore the remarkable strides WENs are making in the fight against wildlife crime, serving as compelling evidence to support the CAR-WEN initiative.

Despite notable successes, many WENs remain weighted towards general deterrence and could integrate responsive-regulation and restorative-justice tools more fully by employing strategies

² In Spanish, the name of the Central American WEN (CA-WEN) is the Red de Observancia y Aplicación de la Normativa de Vida Silvestre (ROAVIS) de Centroamérica y la República Dominicana.

that also address the root causes of wildlife crime, such as promoting behaviour change and developing alternative livelihoods, or that mitigate the harms of wildlife crime, such as by building wildlife rehabilitation capacity and establishing biosecurity controls. This is indicative of a broader trend in which WENs tend to be guided more by a general deterrence theory of compliance, rather than more contemporary responsive regulation and restorative justice theories. Deterrence theory suggests that the threat of punishment will deter individuals from committing crimes (Nagin, 2013). In contrast, the responsive regulation theory proposes a more nuanced approach, suggesting that regulators should promote voluntary compliance by offering a range of regulatory responses proportionate to the behaviour of those being regulated (Ayres & Braithwaite, 1994). Restorative justice theory focuses on repairing the harm caused by illegal behaviour through law enforcement and emphasises the importance of involving all stakeholders in a process of understanding, mitigation, and healing (Johnstone, 2011). By adopting a more comprehensive approach to compliance, WENs can address wildlife crime more effectively.

In recent years, the global environment for WENs has changed significantly, owing to both emerging opportunities in global networking and challenges in traditional donor support. Notably, the Nature Crime Alliance, launched in 2023, offers a broader collaboration frame on “nature crimes”, creating partnership and funding channels relevant to the CAR-WEN (Nature Crime Alliance, 2023). Meanwhile, the most pressing challenge is that U.S. government foreign aid—traditionally a major source of financing for WEN initiatives—has greatly decreased, forcing wildlife enforcement actors and supporting civil society implementers to explore new funding sources. In this shifting context, networks like the CAR-WEN must align themselves not just with local or bilateral partners, but also with global platforms capable of offering alternative technical and financial support.

3. Wildlife Crime Threats in the Caribbean

The Caribbean is home to a remarkable diversity of wildlife, encompassing a broad range of wild plant, animal, and fungi species and the habitats and ecosystems that support them. This rich biodiversity contributes significantly to the Caribbean’s natural beauty, ecological health, economic vitality, and cultural identity. For that reason, there exists a similar diversity of laws and international agreements governing human activities involving or otherwise impacting wildlife. As commonly seen elsewhere in the world, human activities governed by contemporary Caribbean wildlife laws include those that regulate the consumption, hunting, possessing, processing, transporting, and selling of undomesticated species (Pascual et al., 2021).

Unfortunately, wildlife laws and treaties appear to be poorly implemented and enforced in many, if not most, countries and territories of the WCR. However, this crisis in Caribbean wildlife law is set within a far greater global crisis in the environmental rule of law (Nellemann et al., 2014). For instance, a United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) expert report on the global environmental rule of law found that despite a 38-fold increase in environmental laws since 1972, failure to implement and enforce these laws fully remains one of the greatest challenges to

mitigating climate change, reducing pollution and preventing widespread species and habitat loss (UNEP, 2019a).

Evidence of limited implementation of Caribbean wildlife laws and associated widespread non-compliance is broadly available, but systematic analyses still need to be produced. Therefore, to illustrate the scale of wildlife crime in the WCR, the CAR-WEN Working Group has identified at least twelve types of “wildlife crimes” of concern. This broad approach is consistent with other international efforts to address a wide array of crimes directly impacting the natural world. For instance, in 2023, the Nature Crime Alliance was initiated to combat multiple offences—such as illegal deforestation, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and the illegal wildlife trade—under the parallel terminology of “nature crimes” (Nature Crime Alliance, 2023).

1. *Illegal Agricultural Clearance.* This offence involves clearing land for agricultural use without authorisation, causing habitat destruction and worsening human-wildlife conflict. Concerning incidents have been documented in many Caribbean countries and territories, including the Dominican Republic (Secades, 2010), Haiti (Hedges et al., 2018), Trinidad and Tobago (Hroudova, 2012), Saint Lucia (Daltry, 2009), and Jamaica (Miller, 2000). In the Dominican Republic and Haiti, expansion jeopardises endemic species such as the Hispaniolan hutia and Hispaniolan solenodon (Hedges et al., 2018; Secades, 2010). Meanwhile, in Jamaica, illegal marijuana cultivation degrades the Negril Great Morass, and agricultural drainage threatens the Black River Lower Morass, home to the American crocodile and West Indian manatee (Garrick, 1986; Miller, 2000), highlighting how unchecked clearance compromises habitat integrity and accelerates biodiversity loss.
2. *Illegal Fishing.* This crime entails overfishing, harvesting prohibited resources, or targeting protected species, resulting in fishery collapse and lost income for coastal communities. Concerning incidents have been recorded in many Caribbean countries and territories, including Belize (Stiles et al., 2010), Cuba (Alzugaray et al., 2018), Saint Kitts and Nevis (Granderson & Ramkissoon, 2022), Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (Department of Maritime Administration, St Vincent & Special Advisory Services Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat, 2013), and Trinidad and Tobago (Solomon, 2018). In Trinidad and Tobago, illegal trawling and overfishing have decimated most marine fisheries (Solomon, 2018), while in Cuba, Spiny lobster populations have sharply declined due to illegal catch (Alzugaray et al., 2018). The European Union has also issued “yellow” and “red” cards to several Caribbean nations for failing to address IUU fishing (EU IUU Fishing Coalition, n.d.), underscoring how unsustainable harvest undermines livelihoods and ecosystem stability.
3. *Illegal Human-Wildlife Conflict.* This crime typically involves the unauthorised killing of wildlife considered pests, resulting in biodiversity loss and worsening human-wildlife

tensions. Concerning incidents are reported in most Caribbean countries and territories, including Dominica (Douglas, 2011), Jamaica (Snyder et al., 2000), Saint Lucia (Daltry, 2009), Bonaire (BioNew7, 2013), and Trinidad and Tobago (Gibson, 2022). In Trinidad and Tobago, the misuse of pesticides has indirectly decimated local bird populations (Gibson, 2022), while in Saint Lucia, indiscriminate killing of the Fer-de-lance snake disrupts native ecosystems (Daltry, 2009), emphasising how lethal responses to wildlife can magnify ecological imbalances.

4. *Illegal Hunting.* This crime threatens endangered species and harms ecosystem health, especially when linked to illicit trade and organised crime. Concerning incidents have been reported in most Caribbean countries and territories, such as Trinidad and Tobago (Hsu & Agoramoorthy, 1996), Guyana (Grimes et al., 2008), Saint Lucia (Snyder et al., 2000), Dominica (Durand & Baptiste, 2008), and Belize (Foster et al., 2016). In Trinidad and Tobago, hunting pressure drastically reduces red howler and capuchin monkey populations (Hsu & Agoramoorthy, 1996), while in Saint Lucia, poaching imperils the native parrot (Snyder et al., 2000), highlighting how excessive hunting sustains broader criminal networks and endangers vulnerable wildlife.
5. *Illegal Introduction of Species.* This crime involves the unauthorised release, escape, or smuggling of non-native animals or plants into local ecosystems, where they can become invasive and severely disrupt native biodiversity, agriculture, and public health. These introductions are often linked to the illegal pet trade, unregulated farming, or accidental transport. Documented cases have emerged in several Caribbean countries and territories, including Trinidad and Tobago (De Silva, 2023; Williams, 2020), the Cayman Islands (Cayman Compass, 2023), and Barbados (Madden, 2020). For instance, in Trinidad and Tobago, capuchin monkeys have been smuggled from South America for the exotic pet market, posing ecological risks and violating national wildlife laws (De Silva, 2023; Williams, 2020). In Barbados, ring-necked parakeets, believed to be deliberately released, have multiplied rapidly, damaging crops and threatening native bird populations (Madden, 2020).
6. *Illegal Jewellery and Art Making.* This crime involves the unauthorised use of wildlife products to make jewelry or art, driving overexploitation and habitat damage. Concerning incidents have been observed in Belize (Arias, 2021), Haiti (Kitade et al., 2021), the Dominican Republic (CAFTA-DR, 2018), Mexico (Gress & Andradi-Brown, 2018), and Cuba (Woronuk, 2008). In Haiti and the Dominican Republic, Hawksbill turtle shells are fashioned into jewelry (CAFTA-DR, 2018; Kitade et al., 2021), while in Cuba, corals and other endangered species are exploited for artisanal products (Woronuk, 2008), reinforcing how crafting wildlife-based art depletes at-risk species and damages both marine and terrestrial habitats.

7. *Illegal Land Settlement.* This offence involves unregulated or informal encroachment onto ecologically sensitive areas, causing habitat destruction, deforestation, and biodiversity decline. Concerning incidents have been documented in Puerto Rico (Grau et al., 2003), Trinidad and Tobago (The Water Resources Agency, 2001), Jamaica (Ferguson, 2022), Barbados (Sandoval & Sarmiento, 2020), and Saint Kitts and Nevis (Sandoval & Sarmiento, 2020). In Puerto Rico, illegal settlements drive habitat loss and fragmentation (Grau et al., 2003), while in Trinidad and Tobago, squatting communities in the western Northern Range degrade watersheds (The Water Resources Agency, 2001), illustrating how informal encroachment into critical habitats leads to permanent ecological damage.
8. *Illegal Logging.* This crime involves the unauthorised felling of trees, leading to habitat fragmentation, soil erosion, and displacement of local communities. Concerning incidents are reported throughout the Caribbean, including Trinidad and Tobago (Hroudova, 2012), Belize (Young, 2008), Guyana (Guyana Chronicle, 2021), Honduras (WRI, 2014), and Jamaica (Davis, 2013). In Belize, illegal logging intensifies deforestation (Young, 2008), while in Jamaica, deforestation for charcoal threatens endemic flora and fauna (Davis, 2013), underscoring how unchecked tree-felling undermines forest resilience and community well-being.
9. *Illegal Mining.* This crime entails the unauthorised extraction of minerals and hazardous chemical use, contributing to deforestation, soil erosion, and water pollution. Concerning incidents have been recorded in Guyana (Grimes et al., 2008), Suriname (Hilson & Vieira, 2007), Jamaica (Pilkey et al., 2023), Grenada (Cambers, 1997), and Haiti (Merilus, 2018). Mercury-based mining in Guyana and Suriname severely impacts local ecosystems (Hilson & Vieira, 2007), while unregulated extraction in Haiti degrades habitats and contaminates water supplies (Merilus, 2018), demonstrating how unsafe mining practices imperil habitats and human health.
10. *Illegal Pet Keeping.* This crime involves keeping wild animals as pets without authorisation, fuelling species overexploitation and habitat destruction. Concerning incidents have been reported in the Dominican Republic (Snyder et al., 2000), Trinidad and Tobago (Gibson, 2022), Cuba (Altherr et al., 2019), Saint Vincent (Johnson, 2017), and Brazil (Connelly & Peyronnin, 2021). In Trinidad and Tobago, parrots, songbirds, and capuchin monkeys are commonly kept illegally (Gibson, 2022), while in the Dominican Republic, wild-caught parakeets are threatened by pet demands (Snyder et al., 2000), showcasing how unauthorised captive wildlife ownership depletes natural populations and disrupts fragile ecosystems.
11. *Illegal Pollution.* This crime includes the unlawful discharge of harmful substances such as oil, chemicals, sewage, and solid waste into terrestrial and marine environments, in violation of national environmental laws and international standards. Such actions can degrade ecosystems, harm wildlife, and endanger public health. Cases of illegal pollution have been reported in several Caribbean countries and territories, including the Dominican Republic

(Diario Libre, 2018; Germán, 2025), Antigua and Barbuda (Loop News, 2023), and Jamaica (Anderson, 2022; Radio Jamaica News, 2011). In the Dominican Republic, a chemical discharge into the Haina River triggered fish deaths and harmed aquatic biodiversity, while continued illegal garbage dumping further pollutes this key waterway, impacting downstream estuarine ecosystems (Diario Libre, 2018; Germán, 2025). In Jamaica, the discharge of caustic waste into the Rio Cobre resulted in the death of over 1,000 fish and other aquatic life, prompting legal action under national environmental laws (Anderson, 2022; Radio Jamaica News, 2011). These incidents reflect how illegal pollution not only violates regulatory frameworks but directly harms the region's diverse and often fragile wildlife.

12. *Illegal Wild Meat Consumption*. Often called bushmeat hunting, this crime involves consuming wild animals, posing public health risks and driving species overexploitation. Concerning incidents have been recorded in Colombia (Ingram et al., 2022), Brazil (Ripple et al., 2016), the US Virgin Islands (Fleming, 2001), Guyana (Vliet et al., 2022), and Jamaica (Newman, 2014). In Jamaica, the endangered Jamaican boa is hunted for food (Newman, 2014), while in Guyana, deer, tapir, and armadillos are sold as bushmeat (Vliet et al., 2022), indicating how overharvesting for wild meat depletes species and may transmit zoonotic threats.
13. *Illegal Transportation and Sales of Wildlife*. Often referred to as “wildlife trafficking,” this crime involves transporting and marketing wildlife specimens without authorisation, fuelling species exploitation. Concerning incidents have been documented in Saint Vincent (Lambert, 1985), Cuba (Altherr et al., 2019), the Dominican Republic (Kitade et al., 2021), Jamaica (Neufville et al., 2012), and Puerto Rico (Snyder et al., 2000). In Cuba, traffickers target endangered endemic lizards (Altherr et al., 2019), while in the Dominican Republic, Hawksbill turtle shells are illegally sold (Kitade et al., 2021), highlighting how smuggling undermines conservation and burdens regional law enforcement efforts.
14. *Theft of Genetic Resources*. Also known as biopiracy, this crime involves the unauthorised extraction and commercial use of biological materials—plants, animals, or microorganisms—without equitable benefit-sharing. Concerning incidents have been recorded in French Guiana (Holland, 2019; Singh, 2022), Haiti (Rotzin, 2024), and Saint Lucia (Michell et al., 2023). In French Guiana, Quassia amara (“couachi”) was patented for its antimalarial properties without crediting local knowledge (Holland, 2019; Singh, 2022), while in Saint Lucia, regulatory gaps leave genetic resources vulnerable (Michell et al., 2023), exemplifying how biopiracy undermines community benefits and de-incentivises biodiversity stewardship.

Various other types of crime further exacerbate and enable the occurrence of wildlife crimes in the WCR both through direct interaction as well as through destabilisation of governance systems and use of governance resources that might otherwise be directed toward combating wildlife crime. Documentation of convergent crimes in the WCR, however, is relatively limited,

even as many such crimes are broadly viewed as problematic throughout the region. The following ten convergent crimes illustrate how overlapping illicit activities can intensify threats to wildlife:

1. *Commercial Fraud*. This crime entails deliberate deception in business practices for financial gain. Concerning incidents have emerged across Caribbean nations, including Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Barbados, and Antigua and Barbuda (Gibbings, 2020; Mavrellis, 2022). In Trinidad and Tobago, the “Drug Sou Sou” pyramid scheme collapsed amid police scrutiny, while in Guyana, the Accelerated Capital Firm Inc. scheme defrauded thousands (Gibbings, 2020). By obscuring the provenance of such commodities, fraud perpetuates wildlife crime by making it harder to trace contraband goods and identify culpable actors.
2. *Criminal Gangs*. This crime entails organised groups that threaten public safety, governance, and socioeconomic stability through drug trafficking, firearms offences, and extortion. Concerning incidents have been documented in Jamaica (UNODC, 2024), Trinidad and Tobago (Adams et al., 2018), Haiti (Noel & Pierre-Louis, 2021), the Dominican Republic (Harriott & Katz, 2017), and Guyana (UNODC, 2024). In Jamaica, gang-related violence drives one of the highest homicide rates globally, diverting law enforcement focus away from the natural environment. Criminal gangs can serve as logistics hubs for wildlife crimes and when gang-related violence is prevalent, wildlife protection may become a lower priority, allowing illegal hunting, trafficking, and habitat encroachments to occur with less scrutiny.
3. *Human Trafficking*. This crime involves exploiting individuals for forced labour, sexual exploitation, or other coercive activities. Concerning incidents exist in Jamaica (US Department of State, 2024), Trinidad and Tobago (Seemungal, 2023), Haiti (United States Department of State, 2024a), the Dominican Republic (UNODC, 2020a), and Guyana (Harrison et al., 2023). Haiti remains a principal source of trafficked individuals, particularly children, while Trinidad and Tobago documented hundreds of cases between 2013 and 2019 (Seemungal, 2023). Human trafficking rings often overlap with wildlife trafficking networks, complicating enforcement priorities.
4. *Firearm Trafficking and Illegal Possession*. This crime refers to the import, distribution, or holding of unregistered firearms, amplifying violence and organised crime throughout the Caribbean. Concerning incidents have been reported in Jamaica (UNODC, 2020b), Trinidad and Tobago (Douglas, 2024), Haiti (Forero & Córdoba, 2024), Guyana (United States Department of State, 2024b), and The Bahamas (Russell, 2022). In Trinidad and Tobago alone, firearms were implicated in over 8,400 crimes from 2016 to 2020 (Douglas, 2024). This convergent crime increases the availability of unregistered weapons, emboldening those who poach threatened species and fuelling violence that overshadows wildlife enforcement

efforts.

5. *Drug Trafficking and Consumption.* This crime entails the production, smuggling, and sale of controlled substances including cocaine and marijuana. Concerning incidents have been recorded in Mexico (COHA, 2011a), Trinidad and Tobago (Bledsoe et al., 2023), Haiti (COHA, 2011b), Suriname (Wilkinson, 2024), and Bonaire (INTERPOL, 2022). Traffickers of drugs often exploit the same smuggling routes used for illicit wildlife and so can deal in both types of products. Moreover, drug cultivation sites can drive deforestation and pollution, undermining habitats and intensifying human-wildlife conflict.
6. *Illicit Online Trade.* This crime involves using digital platforms to deal in contraband, including wildlife products and counterfeit goods. Concerning incidents have surfaced in the Dominican Republic (OECD, 2022), Brazil (Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, 2024), and Trinidad and Tobago (T. Smith & Stamatakis, 2021). Online anonymity masks the origins of illicit commodities and widens consumer access to wildlife crime networks, hindering enforcement efforts and scaling wildlife crime impacts.
7. *Police Misconduct.* This crime involves the abuse of authority by law enforcement, which erodes public trust and wastes resources that could be spent countering wildlife offences. Concerning incidents appear in Trinidad and Tobago (Wallace et al., 2024), Jamaica (Amnesty International, 2021), Barbados (Barbados Today, 2024), Guyana (Singh, 2024), and the Dominican Republic (Dominican Today, 2023). In Jamaica, the Independent Commission of Investigations recorded more than 500 fatalities linked to police actions between 2015 and 2018 (Amnesty International, 2021). This convergent crime erodes public trust, squanders resources, and compromises investigations into wildlife crimes when officers turn a blind eye to crimes perceived as less important or by actively engaging in such crime.
8. *Public Sector Corruption.* This crime involves misusing public office—often via bribery or cronyism—at the expense of the broader population (OECD 2025). Concerning incidents are reported in Guyana (World Justice Program, 2022), the Dominican Republic (Sherwood, 2024), Haiti (Reuters, 2024), Trinidad and Tobago, and Jamaica (The Gleaner, 2021). Corrupt officials can enable illicit wildlife trade, for instance by issuing false permits or ignoring regulatory breaches in return for private compensation, undermining conservation law enforcement.
9. *Sexual Assault and Exploitation.* This crime refers to coerced or forced involvement in sexual activities for monetary gain, often facilitated by larger trafficking operations. Concerning incidents occur in the Dominican Republic (ECPAT International, 2022.), Haiti (UNFPA, 2024), Trinidad and Tobago (Smith et al., 2024), Jamaica (UNICEF, 2022), and Guyana (Wickham, 2023). These same criminal networks may engage simultaneously in wildlife and

drug trafficking, leaving law enforcement overstretched.

10. *Property Theft*. This crime involves the illegal appropriation of personal property, real estate, or cultural artifacts, including burglary, fraud, or unauthorised land occupation. Concerning incidents are noted in Haiti (UNODC & The World Bank, 2007), Trinidad and Tobago (Sutton et al., 2017), The Bahamas (Sutton et al., 2017), Guyana (Hall, 2024), and Jamaica (Yagoub, 2017). This convergent crime includes the unlawful seizure of legally harvested timber, seized contraband, or small-scale fisheries' gear, thereby undermining sustainable livelihoods and the effective management of natural resources.

Beyond wildlife crimes and convergent crimes, a range of other threats also significantly impact wildlife in the Caribbean. These include climate change (Day, 2009), which alters habitats and threatens species' survival; natural disasters (López-Marrero et al., 2013), which can devastate ecosystems; and the introduction of invasive species (Rojas-Sandoval et al., 2017), which can outcompete native wildlife. Overfishing (Leria, 2016), overhunting (Hillstrom & Hillstrom, 2004), and over-clearance (CANARI, 2019), even when legal, can lead to significant habitat loss and species decline. The impact of tourism (Peterson, 2020), often seen as a benign industry, can also be detrimental when not managed sustainably. Harmful but legal animal-keeping practices (Fielding & Ostberg, 2023), pollution (Diez et al., 2019), and the emergence of zoonotic diseases (Shiokawa et al., 2019) further compound the threats to wildlife. These threats must also be considered in any comprehensive strategy to combat wildlife crime and better protect the region's biodiversity.

The interplay between crime and non-crime threats creates a complex situation for wildlife in the Caribbean. For instance, legal overfishing may deplete fish stocks, creating an economic vacuum that illegal fishing can fill (Leria, 2016). Similarly, climate change-induced habitat loss may push species into smaller areas, making them easier targets for poachers (Day, 2009). Therefore, addressing wildlife crime in the region requires a holistic approach that considers not only the direct illegal activities but also the broader socio-economic and environmental factors at play.

The above-described wildlife crimes, convergent crimes and other intersecting non-crime threats contribute to a pervasive crisis that threatens not only the wildlife of the Caribbean, but also the ecological balance, economic stability, and cultural legacy of the region. Addressing these problems with urgency and constructing a robust framework for effective implementation and enforcement of wildlife laws has, therefore, never been more critical.

4. A History of the CAR-WEN Initiative

An initiative to establish a CAR-WEN has been discussed and developed among Caribbean leaders for over a decade. The initiative's popularity may have built upon the more general popularity of the WEN concept that began with the establishment of the ASEAN WEN in 2005

(CITES, 2022) and the continued establishment of WENs in other regions of the world, such as the ROAVIS in Central America and the Dominican Republic ('ROAVIS' for its Spanish initials) established in 2010 (ROAVIS, 2022) and the Lusaka Agreement Task Force established in 1996 (LAFT, 2021). Although initial progress was gradual, developments since 2023 have significantly accelerated the impetus to formally establish a CAR-WEN.

To contextualise recent advancements, it is useful to revisit key historical milestones. In 2014, the Parties to the SPAW Protocol formalised efforts to establish a CAR-WEN. Specifically, the Sixth Meeting of the SPAW STAC (STAC6) recommended that a regional wildlife enforcement network be developed in the Caribbean (UNEP, 2019a). This recommendation was subsequently discussed and approved by the Parties to the SPAW Protocol at its annual conference of parties (COP8) in Cartagena (UNEP, 2014). As a result, various Parties to the SPAW Protocol entered into collaborative planning for a CAR-WEN in cooperation with the UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme (CEP) and the UNODC.

Cooperation between Caribbean governments, the UNEP CEP, and the UNODC led to two important workshops to form the CAR-WEN (ICCWC, 2022a; Isaacs et al., 2016). The first workshop, held in Nassau from July 20-22, 2016, was organised by the UNODC in collaboration with the Government of The Bahamas and the ICCWC (UNODC, 2016). It convened 55 participants consisting of experts and law enforcement officials from 11 Caribbean countries to identify critical threats and recommendations concerning wildlife crime to enhance regional cooperation and enforcement. This workshop recommended the establishment of a CAR-WEN to facilitate increased information sharing, provide a platform for capacity building and sustainable financing, and support greater enforcement actions. The identification of country focal points was central to this initiative, as it facilitated ongoing dialogue among interested parties.

The second workshop held in Bridgetown, Barbados on May 10-11, 2017, was organised by the UNODC in collaboration with the Government of Barbados and the ICCWC (UNODC, 2017). It convened 32 participants, including law enforcement agency representatives from 10 Caribbean countries. This workshop reaffirmed interest in the establishment of a CAR-WEN and discussed possible structures and frameworks for network coordination and implementation. Key takeaways from this workshop included a recommendation to involve UNEP as a leading partner, a draft MoU for revision, and a statement of intent to create a CAR-WEN Working Group (UNEP, 2018).

From 2014 to 2018, efforts to establish a CAR-WEN yielded several promising results, including a draft MOU, a SPAW Protocol Briefing document, and the establishment of a CAR-WEN Working Group led by the UNODC. These results also attracted the interest of additional CSO supporters, including the Animal Welfare Institute (AWI) and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW). AWI organised a WEN side event at the Eighth Meeting of the SPAW STAC

(STAC8) in Panama in 2018, co-hosted by the UNODC and the SPAW Secretariat, and drawing the participation, interest and enthusiasm of Parties to the SPAW Protocol in advance of the 10th COP (COP10) in 2019 in Roatan, Honduras. IFAW, known for its past engagements with other WENs such as the Horn of Africa Wildlife Enforcement Network (HAWEN) and the ASEAN WEN, reiterated strong support for a CAR-WEN, highlighting its alignment with critical biodiversity threats identified by Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (UNEP, 2019b).

Despite the progress made towards establishing a CAR-WEN, the initiative was widely considered to be indefinitely stalled by 2022. The reasons for this stalling have yet to be fully understood, but a range of factors have been mentioned to the current CAR-WEN Working Group members. The unexpected passing of Dr Maurice Isaacs, a central figure in the CAR-WEN initiative, in March 2021 left a significant void in the project's leadership. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted regional cooperation and prevented further in-person workshops, a primary method of advancing the initiative. High turnover in-country focal points and a lack of support from Caribbean governments have also been suggested as contributing factors. Furthermore, desk research and expert discussions suggest that dwindling donor enthusiasm due to the perceived poor performance and performance monitoring of WENs elsewhere may have also contributed to reduced donor resources to establish a CAR-WEN (TRAFFIC & Freeland, 2016).

Recent efforts to reinvigorate the initiative began with informal discussions at the 4th Global Meeting of WENs in November 2022. Governmental representatives from Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, and The Bahamas, and civil society representatives from the US-based Animal Welfare Institute and the Trinidad and Tobago-based Nurture Nature Campaign engaged in dialogue with representatives from ICCWC, UNODC, and UNEP. These conversations sparked a renewed interest in the CAR-WEN initiative, leading to monthly planning meetings for key stakeholders and periodic intergovernmental meetings for interested government representatives since December 2022. Importantly, the governmental and civil society actors conforming the CAR-WEN Working Group made a conscious decision to use the term 'Caribbean WEN' or 'CAR-WEN' in place of the former name 'CaribWEN' as a more politically-correct and inclusive name.³

Renewed momentum for a CAR-WEN was notably evident during the Tenth Meeting of the SPAW STAC (STAC10), held virtually from 30 January to 1 February 2023. During this meeting, the Lightkeepers Foundation emphasised the importance of reaffirming the Secretariat's commitment to actively support and facilitate the establishment of a CAR-WEN. They further recommended conducting a comprehensive technical assessment of illegal and undocumented

³ The terms 'Carib' and 'Arawak' are increasingly recognised as externally-imposed terms that obscure a diversity of indigenous identity, with the former term in particular carrying strongly pejorative connotations. Increasingly, identifiers such as 'Kalinago' and 'Taino' are used in their place.

wildlife trade within the Caribbean region to enhance CAR-WEN's effectiveness and operational objectives. These recommendations were explicitly supported by observers, including the Animal Welfare Institute (AWI), who reiterated their ongoing involvement and support. The SPAW Secretariat also reaffirmed its continued commitment to collaboration, highlighting its role in capacity building and facilitating regional enforcement networks aligned with SPAW Protocol priorities.

Further validation of a CAR-WEN's regional significance occurred at SPAW Protocol COP12, held in October 2023 in Aruba. Government representatives from Trinidad and Tobago and The Bahamas, facilitated by Sustainable Innovation Initiatives (SII) and its associated Nurture Nature Campaign, a civil society coalition, hosted a CAR-WEN side event supported by AWI and the Lightkeepers Foundation. A CAR-WEN Briefing Paper advocating for targeted recommendations from Contracting Parties to enhance wildlife enforcement and support a regional wildlife enforcement network was submitted and discussed. Additionally during this event, the United States strongly supported the establishment of a CAR-WEN, highlighting its strategic importance within regional conservation agendas and advocating for its formal inclusion in future SPAW discussions.

Since the conclusion of SPAW Protocol COP12 in October 2023, the CAR-WEN Working Group has maintained robust outreach and strategic planning, building on the renewed momentum sparked at the conference. As of present, membership in the CAR-WEN Working Group has expanded significantly and now includes representatives from 20 Caribbean countries and territories. This growth positions the CAR-WEN to potentially become the largest Wildlife Enforcement Network globally in terms of number of participating states. A detailed list of the CAR-WEN Working Group's current membership and roles is provided in Annex B.

5. Ongoing Activities of the CAR-WEN Working Group

Since its inception, the CAR-WEN Working Group has undertaken substantial activities to operationalise regional collaboration against wildlife crime. The activities outlined below illustrate ongoing efforts to institutionalise CAR-WEN, strengthen its operational capacity, and expand public and stakeholder engagement across the WCR.

Institutionalisation. To institutionalise the initiative, the Working Group has finalised a comprehensive draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that is now under review by Caribbean governments with a view towards opening the document for signature in 2026. Importantly, the CAR-WEN Working Group has undertaken detailed technical work to ensure the draft MOU adheres to the ICCWC's Guideline 1 for the establishment of WENs (ICCWC, 2020), thereby meeting recognised global standards for wildlife enforcement. Additionally, a UNODC-supported regional workshop—intended to refine the MOU's design—was developed for implementation in April 2025, but this was unfortunately cancelled due to recent shifts in

U.S. foreign aid priorities. Nevertheless, the groundwork laid through the workshop planning sessions continues to inform the Working Group's developmental roadmap.

Planning and Fundraising. Beyond the MOU, the CAR-WEN Working Group has accelerated strategic and operational planning, culminating in a four-phase Strategic Plan that outlines the network's progression from Establishment through Foundational Operations, Expansion, and External Support. An organisational plan is currently under development, detailing CAR-WEN's future operational structure, including legal arrangements and human-resource design. The Working Group has also developed several project designs and submitted them in formal funding proposals to the U.S. Department of State, WILDLABS, and other prospective donors, underscoring its determination to secure the technical and financial backing necessary to undertake impactful, jointly-planned projects and translate the CAR-WEN's broader strategic vision into tangible enforcement outcomes.

Pilot Demonstration Projects. The Working Group's Biodiversity Manager data platform and app pilot project shall this year advance into evaluation for future launch, focusing on developing an integrated data management solution to support effective wildlife crime monitoring and enforcement across the WCR. Additionally, the Working Group is developing a Toolkit for Rapid Assessment of Wildlife Enforcement in the WCR, which is expected to be presented at the SPAW Protocol COP in October 2025. This toolkit will enable countries and enforcement agencies to quickly assess their capacity, resources, and operational gaps, supporting targeted, efficient assessment designs. Included in the toolkit are crime risk assessment, enforcement capacity assessment, and other methodologies that have been deployed in other applied contexts.

Communications. Complementing these activities, the CAR-WEN Working Group has begun developing the CAR-WEN online identity and communications with a website now in development to enhance public awareness and stakeholder engagement. Official launch of the website is planned at the upcoming Eleventh Meeting of the SPAW STAC (STAC11). This launch will significantly bolster outreach, education, and transparency regarding wildlife crime issues and enforcement efforts within the Caribbean region.

In sum, despite a history of partial successes and setbacks, recent developments underscore a promising future for the CAR-WEN. Expanded membership, robust strategic planning, and sustained engagement from Caribbean governments and international partners reflect a clear regional commitment to addressing wildlife crime. Supported by global momentum and strengthened by practical resources and strategic initiatives, CAR-WEN is now well-positioned to effectively establish and operationalise a robust Wildlife Enforcement Network within the Caribbean region.

6. How a CAR-WEN Benefits the Parties to the SPAW Protocol

During the SPAW Protocol COP12 in 2023, delegates raised a pivotal question: What practical advantages could a regional Wildlife Enforcement Network bring to the Protocol’s conservation aims? This question reflects a recognition that the SPAW Protocol offers a strong legal framework for protecting critical habitats and threatened species and the region’s relatively limited experience with wildlife enforcement networking. In response, we offer the following four explanations of how an institutionalised CAR-WEN can benefit both current and future Parties to the SPAW Protocol.

First, a regional WEN can strengthen the practical implementation of SPAW’s legal commitments by facilitating consistent collaboration between diverse biodiversity management actors, from fisheries managers and game wardens to customs officers and police officers, within each participating country and territory. This collaboration closes jurisdictional gaps that criminals frequently exploit, making it far more difficult for wildlife crimes to occur unnoticed or unaddressed (ICCWC, 2022b). Furthermore, by linking countries and territories across a region, a WEN ensures that each participating polity does not act in isolation, but instead engages in coordinated investigations and cross-border intelligence exchanges that can give SPAW Parties the collective vigilance needed to detect and disrupt wildlife crimes affecting their protected species and areas.

Second, many Caribbean states—particularly smaller island nations—struggle with limited budgets, specialised skills, and the advanced tools needed for effective wildlife protection. By pooling critical resources—such as technical training programmes, species-identification protocols, and user-friendly data systems for tracking wildlife offences—a CAR-WEN will allow participating countries and territories to enhance their enforcement capacity without bearing the entire cost alone. This synergy proves especially valuable for responding to new or complex illicit activities: a customs officer who confiscates a rare reptile in one jurisdiction can promptly share details with counterparts elsewhere, enabling quicker follow-up investigations and a more unified regional stance on preventing illegal trade. As a result, Parties to the SPAW Protocol can address enforcement challenges more effectively, advancing their conservation goals with greater confidence.

Third, networked enforcement mechanisms help to more holistically protect entire ecological communities, a core aim of the SPAW Protocol’s ecosystem-based approach. The illegal capture of key species—like sea turtles or queen conch—often triggers cascading effects that disrupt marine food webs or degrade coastal habitats (Patel, 2025). By fostering rapid information exchange across borders, a WEN can detect emerging threats before they escalate, whether it be a suspected poaching ring operating near sensitive coral reefs or an influx of unregulated fishing gear into marine protected areas. These coordinated responses help maintain ecological balance

and protect the livelihoods that depend on healthy ecosystems, particularly in small island economies reliant on reef tourism or nearshore fisheries.

Finally, a regional WEN in the Caribbean will amplify Parties' abilities to implement not only the SPAW Protocol, but also other international conservation agreements, most notably the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). While CITES provides the legal framework regulating cross-border trade in protected fauna and flora, it relies heavily on local enforcement to detect improperly labelled shipments or fraudulent import permits (Reeve, 2000). By establishing consistent inspection protocols and specialised training for frontline officers, a WEN can significantly boost each Caribbean Party's ability to identify CITES-listed species and combat transnational trafficking. This synergy between WENs and CITES is well established, with periodic global meetings of regional WENs held during CITES conferences of parties.

7. How Parties to the SPAW Protocol Can Help Establish The CAR-WEN

The CAR-WEN initiative presents an invaluable opportunity for the Parties to advance the protection, preservation and sustainable management of specially-valued areas and threatened species of flora and fauna in the WCR. Moreover, all stakeholders, particularly the Parties to the SPAW Protocol, have a vested interest in supporting the establishment and impactful operation of the CAR-WEN.

Action 1: Participate in the CAR-WEN Working Group.

SPAW Protocol focal points, associated professionals, and their colleagues are urged to actively engage in and contribute to the CAR-WEN Working Group. The collective wealth of knowledge possessed is invaluable to the strategic design of CAR-WEN. The Working Group is now collaborating closely with governmental stakeholders to finalise the draft CAR-WEN Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), complete the comprehensive Strategic Plan, and identify impactful pilot projects. Active participation in the Working Group broadens representation, strengthens legitimacy, and enables the effective handling of diverse regional wildlife crime challenges. Importantly, this inclusive approach enhances the Working Group's capacity to refine, advocate for, and ultimately secure intergovernmental approval of the MOU critical for CAR-WEN's formal establishment. Please refer to Annex B for contact information if you wish to participate in the CAR-WEN Working Group.

Action 2: Support the MOU Review and Approval.

Parties to the SPAW Protocol are strongly encouraged to review and support the finalised CAR-WEN Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which closely adheres to ICCWC's Guideline 1 for WENs, a recognised global best practice. Parties should facilitate internal government review processes and advocate for timely endorsement and ratification of this key document. The SPAW Secretariat is likewise encouraged to actively assist Parties through

consistent communication and guidance to expedite the MOU's official approval and operationalisation.

Action 3: Support Funding and Technical Assistance for Regional Wildlife Crime and Enforcement Monitoring.

The SPAW Secretariat, in collaboration with regional and international partner agencies, should actively mobilise financial resources and technical expertise to strengthen regional wildlife crime detection, documentation, and enforcement monitoring. Systematic detection and analysis of wildlife crimes—including illegal wildlife trafficking, illegal hunting, and illegal fishing—remain significantly underdeveloped in the region. By securing support and establishing collaborations for comprehensive wildlife crime assessments across the WCR's diverse countries and territories, the SPAW Secretariat and partners can substantially improve understanding of these threats, guiding effective enforcement strategies and policy interventions.

Action 4: Support Funding and Technical Assistance for CAR-WEN Establishment and Operations.

The SPAW Secretariat and partner agencies should proactively identify and secure dedicated funding streams and technical resources critical to a CAR-WEN's institutional establishment and operational sustainability. Emphasis should be placed on supporting the implementation of the recently finalised CAR-WEN Strategic Plan, ensuring systematic progression through its four developmental phases: Establishment, Foundational Operations, Expansion, and External Support. Additionally, technical assistance from international bodies such as ICCWC and UNODC can significantly enhance operational capacity and effectiveness, notably through targeted workshops and training initiatives.

Action 5: Propose and Adopt Recommendations at the SPAW Protocol.

Parties to the SPAW Protocol are strongly encouraged to formally propose and adopt recommendations explicitly supporting the establishment, operationalisation, and strategic advancement of CAR-WEN at meetings of the SPAW Protocol. Parties should advocate explicitly for prioritisation and resource allocation decisions supporting CAR-WEN's operational goals, including sustainable financing strategies. Recommendations should highlight the strategic relevance of CAR-WEN within SPAW Protocol objectives, encouraging explicit inclusion of CAR-WEN initiatives in future SPAW agendas. The SPAW Secretariat is further encouraged to actively facilitate and guide Parties in proposing and advocating these recommendations at SPAW Protocol sessions.

By actively participating in the CAR-WEN Working Group, supporting the MOU review and approval, securing funding and technical assistance for enforcement monitoring and network operations, and advocating for CAR-WEN at the SPAW Protocol, SPAW Parties, the Secretariat and partner agencies can play a pivotal role in advancing its establishment. Strengthening

regional cooperation, mobilising resources, and formalising commitments will ensure that CAR-WEN becomes a sustainable and effective mechanism for combating wildlife crime in the Caribbean.

8. Conclusion

The rich biodiversity of the Caribbean is not only a source of the region's natural beauty but also a critical driver of its ecological health, economic vitality, and cultural identity. Unfortunately, the lack of proper implementation and enforcement of wildlife laws and agreements in the WCR threatens these invaluable assets. The emergence of a wide array of wildlife crimes and convergent crimes, ranging from illegal fishing and wildlife trafficking to illicit online trade and drug trafficking, further indicates the urgency of tackling this multifaceted biodiversity management problem.

In response to this pressing need, the CAR-WEN initiative presents a significant opportunity to bolster wildlife law enforcement across the region. Establishing a CAR-WEN, however, will require concerted effort and collaboration from all stakeholders, particularly the SPAW Protocol. By participating in the CAR-WEN Working Group, supporting the MOU review and endorsement process, mobilising funding and technical assistance for regional wildlife crime and enforcement monitoring, securing resources for CAR-WEN's operational development, and proposing recommendations at the SPAW Protocol, the Parties to the SPAW Protocol can play a crucial role in driving this initiative forward.

Establishing a CAR-WEN will not only help to address the current wildlife crime crisis but also contribute to the broader global movement for the environmental rule of law, climate change mitigation, and biodiversity conservation. As such, the commitment and proactive engagement of all stakeholders in this endeavour are paramount. By working together, we can secure a sustainable and biodiverse future for the Caribbean, safeguarding its natural beauty, ecological integrity, and economic prosperity for generations to come.

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Annex A - List of Existing Wildlife Enforcement Networks (WENs)

Name	Type	Date of Establishment	Website	Geographic Area	Member States/Territories
ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN)	Governmental	2005	N/A	Southeast Asia	Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam
Central America Wildlife Enforcement Network (ROAVIS)	Governmental	2010	https://roavis.net/	Central America	Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Dominican Republic
Coalition Against Wildlife Trafficking (CAWT)	Governmental / Non-governmental	2005	N/A	Global	Various governments, NGOs, and international organisations
Eco Activists for Governance and Law Enforcement (EAGLE) Network	Non-governmental	2003	eagle-enforcement.org	Central & West Africa	Cameroon, Gabon, Republic of Congo, Togo, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Uganda
Europol, Environmental Crime Unit	Intergovernmental	1999	europol.europa.eu	Europe	Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden
Horn of Africa Wildlife Enforcement Network (HAWEN)	Governmental	2017	N/A	Horn of Africa	Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda
International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC)	Intergovernmental	2010	https://icwc-wildlife-crime.org/	Global	CITES, INTERPOL, UNODC, World Bank, and WCO

Lusaka Agreement Task Force (LATF)	Intergovernmental	1999	lusakaagreement.org	Eastern & Southern Africa	<i>Members:</i> Republic of Congo, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia. <i>Cooperating Parties:</i> Ethiopia, South Africa, Eswatini, Mozambique. <i>Observer:</i> Lesotho
North American Wildlife Law Enforcement Accreditation (NAWLEA)	Non-governmental	2022	nawlea.org	North America	United States, Canada, and other participating regions
South America Wildlife Enforcement Network (SudWEN)	Governmental	2014	N/A	South America	Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Venezuela
South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN)	Governmental	2011	sawen.org	South Asia	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka

Annex B - A List of Members in the CAR-WEN Working Group

Government Working Group Members

No.	Country / Territory	Organisation(s)	Focal Points Name	CAR-WEN Role	Position	Department	Focal Points Email(s)
1	The Bahamas	Ministry of National Security	Desiree Corneille	Co-Chair	Commander, Lead Designate	Bahamas Wildlife Enforcement Network (BahWEN)	Desireecorneille@bahamas.gov.bs
			Danielle Morley	Focal Point	Public Relations Officer, Sub-Lieutenant	Royal Bahamas Defence Force	daniellemorley@bahamas.gov.bs
		Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources	Danielle Hanek	Focal Point	Director	Forestry Unit	daniellehanek@bahamas.gov.bs
		Nassau Airport Development Company	Mechelle McDonald	Focal Point	Environmental Coordinator	Airside Operations & Public Safety	mechelle.mcdonald@nas.bs, m.mechelle@gmail.com
2	Trinidad and Tobago	Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries	David Mahabir	Co-Chair	Wildlife Biologist/Assistant Conservator of Forests/Head of Wildlife Section	Forestry Division	david.mahabir@gov.tt, trinidadavid@yahoo.com
			Denny Dipchansingh	Focal Point	Deputy Permanent Secretary (Ag)	N/A	ddipchansingh@yahoo.com
			Christopher Nakhid	Focal Point	Research Assistant	Forestry Division	chris24.94@hotmail.com, christopher.nakhid@gov.tt
			Tevin Butler	Focal Point	Research Technician - Biologist Assistant	Forestry Division	tevin.butler@gov.tt

		Tobago House of Assembly	Darren Henry	Focal Point	Assistant Conservator of Forests	Division of Food Security, Natural Resources, the Environment, and Sustainable Development	bagoboy39@yahoo.co.uk
3	Anguilla (UK)	Government of Anguilla	Carencia Rouse	Focal Point	Director of Environment	Department of Natural Resources	carencia.rouse@gov.ai
			Rhon Connor	Focal Point	Director of Environment (Ag)	Department of Natural Resources	rhon.connor@gov.ai
4	Belize	Belize Forest Department	Mercedes Valdez	Focal Point	Forest Officer	Forestry Department	valdezma@gobmail.gov.bz mercedez_valdez@yahoo.com
		Belize Fisheries Department	Rigoberto Quintana	Focal Point	Acting Fisheries Administrator	Head of Department	quintanari@gobmail.gov.bz fisheries_department@fisheries.gov.bz
			Adriel Castaneda	Focal Point	Acting Senior Fisheries Officer	Head of Department	adriel.castaneda@fisheries.gov.bz ac.cfu@ffsd.gov.bz
5	Cuba	Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (CITMA)	Dianet Hernández Sainz	Focal Point	Acting Director of the Environmental Control Directorate and Head of the Department of Biosafety and Biodiversity	Office for Environmental Regulation and Safety	dianecat369@gmail.com
			Indra Cabrera	Focal Point	?	Office for Environmental Regulation and Safety	indraconcab@orasen.cu
6	Dominica	Ministry of Environment, Rural Modernization, Kalinago Upliftment	Bradley Guye	Focal Point	Forest Officer - Research, Monitoring & Environment Education	Forestry, Wildlife and Parks Division	guyeb@dominica.gov.dm

		& Constituency Empowerment	Jeanelle Brisbane	Focal Point	Assistant Forest Officer	Forestry, Wildlife and Parks Division	jlkbrisbane@gmail.com wilddominique@outlook.com
7	Dominican Republic	Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources	Nelson Garcia Marcano	Focal Point	Wildlife Inspection Division Manager	N/A	nelson.garcia@ambiente.gob.do, nelsongarcia.marcano@gmail.com
			Samy Genao Castro	Focal Point	Wildlife Inspector	N/A	samygenaro@gmail.com
8	Grenada	Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, Forestry and Marine Resources	Anthony Jeremiah	Focal Point	Acting Chief Forestry Officer	Forestry Department	cfoo@moa.gov.gd, tonydove2@gmail.com
			Kimond Cummings	Focal Point	Chief Veterinary & Livestock Officer	Veterinary and Livestock Division	chiefvet-livestockofficer@moa.gov.gd
9	Guatemala	National Council for Protected Areas (CONAP)	Airam López Roulet	Focal Point	Advisor in Coastal Marine Ecosystems and Wetlands	Forest and Wildlife Management Department	airam.lopez@conap.gob.gt, marinocosteroconap@gmail.com
10	Guyana	Guyana Wildlife Conservation and Management Commission	Marlon Glasgow	Focal Point	Acting Director	Monitoring and Compliance Division	marlon.glasgow@wildlife.gov.gy
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Annex C - Overview of Prevalent Wildlife Crimes & Convergent Crimes

Wildlife Crimes		
Crime Type	Description	Examples in the Caribbean
Illegal Agricultural Clearance	Unauthorised clearing of land for crops or livestock, causing habitat loss and increased human-wildlife conflict.	Dominican Republic (Secades, 2010), Haiti (Hedges et al., 2018), Trinidad and Tobago (Hroudova, 2012), Saint Lucia (Daltry, 2009), Jamaica (Miller, 2000).
Illegal Fishing	Illicit exploitation of marine resources, targeting protected species, and undermining fisheries and protected areas.	Belize (Stiles et al., 2010), Cuba (Alzugaray et al., 2018), Saint Kitts and Nevis (Granderson & Ramkissoon, 2022), Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (Department of Maritime Administration, St Vincent & Special Advisory Services Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat, 2013), Trinidad and Tobago (Solomon, 2018).
Illegal Human-Wildlife Conflict	Unpermitted killing or displacement of animals deemed “pests,” often leading to broader ecological imbalance.	Dominica (Douglas, 2011), Jamaica (Snyder et al., 2000), Saint Lucia (Daltry, 2009), Bonaire (BioNew7, 2013), Trinidad and Tobago (Gibson, 2022).
Illegal Hunting	Unsanctioned targeting of wildlife, including threatened or endangered species and specimens within protected areas.	Trinidad and Tobago (Hsu & Agoramoorthy, 1996), Guyana (Grimes et al., 2008), Saint Lucia (Snyder et al., 2000), Dominica (Durand & Baptiste, 2008), Belize (Foster et al., 2016).
Illegal Introduction of Species	Unauthorised introduction of non-native plants or animals, threatening native biodiversity and causing economic damage.	Trinidad and Tobago (De Silva, 2023; Williams, 2020), Cayman Islands (Cayman Compass, 2023), Barbados (Madden, 2020).
Illegal Jewellery and Art Making	Crafting items from coral, turtle shells, or other protected materials threatens species and exploits fragile habitats.	Belize (Arias, 2021), Haiti (Kitade et al., 2021), Dominican Republic (CAFTA-DR, 2018), Mexico (Gress & Andradi-Brown, 2018), Cuba (Woronuk, 2008).
Illegal Land Settlement	Prohibited human encroachment into critical habitats, leading to deforestation and loss of biodiversity.	Puerto Rico (Grau et al., 2003), Trinidad and Tobago (The Water Resources Agency, 2001), Jamaica (Ferguson, 2022), Barbados (Sandoval & Sarmiento, 2020), Saint Kitts and Nevis (Sandoval & Sarmiento, 2020).
Illegal Logging	Unauthorised felling of trees for timber or charcoal production, resulting in deforestation and habitat fragmentation.	Trinidad and Tobago (Hroudova, 2012), Belize (Young, 2008), Guyana (Guyana Chronicle, 2021), Honduras (WRI, 2014), Jamaica (Davis, 2013).

Illegal Mining	Unpermitted mineral extraction, often involving harmful byproducts that contaminate water supplies and destroy wildlife habitats.	Guyana (Grimes et al., 2008), Suriname (Hilson & Vieira, 2007), Jamaica (Pilkey et al., 2023), Grenada (Cambers, 1997), Haiti (Merilus, 2018).
Illegal Pet Keeping	Illicit keeping of wild animals, undermining animal welfare and public health and fuelling unsustainable demand for species.	Dominican Republic (Snyder et al., 2000), Trinidad and Tobago (Gibson, 2022), Cuba (Altherr et al., 2019), Saint Vincent (Johnson, 2017), Brazil (Connelly & Peyronnin, 2021).
Illegal Pollution	Unlawful release of hazardous materials into natural environments, degrading habitats, poisoning wildlife, and endangering public health.	Dominican Republic (Diario Libre, 2018; Germán, 2025), Antigua and Barbuda (Loop News, 2023), Jamaica (Anderson, 2022; Radio Jamaica News, 2011).
Illegal Transportation and Sales of Wildlife	Trafficking of wildlife and natural resource products fuels black markets and accelerates species decline.	Saint Vincent (Lambert, 1985), Cuba (Altherr et al., 2019), Dominican Republic (Kitade et al., 2021), Jamaica (Neufville et al., 2012), Puerto Rico (Snyder et al., 2000).
Illegal Wild Meat Consumption	Prohibited consumption of wild animal meat poses health risks, depletes wildlife populations, and can disrupt entire ecosystems.	Colombia (Ingram et al., 2022), Brazil (Ripple et al., 2016), US Virgin Islands (Fleming, 2001), Guyana (Vliet et al., 2022), Jamaica (Newman, 2014).
Theft of Genetic Resources	Unauthorised extraction and commercialisation of genetic and biological materials, often without sharing benefits with local communities.	French Guiana (Holland, 2019; A. Singh, 2022), Haiti (Rotzin, 2024), Saint Lucia (Michell et al., 2023).

Convergent Crimes		
Crime Type	Description	Examples in the Caribbean
Commercial Fraud	Deceptive business practices facilitate the laundering of illegally sourced products—including fish, gold, or wild animal meat—into legitimate supply chains, making wildlife crimes harder to detect.	Jamaica (Gibbings, 2020), Trinidad and Tobago (Mavrellis, 2022), Guyana (Gibbings, 2020), Barbados (Mavrellis, 2022), Antigua and Barbuda (Mavrellis, 2022).
Criminal Gangs	Organised groups engaged in drug trafficking, extortion, and armed violence that facilitate wildlife crimes while also shifting law enforcement priorities away from wildlife protection.	Jamaica (UNODC, 2024), Trinidad and Tobago (Adams et al., 2018), Haiti (Noel & Pierre-Louis, 2021), Dominican Republic (Harriott & Katz, 2017), Guyana (UNODC, 2024).

Human Trafficking	Prohibited transportation of individuals often overlapping with the transport of illegal wildlife and other natural resource products.	Jamaica (US Department of State, 2024), Trinidad and Tobago (Seemungal, 2023), Haiti (United States Department of State, 2024a), Dominican Republic (UNODC, 2020a), Guyana (Harrison et al., 2023).
Firearm Trafficking and Illegal Possession	Proliferation of unlawful firearms empowers illegal hunters and fuels violence, creating security threats that overshadow wildlife enforcement efforts.	Jamaica (UNODC, 2020b), Trinidad and Tobago (Douglas, 2024), Haiti (Forero & Córdoba, 2024), Guyana (United States Department of State, 2024b), The Bahamas (Russell, 2022).
Drug Trafficking and Consumption	Smuggling routes for narcotics that frequently coincide with those used for illicit wildlife, complicating detection and prosecution.	Mexico (COHA, 2011a), Trinidad and Tobago (Bledsoe et al., 2023), Haiti (COHA, 2011b), Suriname (Wilkinson, 2024), Bonaire (INTERPOL, 2022).
Illicit Online Trade	Anonymous platforms and e-commerce sites facilitate illegal transactions, masking the origin and nature of contraband goods including wildlife, precious metals, and timber products.	Dominican Republic (OECD, 2022), Brazil (Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, 2024), Trinidad and Tobago (T. Smith & Stamatakis, 2021).
Police Misconduct	Abuse of power among law enforcement officers undermines public trust and compromises wildlife crime investigations..	Trinidad and Tobago (Wallace et al., 2024), Jamaica (Amnesty International, 2021), Barbados (Barbados Today, 2024), Guyana (Singh, 2024), Dominican Republic (Dominican Today, 2023).
Public Sector Corruption	Bribery, favoritism, and embezzlement within government agencies enable wildlife crimes to flourish unchecked.	Guyana (World Justice Program, 2022), Dominican Republic (Sherwood, 2024), Haiti (Reuters, 2024), Trinidad and Tobago (The Gleaner, 2021), Jamaica (The Gleaner, 2021).
Sexual Assault and Exploitation	Criminal networks engaged in sexual exploitation that often overlap with wildlife trafficking rings, creating a vicious cycle of power and transgression.	Dominican Republic (ECPAT International, 2022.), Haiti (UNFPA, 2024), Trinidad and Tobago (Smith et al., 2024), Jamaica (UNICEF, 2022), Guyana (Wickham, 2023).
Property Theft	Illegal seizures that directly affect biodiversity—such as the theft of legally harvested timber or legally kept pet animals—thereby disrupting sustainable livelihoods and management.	Haiti (UNODC & The World Bank, 2007), Trinidad and Tobago (Sutton et al., 2017), The Bahamas (Sutton et al., 2017), Guyana (Hall, 2024), Jamaica (Yagoub, 2017).

Annex D - Draft Recommendation on CAR-WEN

Contracting Parties affirm their support for the establishment and sustained operation of the Caribbean Wildlife Enforcement Network (CAR-WEN) by designating national focal points for the CAR-WEN Working Group and sharing contact details; completing governmental review of the draft Memorandum of Understanding, with a view to enabling signature when opened; actively participating in pilot initiatives; and mobilising financial and technical assistance for regional wildlife crime monitoring, specialised training, and enforcement operations.

**A Memorandum of Understanding to Establish the Caribbean Wildlife
Enforcement Network (CAR-WEN)**

By

The CAR-WEN Working Group

Version 2025.06

A Memorandum of Understanding to Establish the Caribbean Wildlife Enforcement Network (CAR-WEN), Version 2025.06

By the CAR-WEN Working Group

Executive Summary

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) establishes a non-binding framework for the creation of the Caribbean Wildlife Enforcement Network (CAR-WEN), a regional mechanism designed to enhance cooperation among the States and Territories of the Wider Caribbean Region (WCR) in preventing and combating wildlife crime. Rooted in shared commitments to biodiversity conservation, animal welfare, public health, human well-being, and the rule of law, the CAR-WEN aims to strengthen national and regional enforcement efforts through coordination, intelligence sharing, and capacity building.

Developed by the CAR-WEN Working Group and informed by international best practices and regional consultations, this draft MOU outlines the mission, guiding values, and governance structure of the CAR-WEN. It describes key areas of cooperation, including joint enforcement operations, harmonisation of policies and legislation, public education, and engagement with other regional and international wildlife enforcement networks. It also introduces a flexible governance model composed of designated Focal Points, a Chair and Vice Chair, a dedicated Management Unit, and mechanisms for participation by Advisors and Observers.

The document recognises the CAR-WEN as a voluntary platform operating without legal or financial obligations unless otherwise agreed. It remains open for signature by all interested States and Territories of the WCR and serves as a living document to be reviewed and amended as needed.

This version (2025.06) is circulated as a **draft for review and comment**, with a feedback deadline of **30 September 2025**.

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A Memorandum of Understanding to Establish the Caribbean Wildlife Enforcement Network (CAR-WEN)

Participating States and Territories of the wider Caribbean region (hereinafter referred to as “the Parties”),

Recognising that wild fauna and flora are irreplaceable components of Earth’s systems and must be protected for present and future generations,

Acknowledging the ever-growing economic, aesthetic, scientific, cultural, and recreational value of wild fauna and flora, and that the sustainable utilisation of these resources can provide significant benefits to local communities and national economies,

Recognising that effective wildlife enforcement encompasses a range of approaches beyond punitive measures and includes community engagement, education, preventative strategies to address the root causes of wildlife crimes, and mitigation measures to address harms that can no longer be undone,

Emphasising the urgent need for increased regional cooperation by the States and Territories of the wider Caribbean region to combat crimes affecting wild fauna and flora, and the role of regional bodies in facilitating the secure exchange of law enforcement resources and intelligence information among the Parties,

Recalling the recommendation adopted at the 8th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the SPAW Protocol in 2014 to develop a regional Wildlife Enforcement Network,

Referring to the decision of the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in 2016 that directed its Parties to utilise the resources of the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC), such as the *ICCWC Guidelines for Wildlife Enforcement Networks* and the information provided by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in its *World Wildlife Crime* reports,

Noting the recommendations from the 1st Caribbean Regional Wildlife Enforcement Workshop in 2016 in The Bahamas and the 2nd Caribbean Regional Wildlife Enforcement Workshop in 2017 in Barbados, which called for the creation of a regional wildlife enforcement network in the wider Caribbean to facilitate and support the prevention and combating of illegal, unreported, and unregulated wildlife trade, and to promote wildlife enforcement nationally and regionally as essential for sustainable development,

Taking into account Resolution 73/343 adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2019, which encourages Member States to adopt effective measures to prevent and counter wildlife trafficking and poaching and to cooperate at bilateral, regional, and international levels,

Recognising the Lima Declaration on Illegal Wildlife Trade issued at the first high-level conference on illegal wildlife trade in the Americas, held in Lima, Peru, which encourages States and Territories in the Americas to treat wildlife poaching and trafficking as serious crimes and to strengthen cross-border and regional cooperation enforcement networks to improve coordination and the investigation, prosecution, and punishment of wildlife crime,

Referring to Resolution Conf. 11.3 Compliance and Enforcement of the 19th Conference of the Parties to the CITES in 2022 and its recommendations to Parties on strengthening national responses to wildlife trafficking, including their prevention,

Noting the discussions on regional cooperation and wildlife crime law enforcement at the 4th Global Meeting of the Wildlife Enforcement Networks in Panama City, Panama in November 2022 and the many operational regional wildlife enforcement networks around the world,

Recalling the UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 14, Life Below Water, which focuses on conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development, SDG 15, Life on Land, which focuses on protecting, restoring, and promoting sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, and SDG 16, Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, which promotes peaceful and inclusive societies, provides access to justice for all, and builds effective, accountable institutions,

Acknowledging the Lusaka Agreement on Cooperative Enforcement Operations Directed at Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora as a relevant regional agreement from Africa that could serve as a model for regional cooperation,

Recalling the provisions of the SPAW Protocol of the Cartagena Convention aimed at protecting and preserving the marine environment of the wider Caribbean,

Appreciating the contributions of the United Nations Environment Programme, particularly its Caribbean Environment Programme, which aligns with the objectives of establishing and operating a regional WEN in the wider Caribbean,

Acknowledging the support of the Global Environment Facility in projects aimed at biodiversity conservation and combating illegal wildlife trade,

Recognising the importance of the Convention on Migratory Species in addressing the conservation of migratory species, which are affected by wildlife trafficking and other forms of wildlife crime,

Highlighting the relevance of the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing for ensuring that benefits from wildlife use are shared fairly,

Recalling the acknowledgement by signatories to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime that the agreement constitutes an effective tool and

necessary legal framework for international cooperation in combating, inter alia, the trafficking of wild fauna and flora and such associated criminal activities, including but not limited to money laundering, bribery, poaching, and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and recognising the growing links between wildlife crimes and transnational organised crime and terrorist activities,

Noting the ongoing efforts to draft a new protocol under the UNTOC to address illicit trafficking of wildlife, thereby strengthening international legal frameworks for wildlife crime prevention,

Convinced of the urgency of taking effective measures to eliminate wildlife crimes in the wider Caribbean region and that an appropriate framework for combating wildlife crimes will promote such cooperation,

Desiring to create such a network with due regard for the principles of sovereignty and reciprocity,

Recognising further that this Memorandum is not intended to create legally binding obligations under international or domestic law, nor to supersede any national laws or require the Parties to commit financial resources, except as may be agreed upon in separate legal instruments;

We, the Parties, have agreed as follows:

To cooperate and collaborate to the extent practicable and appropriate in keeping with all existing national laws and regional and international agreements in the establishment and operation of a Caribbean Wildlife Enforcement Network (CAR-WEN) open to the participation of all States and Territories of the wider Caribbean region.

Article 1

Interpretation

1. This Memorandum represents the complete understanding between the Parties and supersedes all prior communications and representations, whether oral or written, on the issues raised in this document.
2. “CAR-WEN” refers to the Caribbean Wildlife Enforcement Network, a regional network established by and among the Parties to promote and support the prevention and reduction of illegal wildlife trade and other wildlife crimes through effective and fair wildlife enforcement both nationally and regionally in the wider Caribbean region.
3. “Wildlife” refers to all animal, plant, and fungi species that are undomesticated and have not been genetically modified or selectively bred by humans, as well as the naturally occurring ecosystems and habitats that support and depend upon them.

4. “Values” refers to the foundational ethical, ecological, and social principles that guide the spirit and operation of the CAR-WEN, including but not limited to Animal Welfare, Biodiversity Conservation, Human Well-being, Public Health, and the Rule of Law, as outlined in Article 3 of this Memorandum.
5. “Wildlife Crime” refers to any unlawful activities involving the exploitation of wildlife, including poaching, illegal fishing, trafficking, and other actions that violate national laws and international agreements for biodiversity protection and management.
6. “Illegal Wildlife Trade” refers to the trade, import, export, purchase, sale, or exchange of wild fauna and flora conducted in violation of national laws and international agreements.
7. “Wildlife Enforcement” refers to the implementation of rules and measures contained within, or otherwise derived from, national laws and international agreements for biodiversity protection and management, including activities such as educating, monitoring, investigating, and prosecuting those to which the rules and measures apply.
8. “Wildlife Enforcement Network” refers to a collaborative partnership among governmental agencies, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders dedicated to enhancing wildlife enforcement through cooperation, coordination, information sharing, and joint actions to combat wildlife crimes, typically at the regional level.
9. “Wildlife Enforcement Task Force” refers to a multi-agency coordinating body established at the national level by a Party, comprising representatives from various law enforcement, regulatory, and prosecutorial agencies, and possibly civil society organisations and other stakeholders, aimed at facilitating communication, coordination, and collaboration in the enforcement of wildlife laws and combating wildlife crimes within the Party's jurisdiction.
10. “Wider Caribbean” refers to the geographic area encompassing coastal States and Territories and national and international waters of the Caribbean Sea and adjacent areas of the Atlantic Ocean, south of 30 degrees north latitude.
11. “Parties” refers to the States and Territories participating in this Memorandum.
12. “Focal Points” refers to the individuals designated by each Party to represent its interests in the CAR-WEN, serving as liaisons between their respective governments and the CAR-WEN, responsible for facilitating coordination, communication, and information sharing.
13. “Advisors” refers to experts invited to support the CAR-WEN with specialised knowledge and guidance, including representatives from intergovernmental organisations, academic institutions, civil society organisations, and other relevant

- entities, whose role includes attending meetings, sharing expertise, and providing recommendations to support the CAR-WEN's operations.
14. "Observers" refers to individuals or entities from non-party governments, civil society, multilateral organisations, and the general public who are invited to participate in certain CAR-WEN activities.
 15. "Special Observers" refers to Observers who have been granted additional privileges or roles within CAR-WEN activities, as determined by the Parties, in order to support its operations.
 16. "Chair" refers to the individual elected by the Parties to provide overall leadership and guidance to the CAR-WEN. The Chair's responsibilities include convening and presiding over meetings, ensuring effective communication among Parties, representing the CAR-WEN in external engagements, and making executive decisions for programme and project implementation.
 17. "Vice Chair" refers to the individual who assists the Chair in their duties and acts as Chair in their absence.
 18. "Management Unit" refers to the entity responsible for providing coordination and operational support for the development and conduct of CAR-WEN activities.
 19. "Management Unit Director" refers to the individual appointed to lead the Management Unit.

Article 2

Purpose

1. The purpose of this Memorandum is to provide a voluntary framework for enhanced cooperation and collaboration at the national and regional levels with the overall goal of promoting and supporting the prevention and reduction of illegal wildlife trade and other wildlife crimes through effective and fair wildlife enforcement both nationally and regionally in the wider Caribbean region.
2. We shall use this Memorandum to formalise the creation of a regional CAR-WEN supported by national wildlife enforcement task forces or similar coordinating bodies within each participating Party, recognising that all activities are undertaken on a best efforts basis.
3. The implementation of any project and/or subsequent programmes pursuant to this Memorandum, including those involving the transfer of funds between the Parties, will necessitate the execution of appropriate legal agreements between the Parties.

4. This Memorandum does not in itself give rise to any implication or commitment of financial resources on the part of the Parties unless subsequently agreed by the Parties through an amendment to this document as per the terms of Article 19.
5. This Memorandum is non-exclusive and does not in any way limit or restrict a Party's participation in other wildlife enforcement networks and cooperative bodies concerned with wildlife enforcement.

Article 3

Vision, Mission, and Values

1. The Parties share a vision of a wider Caribbean region free from wildlife crime, where biodiversity and sustainability are embedded in everyday life, and where both people and wildlife prosper in harmony.
2. The Parties acknowledge that the mission of the CAR-WEN is to effectively protect the region's wildlife by preventing, reducing, and mitigating wildlife crimes through collaborative enforcement and proactive engagement with governments, civil society organisations, and citizens.
3. A range of substantive values are foundational to the spirit and operation of the CAR-WEN, emphasising the ethical, ecological, and social dimensions of wildlife enforcement. The values include but are not limited to the following:
 - a. **Animal Welfare.** The CAR-WEN is committed to ensuring that wild animals are treated humanely and with respect for their welfare. This includes efforts to minimise suffering and distress when animals are taken into custody or impacted by trade.
 - b. **Biodiversity Conservation.** The CAR-WEN stands firm in its resolve to protect and conserve biodiversity. This commitment encompasses the preservation of species, the prevention of the spread of invasive species, and the safeguarding of critical habitats.
 - c. **Human Well-being.** The CAR-WEN is committed to promoting human well-being, which includes fostering sustainable livelihoods, enhancing community resilience, supporting education, and promoting good governance. These efforts contribute to the overall well-being and development of societies in the wider Caribbean region.
 - d. **Public Health.** The CAR-WEN recognises the interdependence between human, animal, and ecosystem health. It aims to prevent and mitigate the health risks posed by wildlife crimes that can lead to disease transmission and outbreaks, thereby safeguarding the health of all.
 - e. **Rule of Law.** The CAR-WEN is dedicated to upholding the rule of law,

ensuring that wildlife laws are well-crafted and effectively implemented and enforced. This commitment to legal frameworks reflects an understanding that broad compliance and respect for the law are built upon its fair and responsive design and application.

Article 4

Geographic Scope and Accession

1. This Memorandum is open to participation by the States and Territories of the wider Caribbean region.
2. This Memorandum is also open to participation by adjacent States and Territories that share ecological, economic, or enforcement interests relevant to the objectives of the CAR-WEN.
3. This Memorandum is continuously open for accession by any additional States or Territories of the wider Caribbean region wishing to join in the future. Such accession shall be formalised through the signing of this Memorandum and will take effect immediately upon receipt of the signature by the Management Unit as the designated depository.

Article 5

Areas of Cooperation

1. The Parties agree to participate in the CAR-WEN to address wildlife trafficking and other wildlife crimes in the wider Caribbean by promoting wildlife enforcement nationally and regionally as an essential step to achieve their goals for sustainable development. The areas of cooperation include but are not limited to:
 - a. Focal Points Communications. The Focal Points will establish, plan, and maintain regular communications between the other focal points, their governmental agency(ies), and other related governmental representatives.
 - b. Information Sharing. The timely and secure exchange of information and intelligence on wildlife crimes and associated criminal networks will be facilitated by the Parties.
 - c. Joint Enforcement Actions. The Parties will coordinate and conduct joint enforcement actions against wildlife crimes, leveraging their collective resources and expertise.
 - d. Capacity Building. Training programmes that enhance the technical and operational capabilities of law enforcement, regulatory, and judicial personnel will be developed and implemented with the Parties. This includes

- training in border controls, criminal investigative techniques, legislation, and other relevant areas.
- e. **Harmonisation of Policies and Legislation.** The harmonisation of wildlife enforcement policies, legislation, and priorities to ensure a cohesive and effective regional approach to combating wildlife crimes will be assisted by the Parties.
 - f. **Public Awareness and Education.** Public awareness and education initiatives that highlight the importance of wildlife conservation and the impacts of wildlife crimes on biodiversity and human well-being will be promoted by the Parties.
 - g. **Research and Data Collection.** Research and data collection efforts that improve understanding of wildlife crimes, their drivers, and their impacts will be supported by the Parties. This includes creating and maintaining a regional database on wildlife crimes and enforcement actions to facilitate information sharing and support prudent decision-making.
 - h. **Technical Assistance.** Technical assistance and advisory services that support the implementation of wildlife enforcement strategies and initiatives will be provided by the Parties.
 - i. **Collaboration with Other Networks.** Collaboration with other regional and international wildlife enforcement networks that enhance the effectiveness of global efforts against wildlife crimes will be fostered by the Parties.
 - j. **Funding and Resource Mobilisation.** Fundraising and resource mobilisation efforts that support the activities and initiatives of the CAR-WEN will be engaged in by the Parties. This includes seeking financial and technical support from international donors, governments, and civil society organisations.
 - k. **Monitoring and Evaluation.** A robust monitoring and evaluation framework that assesses the effectiveness of CAR-WEN initiatives and ensures continuous improvement in the network's operations and outcomes will be established by the Parties.
 - l. **Harmonisation with Other Regional Wildlife Enforcement Networks.** To enhance the effectiveness of global efforts against wildlife crimes, the CAR-WEN endeavours to engage in partnerships with other regional and international wildlife enforcement networks to share intelligence, best practices, and strategies, align policies to facilitate cooperation, and participate in joint operations and coordinated actions targeting transboundary wildlife crimes.

Article 6

Governance Structure

1. To ensure effective leadership, coordination, and operational management, the CAR-WEN will be governed by the following roles and responsibilities:
 - a. **Chair.** The Chair is responsible for providing overall leadership and guidance to the CAR-WEN. The Chair’s responsibilities include convening and presiding over meetings, ensuring effective communication among Parties, representing the CAR-WEN in external engagements, and making executive decisions for programme and project implementation.
 - b. **Vice Chair.** The Vice Chair shall assist the Chair in their duties and act as Chair in their absence.
 - c. **Focal Points.** Each Party shall designate at least two focal points to represent its interests in the CAR-WEN. Focal Points are responsible for ensuring their Party’s participation in activities and communication with the Management Unit. Focal Points serve as liaisons between their respective governments and the CAR-WEN, facilitating coordination and information sharing.
 - d. **Management Unit.** The Management Unit provides coordination and administrative support for the CAR-WEN’s activities. The Management Unit shall be led by a Management Unit Director. The unit’s responsibilities include implementing the CAR-WEN’s strategic plans, coordinating meetings, managing communications, and overseeing the execution of projects and programmes.
 - e. **Advisors.** Advisors are experts appointed to support the CAR-WEN with specialised knowledge and guidance. Advisors may include representatives from intergovernmental organisations, academic institutions, civil society organisations, and other relevant entities. Their role includes attending meetings, sharing expertise, and providing recommendations to support the CAR-WEN’s operations.
 - f. **Observers.** Observers from non-party governments, civil society organisations, multilateral organisations, and the general public are invited to participate in public CAR-WEN activities and receive periodic updates. Observers may receive written communications, attend meetings, and provide input but do not have voting rights. Their participation fosters transparency and broadens the network’s perspective.
 - g. **Special Observers.** Special Observers are individuals or entities from non-party governments, civil society organisations, academic institutions, or other stakeholders who have been granted additional privileges or roles

within CAR-WEN activities by the decision of the Parties. These privileges may include: attending specific meetings or sessions not open to general Observers, accessing certain non-public documents or information relevant to CAR-WEN operations, participating in working groups, committees, or task forces to provide expertise or support, or contributing to the development and implementation of CAR-WEN projects and initiatives.

2. Selection Process

- a. The Chair shall be elected by a vote among the Parties and will serve a term of three years. No Party may serve as Chair for more than one consecutive term.
 - b. The Vice Chair shall be elected by a vote among the Parties and will serve a term of three years, concurrent with the Chair's term. No Party may hold the position of Vice Chair for more than one consecutive term.
 - c. The Management Unit Director shall be appointed by the Chair and Vice Chair based on qualifications and experience, with input from the Parties.
 - d. Advisors and Special Observers will be selected based on their expertise and contributions to relevant fields, with nominations reviewed and approved by the Chair and Vice Chair.
 - e. Observers will be selected through an open application process reviewed by the Management Unit and approved by the Chair and Vice Chair.
3. The Chair and Vice Chair may establish additional working groups or committees as needed to address specific issues or projects.

Article 7

Quorum and Decision-making

1. Quorum

- a. A quorum shall consist of at least one-third (1/3) of the Parties, but not fewer than five (5) Parties, whichever is greater.

2. Decision-Making Process

- a. Consensus. Decisions shall be made by consensus wherever possible.
- b. Ordinary Decisions. If consensus cannot be achieved on ordinary matters, decisions shall be made by a simple majority (>50%) vote of the Parties present.
- c. Amendment Decisions. If consensus cannot be achieved on amendments,

decisions shall be made by a two-thirds (2/3) majority of all Parties to the Memorandum, regardless of attendance. Parties unable to attend may submit their votes in advance through written or electronic means, and such absentee votes shall be counted in the decision-making process.

- d. Emergency Decisions. In urgent situations where a timely decision is required, the Chair may make executive decisions subject to voting at the next ordinary meeting or at a special meeting convened as soon as possible.
3. Voting Rights and Procedures
 - a. Each Party shall have one vote. Advisors, Observers, Special Observers, and members of the Management Unit do not have voting rights.
 - b. Voting Method. Decisions are made by open vote unless a secret ballot is requested by any Party.
 - c. Tie-Breaking. In the event of a tie during ordinary decision making, the Chair has the casting vote.
 4. Record of Decisions
 - a. All decisions made during meetings shall be documented in official minutes by the Management Unit, which will be circulated to all Parties within 30 days of the meeting.
 5. Dispute in Decisions
 - a. In the event of a dispute arising from a decision, the Parties agree to follow the dispute resolution procedures outlined in Article 17 of this Memorandum.

Article 8

Legal and Operational Structure

1. The Parties agree to establish a clear legal and operational framework for the CAR-WEN to ensure effective governance, accountability, and adaptability. The structure will be determined, and may adapt over time, based on the following options:
 - a. Contracted Non-Governmental Management Unit. The Parties may contract an external civil society organisation to serve as the Management Unit, handling the operational and legal responsibilities on behalf of the CAR-WEN.

- b. **New Entity Formation.** The Parties may establish a new independent civil society organisation to serve as the management unit and legal representative of the CAR-WEN.
 - c. **Integration with Existing Institutions.** The management unit of the CAR-WEN may be integrated within an existing multilateral organisation, academic institution, or similar entity, leveraging its legal and operational framework.
2. This structure will be designed to support transparent governance, efficient financial management, and operational flexibility, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the CAR-WEN.

Article 9

National Coordinating Bodies

1. To build upon and contribute to the activities of the CAR-WEN, the Parties endeavour to establish, formalise, or strengthen multi-agency national wildlife enforcement task forces or similar coordinating bodies when practicable. These bodies will facilitate communication and coordination between participating agencies/institutions at the national level, including law enforcement, regulatory, and prosecutorial agencies. Specifically, each Party shall:
 - a. **National Focal Points.** Appoint focal points to represent each agency/institution in the national wildlife enforcement task force or similar coordinating body where no existing structure exists, following consultation with the relevant national agencies/institutions.
 - b. **Establish Leadership Positions.** Establish the position of Chair for each national wildlife enforcement task force or similar coordinating body.
 - c. **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).** Develop and agree on SOPs for the national wildlife enforcement task force or similar coordinating body that clearly outlines the role of each participating agency.
 - d. **Judicial Support.** Provide support for the objectives of the national wildlife enforcement task forces or similar coordinating bodies at the judicial level, including the effective prosecution of cases involving wildlife crimes and fulfilling obligations under CITES.
 - e. **National Strategies.** Promote the creation of national strategies to combat wildlife crimes, including both international and domestic illegal wildlife trade.
 - f. **Collaborative Activities.** Collaborate in the activities of the CAR-WEN, including facilitating the detection, investigation, interdiction, and

- b. Special Meetings. Additional meetings may be convened by the Chair or upon the request of at least three Parties to address urgent matters.
- c. Virtual Meetings. The CAR-WEN will utilise virtual meeting platforms to facilitate participation from all Parties, minimising travel costs and ensuring timely discussions.
- d. Annual Conference. The CAR-WEN will convene an annual conference to facilitate deeper engagement, strategic planning, and networking among Parties. This conference will ideally be in-person and organised and hosted by a rotating Party, with support from the Management Unit.

Article 12

Organising Documents

1. To ensure the effective functioning and governance of the CAR-WEN, the following organising documents will be developed, maintained, and periodically reviewed:
 - a. Memorandum of Understanding. This memorandum shall be periodically reviewed for its improvement and adaptation given the challenges and opportunities in the wider Caribbean region.
 - b. Strategic Plan. A comprehensive strategic plan will be developed to outline the priorities, objectives, and key activities of the CAR-WEN for a defined period. This plan will guide the implementation of programmes and projects and will be reviewed and revised periodically to adapt to emerging challenges and opportunities.
 - c. Project Plans. Detailed project plans will be created for each specific initiative undertaken by the CAR-WEN. These plans will include objectives, timelines, resource allocation, and performance metrics to ensure effective project management and accountability.
 - d. Terms of Reference (TOR). TOR documents will be established for all working groups, committees, and advisory roles within the CAR-WEN. These documents will define the scope, responsibilities, and expected deliverables of each entity to ensure clarity and alignment with the CAR-WEN's objectives.
 - e. Annual Reports. The CAR-WEN will produce annual reports summarising its activities, achievements, and financial status. These reports will be shared with all Parties to ensure transparency and accountability.
2. Additional organising documents may be developed as necessary to support the effective functioning and governance of the CAR-WEN. These documents will be created, maintained, and reviewed following the procedures agreed upon by the

Parties.

Article 13

Fundraising and Financial Management

1. The Parties may engage in fundraising efforts to secure the necessary resources for the CAR-WEN's activities and initiatives. The Management Unit will take a leading role in these efforts, with support from the Parties as needed. These efforts will involve:
 - a. **Fundraising Strategy.** The Management Unit will develop and implement a comprehensive fundraising strategy that identifies potential funding sources, including international donors, government agencies, civil society organisations, and private sector partners.
 - b. **Grant Applications.** The Management Unit will prepare and submit grant applications to secure funding for specific projects and programmes that align with the objectives of the CAR-WEN.
 - c. **Financial Management.** The Management Unit will oversee the financial management of the CAR-WEN, ensuring that funds are used efficiently and transparently. The Management Unit will maintain accurate financial records and prepare regular financial reports for review by the Parties.
 - d. **Budget Preparation and Approval.** Annual and project-specific budgets for the CAR-WEN will be prepared by the Management Unit and submitted to the Parties for approval, contingent upon funds being provided or secured through fundraising.
 - e. **Audits.** Regular financial audits will be conducted by an independent auditor to ensure accountability and transparency in the management of the CAR-WEN's funds. The results of these audits will be shared with all Parties.
 - f. **Reporting.** The Management Unit will prepare and submit regular financial reports to the Parties, detailing the income, expenditures, and financial status of the CAR-WEN. These reports will be reviewed during regular meetings to ensure ongoing financial oversight and accountability.
 - g. **Contingency Planning.** The Management Unit will develop contingency plans to address potential financial shortfalls or unexpected expenses, ensuring that the CAR-WEN can continue to operate effectively even in challenging financial circumstances.

Article 14

Intellectual Property and Data Sharing

1. To ensure the effective management and use of intellectual property and data within the CAR-WEN, the following principles and procedures will be adhered to:
 - a. **Intellectual Property Rights.** Nothing in this Memorandum will be construed as granting or implying rights to, or interest in, the intellectual property of the Parties. The Parties will negotiate and agree on terms of its ownership and use in a relevant legal instrument when the Parties foresee that intellectual property that can be protected will be created in relation to any project, programme, or activity carried out under this Memorandum or within the CAR-WEN.
 - b. **Data Sharing.** The Parties shall make best efforts to share relevant data and information to support the objectives of the CAR-WEN. Specific agreements will be arranged to define the scope, security protocols, and use of shared data.
 - c. **Data Security and Confidentiality.** The Parties will ensure that sensitive information is protected according to national and international legal frameworks and agreed protocols. Access to sensitive data will be restricted as per the agreed terms in specific agreements. The Parties will establish and maintain robust protocols for data security and confidentiality to protect sensitive information.
 - d. **Access to Data.** Access to shared data will be governed by the specific agreements mentioned above. Not all data will be accessible to all Parties, particularly if it is sensitive.
 - e. **Use of Data.** Data shared within the CAR-WEN will be used solely for the purposes of advancing the network's objectives, including research, enforcement actions, capacity building, and policy development. Any other use of the data will require explicit consent as outlined in the specific agreements.
 - f. **Publication of Data.** The Parties may publish data and findings resulting from CAR-WEN activities, provided proper attribution is given to the sources and contributors. Joint publications involving multiple Parties will require the agreement of all contributing Parties.

Article 15 **Confidentiality**

1. To ensure the confidentiality of sensitive information shared within the CAR-WEN framework, the following protocols will be established:
 - a. All Parties will maintain the confidentiality of sensitive information and data

shared within the CAR-WEN. This includes adhering to national and international legal frameworks for data protection.

- b. Protocols for handling confidential data will be established, including guidelines for data access, storage, and transmission. Only authorised personnel will have access to sensitive information.
- c. The consequences of breaches in confidentiality will be clearly outlined. This includes disciplinary actions for individuals responsible for breaches and procedures for mitigating any harm caused by such breaches.

Article 16 **Use of the Name and Logo**

1. No Party shall use the name, logo, or trademarks of the other Party, its subsidiaries, or affiliates, or any abbreviation, in connection with its business or otherwise without the express prior written approval of the other Party in each case. In no case shall authorisation be granted to use the name or emblem of another Party for commercial purposes.
2. No Party shall use the CAR-WEN logo for purposes outside of the activities of the CAR-WEN.

Article 17 **Dispute Resolution**

1. To address and resolve any disputes arising from the implementation or interpretation of this Memorandum, the following procedures will be adhered to:
 - a. In the event of a dispute, the Parties will first seek to resolve the issue through direct negotiation and, if necessary, mediation. If the dispute cannot be resolved through these means within a 3 to 6 month timeframe, the matter will be escalated.
 - b. Should mediation fail, the dispute will be submitted to binding arbitration. The arbitration process will be conducted in accordance with mutually agreed-upon rules and procedures. The decision of the arbitrator(s) will be binding on all Parties.
 - c. If necessary, neutral parties or external mediators may be engaged to facilitate the resolution of disputes. These individuals will be selected based on their expertise and impartiality.
 - d. All steps taken to resolve disputes will be documented and reports will be shared with all Parties to ensure transparency and accountability.

Article 18

Amendments and Termination

1. To ensure the flexibility and adaptability of the CAR-WEN, the following procedures for amending and terminating this Memorandum will be established:
 - a. Any amendments to this Memorandum must be agreed upon by all Parties in writing. Proposed amendments will be discussed and approved during regular or special meetings.
 - b. This Memorandum may be terminated by mutual agreement of the Parties, and any Party may withdraw by providing written notice of its intent to withdraw to the Chair and Vice Chair. Termination will be effective upon the completion of any ongoing activities or as otherwise agreed by the Parties. Withdrawal by any Party to this Memorandum will not affect the status of this Memorandum or the remaining Parties to it.
 - c. Provisions will be made for the orderly completion of any ongoing activities and the resolution of any outstanding obligations in the event of termination.

Article 19

Duration and Review

1. This Memorandum will be effective upon signature of at least five (5) States or Territories of the wider Caribbean region and will remain in force indefinitely unless terminated in accordance with Article 18 of this document.
2. This Memorandum shall continue to accept signatures from any State or Territory of the wider Caribbean region beyond the initial signatories, ensuring its adaptability and inclusiveness as regional dynamics evolve.
3. The Parties will conduct a formal review of this Memorandum every five years to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness. Amendments resulting from these reviews will be agreed upon by all Parties and documented as per the procedures outlined in Article 18.

IN WITNESS THEREOF, the duly authorised Representatives of the States and Territories participating in the CAR-WEN sign this Memorandum in English, French, and Spanish, each text equally valid.

1. On behalf of the Government of: _____

Name of Representative: _____

Position: _____

Organisation: _____

Date: _____

Location: _____

Name of Witness: _____

Position: _____

Organisation: _____

[Signature lines for additional participating governments continue.]

**Technical Note to the Memorandum of Understanding for the Caribbean
Wildlife Enforcement Network (CAR-WEN)**

By

The CAR-WEN Working Group

Version 2025.06

Technical Note to the Memorandum of Understanding for the Caribbean Wildlife Enforcement Network (CAR-WEN)

By the CAR-WEN Working Group

Executive Summary

This technical note accompanies the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the establishment of the Caribbean Wildlife Enforcement Network (CAR-WEN), a voluntary, non-legally binding framework designed to strengthen regional coordination in combating wildlife crime. Developed through an inclusive and consultative process involving over 20 Caribbean countries, the MOU for circulation and feedback by governments complements existing commitments under agreements such as the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and outlines a structured, practical mechanism to address enforcement gaps across the region. Stakeholders are invited to submit feedback through multiple channels to inform final revisions, with the goal of achieving a consensus-based MOU by the end of 2025. Subject to regional agreement, the preferred ambition is to open the MOU for signature in early 2026, positioning the CAR-WEN as a timely and strategic step toward more cohesive and effective wildlife enforcement in the Caribbean.

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1. Introduction

This technical note serves as an accompanying document to the draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the establishment of the Caribbean Wildlife Enforcement Network (CAR-WEN). Its purpose is to provide detailed context, clarify the initiative's rationale, outline the proposed MOU's structure, and actively invite stakeholder feedback to enhance the draft further. Importantly, the current MOU is presented as a non-legally binding proposal subject to ongoing governmental review. This approach promotes continued dialogue and collaboration, ensuring the document remains relevant and supported regionally.

The MOU's primary objective is to strengthen regional coordination and collaboration in addressing wildlife crime throughout the Caribbean region. Rather than replacing existing national or international commitments, the MOU is intended as a complementary mechanism to enhance and support these established obligations. The MOU will provide a structured and operational framework, grounded in internationally recognised best practices, designed to facilitate effective collaboration and coordinated enforcement actions among Caribbean nations.

The development of the MOU is founded on principles of consensus-building and extensive consultation. Its drafting process has involved significant stakeholder engagement, ensuring representation and active participation from over 20 Caribbean countries. Regional experts and enforcement authorities have contributed to iterative reviews and refinements, ensuring the final draft reflects comprehensive regional insights and expertise.

The immediate next step involves a dedicated consultation period to comprehensively collect and integrate stakeholder feedback, thereby advancing toward a consensus-based final draft. This feedback-driven process ensures the final document accurately represents regional priorities and effectively addresses practical enforcement needs. The goal is to finalise the MOU and secure signatures from participating Caribbean governments by the end of 2025, establishing a solid foundation for enhanced regional collaboration in combating wildlife crime.

2. Context

The Caribbean region, celebrated for its exceptional biodiversity and unique ecosystems, now faces mounting threats from escalating wildlife crimes. These illicit activities—ranging from illegal fishing, trafficking, and poaching to unauthorised land clearance—undermine not only biodiversity conservation but also the economic and social stability of the region. Given that many Caribbean states are constrained by limited enforcement resources and fragmented national mechanisms, there is an acute need for enhanced regional coordination. A synchronised, cross-border response is essential to close jurisdictional gaps, share intelligence rapidly, and leverage collective capacities to counter increasingly sophisticated criminal networks.

International frameworks such as the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and

Flora (CITES) have long provided a regulatory foundation for wildlife protection. The SPAW Protocol, in particular, has been instrumental in uniting Caribbean coastal and marine stakeholders under a common conservation agenda, while CITES establishes the global standards for regulating wildlife trade. Despite these robust frameworks, the effective implementation of their objectives is frequently hindered by isolated national responses. The proposed MOU to establish the CAR-WEN represents a strategic evolution of these initiatives—a mechanism designed to harmonise enforcement efforts across the region and to build on the principles and commitments outlined in existing international agreements.

In light of the rapidly growing challenges posed by transboundary wildlife crime, the timing for a Caribbean-focused MOU could not be more appropriate. The MOU is conceived as a practical framework that consolidates the diverse resources and expertise of individual governments, thereby enabling a more effective and coordinated response to wildlife crimes. By bridging the enforcement gaps that currently exist, the initiative not only enhances the operational capacity at the national level but also reinforces the region’s collective commitment to sustainable development and environmental security. In doing so, it supports established regional objectives and international obligations that are critical to both conservation efforts and the broader socio-economic stability of the Caribbean.

Moreover, the CAR-WEN initiative is inherently aligned with national priorities and regional commitments. Many Caribbean governments recognise that safeguarding biodiversity is not only a conservation imperative but also a key driver of sustainable economic growth and community well-being. This MOU is, therefore, designed to facilitate cooperation among states, enabling them to pool resources, share intelligence, and coordinate enforcement actions in a manner that strengthens both national and regional capacities. By formalising intergovernmental collaboration within an established legal framework, the initiative promises to deliver a more robust and cohesive approach to combating wildlife crime, ultimately contributing to a safer, more sustainable future for the region.

3. Development of the MOU

Since 2014, Caribbean leaders have recognised the urgent need for a coordinated response to escalating wildlife crime, and early discussions among Parties to SPAW laid the groundwork for a regional enforcement network. This concept was further refined during pivotal discussions at key events, notably a workshop in Nassau, Bahamas, from July 20 to 22, 2016, which convened 55 experts and law enforcement officials, and a subsequent consultation in Bridgetown, Barbados, on May 10 to 11, 2017, which brought together 32 participants. These early engagements produced promising outputs such as a starting draft MOU, a SPAW Protocol Briefing document, and a statement of intent to create the CAR-WEN Working Group. Over time, additional support from international partners—including the Animal Welfare Institute and the International Fund for Animal Welfare—reinforced the concept. However, the initiative subsequently stalled, influenced by factors such as leadership vacancies, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and fluctuating donor enthusiasm.

In 2022, a renewed commitment to the concept was achieved when the current CAR-WEN Working Group was established, now comprising over 40 focal points from government agencies across 20 Caribbean countries and territories, together with technical advisors from civil society and academia. The iterative drafting process that followed was characterised by structured presentations and regular consultations, which ensured that comprehensive feedback was meticulously reviewed and integrated. Throughout this process, the MOU has been guided by internationally recognised best practices, particularly the guidelines of the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC) for Wildlife Enforcement Networks (WENs), and is underpinned by core principles such as the rule of law, effective intelligence sharing, coordinated enforcement, capacity building, and sustainable resource management. With sustained momentum, bolstered by recent high-level events such as the SPAW Protocol COP12 in October 2023, and coordination by Sustainable Innovation Initiatives, this robust and consensus-driven MOU now stands as the cornerstone of a unified, practical framework to enhance regional cooperation and combat transboundary wildlife crime throughout the Caribbean.

4. Overview of the MOU

This section provides a structured overview of the current MOU, designed as a voluntary, non-legally binding framework for coordinated regional wildlife enforcement. The MOU defines key terms and concepts, clarifies participation scope and governance structures, and outlines detailed operational protocols—including decision-making, performance evaluation, and dispute resolution processes. The following table summarises each article’s purpose and content, facilitating focused review and stakeholder feedback. This MOU is designed to complement, rather than replace, existing international commitments and frameworks. By focusing on coordinated, regional enforcement action, it reinforces the objectives already established under instruments such as the SPAW Protocol and CITES while addressing specific enforcement challenges unique to the Caribbean region.

Article & Title	Description
Article 1: Interpretation	Defines key terms (e.g., “Wildlife Crime,” “Illegal Wildlife Trade,” “Wildlife Enforcement”) to establish a clear and operational framework.
Article 2: Purpose	Outlines the MOU’s primary objective of enhancing regional cooperation to prevent and reduce wildlife crimes, operating on a voluntary basis.

<p>Article 3: Vision, Mission, and Values</p>	<p>Articulates the CAR-WEN’s shared vision and mission and sets forth core guiding principles such as Animal Welfare, Biodiversity Conservation, Human Well-Being, Public Health, and Rule of Law.</p>
<p>Article 4: Geographic Scope and Accession</p>	<p>Defines the geographic coverage and outlines an open-accession model for Caribbean states, territories, and adjacent entities with shared interests.</p>
<p>Article 5: Areas of Cooperation</p>	<p>Details the collaborative activities (e.g., information sharing, joint enforcement, capacity building, policy harmonisation) essential for the network.</p>
<p>Article 6: Governance Structure</p>	<p>Specifies the organisational framework and key leadership roles (Chair, Vice-Chair, Management Unit, Advisors, and Observers) to ensure effective coordination and accountability.</p>
<p>Article 7: Quorum and Decision-making</p>	<p>Establishes quorum requirements and decision-making processes, including consensus-building, voting protocols, and tie-breaking mechanisms.</p>
<p>Article 8: Legal and Operational Structure</p>	<p>Provides flexible options for the network's legal and operational model, enabling integration with existing institutions or the formation of a new entity.</p>
<p>Article 9: National Coordinating Bodies</p>	<p>Encourages Parties to establish or strengthen national wildlife enforcement task forces to ensure domestic efforts align with regional objectives.</p>
<p>Article 10: Performance Metrics</p>	<p>Defines key performance indicators and mandates regular reporting to assess the network's effectiveness and drive continuous improvement.</p>

Article 11: Communications	Establishes protocols for regular meetings, special sessions, and the use of virtual platforms to ensure timely and efficient information exchange.
Article 12: Organising Documents	Mandates the development and periodic review of strategic and governance documents (e.g., strategic plans, project plans, terms of reference, annual reports).
Article 13: Fundraising and Financial Management	Outlines mechanisms for resource mobilisation, including fundraising strategies, budget preparation, financial oversight, audits, and contingency planning.
Article 14: Intellectual Property and Data Sharing	Regulates the creation, ownership, and secure sharing of intellectual property and data generated within the network.
Article 15: Confidentiality	Sets strict confidentiality protocols to protect sensitive information and defines procedures for handling breaches.
Article 16: Use of the Name and Logo	Governs the authorised use of the CAR-WEN name, logo, and branding to safeguard the network’s identity from unauthorised commercial use.
Article 17: Dispute Resolution	Provides a structured process for resolving disputes through negotiation, mediation, and, if necessary, binding arbitration.
Article 18: Amendments and Termination	Outlines procedures for amending or terminating the MOU, requiring unanimous agreement and ensuring orderly transition for ongoing initiatives.

Article 19: Duration and Review	Specifies that the MOU takes effect upon signature by the required number of Parties, remains in force indefinitely, and is subject to review every five years.
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5. Process for Review and Finalisation

Several feedback mechanisms have been established to ensure that the draft MOU for the CAR-WEN effectively incorporates comprehensive and representative input from all stakeholders. Stakeholders are invited to submit detailed comments and suggestions via email directly to the CAR-WEN coordinators, Anaadi Pooran at apooran@sii-inc.org and Mark Gibson at mgibson@sii-inc.org, clearly indicating their official position and including any relevant supporting documentation.

For immediate queries or to request a meeting, stakeholders may directly contact Anaadi Pooran at 1 (868) 352-1075 or Mark Gibson at 1 (202) 308-8993 via WhatsApp. All feedback received through WhatsApp will be documented and integrated alongside formal email submissions. Additionally, an online survey linked [here](#) can optionally be used to collect structured feedback and insights on key provisions of the MOU.

The deadline for submitting stakeholder feedback is the **30th September 2025**. Feedback submitted on or before this date will be compiled, organised, and reviewed by the CAR-WEN Working Group to inform subsequent revision of the draft. Submitted feedback will be assessed carefully, considering its practical feasibility, alignment with international commitments, and overall consistency with the objectives of the MOU. Points on which consensus is reached will be incorporated into the updated version, while critical issues that require broader consultation will be brought forward for further discussion during subsequent Working Group meetings.

After integrating the feedback, a consolidated draft will be circulated among stakeholders for final endorsement, ensuring comprehensive representation of the perspectives of government agencies, enforcement bodies, and civil society representatives. The decision to finalise the MOU will be determined by sufficient engagement and agreement from all major stakeholder groups. The consensus reached will serve as the key criterion for moving forward with the finalisation and eventual signing of the MOU.

6. Next Steps for Formal Signing

Following the collation and review of feedback on the draft Memorandum of Understanding, the CAR-WEN Working Group will determine the details of an official signing event to formally launch the CAR-WEN. While specific arrangements have not yet been finalised, the event will

be planned to reflect the significance of this milestone and to promote regional visibility and engagement.

7. Summary

The CAR-WEN represents a strategic and timely evolution in regional wildlife enforcement, emerging from extensive dialogue among Caribbean stakeholders. The MOU—developed through an inclusive process involving over 40 focal points from 20 countries and guided by internationally recognised best practices—offers a robust framework for coordinated action against transboundary wildlife crime. By formalising intergovernmental collaboration, the CAR-WEN not only strengthens national enforcement capacities but also reinforces the region’s collective commitment to environmental security and sustainable development. With its comprehensive feedback and review process and a planned launch designed for maximum impact, the CAR-WEN is poised to become a cornerstone in the fight against wildlife crime in the Caribbean.