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Virtual, 30 January – 1 February 2023

**REVIEW OF OPERATIONS, FUNCTIONING, AND FINANCING OF  
REGIONAL ACTIVITY CENTRES AND REGIONAL ACTIVITY  
NETWORKS OF THE CARTAGENA CONVENTION  
WORKPLAN 2022/2023**

*This meeting is being convened virtually. Delegates are kindly requested to access all meeting documents electronically for download as necessary.*



REVIEW OF OPERATIONS, FUNCTIONING, AND FINANCING OF REGIONAL ACTIVITY CENTRES AND  
REGIONAL ACTIVITY NETWORKS OF THE CARTAGENA CONVENTION  
WORKPLAN 2022/2023

#	RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTIONS NEEDED	TIMEFRAME	ACTIONS TAKEN/PROGRESS/COMMENTS	RESPON SIBLE
	<b>CURRENT STRUCTURE AND GENERAL OPERATIONS OF RACs and RANs</b>				
	<b>Secretariat</b>				
	<b>Short-Term</b>				
1	For the sake of clarity and consistency in the use of the terms “ <i>Caribbean Environment Programme</i> ,” “ <i>Regional Coordinating Unit</i> ,” “ <i>Secretariat of the Cartagena Convention</i> ,” the Coordinating Unit should be known externally as the “ <b>Cartagena Convention Secretariat/CEP Secretariat</b> .” The term CAR/RCU should only be used for internal administrative purposes within UNEP.	<i>Accepted and can be implemented with no resource implications or need for new COP Decisions.</i>	<i>Immediate and ongoing</i>	<i>Efforts have started in all communications to refer more specifically to the Cartagena Convention Secretariat.</i>  <i>Use of CAR/RCU is limited to legacy documents and references in UNEP HQ. Use of CEP alone also causes confusion with the Caribbean Sub-Regional Office of UNEP.</i>	
2	To date, no Host Country Agreements nor MOUs concluded with partner organizations contain operational details regarding the relationship between the CEP Secretariat and RACs or RANs, how they function or how they should be financed. Aiming at an enhanced Governance structure, the full scope of the functions and tasks of the Secretariat, reflecting current needs and practices, as well as clear relationship, division of responsibilities with RACs should be outlined, possibly in a format of “Terms	<i>Accepted and can be implemented for new MOUs with no resource implications or need for new COP Decisions.</i>  <i>For changes to existing or new Host Agreements, formal amendments will be required as well as possible new COP Decisions.</i>	<i>Immediate and ongoing for any new MOUs.</i>  <i>Medium-term for Host Agreements</i>	<i>MOUs are standard templates and would not usually have details of operational arrangements. This also applies to Host Government Agreements, one of which was developed before the RAC/RAN Guidelines were developed and a standard template proposed by UNEP HQ. This level of detail might best be reflected within an Annex to these agreements which may be easier to be amended/updated as</i>	

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	<p>of Reference” that outline the basic elements necessary to define a functional cooperative relationship between CEP and RACs/RANs, while also outlining expectations between all parties to the Host Agreement/MOU.</p>			<p><i>appropriate. Additional details on governance of RACs including relationship with focal points and the host government may also be developed.</i></p> <p><i>RACs should be consulted, as appropriate, and advised on any new MOUs being developed/updated by the Secretariat with partner agencies. TORs would be useful to supplement standard agreements without a need for formal amendments. RACs and RANs can also develop MOUs among themselves and with other partner agencies in fulfilling the objectives of the Convention and its Protocols.</i></p>	
<b>Regional Activity Centres</b>					
<b>Short-Term</b>					
3	<p>Reiterate the role and importance of RACs and RANs as an integral component of the institutional framework of the Cartagena Convention, as appropriate, in strategic documents such as the CEP Strategy, and external platforms such as social media, relevant websites, and through communication channels with partner organizations and Contracting Parties, so as to avoid perceptions of burdening or duplicating structures [whether existing or planned in the future].</p>	<p><i>Accepted and can be implemented with no resource implications and/or need for new COP Decisions.</i></p>	<p><i>Immediate and ongoing</i></p>	<p><i>The work of RACs and RANs (partner agencies) being featured in all communication material, websites, social media and there is a new dedicated section for RACs in the CEP Newsletter.</i></p> <p><i>RAC Staff are more actively involved as resource persons and/or presenters for programme/project activities, including participation at events on behalf of the Secretariat.</i></p>	

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				<i>TORs for a consultant to finalize the draft CEP Strategy should ensure the details are provided on the role of RACs and RANs.</i>	
	<b>Medium-Long Term</b>				
4	Considering the <a href="#">current 2008 RAC/RAN Guidelines</a> as appropriate, future new Host Country Agreements or eventual amendments should contemplate incorporating elements regarding self-financing, outside its core operations and maintenance, as well as relationships on functioning/reporting among the CEP Secretariat, the RACs and RANs.	<p><i>Agreed.</i></p> <p><i>As much as possible, ensure staff of RACs benefit from relevant capacity building provided to beneficiary countries through the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) and/or other externally funded projects being implemented/executed by the Secretariat.</i></p> <p><i>Review existing Host Agreements to ensure they accurately reflect the current situation of each RAC.</i></p> <p><i>Include in this text “<b>and financing by projects</b>” to this recommendation.</i></p>	<p><i>Ongoing</i></p> <p><i>Immediate</i></p> <p><i>Ongoing</i></p>	<i>This should be incorporated into the updated RAC/RAN Guidelines and would be an ongoing effort of the Secretariat. This can include how RACs and the Secretariat interact at meetings including formal meetings of the Secretariat and where RACs are able to present on work at the Secretariat in the absence of Secretariat representation. There should be advance agreement on issues such as reporting, presentations made, outcomes and follow-up action etc.</i>	

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		<p><i>In the design and implementation of new projects, have RACs more directly involved in the development and implementation of such projects.</i></p> <p><i>Promote, as appropriate, enhanced participation of RACs at external meetings in support of the overall work of the Secretariat.</i></p>			
5	<p>There has been long-standing significant support from civil society and the NGO community to the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols, particularly the SPAW Protocol. There is ample room for this engagement to be further continued and expanded with definition of a specific/formal cooperation programme, with meetings and associated deliberations of interested civil society organizations/observers as a component of the institutional framework of the Cartagena Convention, a similar process exists under the Barcelona Convention. Such recognition in turn may contribute to the financial sustainability of RACs and RANs and enhance the operational effectiveness of the Cartagena Convention.</p>	<p><i>This is a substantial issue that should be considered in the development of new MOUs, involvement of NGOs and CBOs in the work of the Secretariat, and in the update of the RAC/RAN Guidelines including new RACs and RANs as well as development of bilateral agreements between a RAC and potential NGO/civil society partner. There is a need to also ensure that RACs, RANs and the Secretariat do not compete for the same external funding.</i></p>	Ongoing	<p><i>Possibly consider a dedicated section for civil society in the CEP newsletter.</i></p> <p><i>Include civil society and NGO engagement in the Knowledge Management Strategies.</i></p>	

#	RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTIONS NEEDED	TIMEFRAME	ACTIONS TAKEN/PROGRESS/COMMENTS	RESPONSIBLE
<b>Governance Structure</b>					
<b>Short-Term</b>					
6	Current Governance structures for each RAC need to be finalized and made fully functional, and developed in the case of SPAW-RAC, and should form part of the RACs' respective Strategies. Other terms that need to be developed for the SPAW-RAC include the composition, terms of reference, and reporting requirements for both Steering Committees and Advisory Boards as appropriate, with submission for the endorsement of Contracting Parties.	<p><i>Explore ways to allow more engagement and feedback from the focal points directly to the RACs and the Secretariat.</i></p> <p><i>Encourage RACs to take the lead role in the convening of future STAC meetings, similar to what has been institutionalized in the Barcelona Convention. Carefully evaluate the most appropriate governance structure to oversee the work of the RACs building on what already exists.</i></p>	Ongoing	<p><i>Current work through the CETA sub-programme of the Secretariat is aimed at greater engagement of focal points including creation of dedicated country pages on the Secretariat website.</i></p> <p><i>The SPAW RAC Strategy is under development and should be completed by the next SPAW STAC where it will be presented for endorsement.</i></p> <p><i>SPAW and LBS RACs to play a more integral role in preparation for the STACs scheduled for Nov. 22 based on ongoing work.</i></p> <p><i>The aim would be to have a COP Decision supporting the lead role of RACs in future STACs.</i></p>	
7	Finalization of the Host Country Agreement between the Government of Cuba and UNEP, considering in as much as feasible, aspects outlined above and including excluding any provisions for regional activities of the RAC being financed by the Caribbean Trust Fund.	<i>Finalize Host Country Agreements</i>	Ongoing	<i>A draft host agreement (Spanish version) has been circulated among the environmental authorities in Cuba (CITMA) that is being reviewed. It is hoped that with the input of the new Coordinator, this can be finalized and signed before the end of 2022.</i>	
<b>General Operations and Functioning</b>					

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	<b>Short-Term</b>				
8	Develop mechanisms and a schedule to increase regular communications between the Secretariat and RACs as well as among RACs, which should also include regular strategic meetings with the participation of partner organizations and other stakeholders, with corresponding reporting and follow-up on decisions.	<p><i>Conduct regular exchanges and meetings with the RACs to better understand their operations/activities.</i></p> <p><i>Enhance communication between the Secretariat and the RACs on key activities through scheduled meetings and E mail updates.</i></p> <p><i>Include RACs in the development of the Protocol Workplans.</i></p>	Ongoing	<p><i>The Secretariat relaunched the quarterly newsletter with the aim of increasing communication.</i></p> <p><i>It was agreed that RACs would be more involved in Programme Meetings as well as dedicated RAC Coordination Meetings and, when applicable, Working Group Meetings. The appointment of a Chair for the LBS Working Group is ongoing.</i></p> <p><i>The <a href="#">Regional Eutrophication Workshop</a> to be held from 25-27 July will have a dedicated day for discussions among all RACs to enhance cooperation.</i></p> <p><i>Meetings should be carefully planned and scheduled with a clear agenda to avoid meeting overload. Where possible, allocated time at already existing/scheduled meetings should be used.</i></p>	
9	Develop Terms of Reference for the Focal Points for each RAC and National Focal Points, to define the main tasks expected to be performed by Focal Points in order to enhance the relationship between Member countries and the Secretariat and RACs,	<i>Include in the TORs of Focal Points, the main items related to their communication between National Focal Points, RACs and the Secretariat.</i>	Aug 2022	<i>Draft could be developed by the Secretariat and presented as an Information Document to the next STACs. The list of Focal points and technical persons was updated as a</i>	



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	including the preparation of a "Focal Point Kit," with key documents and decisions, aiming at assisting Focal Points in the delivery of their functions.	<p><i>Review the guidelines of RACs and RANs and consider the recommendations provided in this report to guide the revision of these guidelines.</i></p> <p><i>Develop a welcome package for new Focal Points on the Convention and the Protocols to assist with the handover from previous Focal Points. This should be included in the CETA Workplan and for presentation to the next Convention COP.</i></p>	Q1, 2023	<p><i>first step to ensure representation of countries.</i></p> <p><i>The welcome package has been included in the CETA Workplan to be developed for presentation at the next Convention COP.</i></p>	
10	Define procedures for communication with Contracting Parties/Member Countries, which should leave coordination and policy issues to the RCU, whereas RACs would communicate on technical matters.	<i>Ongoing discussion on a case-by-case basis</i>		<i>In some cases, it would be appropriate for communication to be channeled through the Secretariat. There should also be the flexibility for RACs to interact directly with their respective protocol focal points, keeping the Secretariat in copy, as appropriate.</i>	
	<b>ON-GOING medium-long term</b>				
11	Foster development by the Secretariat of joint programming and strategic planning among RACs to implement workplan for each Protocol and for the design of joint	<i>Provide internal training on the role of the Secretariat, orientation to all focal points, and</i>			

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	<p>projects where possible, mapping synergies among areas of work/cross-cutting issues. To that end the development of Medium-Term strategies for each RAC would be desirable and an approach for more integrated workplans, including defined targets and indicators, which would allow for increased monitoring and accountability.</p>	<p><i>identify opportunities for broader capacity building. Develop a spreadsheet outlining the resources available within each RAC which could be used for joint activities (i.e., technical collaboration).</i></p> <p><i>Each RAC could share their programme of activities. This could be used to identify areas where other RACs could participate.</i></p> <p><i>RACs may need to develop capacity building in seeking grant funding from donor agencies or other funding sources.</i></p>			
12	<p>Design projects with a bottom-up approach and in line with workplans, in greater consultation and input from Focal Points and stakeholders/partners, specially from RANs, with specific tasks and responsibilities defined for the roles of the Secretariat, RACs and RANs in their implementation.</p>	<p><i>Communicate with the RACs on the projects that could form part of an overall workplan.</i></p> <p><i>Outreach should ensure that the 'base' is provided with more information. In addition to a bottom-up approach, information needs to flow down from the Secretariat as well.</i></p>	Ongoing	<p><i>RAC Coordination meeting convened in July 2022 identified specific areas for further collaboration. These will be presented in a separate report.</i></p>	

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		<i>This would be valuable to solicit information/ideas that might be helpful in decision making.</i>			
<b>Regional Activity Networks</b>					
<b>Short-term</b>					
13	Contracting Parties to reaffirm the coordination role of the RACs towards the work and operation of a RAN and the need of approval by Contracting Parties for designation of an institution as a RAN, as per current 2008 Guidelines.	<i>No action needed.</i>		<i>This should be a consistent message by the Secretariat to focal points and all RACs.</i>	
14	Develop and sign MoU between the Secretariat and the Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network -WIDECAST, which has functioned as a RAN for decades.	<i>No final decision was made.</i>		<p><i>It was felt that a formal MOU may not be necessary but further discussions could take place at the SPAW STAC and COP to agree on the best way forward.</i></p> <p><i>The rationale here was that moving forward, increased consistency would be sought in governance structures and formalizing relationships between the Secretariat and RANs.</i></p>	
<b>ON-GOING medium-long term</b>					
15	Contracting Parties to refine and reconcile the concept of RACs and RANs, through an amendment to the current 2008 Guidelines, to closer reflect their evolution in terms of role and operations since the Guidelines were adopted in 2008, e.g., regarding "Definitions" and "Establishment".	<i>There is an urgent need to review and update the 2008 Guidelines adopted by Parties. While some immediate operational matters can be addressed, it would be best to have a</i>	<i>Mar 2023-Dec 2023</i>	<i>A consultant will be needed to update the Guidelines. This should be done once the new CEP Strategy is endorsed and should be based on a Decision of the next Cartagena Convention COP.</i>	

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		<i>COP Decision on the need for such an update which would better clarify the roles of the RANs.</i>			
16	Workplans for RANs to be developed via close consultation with RACs and the Secretariat, with definitions of roles, targets and indicators, in line with workplans of each sub-programme under the Convention, and with the goals, expertise and capacities of RANs.	Agreed with the initial focus being for the RACs.	<i>Ongoing</i>	<i>Work Plans of RACs should be formally incorporated into the Biennial Work Plans presented to COPs while work of RANs could be provided as information papers or as opportunities for future collaboration.</i>	
17	Explore opportunities for the possible creation of new RACs/RANs to further focus the scope of action for programme implementation and active engagement of partners within the institutional framework of CEP.	<i>Agreed. This should be led by the Secretariat working directly with existing RACs especially where there are potential areas of overlap and/or duplication with any new proposals received.</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>	<p><i>A Marine Mammal RAN project was requested by SPAW Contracting Parties at the last COP to build on the CARI'MAM project and work has begun by SPAW RAC (to be finalized by September 2022).</i></p> <p><i>Some agencies have expressed an interest in being a new RAC for the Convention, but no detailed discussions have yet taken place.</i></p> <p><i>The establishment of new RACs should be informed by guidelines and definition of roles/responsibilities to avoid duplication of efforts amongst RACs and build on best practice examples from other Regional Seas Conventions. Funding is also an</i></p>	

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				<i>important consideration in the creation of new RACs.</i>	
<b>Financial aspects</b>					
<b>Short-term</b>					
18	Harmonize budget planning in respective workplans and reporting formats for each RAC and RAN, with clear breakdowns for core contributions from Host Countries as appropriate [permanent staff and maintenance costs], additional non-permanent staff, activities and project funds [secured and required].	<i>Agreed. This has been done for the AMEP Sub-programme and should be done for SPAW in a harmonized manner.</i>	<i>Sep to Nov 2022</i>	<i>The presentation of budgets across the RACs needs to be consistent. A template will be developed by the Secretariat and shared with RACs to ensure consistency with how the biennial budget is submitted to Contracting Parties.</i>	
<b>ON-GOING medium-long term</b>					
19	Explore new resource mobilization avenues for RACs and RANs, as integral part of CEP Resource Mobilization Strategy, including possible voluntary Fund/Trust in support of the Cartagena Convention, to complement, not replace the CTF, funding core Secretariat functions, initiatives and/or projects that ensure progress towards achieving agreed targets.	<i>This element should be included in the TORs for the consultancy to finalize the draft CEP Strategy. This will incorporate an internal Secretariat Resource Mobilization Strategy (RMS). The RMS should also reflect resource mobilization opportunities for the RACs.</i>	<i>July-Dec 2022</i>	<i>Funds under ACP MEA project identified to support this consultancy. TORs to be developed by end of August for consultant selection by end of September.</i>	