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Eleventh Meeting of the Scientific and Technical  
Advisory Committee (STAC) of the Protocol  
Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife  
(SPA W) in the Wider Caribbean Region

Panama City, Panama  
30 June – 3 July 2025

## PROJECT UNDER DEVELOPMENT: SARGCOOP II

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

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## Table of Content

1. ACRONYMS	ii
2. PROJECT SUMMARY	iii
3. CARTAGENA CONVENTION AND SPAW STAC RECOMMENDATIONS	1
4. PROJECT SYNTHETIC DESCRIPTION	1
5. SCOPE OF THE PROJECT	4
6. PARTNERSHIP AND BUDGET	4



## 1. ACRONYMS

AFD	French Development Agency ( <i>Agence française de développement</i> )
ACS	Association of Caribbean States
ADEME	French Ecological Transition Agency
ANR	French National Research Agency
CNES	National Centre for Space Studies
COP	Conference of the Parties
CRG	Regional Council of Guadeloupe
EU	European Union
INTEC	Santo Domingo Institute of Technology
LEGOS	Space Geophysics and Oceanography Laboratory
OECS	Organization of Eastern Caribbean States
RAC	Regional Activity Centre
SPAW	Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife
SPAW RAC	Regional Activity Centre for the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife for the Wider Caribbean Region
STAC	Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee
UNECLAC	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNOC	United Nations Ocean Conference
WCR	Wider Caribbean Region
WP	Work Package

## 2. PROJECT SUMMARY

### Context

The influx of sargassum is recognized as a critical phenomenon in the Caribbean, affecting all countries and territories in the region and beyond. It is a major problem for governments, which have to deal with it with limited capacity, resources, equipment, tools and knowledge about sargassum. Recognizing the need for understanding of the issues and **cooperation at regional level**, this project aims to fill critical gaps in **knowledge, and provide decision-makers and managers with tools** to take action and strengthen regional collaboration in order to manage the **impact of Sargassum influxes on biodiversity**.

The Secretariat and SPAW-RAC are invited to collaborate with relevant regional fora, including the Sargassum Information Hub, the GEO Blue Planet Initiative and the UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission Sub-Commission for the Caribbean (IOC-UNESCO) and Adjacent Regions (IOCARIBE). The emphasis is on coordination with global initiatives and studying the needs of the contracting parties. (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/4).

### Project objectives

- Strengthen regional governance on the influx of Sargassum in the Caribbean.

### Activities

The operational objectives of SPAW-RAC in SargCoop II are:

1. To develop or complete the biodiversity component of a **regional biodiversity action plan** to improve sargassum management practices in the Caribbean and the cooperation of efforts (WP6 Internationalization)
2. Improve **knowledge of** the effects and impacts of Sargassum influxes on the coastal and marine environment and associated biodiversity (WP5 Effect & Impact)
3. Conduct a needs and feasibility study for a biodiversity layer on a **tool for monitoring** Sargassum influxes on sensitive marine environments (WP2 Cluster)
4. Strengthen **communication and awareness of the ecological value** of sargassum and good management practices. (WP1 Project coordination and management).

### Calendar

The SargCoop II project will last 3 years from 2025 to 2028.

### Budget SPAW-RAC

The overall budget for this European union funded Interreg project is 5.766 million euros over 3 years. The SPAW-RAC budget within this project is 947 000 euros over 3 years.

### SPAW-RAC role

The SPAW-RAC is a technical partner, and lead for the actions described in the chapter on operational objectives.



## **SARGCOOP II PROJECT: Sargassum influx & Biodiversity in the Wider Caribbean**

### **3. CARTAGENA CONVENTION AND SPAW STAC RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations of the last STAC in 2022 on the subject of sargassum indicate that:

“Contracting Parties engage in and contribute to relevant fora, as appropriate, including the Sargassum Information Hub and the Sargassum Working Group coordinated by the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) Blue Planet Initiative, as well as the IOC of UNESCO Sub-Commission for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions (IOCARIBE), as well as, as appropriate, the SARGCOOP Program.

Upon request, the Secretariat and SPAW-RAC, as appropriate, continue coordination and collaboration with relevant regional and global initiatives to study the causes of and promote synergies and solutions to coastal Sargassum influxes, within the scope of the SPAW Protocol and the Cartagena Convention, and provide information on SPAW and its work to such fora.” (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.43/4).

The 2021 Sargassum Action Plan, presented at the 9th session of the SPAW Protocol's STAC, aims to improve regional and global coordination to effectively manage Sargassum. It comprises five main components - governance, research, management, communication and awareness-raising, and sustainable financial resources - with specific objectives, lines of action and results. The aim of the SargCoop project is therefore to work in collaboration with other players in the region on this issue and to help implement the recommendations of the action plan on a Caribbean scale.

### **4. PROJECT SYNTHETIC DESCRIPTION**

1. Since 2011, Caribbean countries and territories have been considerably affected by sargassum inundations. Several territories and regional organizations of the Caribbean region are affected by this phenomenon, which is hampering their sustainable development. This has prompted them to join forces to find shared solutions.
2. SargCoop is a Caribbean programme launched in 2019 and funded by the EU for regional and inclusive cooperation on Sargassum matters through the Interreg programme<sup>1</sup>. The mission of

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1. <sup>1</sup> [INTERREG Caribbean](#)<sup>1</sup>, which has existed since 2000, is a cooperation program aiming at strengthening Caribbean

the project is **to pool resources, increase scientific knowledge and share best practices to develop effective and global strategies that address Sargassum's impacts in the Caribbean region, across the board**. The program ended in 2023, but the stakeholders decided to conduct a second part. The solutions funded via SargCoop I must be reinforced and improved. The assessments drawn from SargCoop I should also be re-evaluated in light of the economic costs of Sargassum proliferation & strandings. Information should be clarified and disseminated broadly across all communities. Alert responses must become more operational and immediate while technical valorization processes should be amplified. Research & technical surveys/studies, seminars, and prototypes for valorization will be developed with SargCoop II.

3. The overall objective of SargCoop II is to leverage the outcomes of the first programme and launch the activities lined up as a result **to strengthen regional governance of the Sargassum issue in the Caribbean**. The project is intended **to strengthen cooperation on the environment and the protection of natural habitats between the Caribbean states and territories**.
4. The specific objectives are the following:
  - To put the Sargassum issue on the public agenda at various scales: local, national, regional and international o increase our comprehension and knowledge of this multifactorial phenomenon
  - To bring the right information to the right person and train all stakeholders that play a key role on Sargassum in the region
  - To prevent and to manage more efficiently the Sargassum stranding's affecting the Caribbean territories that will be part of the programme.
5. This **3 years project** will be financed by the EU via the Interreg Caribbean Programme as well as non-governmental organizations and international development agencies.
6. The project will be organized in five work packages (WP) and the SPAW RAC will lead or contribute to four of them:
7. **Work package 1: Steering and Monitoring of the programme**
8. Led by the Regional Council of Guadeloupe, in charge of overseeing, implementing (administratively, financially and technically) as well as ensuring full compliance of the programme with the Interreg Caribbean regulatory framework. The Regional Council of

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cooperation between European French territories (Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Martinique and Saint-Martin) and other Caribbean territories and states, notably for protecting and promoting the natural and cultural environments.



Guadeloupe will also have to make sure that Communication obligations as per the Interreg Caribbean funding scheme are disseminated to, implemented and known by all partners and stakeholders.

9. Moreover, this leadership includes providing translation and interpretation services for all activities of the programme, in three working languages (English, French, Spanish): this applies to all documents and deliverables pertaining to the project. The Regional Council of Guadeloupe will have to ensure that the Steering Committees and Working Group meetings for each Work Package take place; and those deliverables are consistently produced according to the defined timelines.

#### **10. Work package 2: Cluster**

11. Co-leadership is to be ensured by OECS & the Regional Council of Guadeloupe. In addition, ADEME and SPAW-RAC will be leading specific activities within that Work Package.
12. The Cluster is one of the first programme's achievements: the second edition's ambition is to expand it; by examining ways of pooling existing information portals — such as the Sargassum Hub — and by establishing this Cluster legally. Another goal is to enhance the existing platform/portal and write a training programme over the 3-year duration of SargCoop II.

#### **13. Work package 3: Collection & Valorization**

14. The co-leadership of this work package is ensured by ADEME (France) and INTEC (Dominican Republic). The Overseas Collectivity of Saint-Martin will also take the leadership of specific activities within this WP.
15. Its areas of focus include identifying innovative techniques relative to algae collection — especially in areas closer to shores — as well as storage and pre-processing processes; and to draw from the EU's recent market study on valorization sectors, so as to pinpoint potential paths worth exploring. One of the key tasks of this WP3 is to organize a Trade Fair to shed light on the diverse technical processes and progresses made since the 2019 edition.

#### **16. Work package 4: Observation**

17. Leadership will be ensured by the Overseas Collectivity of Saint-Martin and Mercator Ocean International. Active members who will take charge of specific activities will include the Government of Sint-Maarten and the French National Centre for Space Studies.
18. One of the core challenges of this WP is to go beyond remote sensing, into more observation. This raises the question of using cameras, drones, as well as human observers, in a coordinated and efficient manner.

**19. Work package 5: Effects & Impacts**

- 20. To be co-led by the Regional Council of Guadeloupe and the OECS. One of the (active) members to conduct activities within this WP will be SPAW-RAC.
- 21. The core issue addressed by this WP is the measurement of Sargassum effects and impacts on Caribbean territories; in regard to public health, economic activities, primary industries such as fisheries and tourism. It will also deploy the air quality network pre-defined in SargCoop I, based on the preliminary studies that helped identify locations in several member territories, where remote sensors will be installed as part of the programme's second edition.

**22. Work package 6: Internationalization**

- 23. Co-led by the Regional Council of Guadeloupe and SPAW-RAC. Active members include all strategic partners and stakeholders of SargCoop II.
- 24. Its primary objective is to advance the determination of the legal qualification, status and framework applicable to Sargassum in the Caribbean region. A second objective aims at establishing regional advocacy to amplify the region's weight and voice in legal, economic and political aspects relative to Sargassum. The third one is to conduct an international initiative on Sargassum by putting it on the agenda of UNOC.

**5. SCOPE OF THE PROJECT**

- 25. The project will be carried out in an area including all the Caribbean region.
- 26. This project has **a strong regional ambition**. To achieve this, it will be necessary to seek the endorsement of the countries and territories, as well as the involvement of the field stakeholders.

**6. PARTNERSHIP AND BUDGET**

- 27. The lead Partner of the project is the Regional Council of Guadeloupe (CRG) who already led the project SargCoop I.
- 28. Other partners have committed to participating in the project, such as: the OECS (Organization of Eastern Caribbean States), the French Ecological Transition Agency (ADEME), Collectivity of Saint-Martin, Mercator Ocean International, Space Geophysics and Oceanography Laboratory (LEGOS), GEO Blue Planet, United Nations Economic Commission for Latin

America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC), French Development Agency (AFD), Santo Domingo Institute of Technology (INTEC), Collectivity of Saint-Barthelemy, Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources (Mexico), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic, Ministry of the Environment and Energy (Costa Rica), Association of Caribbean States (ACS), Trinidad Institute of Maritime Affairs, Ministry for Overseas France, Université des Antilles, French National Research Agency (ANR), Connect by CNES, EU Delegation to Barbados, EU Delegation to the Dominican Republic.

The total budget of the project is 5.766 million euros for 3 years. The SPAW-RAC budget within this project is 947 000 euros over 3 years. SargCoop II project has been an awarded INTERREG Caribbean, it is co-financed by 85%.