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

Kingston, Jamaica,

14 & 16 October 2025

Blue Growth through Green Restoration: Cartagena Regional Seas Convention's Capacity Building on Seagrass Ecosystems project.

For reasons of economy and the environment, Delegates are kindly requested to bring their copies of the Working and Information documents to the Meeting, and not to request additional copies.

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Blue Growth through Green Restoration: Cartagena Regional Seas Convention's Capacity Building on Seagrass Ecosystems project.

Presented by the Joint Nature conservation Committee

Action Requested

Participants are invited to:

1. **Note** the project funded under the Sustainable Blue Economies (SBE) Programme.
2. **Discuss and consider** opportunities to support this project and participation of relevant national experts.

1 Background

1.1 The **Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)** is the UK Government's adviser on nature conservation in international fora. For over 30 years, JNCC has provided trusted scientific evidence and advice to help decision-makers translate science into action. This includes supporting the UK's implementation of international biodiversity conventions such as the **Convention on Biological Diversity** and the **OSPAR Regional Sea Convention** in the North East Atlantic.

1.2 The **Sustainable Blue Economies Programme (SBE)** is part of the UK Governments commitment under the Blue Planet Fund (BPF). The **SBE Technical Assistance Platform** is one component of the wider Sustainable Blue Economies (SBE) Programme which supports **Small Island Developing States (SIDS)** in building resilience to global environmental shifts. By improving ocean management, strengthening livelihood opportunities for coastal communities and promoting nature-based solutions, the SBE programme aims to enhance sustainable economic stability and protect marine ecosystems https://sbe-platform.org.uk/ .

1.3 JNCC is a partner under the SBE Technical Assistance Platform, providing specialist assistance on marine science and management to co-develop with SIDS the evidence, tools and technical capacity needed for environmentally resilient sustainable use of marine resources.

1.4 In line with Decision I.2 adopted at the Seventeenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 17) to the Cartagena Convention, which *urged the Secretariat to continue to leverage resources and expertise from other organisations and projects to help achieve the*

objectives of the Convention and its Protocols, including through the implementation of the 2023–2024/2025 Workplan and support for unfunded activities, this collaboration was proposed to strengthen in particular the implementation of the SPAW Protocol. Through the partnership with the Sustainable Blue Economies Technical Assistance Platform, synergies are being created to channel technical expertise, mobilize resources and build capacity, thereby enhancing regional cooperation and advancing the objectives of SPAW in conserving biodiversity and promoting sustainable use of the Wider Caribbean's marine and coastal ecosystems.

2 Project overview

2.1 This project is funded under the SBE programme and aims to enhance technical capability among SIDS experts, support regional cooperation and knowledge sharing in restoration efforts around the Caribbean, targeting seagrass beds (blue carbon habitat) and its contributions to sustainable blue economies and local livelihoods.

2.2 Seagrass habitats are vital marine ecosystems that play a crucial role in stabilising sediments, filtering pollutants, and serving as nurseries for commercially important fish species. They offer a wide range of essential services, including coastal protection, carbon sequestration, food security, and economic support through fisheries and tourism. These benefits are particularly significant for the resilience and prosperity of SIDS, making the restoration of seagrass not only an environmental priority but also a socio-economic necessity.

2.3 This project supports the implementation of the **SPAW Protocol** under the Cartagena Convention, in particular actions related to ecosystem-based management and restoration.

2.4 Drawing on local, regional, and global case studies, the project will explore both active and passive seagrass restoration techniques to establish best practice guidance. It will also include frameworks for monitoring and evaluating progress, and evidence on the ecosystem services provided by seagrass beds. A combination of desk-based research and stakeholder engagement—through online and in-person meetings—will be used to gather insights into local knowledge, limitations, and challenges across the Caribbean region. Regional workshops will serve as platforms to share findings and encourage dialogue.

2.5 By generating robust evidence on seagrass restoration approaches, indicating their importance to ecosystem services and opportunities for economic benefits, the project will

support existing efforts under the SPAW Protocol to the conservation and sustainable use of coastal and marine ecosystems across the Caribbean. The full project description can be found in Annex 1.