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Eleventh Meeting of the Scientific and
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Areas and Wildlife (SPA) in the Wider
Caribbean Region

Panama City, Panama
30 June – 3 July 2025

DRAFT CARTAGENA CONVENTION ACTION PLAN ON SARGASSUM INUNDATION

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DRAFT CARTAGENA CONVENTION ACTION PLAN ON SARGASSUM INUNDATION

INTRODUCTION

1. Specific tasks of the sargassum working group recommended by STAC10, as expressed in the 2024-2025 Tasks and Chairs of the of the SPAW *ad hoc* Working Groups Annex paragraph 4, are to:
 - Survey Contracting Parties on their needs related to managing Sargassum influx and how such influx may affect their implementation of obligations under the SPAW Protocol and Cartagena Convention, as well as the LBS Protocol, as appropriate.
 - Taking into account the findings of the survey and consultations, as well as any consultations with additional experts as appropriate, update and prioritize the proposed action plan of the Sargassum Working Group in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/7 for consideration by SPAW STAC11 and COP 13.

This document also responds to the COP17/IGM20 decision 9 that request the Secretariat to present a draft action plan developed in response to Recommendation VI of SPAW STAC10, subject to approval by SPAW COP13, to the Cartagena Convention COP18 for decision.

PROPOSED ACTION PLAN

2. Goal: Improve regional cooperation and capacity to effectively manage sargassum inundation events and coastal accumulation in marine and coastal ecosystems in the Wider Caribbean Region, while recognizing the global origins of this issue and need for wider stakeholder engagement.
3. This action plan is intended to serve as a framework that may guide activities related to Sargassum at the national and regional level. The Sargassum working group recommends this action plan to be presented at the next SPAW STAC and COP and Cartagena IGM.
4. The action plan is primarily guided by the Survey Results (UNEP(DEPI)/CARWG.45/INF 26 Contracting Parties needs to managing sargassum inundation survey Report) with inputs from the SPAW STAC *Ad Hoc* Sargassum Working Group and the mandate from the SPAW STAC, with the participation from LBS open-ended working group members. (List of Experts involved in the Action plan elaboration UNEP(DEPI)/CARWG.45/INF 25 Sargassum working group report).
5. This document has been reviewed by the STAC 11 and will be submitted to SPAW COP13 and Cartagena Convention COP18 for decision.

<u>Component</u>	<u>Objectives</u>	<u>Lines of Action</u>	<u>Priority level</u> (High, Medium, Low)	<u>Outputs</u>	<u>Level of action</u>
1. Cooperation, Coordination and Governance	Objective 1.1 Strengthen cooperation between the SPAW and LBS Protocol and regional agencies coordinating implementation of relevant regional plans and initiatives addressing sargassum inundations.	1.1.1 Facilitate coordination of efforts across the region to manage sargassum.	HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify existing sargassum regional coordination mechanisms. Strengthen or create sargassum regional coordination mechanisms. Awareness raised at the global level of the impacts of Sargassum inundation events and coastal accumulation. MOUs/Statements of Cooperation and other concrete demonstrations of collaboration (e.g., joint work plans, co-hosted events) between the Cartagena Convention Secretariat, the SPAW-RAC, LBS-RACs and key regional bodies (E.g., Inter American Sea Turtle Convention, ACS, OECS, CRFM, UNEP etc). 	RACs and secretariats
		1.1.2 Implement integrated and coordinated work plans between SPAW and LBS, as well as strategies, plans, policies or other instruments addressing Sargassum at regional level.	HIGH		RACS and secretariat
		1.1.3 Develop regionally appropriate best practices, procedures and guidelines for response to sargassum inundation events to protect biodiversity and human health.	HIGH		RACs and Secretariats CPs
		1.1.4 Strengthen cooperation with the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management (GPNM) and the Sustainable Nitrogen Alliance (SNA) to improve nutrient management and control contributing to sargassum proliferation outside of the convention area.	MEDIUM		RACS and secretariat
		1.1.5 Prepare briefs for use by regional governments in other Conventions (e.g., UNFCCC, UNEA) to strengthen negotiation positions on sargassum.	MEDIUM		RACS and secretariat
	Objective 1.2 Facilitate coordination among government organizations at the national and subnational level and strengthen links with the private sector to	1.2.1 Support collaboration among subnational government institutions, national government institutions, and the private sector.	MEDIUM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in number of countries benefiting from sargassum inundation-reduction initiatives. Coordinating and collaboration mechanisms developed between subnational and national 	RACs and secretariats
		1.2.2 Coordinate efforts to build capacity related to managing public and/or private sector activities focused on mitigating the impacts of sargassum inundation on coastal ecosystems, biodiversity and coastal communities.	MEDIUM		RACs and secretariats, CPs

	develop/implement sargassum management plans and action to mitigate impacts on biodiversity and coastal ecosystems.	1.2.3 Support for national management plan development and/or update and implementation.	HIGH	governmental institutions and the private sector. • Development of public-private partnerships for the implementation of national plans.	RACs and secretariats
		1.2.4 Involve the CARICOM Regional Organisation on Standards and Quality (CROSQ) in the development of regional protocols and standards for sargassum products to support valorization initiatives.	MEDIUM		RACs and secretariats
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<u>2. Research</u>	<u>Objective 2.1</u> Facilitate/support scientific research to address current priority gaps in knowledge to improve response to Sargassum inundations.	2.1.1 Facilitate/support scientific research assessing and monitoring the impacts of different Sargassum inundation response actions (e.g., beach clearing, use of in-water barriers, in-water harvesting, sinking, storage, disposal, use of sargassum products, disposal of by-products) on biodiversity. Document best practices to address Sargassum inundation. Such efforts should consider the need for observers to report bycatch when Sargassum is harvested in-water.	HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessments and monitoring are informed through interactions with existing information hub partners (e.g., Sargassum Information Hub from IOCaribe and GEO Blue Planet). Monitoring/early warning tool developed or existing tools enhanced, taking into account information provided by citizen science as appropriate. Research papers finding answers to knowledge gaps needed to improve sargassum management in the Wider Caribbean published in peer reviewed literature and key messages broadly shared with regional stakeholders. Standardized procedures to assess and monitor impacts of Sargassum inundation on biodiversity in 	SPAW RAC
		2.1.2 Facilitate/support scientific research assessing and monitoring impacts of sargassum on biodiversity (including species listed in the annexes to the SPAW Protocol), ecosystems, public health, local communities, and other environmental parameters (e.g., heavy metal and metalloids, adsorbed pesticides, associated microplastics and alien species, toxic gases, leachates). Identify standardized procedures and best practices.	HIGH		LBS and SPAW RACs

		<p>2.1.3 Facilitate/support scientific research improving access to information about predictions, movement and tracking of sargassum inundation / beaching events at a meaningful scale for managers (e.g., modeling local currents and wind patterns coupled with open ocean based sargassum forecasts) to improve preparedness for mitigation of damage to coastal marine ecosystems and biodiversity.</p>	<p>HIGH</p>	<p>collaboration with leader institutions (e.g., CERMES). Developing template for data collation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated Sargassum White Paper, “Sargassum Outbreak in the Caribbean: Challenges, Opportunities and Regional Situation,” peer reviewed. Plain language report/website summarising current knowledge on heavy metals and/or metalloid contamination associated with Sargassum for stakeholders. Plain language report/website summarising current knowledge of Sargassum inundation management and response best practices. 	<p>Contracting Parties (National institutions e.g., CERMES)</p>
		<p>2.1.4 Encourage collaboration between regional laboratories to build regional capacity on heavy metal and metalloid testing, and support research into safe alternative uses of Sargassum, including methods to extract arsenic and other heavy metals to ensure safe valorization and disposal of the material.</p>	<p>MEDIUM</p>		<p>LBS RACs</p>
		<p>2.1.5 Facilitate/support scientific research identifying and assessing local drivers (e.g., nutrients or other pollutants) in the Cartagena Convention area that may be contributing to coastal accumulation and inundation events, and evaluate how such research can inform the development of regional nutrient standards currently under consideration.</p>	<p>MEDIUM</p>		<p>LBS RACs and secretariat</p>
		<p>2.1.6 Prioritise development of regional protocols for the extraction of high-value products such as alginates and fucoidans, to encourage establishment of a network of biorefineries throughout the region.</p>	<p>MEDIUM</p>		<p>LBS RACs and secretariat</p>
<u>Component</u>	<u>Objectives</u>	<u>Lines of Action</u>	<u>Priority level</u> (High, Medium, Low)	<u>Outputs</u>	<u>Level of action</u>
		<p>and/or an increase in adsorption of toxic chemicals by sargassum and/or of solid waste (e.g., garbage, microplastics) associated with/ carried by sargassum rafts.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the identification of indicators about local drivers and the collection of practical and concrete data to enhance sargassum inundation responses. 	

3. Response -	Objective 3.1 Promote Sargassum inundation response best practices and capacity building based on scientific evidence, adaptive management and local knowledge	3.1.1 Engage the local community and resources users (e.g., fishers) in improving response operations of Sargassum inundation, taking into account science and local knowledge.	HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of Sargassum response guidelines with best management practices and lessons learned. 	Contracting Parties
		3.1.2 Capacity building activities at regional and national levels to mitigate and manage sargassum inundation.	HIGH		Secretariat, SPAW, LBS-RACs and Contracting Parties
4. Communication and awareness	Objective 4.1 Increase awareness, knowledge and understanding about the impacts of Sargassum inundation in the Wider Caribbean Region.	<p>4.1.1 Host webinars and panels in virtual or in person.</p> <p>4.1.2 Identify key stakeholders and partners.</p>	HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One website at regional level (e.g., Sargassum Information Hub, SargCoop II project) Partnership with Universities and relevant organisations (e.g., GEO Blue Planet, SFU, Texas A & M, UWI) Active Online and if funding permitted, in person Discussion and Coordination among experts at regional level Utilize the SargNet listserv hosted by FIU as a communication channel to promote work of the action plan. Support and reference the Sargassum Podcast given its wide viewership and impactful episodes. 	Secretariat, SPAW and LBS-RAC
5. Sustainable financing resources	Objective 5.1 Enhance access to sustainable financing	5.1.1 Identification and access to funding resources for Contracting Parties, other stakeholders, Cartagena Convention Secretariat and RACs.	HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed priority activities with a budget & timeline within the Cartagena 	Secretariat, SPAW and LBS-RAC
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	resources for sargassum research and response by Contracting Parties, other stakeholders, and the Cartagena Convention Secretariat.	5.1.2 Identification of regional funding gaps for response to Sargassum inundation events.	MEDIUM	Convention, SPAW and LBS workplan.	Secretariat, SPAW and LBS-RAC
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Column definition:

Component: Pillars from the Workplan Proposal in UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/7” and from the topics addressed in the study.

Objectives: Target to achieve.

Lines of Action: Sub-objective oriented towards actions.

Priority: Priority level given to each line of action in relation to the results of the survey and the contributions of the experts of the SPAW/LBS Sargassum working group. Possible choices: High - Medium - Low.

Outputs: List of desired results.

Level of Action: Level of organization involved in the implementation or coordination of the lines of action. This may be the Secretariat of the Cartagena Convention, SPAW RAC, LBS RACs or the Contracting Parties (without specifying a specific State).

Additions to the sustainable financing component

6. **Goals:**

- Identify sustainable financing resources for managing sargassum
- Explore funding opportunities for Contracting Parties to improve research and responses on the ground.

7. Potential funding opportunities and resources could include:

- SARGCOOP II (European Union Interreg Project)
- Green Climate Fund

- INTERREG - European Union program to maximize return on European Regional Development Fund investments; co-finances up to 85% of interregional cooperation project activities; supports research and innovation, SME competitiveness, low-carbon economy, and environment and resource efficiency
- BPI-France – French agency for innovation; supports microbusinesses and SMEs
- Project from Expertise France funded by the Agence Française de Développement (AFD)
- Horizon Europe (European Union projects)
- Global Environment Facility Small Grants Program
- Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
- Global Programme of Action for the protection of the marine environment from land-based activities Strategy 2017-2021
- Bilateral funding agreements
- FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations)

Given the different status of Contracting Parties (SIDS, European, independent, territories, etc.), each option does not cover all Contracting Parties