

**Updated guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of the Regional Activity
Centres and Regional Activity Networks for the Cartagena Convention
(REV 4) 2025**

REVISED VERSION Of the RAC_RAN Guidelines rev3 2008, Consolidated version for the 13th IGM which include the observation of all States and Organisations which participated in the working group – 10/09/2008

UNITED

NATIONS

EP



**United Nations
Environment
Programme**



UNEP

Distr.
LIMITED

UNEP(DEC)/CAR.IG.24/CRP.9 Rev.1
17 November 2006

Original: ENGLISH

Twelfth Intergovernmental Meeting on the Action Plan for the Caribbean Environment Programme and the Ninth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region

Montego Bay, Jamaica, 29 November – 2 December 2006

**GUIDELINES FOR ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATION OF REGIONAL
ACTIVITY
CENTRES AND REGIONAL ACTIVITY NETWORKS FOR THE CARTAGENA
CONVENTION (Rev 1)**

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ACRONYMS

AMEP	Assessment and Management of Environmental Pollution
CC	Cartagena Convention or Convention for the protection and development of the marine environment of the Wider Caribbean Region
CCS	Cartagena Convention Secretariat, hosted by UNEP-CAR/RCU
CEP	Caribbean Environment Programme
CIMAB	The Centre of Engineering and Environmental Management of Coasts and Bays (CIMAB), hosting a Regional Activity Centre (RAC) for the Protocol concerning Pollution from Land-based Sources and Activities
CPs	Contracting Parties
COP	Conference of the Parties
CTF	Caribbean Trust Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IGM	Intergovernmental Meetings
IGO	Intergovernmental Organisations
LBS	Land Based Sources of Marine Pollution
LME	Large Marine Ecosystem
MEA	Multilateral Environment Agreement
MMAP	Marine Mammal Action Plan
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPA	Marine Protected Area
NbS	Nature-based Solutions
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OLP	Oil Spill Protocol
RAC	Regional Activity Centre
RAN	Regional Activity Network
SAMOA	Small Island Development States Accelerated Modalities of Action
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SOCAR	State of the Convention Area
SPAW	Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife protocol
SPAW RAC	Regional Activity Centre for the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife protocol
STAC	Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee
ToR	Terms of Reference
WCR	Wider Caribbean Region
WIDECAST	Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle network

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The establishment and operation of Regional Activity Centres (RACs) and related Regional Activity Networks (RANs) have proved to be very effective ways for governments and the Caribbean Environment Programme (CEP) partner organisations to implement cooperative measures and programmes called for by the Cartagena Convention (CC) and its Protocols and through Decisions of Contracting Parties (CPs).
2. The general objective of RACs and RANs is to contribute to the improvement of the marine and coastal environment and the promotion of sustainable development in the Wider Caribbean Region (WCR) by assisting, in their respective fields of activity and expertise, in the implementation of the Cartagena Convention, its Protocols and the Regional Cartagena Convention Strategy.
3. These guidelines are intended to provide guidance on the establishment, coordination, and operations of Regional Activity Centres (RACs) and Regional Activity Networks (RANs) under the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region - the Cartagena Convention. In particular, they will assist in the evaluation of the administration and functioning of existing RACs and RANs and of new RAC and RAN proposals as they arise.
4. This document is a revision of the 2008 guidelines, as requested by the Twentieth Intergovernmental Meeting on the Action Plan for the Caribbean Environment Programme (CEP) and Seventeenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region through decision V on Governance and is in alignment with recent UNEP general and regional marine policies development. They have been developed in consultation with, the Secretariat of the Convention (UNEP-CAR/RCU) and other participating governments, organisations or institutions responsible for RACs and RANs and approved by the CC contracting Parties.
5. These guidelines are intended to enhance transparency, accountability, efficiency and coordination of the RACs and RANs at both the regional and global levels.

II. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

6. The Cartagena Convention Secretariat (CCS) is responsible for the coordination of the Cartagena Convention (CC), its protocols and related activities, decided upon by the Contracting Parties (CPs).
7. The Cartagena Convention has three supporting Protocols: The Oil Spills Protocol, the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife Protocol (SPA) and the Land-Based Sources of Pollution Protocol (LBS).

8. Under the general coordination and guidance of the Cartagena Convention Secretariat, RACs and RANs are established to support the coordination and implementation of activities as requested by the Contracting Parties (CPs) and/or the Secretariat in the implementation of biennial work plans and responding to the Conference of the Parties (CoP) Decisions. Therefore, they are instrumental to the advancement of the Cartagena Convention and/or its Protocols.
9. In order to ensure the coordination of actions, it is important to clearly indicate which Protocol(s) and sub-programme (s)^[1] a RAC or RAN is serving and ensure complementarity of expertise and synergy of activities -and their reporting-, avoiding duplication but also allowing to identify the areas of contribution to the work of the Secretariat as a whole.
9. RACs and RANs are not intended to use funding from the Caribbean Trust Fund (CTF) unless, specific permission is granted by the CoP and the Secretariat.

III. DEFINITIONS: REGIONAL ACTIVITY CENTRES (RACs) AND REGIONAL ACTIVITY NETWORKS (RANs)

10. RACs and RANs represent an institutional framework of Wider Caribbean regional and technical cooperation for the purpose of coordinating and implementing activities in support of the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols in a systematic manner, facilitating the exchange of information and technical expertise and providing the resources required for implementing project activities and responding to CoP Decisions.

11. **A Regional Activity Centre (RAC)** is an international, regional or national organisation with regional focus, which has been designated by the Contracting Parties to the Cartagena Convention to coordinate or carry out specific technical functions and activities in support of the Convention and its Protocols (existing or new). The primary objective of the RAC is to strengthen the delivery of activities in support of the Convention and its Protocols and the science-policy-society interface through decentralising the work, building regional institutional capacity and addition of human and financial resources from a member country, another UN or international organization, non-governmental organisation, or any other organisation as decided by the COP.

12. **A Regional Activity Network (RAN)** is a network of technical institutions or individuals (including inter alia governmental, intergovernmental, international, non-governmental, scientific or academic institutions) that provide input, peer review, technical expertise or other supporting services (i.e. communication, networking, capacity building or awareness raising), in one or more scientific or technical areas covered under the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols through its coordinating mechanism as designated by the Decision of Parties. The primary objective of the RANs is to enhance the science-policy-society interface and the level and depth of

cooperation and sharing of expertise in the WCR related to the implementation of the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols.

***PART ONE: GUIDELINES ON THE ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATIONS OF
THE RACs***

IV. OBJECTIVES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE RACs

13. All RACs will strive to enhance the impact and visibility of the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols and the coordination of the implementation of the Convention and its Protocols in close cooperation with the Secretariat (UNEP CCS). They will pursue, among others, the following objectives:
 - (a) To maintain regular contact with the Secretariat and other RACs and RANs for coordinating holistic, integrated and synergetic action;
 - (b) To foster and catalyse regional knowledge production and exchange among RANs, national, regional and international organisations, civil society and research institutions related to the relevant scientific and technical aspects of the Convention and its Protocols;
 - (c) To compile, update and disseminate data, reports and provide technical advice in an appropriate form to the governments of the region, in particular in response to the COP Decisions and in coordination with RACs, RANs, Scientific and Technical Advisory Committees (STACs) and working groups of the Convention and/or its Protocols;
 - (d) To facilitate the provision of technical and scientific assistance (i.e. expertise, training, consultancies) and capacity building activities to Contracting Parties, other governments and organisations as appropriate;
 - (e) To provide technical support and participate in outreach activities to increase the ratification of the Cartagena Convention and its protocols in the Wider Caribbean Region;
 - (f) To advise on the establishment of new RACs and RANs, and support their effective integration and complementarity of actions;
 - (g) To assist the CCS with the implementation of activities and projects and the mobilisation of funding to ensure the achievement of Convention/Protocol objectives;
 - (h) To collect information on state-of-the-art technology and support its transfer and adaptation by Parties as required for the implementation of the Biennial Work Plans and Decisions of Contracting Parties;

- (i) To ensure effective and targeted communication to the public and decision makers and support awareness on the Cartagena Convention and its protocols and activities;
 - (j) To enable an open access to the related Cartagena Convention information available to governments of the region, as well as to any partner organisations, institutions and members of the RANs, among others;
 - (k) To foster scientific and technical cooperation and synergies within the WCR, LAC region and other regions or global initiatives and partners e.g. UN specialised agencies, intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental organisations;
 - (l) To promote and undertake the implementation of specific activities individually or jointly in cooperation with e.g. other RACs, RANs, UN specialised agencies, intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental organisations as appropriate and in coordination with the CCS;
 - (m) To promote accessibility to data sources for regional environmental monitoring and transdisciplinary cooperation on complex and holistic regional challenges as the impact of climate change; and
 - (n) To support advice in the prediction of regional challenges and needs (foresight action) and provide evidence to inform national and regional responses to emerging issues and new policy frameworks- in particular for most vulnerable societal groups and Small Island and Developing States (SIDS).
14. The RACs will provide overall supervision, technical guidance and administrative oversight for the implementation of general and specific activities to implement the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols, as assigned by the Contracting Parties and the CCS. Among other functions, the RACs will:
- (a) Assist at the scientific and technical levels, as well as programmatic and managerial as appropriate, with the coordination of the implementation of programmes, projects and activities in support of the Convention and its Protocols and in responding to COP Decisions;
 - (b) Supervise and coordinate the implementation of activities as requested by the Contracting Parties in consultation with CCS;
 - (c) Provide technical, equipment/facilities and administrative support as appropriate for the implementation of programme and/or project activities;
 - (d) Ensure the effective coordination and synergetic cooperation with other institutions and individuals, in particular other RACs and RANs;

- (e) Assist in the enhancement of regional knowledge and technology exchange platforms including coordination of national, regional and international initiatives, institutions and experts;
- (f) Assist in the mobilisation of relevant expertise and funding to support programme and project implementation or capacity building when required by the parties or the Secretariat;
- (g) Assist and provide advice to the CCS on specific technical matters and programme development through coordination with related STACs, working groups, RANs, and other relevant partners when needed;
- (h) Report bi-annually to CCS and the Contracting Parties on their activities and participate, as appropriate in any related meetings called by;
- (i) Promote effective cooperation and exchange with other RACs and participate in joint meetings when required by the CCS;
- (j) Coordinate and ensure the effectiveness of the Working groups under their area of expertise and support the exchange with other protocols working groups as appropriate;
- (k) Provide technical assistance, training and research inputs to the sub-programmes and projects of the CCS;
- (l) Assist in resource mobilisation for specific activities, to fulfil the goals of the Convention its Protocols, to be implemented by the RAC as requested by the Contracting Parties;
- (m) Monitor and advise on new and emerging challenges and support the mobilisation of experts to fill in knowledge gaps when needed;
- (n) Enhance the science-policy-society interface by articulating interdisciplinary scientific cooperation and exchange within the Wider Caribbean Region and at the global level, with special focus on SIDS and vulnerable groups and communities-

V. ESTABLISHMENT OF RACS

V.i) NECESSITY

15. New RACs are to be established, or the scope of existing RACs redefined, in order to fill in technical and scientific knowledge gaps in support to the Decisions of the Contracting Parties, enhance the technical capacity of the CCS, assist in mobilising additional financial resources, and facilitate activities to implement the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols.

16. A RAC, as a technical institution, should have the capacity to implement projects using its own staff, finance and facilities/services as defined in its establishment agreement with the Convention Secretariat (CCS).

17. The hosting institution can be a) UN regional or International organisation; b) Regional institution (existing or specifically created to host the RAC) or c) National institution with regional focus (existing or created to serve purpose).

18. RAC's should be hosted by institutions with demonstrated competency, technical capacity and regional focus on one or more areas of the Cartagena Convention and its protocols or able to offer cross cutting services such as inter alia (inter alia) on: Communication and awareness, capacity building and training, community engagement, networking and knowledge sharing, resource mobilisation, foresight capacity to address new and emerging challenges, or any other activities aiming at supporting the implementation capacity of the Secretariat or the Contracting Parties.

19. Several possible options exist with respect to the total number of RACs. Any one of the following options may be selected depending on the RAC objectives and capacity to best serve the needs of the Convention, its Protocols, and following the decision of the Parties:

- A single RAC coordinating the implementation of several of the technical activities of a Protocol or related programme under the Convention;
- Multiple RACs coordinating the implementation of multiple activities under a single Protocol or related programme under the Convention. Where the work plan for a specific protocol (or its supporting sub-programme) is large in terms of the number and size of activities, a single RAC may be unable to coordinate the implementation of the activities. It may therefore be necessary to utilise multiple RACs. Additionally, where the nature of the work plan for a specific protocol (or its supporting sub-programme) is such that its activities are highly varied, multiple RACs may be needed to provide the specialised inputs that may be required by the different activities.
- -Single RACs coordinating and implementing actions across Protocols and programmes depending on needs, for example: related to the interdisciplinary nature of the themes (i.e. Climate Change, Blue Economy, Marine Spatial Planning, etc.); its urgency or emergency (i.e. Ocean Acidification, Oil spills, Algal blooms, Natural disasters, Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction); to the cross cutting nature of the theme or service provided (i.e. Communication and Awareness, Marine Observation, Resource mobilisation, Societal engagement, etc.) or by its specialisation and vulnerability focus (i.e. SIDS, Women, Youth, Indigenous and Local Communities, etc.).

V.ii) GENERAL CRITERIA FOR RACs NOMINATIONS

20. In determining which of the above-mentioned options would be most feasible when establishing new or redefining existing RACs competencies, the **following will be considered:**
- The human and physical infrastructure capacity will determine the nature of activities that it can effectively implement.
 - The number and category of staff (research, technical, managerial, financial, and/or administrative) will inform the type of activities a RAC should implement.
 - The level and nature of the specialisation of a RAC will determine the types of activities that it can implement. Where a RAC is highly specialised then its ability to coordinate the implementation of activities will be limited to those which fit into the RAC's area of specialisation. At the same time, a RAC that is highly specialised should serve complementary functions or research themes that are not available within the CCS or other existing RACs.
21. Besides the above-mentioned considerations, some **specific criteria** should be assessed when considering the establishment of new RACs. These may include but not limited to the following, which should form part of any new RAC nomination process initiated by the proponent host country, for further decision of approval by Contracting Parties:
- a) Level of complementarity/overlap of services and technical expertise with other RACs (and RANs) need to be ensured prior to the consideration of new RACs to avoid duplication of efforts and resources.
 - b) Sufficient human and physical capacity ensured by the possession of sufficient human resources having the requisite technical, administrative, financial, and managerial expertise. Additionally, the institution must possess or be able to access office space, equipment and other physical resources required to carry out the activities of the RAC.
 - c) The research capacity of the organisation- as reflected in their technical, scientific or academic expertise in a particular or multiple subject areas- should be recognised regionally as being able to provide specialised assistance to the CCS and Contracting Parties.
 - d) The institution should have well-known technical capacity as to provide scientific evidence to inform policy formulation and decision making by the CCS and Contracting Parties.
 - e) The organisational and governance structure of the RACS should be sufficiently flexible to enable its full role. The staff must have expertise in the use of strategic planning tools, budget tracking and financial reporting. It must also possess efficient management systems in particular oriented to establishing short, medium- and long-term goals. These systems should be in accordance with established practices and procedures.
 - f) The selection of a RAC will be aiming, when possible, at a balanced geographical distribution of the centres that allow for a maximum representation of all the cultural and geographical sub-regions within the Wider Caribbean.

- g) The RACs should aim for communication in the three UN official languages of the Convention- English, French and Spanish- and have personnel or translation budget to allow it.
- h) Linguistic diversity would also be encouraged when considering new proposals as well as the capacity to communicate and produce outputs in the three working languages (English, French and Spanish) of the Convention.
- i) Proven foresight capacity and community work expertise to anticipate and respond to upcoming or urgent regional coastal and marine challenges as identified by the Contracting Parties and within the scope of the Convention and its Protocols will be considered
- j) The institution should demonstrate a high level of long-term commitment to supporting Parties in implementing their obligations under the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols and biennial work plans of the CCS;
- k) RACs should be financially self-sustaining and have appropriate financial management and monitoring/reporting mechanisms in place.

V.iii) PROCEDURE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF RACs

22. RACs will be established using the following framework- unless otherwise decided by Parties:

(a) A RAC proposal should include how the proposed RAC meets the criteria outlined in these Guidelines and should include details of the operational procedures d include in this Guidelines paper. The RAC nomination proposal should include i.a. detailed information on the proposed structure (legal and governance), financial sources, roles and staff, reporting capacities and oversight provisions consistent with the activities to be performed. The proposal should be submitted by the proponent host country to the CCS for prior review and comment before transmission to the Contracting Parties for consideration and/or approval.

(b) A decision to establish a RAC is to be made by the Contracting Parties. This decision should indicate the scope of the RAC in terms of topics, geographical coverage, activities and budget-, as well as any other provisions or mandates that Contracting Parties wish to establish. The decision should also authorize the CCS to start the negotiation of appropriate agreements with the host government or appropriate organisation.

(c) CCS will negotiate the agreement with the proposed RAC hosting government or organisation that is consistent with the UNEP legal requirements and with any other provisions or mandates that Contracting Parties had established, and the ones in this Guidelines. Although the agreement may vary from RAC to RAC, it should specify the nature and type of contribution being offered by the host government or appropriate organisation, the administrative relationship between the RAC and the CCS, the mechanisms for transfer of funding, the characteristics and funding of staff. This agreement will be provided to the Contracting Parties for information and final approval.

VI. RACs FUNCTIONING

VI.i) ADMINISTRATIVE

23. Critical to the effective and efficient functioning of the RAC will be its relationship with the Convention and/or its Protocols. Though the legal status may vary from RAC to RAC and no one arrangement may fit all situations, this relationship must be clearly defined in the decision of the Contracting Parties and through a formal agreement elaborated subsequent to that decision with the CCS.

24. The administrative relationship must show linkages to the Convention and/or one or more Protocols to ensure adequate oversight of the work of the RAC by the CCS and ensure accountability to Contracting Parties.

25. The Contracting Parties may, through decision, delegate their supervisory role to the relevant Protocol Conference of the Parties (COP), STAC, or Steering Committee who would report back to the COPS for further decision, as needed.

26. The Contracting Parties, may at any time request that the agreement between CCS and a Host Government or Organisation for a RAC be terminated if they determine that a RAC is not operating consistently with the decision establishing such a RAC, UN rules and code of conduct that apply to the Secretariat, or if they otherwise decide that a RAC's operation no longer furthers the goals and objectives of the Cartagena Convention. The Contracting Parties may not delegate their termination authority. Such a substantive decision will be made in accordance with the Rules of Procedure for the Convention.

27. The relevant organisation or host government of the RAC may establish the RAC within any legally established institutional structure that has or will develop the required physical, scientific and technical capabilities. Other institutions in the host country may be selected to provide additional technical and scientific support or facilities to the RAC.

28. The relevant organisation or host government will provide access to physical and digital infrastructures, technical equipment and communication and management systems to ensure the effective functioning of the RAC. The host government organisation will ensure the provision of funding for the operating costs of the RAC in accordance with the terms of the relevant agreement. Annex I provides examples of the type of in-kind contributions that a government may make when proposing to host a RAC.

29. Each RAC will maintain its own administration for personnel, procurement, travel, and other support functions according to the RAC strategic plan. Matters concerning personnel should be clearly defined. In the case of a RAC hosted by a UN regional or international organisation, personnel will be selected and hired by the relevant international organisation. For the other types of RACs, the host government may select a dedicated RAC director or assign that role to RAC staff in consultation with the Secretariat. In all cases the governance arrangement for the RAC including selection and hiring of dedicated RAC staff should be specified in the agreement to establish the RAC.

VI.ii) OPERATIONS

30. Each RAC will prepare and periodically update their Strategic Plans, covering a six year period, which should be revised by the CCS and submit for approval by the Contracting Parties.
31. In consultation with the CCS and in accordance with approved Strategic Plan, each RAC will prepare a biennial work plan and budget for the approval of the Contracting Parties using a prescribed UNEP format
32. . RACs should work with the Secretariat to develop the Draft Work Plans and Budgets to be submitted to appropriate meetings as per Rules of Procedure for the Convention and its Protocols.
33. Each RAC will submit to the CCS half-yearly progress and financial reports following the prescribed UNEP format for this purpose and/or at frequencies determined by specific donors. Upon completion of any activity or project the RAC will submit a final report using the prescribed UNEP format.
34. The CCS will take appropriate action on the questions raised in the progress reports and administrative and financial reports made by the RACs in due time.
35. When a RAC is willing and able to redefine or expand the areas or roles to enhance its contribution to the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols, a formal request will be made to the COP including a justification in line with the criteria indicated in the articles 20 and 21 of these guidelines.
36. RACs may be engaged to support technical, scientific and financial aspects of project implementation. The political and policy aspects of project development and implementation will be coordinated by the CCS.
37. The CCS will provide direct programmatic supervision of RAC activities, that are part of the approved biennial Work Plan or respond directly to COP Decisions unless other arrangements are made by decisions of the Contracting Parties.
38. The CCS should be informed of any RAC staff changes as they arise. RACs will be informed on any changes in the designation of National and Protocol Focal points for their related protocol(s) in due time. The designation of NFPs alternates is encouraged as to ensure parties participation in the CC and protocols meetings.
39. With respect to communications, the following will apply:
 - communications on technical matters related to specific activities should be between the RAC designated contact person (s) as determined through discussions with the CCS and the relevant partners (i.e national authorities, protocol focal points, participating institutions or members of the RANs). The CCS should be included in all such communications, in addition to the summaries contained in the RACs' half-yearly progress reports.
 - the only official channel of communication on political and policy matters between the Contracting Parties and RACs should be through the CCS.
40. Each RAC is expected to coordinate workplans and collaborate closely with the other RACs of the Convention and its Protocols in accordance with their own medium-term strategies approved by Parties. Such collaboration should be based, in particular on the exchange of technical knowledge and experiences and working methods and coordination towards the implementation of the CC and its protocols.

41. Therefore, it is recommended that RACs meet regularly and when needed or convened by the CCS or the COP. These meeting can be organised both online and in-person whenever possible and in the occasion of the Cartagena Convention COP meetings and/or other related meetings and events.

42. RACs should also initiate and/or maintain a working relationship among themselves and with relevant RANs to ensure enhanced coordination and integration across the various protocols. This should be done in coordination with the CCS that will share updates on any staff changes in RACs.

43. RACs are expected to develop and maintain collaboration, as appropriate, with other institutions and entities with mandates from other intergovernmental processes in the region and at the global level other Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans and their RACs.

44. Development of legal instruments to facilitate such collaborations may be signed between the CCS, RACs and/or other agencies in line with UNEP rules and policies and/or the existing rules and policies of the Host Country Government.

VI.iii) FINANCE

45. Any institution wishing to become a RAC must be able to do so at their own expense. Costs should not be incurred by the CCS as a result of the establishment and operation of the RAC.

46. RACs will not be funded by the Caribbean Trust Fund (CTR) -except when funds are being provided by donors, expressly for the RAC and using the CTF as a means of transfer.

47. The RAC or host government or host organization will provide the initial resources (physical and digital facilities, human and financial resources) for the establishment and operating costs of the RAC. However, it is not envisioned that the RAC or host government or host organization will necessarily provide all the funding needed for the implementation of relevant COP Decisions and/or all unfunded activities in biennial work plans.

48. Any proposed RAC institution should have a demonstrated ability to mobilize funding to cover its operational costs as a RAC and to attract donor funding for project implementation, consistent with the objectives of the Cartagena Convention and its relevant protocols, its approved biennial work plans and/or COP Decisions.

49. RACs may develop and implement a strategy to attract additional resources (financial and human) and in accordance to their strategic plan and the Resource Mobilisation Strategy of the CCS, from sources including the Contracting Parties, donor countries and organisations, private sector, and the civil society organisations.

50. If a RAC apply for funding to implement their strategic plan and work plans, it should be in agreement and coordination with the CCS. The CCS would be expected to coordinate and support, as appropriate, any RAC/Host Government request to a donor as part of their resource mobilisation efforts and strategy. Funding for this implementation may be obtained from various donors including international financial institutions, bilateral partners, regional and international development agencies, the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), foundations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the private sector.

51. RACs should have mechanisms in place to manage and report on various sources of funding, including contributions from the host institutions or government, transfers from the Secretariat, voluntary contributions, and project funding from external donors meeting the standards set by the Secretariat, Contracting parties and donor organisations

52. RACs should not rely on the CCS to source project funding but the Secretariat can outsource technical activities to RACs at a competitive cost as part of their activities
53. In addition to the submission of biennial work plans and budgets, the RAC will submit, to the CCS, as appropriate, expenditure reports for external funds provided to the RACs through contractual agreements with the CCS for selected projects and/or activities following UNEP's format for this purpose.
54. Working meetings of the RAC can be online or in person depending on needs and resources of the RAC host government, host organisation or other donors as part of project funds.

PART TWO: GUIDELINES FOR THE REGIONAL ACTIVITY NETWORKS (RANs)

VII. OBJECTIVES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE RANs

55. As per definition in article 12 of this guidelines, the primary objective of the RANs is to enhance the science-policy-society interface and the level and depth of cooperation in the WCR related to the implementation of Cartagena Convention and its Protocols.

56. All RANs will strive to enhance the impact and visibility of the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols and the coordination of the implementation of the Convention and its Protocols in close cooperation with the Cartagena Convention Secretariat (CCS) and their RACs. With these general aims, RANs will pursue, among others, the following objectives:

a) To support coordinated and synergistic action by liaising regularly with the Secretariat, RACs, RANs, Conventions and Protocol National Focal Points, relevant project management organisations, and other actors linked to the Cartagena Convention and their Sub-programmes

b) To contribute to the regional integration and solidarity of the WCR in the areas of the on the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols;

c) To support, as required, knowledge production and/or exchange of practices with the CCS, RACs, other RANs, regional and international organisations, civil society and research institutions related to the advancement of the CC and its protocols;

d) To compile, update and disseminate data, reports and information and provide technical advice in an appropriate form to the CCS when required as to support the response to the COP Decisions and in coordination with RACs and other RANs; the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committees (STAC) and working groups of the Convention and/or its Protocols among others

e) To participate in public engagement, education, outreach and dissemination activities including the promotion of the ratification of the Cartagena Convention and its protocols in the Wider Caribbean Region and to Non - Contracting Parties;

f) To advise on the establishment of new RANs, and support their effective integration and complementarity of actions, when needed;

- g) To assist the CCS and RACs in resource mobilisation and project proposal development in support of the objectives of the Convention and its Protocols;
- h) To enable the sharing of practices and knowledge in the WCR, including through open access platforms, to with the Secretariat and governments of the region, as well as relevant partner organisations, institutions and members of the RACs and RANs, among others;
- i) To foster coordination, cooperation and synergies within the WCR, as well as with the LAC region and others and/or relevant global initiatives and partners specially, civil society organisations and partners;
- j) To promote and undertake the implementation of specific activities individually or jointly in cooperation with e.g. other RACs, RANs, UN specialised agencies, intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental organisations as appropriate based on the request of the CCS;
- k) To promote transdisciplinary and community based actions and projects in the CC areas
- l) To support foresight action and provide evidence to inform national and regional responses to emerging issues and challenges and new policy frameworks when requested.

57. The RANs will provide input, peer review, technical expertise or other supporting services (i.e. communication, networking, capacity building or awareness raising) , in one or more scientific or technical areas covered the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols through its coordinating mechanism as designated by the Decision of Parties.

58. Among other functions, the RANs will:

- (o) Assist with the provision of scientific data and information and advice in support of the Convention and its Protocols when required
- (p) Provide support as appropriate for the implementation of approved biennial work plans of the Secretariat and responding to COP Decisions;
- (q) Promote coordination and cooperation with other institutions and individuals, in particular other RACs and RANs;
- (r) Assist in the mobilization of relevant expertise and resources to support programme and project implementation or capacity building actions when required by the parties or the Secretariat
- (s) Provide periodic reports to the CCS and related RACs on their activities and participate, as appropriate in any related meetings called by them;
- (t) Assist with fundraising for activities, to fulfil the goals or emerging needs of the Convention and/or its Protocols, with special focus on Community based projects, SIDS and vulnerable groups including women and youth;
- (u) Enhance the science-policy-society interface by enhancing stakeholder engagement and interdisciplinary cooperation and exchange within the WCR

VIII. ESTABLISHMENT OF RANs

VIII.i) NECESSITY

59. New RANs are to be established or the purpose of existing ones redefined, as initiated by Secretariat, RACs or any of the Parties, in order to provide or enhance the technical or implementation support to the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols.

60. [Click here to enter text.](#) Some general criterion will be assessed for consideration of the necessity to establish a new RAN or re-defining existing ones competencies that shall be properly justify in the official candidature to the CC Secretariat and Contracting Parties:

- a) support the achievement of the objectives of the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols;
- b) disseminate information relating to the Convention and its Protocols in the region and/or their respective countries and/or at the international level
- c) contribute, through a specific project or programme, to the implementation of the biennial work plan of the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols and/or in responding to COP Decisions;
- d) contribute to data generation, awareness-raising and dissemination of information;
- e) provide advice relating to the work of the CCS, RACs or other RANs;
- f) share, as appropriate resources, publications, documents, information and/or opinions at the request of the CCS, RACs or RANs relating to their own field(s) of competence.

61. RANs can also provide support to the CCS and the RACs, on cross cutting issues such as: Communication and awareness, capacity building and training, community engagement, resource mobilisation, foresight capacity to address new and emerging challenges, or any other activities aiming at enhancing the implementation capacity of the Secretariat; RACs or other RANs, as appropriate and decided by the COP.

VIII.ii) GENERAL CRITERIA FOR RANs NOMINATIONS

62. A RAN is a network constituted by multiple partners or individual experts although its coordination or secretariat can be hosted by a single institution. This institution can be an international, regional or national organisation with regional focus and operational regional network of partners .

63. The hosting institution can be UN or international or regional organisation; academic or research institution; civil society organisation or any other legally constituted in the WCR which possess specific expertise in thematic areas of relevance to the work of the CC and its protocols.

64. Besides the general considerations previously stated RANs shall comply with the following specific criteria:

- a) Have a constituted legal status and facilities in any of the WCR countries terms of reference, objectives and scope of activities related to one or more areas of the CC and its Protocols;
- b) have proven relevant regional action and expertise as organisation or through its staff;
- c) provide biennial reports to the STACs or COPs of work carried out in support of the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols and COP Decisions from;

- d) demonstrate long term commitment to the protection and sustainable use of coastal and marine resources within the WCR;
- f) have a strong regional presence and action in the WCR;
- g) demonstrate proof of technical or scientific competence on issues related to the activities of the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols;
- h) demonstrated added-value and relevant contributions to the CCS, the RACs and COP in the implementation of the work plan and COP Decisions of the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols and assisting Parties in meeting their national obligations under the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols;
- i) have appropriate managerial and financial capacities as well as accredited monitoring/reporting mechanisms in place.

65. RANs are not entitled to use funds from the Caribbean Trust Fund (CTF), unless through a specific COP Decision by the parties to authorise it.

66. The selection of a RAN should be aimed at the maximum representation of all the cultural and geographical sub-regions within the Wider Caribbean Region, specially SIDS.

VIII.iii) PROCEDURE FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF A RAN

67. The establishment of a new RAN aims at enhancing the advancement of the CC in the region and should be guided by the following:

- a) The nomination of a new RAN can be initiated and/or endorsed by a contracting partner, a RAC or the RAN itself, through a formal request to the CCS.
- b) The nomination request should justify how the proposed RAN meets the criteria outlined in these Guidelines and should include detailed information on its operational procedures- including the RAN legal structure and governance financial management and budget, reporting mechanisms, and other oversight provisions- which should be consistent with those found in this Guidelines Paper and the CCS legal requirements and United Nations System rules and code of ethics.
- c) The RAN nomination proposal will be revised by the the CSS in coordination with the relevant RAC or RACs as to ensure that it is completed and once reviewed submitted to the Contracting Parties for its consideration and approval.
- d) This proposal should clearly indicate the scope of the RANs in terms of i.a. topics, geographical coverage, proposed activities and complementarity with other RACs and RANs, facilities, personnel and budget timeline and/or any other provisions or mandates that the CCS or the Contracting Parties wish to establish.
- e) CCS will negotiate the appropriate agreement with the proposed RAN organisation that is consistent with the approved TOR and any other provisions or mandates that Contracting Parties had established in its approval, and the ones in this Guidelines.

IX. FUNCTIONING

IX.i) ADMINISTRATIVE

68. Critical to the effective and efficient functioning of the RANs will be its relationship to the Convention or its Protocols. Though the legal status may and no one arrangement

may fit all situations, this relationship must be clearly defined in the Agreement with the CCS.

69. RANs should be accredited observers to the Cartagena Convention.

70. The CCS will provide programmatic supervision of RAN activities, that are part of the approved biennial Work Plan or respond directly to COP Decisions unless other arrangements are made by decisions of the Contracting Parties

71. Each RAN is expected to collaborate closely with the other RACs and RANs of the Convention and its Protocols. Such collaboration should be based, in particular on the exchange of knowledge and experiences regarding working methods and organisation towards the continuing improvement of the system.

72. RANs are expected to develop and maintain collaboration with institutions and networks with mandates from other intergovernmental processes in the region and beyond- as appropriate.

73. Development of legal instruments such as MOUs on such collaboration should be done, in line with UNEP rules and policies and/or the existing rules in a transparent and collaborative manner.

IX.ii) OPERATIONS

74. Each RAN will submit to the CCS biennial progress reports to the STACs and COPs. The report shall inform the CCS on their activities and workplans, including performance indicators for the activities described in the initial agreement and its alignment/support to the CCS, RACs and other RANs workplans.

75. The CCS will take appropriate action on the questions raised in the progress reports made by the RANs.

76. RANs should aim at performing synergetic action and participate in coordination meetings and facilitate knowledge and practices exchange with other RANs and RACs as appropriate and when required by the CCS or the COP

77. RANs shall request formal authorisation for the use of the UNEP and information in any of their activities and get the CCS writing consent prior to any use

IX.iii) FINANCE

78. RANs will not be funded by the Caribbean Trust Fund (CTR). Any institution wishing to participate in a RAN or to become a RAN must be willing and able to do so at their own expense.

79. Moreover, because a RAN must be financially self-sustaining, any proposed RAN must have a demonstrated ability to raise the necessary funds to finance its operations and for projects [Click here to enter text.](#), consistent with the objectives of the Cartagena Convention and its relevant protocols.

80. RANs should have sufficient project and financial managerial capacity as to ensure implementation of their activities

81. RANs should inform the CCS of any resource mobilisation activities in the area of the CC and its protocol and request formal permission to use the UNEP-CAR/RCU logo or information in doing so.

82. RANs are encouraged to partner and provide support the CCS in mobilising funds for their regional action in line with UN rules and regulations and in close coordination with other RACs and RANs as appropriate

ANNEXES

ANNEXE 1- Proposed set of common provisions for hosting of Regional Activity Centres.

The nomination proposal for the establishment of a new RAC will include the following points as required for a later development of a Host Country Agreement (HCA) if approved by a COP Decision:

(1) Identification of the Parties entering into the Host Country Agreement (HCA): The potential HCA text would identify the parties entering into the HCA, which are the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the designated representative of the Host Country Government.

(2) Purpose for entering into the HCA: The potential HCA text would set out the terms and conditions under which RACs will deliver their regional mandate pursuant to the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols and related decisions of the Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols.

(3) Regional Role of RACs: The potential HCA text would set out the necessity and regional role for the proposed RAC as per the criteria established in this guidelines and the CEP.

(4) Financial Resources:

- The potential HCA text would make provisions establishing the separate management and accounting of Caribbean Trust Fund (CTF) transfers (only for specific activities) and would refer to the requested reporting and audit requirements in line with Project Cooperation Agreements or any other legal instruments signed between UNEP and RACs for the transfer of financial resources.

- The potential HCA text would describe the source of funding including the contribution of the Host Country Government and other potential donors as appropriate

- The share of MTF transfers to RACs is a decision which rests with the COP.

(5) Contribution of the Host Country Government: The potential HCA text would address the contribution of the Host Country Government -financial and in-kind including facilities both physical (location, laboratories, equipment, boats, materials, library, etc) and digital (virtual libraries and labs, website, online platforms, etc.), to serve purpose and with clear specification whether the RAC premises are provided at no cost.

(6) Personnel of RACs, including the Director to provide the scientific and managerial services in line with this guidelines

(7) Meetings and Conferences convened by RACs: The text should indicate the periodicity of meetings (internal and external; on-line and in person) and funding sources to cover them in line with the guidelines

8) Reporting and coordination with other RACs and RANs: The text should include the reporting mechanisms to CCS, the COP and coordination activities with other RACs and RANs to seek for synergetic action.

(9) Final Standard Clauses: The potential HCA text would address the Settlement of Disputes/Entry into Force/Duration/Amendment provisions.

ANNEXE 2: Proposed information form for new RANs

The information will constitute the nomination proposal for new RANs and also the accreditation of the organisation as observer to the CC COP.

1. Name and acronym, logo of the organisation in English, French and Spanish

2. Address of the Headquarters and other sites (if appropriate)

Street ,Town, Country

Telephone, Fax, Email, Internet site, Social media

3. Year of foundation

4. Type of organisation

Association; federation, foundation, professional organisation, umbrella organisation, academy, NGO, international organisation, others.

5. Organisational status

President or equivalent of the organisation, name, surname, address

Secretary General or equivalent of the organisation name, surname, address

Structure and functioning of directing bodies

Staff

Number of members

Countries represented, National focal points or others.

Please share any related documents and registration information in the host country

6. Funding sources and sustainability

a) Membership fees

b) Public funding

c) Private donations

d) Other, please specify

7. Role and objectives in relation to the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols

Please describe extensively the goals, mandate or mission of your organisation and proposed contribution to the CC and its Protocols.

Share any documents related to this (strategy, mission, work plan, annual reports, others).

8. Activities of your organisation

Please describe activities of your organisation in general (below the specifically linked to the CC)

9. Constituency

Please describe briefly the support base (members/supporters/donors) of your organisation and long-term strategy for sustainability. *Share any related documents*

10. Accreditations

Accreditation with other international, intergovernmental or regional organisations

11. Publications and technical reports/documents

Titles/number

Does your organisation publish an annual report?

Does your organisation produce a list of available publications and or educational matters?

Please share any relevant information or materials produced

Part B - Areas of possible cooperation with CCS

Please indicate the areas of your organisation's activities which correspond to the Cartagena's Conventions Secretariat Medium Term Strategy, Programme Strategies and Action Plans and Biennial Work Plans.

a) Ocean Governance including Blue and Ocean-Based Economies

b) Integrating land, water and ecosystem management

c) Legal aspects of implementation of the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols

d) Control, Reduction and Prevention of Marine Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities (LBS protocol)

e) Special Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW protocol)

f) Integrated coastal zone management and Marine Spatial Planning

- g) Waste Management including circular economy approaches
- h) Sustainable management and use of natural resources
- g) Oil spills prevention and management
- i) Knowledge Management, Public Education, Awareness, Advocacy and Behavioural Change

Part C - Modalities of cooperation with CCS

1. In what way does your organisation feel it could contribute to the CEP activities and to the promotion of its values?

(Please describe: Studies, reports, previous work in the field concerned, expertise of its members, etc.)

2. What practical cooperation has already been established with the Coordinating Unit and the RACs?

(Please describe joint activities, comments on draft documents, exchange of information, participation as experts, participation at COP meeting and events, etc.)

3. By what means and to which audience would your organisation promote the work of CEP and its achievements?

Please enclose all the documents required

- 1. Copy of the statute
- 2. A list of members organisations
- 3. A report on recent activities
- 4. A declaration that your organisation accepts the rights and responsibilities of RANs partners as described in these guidelines

^[1] The Caribbean Environmental Programme (CEP) consists of two subprogrammes: Assessment and Management of Environmental Pollution (AMEP); and Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) supported by Communication, Education, Training and Awareness (CETA) activities.