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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

**STAC SARGASSUM WORKING GROUP
UPDATED ACTION PLAN PROPOSAL AND SUSTAINABLE FINANCING
RESOURCES**

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

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**STAC SARGASSUM WORKING GROUP
WORK PLAN PROPOSAL AND SUSTAINABLE FINANCING RESOURCES**

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

SPAW WORK PLAN PROPOSAL

2. Goal: Improve regional cooperation and capacity to effectively manage sargassum proliferation and coastal accumulation in the Cartagena convention marine and coastal ecosystems.
3. This action plan is intended to serve as a framework that may guide activities related to Sargassum at the national and regional level to the Contracting Parties of Cartagena Convention in response to the COP17/IGM20 decision 9. 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 Sargassum working groups 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).

<u>Component</u>	<u>Objectives</u>	<u>Lines of Action</u>	<u>Priority</u> (High, Medium, Low)	<u>Outputs</u>	<u>Level of action</u>
1. 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 Coordinate efforts across the region to manage sargassum. MOUs/Statements of Cooperation between the Cartagena convention secretariat, the SPAW-RAC, LBS-RACs and key regional agencies.	MEDIUM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify existing sargassum regional coordination mechanisms. Strengthen or create sargassum regional coordination mechanisms. Proposal for the Resolution on the proliferation and coastal accumulation sargassum issue by UNEA. Participation in other international conventions (E.g., Inter American Sea Turtle convention, ACS workshop, 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 coherent protocols and guidelines for management of sargassum biomass to protect biodiversity and human health.	MEDIUM		RACs and secretariats
	Objective 1.2 Facilitate coordination among government organizations at the national and subnational level and strengthen links with the private sector to develop/implement sargassum management plans and action to mitigate impacts on biodiversity and coastal ecosystems.	1.2.1 Enhancing collaboration with subnational and national governmental institutions and the private sector.	HIGH	<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 governmental institutions and the private sector. Development of public-private partnerships for the implementation of national plans. 	RACs and secretariats
		1.2.2 Support capacity building for governance of public and/or private sectors focus on mitigating impact of sargassum inundation on coastal ecosystems, biodiversity and coastal communities.	MEDIUM		RACs and secretariats, CPs
		1.2.3 Support for national management plan development and/or update and implementation.	HIGH		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 better contribute to the management of sargassum inundations.	2.1.1 Assessing and monitoring the impacts of different sargassum management 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 good practices and sustainable alternatives to address sargassum inundation.	HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessments and monitoring are informed through interactions with existing information hub (e.g., Sargassum Information Hub from IOCaribe and GEO Blue Planet). Monitoring tool developed. 	SPAW RAC
		2.1.2 Assessing and monitoring impacts of sargassum on biodiversity (including species listed in the annexes to the SPAW Protocol), ecosystems, local communities and environmental quality (e.g., heavy metal and metalloids, adsorbed pesticides, associated microplastics and alien species, toxic gases, leachates), using / developing standardized protocols.	HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	LBS and SPAW RACs
		2.1.3 Improving access to information about predictions, movement and tracking of sargassum inundation / beaching events at a meaningful scale for managers (e.g., model local currents and wind patterns and couple with existing open ocean based sargassum forecasts) to improve preparedness for mitigation of damage to coastal marine ecosystems and biodiversity.	HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standardized protocol to assess and monitor impacts of sargassum influx on biodiversity (e.g., CERMES). Developing template for data collation. 	Contracting Parties (National institutions e.g., CERMES)
		2.1.4 Encourage collaboration between regional laboratories to build regional capacity on heavy metal and metalloid testing.	MEDIUM	<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. 	LBS RACs
		2.1.5 Identify and assess local drivers (e.g., nutrients or other pollutants) in the Cartagena Convention area could causing further proliferation	MEDIUM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plain language report/website summarising current knowledge of sargassum management action best practices. 	LBS RACs and secretariat

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		of sargassum 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.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide practical and concrete data and indicators to enhance management. 	
<u>3.Management</u>	<u>Objective 3.1</u> Promote best management 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 management operations of sargassum (combining science and local knowledge).	MEDIUM	<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.	MEDIUM		Secretariat, SPAW, LBS-RACs and Contracting Parties
<u>4.Communication and awareness</u>	<u>Objective 4.1</u> Increase awareness, knowledge and understanding about the sargassum inundation challenge in the wider Caribbean.	4.1.1 Host webinars and panels in virtual or in person.	MEDIUM	<p>Identify key stakeholders and partners:</p> <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 Discussion and Coordination among experts at regional level 	Secretariat, SPAW and LBS-RAC
<u>5.Sustainable financing resources</u>	<u>Objective 5.1</u> 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 management by Contracting Parties, other stakeholders, and the Cartagena Convention Secretariat.	5.1.2 Identification of regional funding gaps for sargassum management.	MEDIUM	Convention, SPAW and LBS workplan.	Secretariat, SPAW and LBS-RAC

Column definition:

Component: Pillars from the previous action plan 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 organisation 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**5. Goals:**

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

6. 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

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