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**INSTITUTIONALIZING AN INTEGRATED REPORTING MECHANISM ON THE
STATE OF THE MARINE ECOSYSTEM IN THE CARTAGENA CONVENTION AREA**

For reasons of economy and the environment, Delegates are kindly requested to bring their copies of the Working and Information documents to the Meeting, and not to request additional copies.

Institutionalizing an integrated reporting mechanism on the STATE OF THE MARINE ECOSYSTEMS IN THE CARTAGENA CONVENTION AREA

The purpose of this conference paper is to inform participants at the Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Cartagena Convention about the opportunities provided through the UNDP/GEF “CLME+ Project” (2015-2020) to work towards the institutionalization of an integrated, collaborative reporting mechanism on the state of the marine ecosystems in the Cartagena Convention Area (habitats-pollution-fisheries-climatic and societal change), in support of enhanced policy coordination and decision-making.

Background information

Large Marine Ecosystems (LME’s) - The LME concept was developed by the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) as a meaningful geospatial unit for the implementation of an **ecosystem-based management (EBM)** approach. Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs) are large extensions of ocean encompassing coastal areas from river basins and estuaries to the seaward boundaries of continental shelves and the outer margins of major ocean current systems (such as the North Brazil Current), and/or occupying semi-enclosed seas (such as the Caribbean, and the Gulf of Mexico). Due to the transboundary nature of many of the world’s LMEs, their adoption as a management unit will generally require **international coordination and collaboration**.

The Cartagena Convention Area and the CLME+ region - The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is promoting the use of the LME concept to support the adoption of EBM approaches under the Cartagena Convention. The Convention Area largely coincides with the extension of 3 of the world’s 66 LME’s: it fully encloses the **Caribbean LME** (“CLME”) and **Gulf of Mexico LME** (“GoMLME”), and partially covers the **North Brazil Shelf LME** (“NBSLME”). In what follows, we will refer to the combined area of the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf LMEs as **“the CLME+ region”**

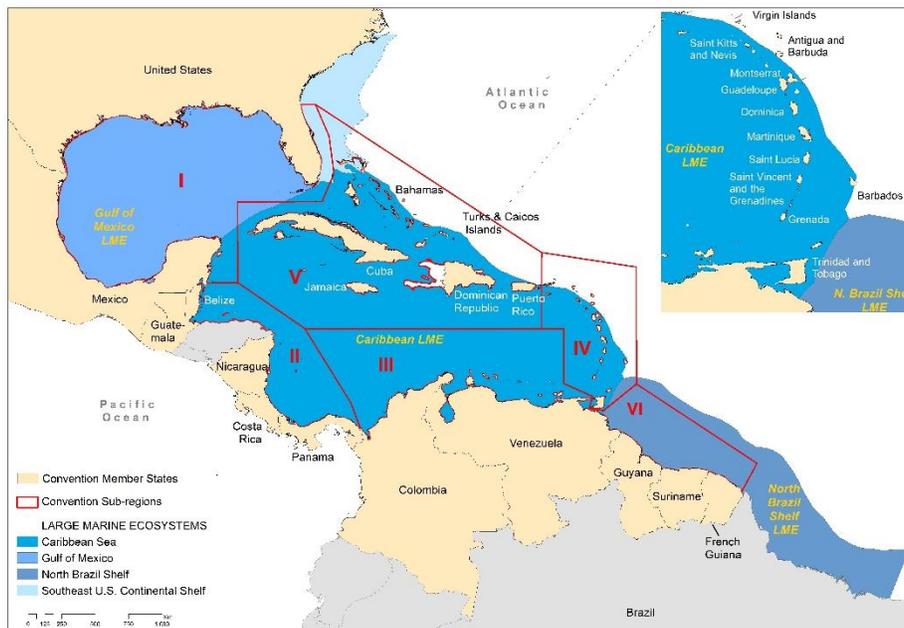


Figure 1. Extension of the CLME+ region vis-à-vis the Cartagena Convention Area



The GEF-supported TDA/SAP approach for LMEs - Since 1995, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), through its International Waters (IW) Focal Area, has been financially supporting the adoption of the “LME approach” for the *collaborative, transboundary management of shared marine resources*. LME projects bring together coastal States with concerned international agencies, regional organisations and other key stakeholders to address issues pertaining to the sustainable use and protection of the marine environment. These projects foster the adoption of a *cyclical approach of joint (a) diagnosis and (b) strategic planning*, in order to identify key transboundary problems, their root causes and the priority actions needed to address them. The diagnostic phase of the cycle consists of the collaborative development of **Transboundary Diagnostic Analyses (TDA’s)**, which then form the basis for a negotiated, and politically endorsed **Strategic Action Programme (SAP)**.

Around the globe, the GEF-supported TDA/SAP approach has proven useful to plan and agree upon strategic action and to attract and upscale investments for reversing environmental degradation in the world’s large marine ecosystems.

The UNDP/GEF “CLME” SAP development project (2009-14) - The “CLME Project” (2009-2014) was one such GEF-supported LME project. It covers both the Caribbean and North Brazil shelf LMEs. Transboundary Diagnostic Analyses (TDAs) undertaken during this project identified three key transboundary issues:

- (i) ***unsustainable exploitation of fish and other living resources;***
- (ii) ***habitat degradation and ecosystem community modification; and***
- (iii) ***pollution***

Root causes behind these issues were identified, with the overarching root cause being **weak governance** (encompassing inadequate legal and institutional frameworks, lack of inter-sectoral coordination, etc.). It was recognized that ***climate and societal change*** could exacerbate the impacts of these key issues.

The findings from the TDAs were used to inform the development of a comprehensive roadmap towards sustainable living marine resources management: the **10-year “CLME+ Strategic Action Programme” (CLME+ SAP)**¹. The SAP consists of 6 Strategies, 4 Sub-Strategies and 76 Actions, combining actions for structural change with capacity building and high-priority management interventions and investments. It is an “umbrella” Programme, meant to enhance cooperation among the region’s many stakeholders, and to establish enabling conditions for synergies between the many ongoing and planned projects and initiatives. To date, 25 countries have formally **endorsed the CLME+ SAP at the Ministerial level**.

SAP Strategy 1 focuses on **protecting the marine environment**. **UN Environment-CEP**, as the Secretariat of the Cartagena Convention and due to their official mandate through the Convention and its Protocols, has been identified as the **lead agency** responsible for facilitating implementation of the Actions under this Strategy. UN Environment-CEP is expected to be supported in this facilitation role by their Member States, as well as by other regional inter-governmental organisations such as the OECS Secretariat, IOCARIBE and CCAD.

¹ Available at <http://www.clmeplus.org>



Reporting on the state of the marine ecosystems

Catalyzing SAP implementation: the new UNDP/GEF “CLME+” Project (2015-20)

In 2014, countries of the CLME+ region submitted a new project proposal to the GEF Secretariat through UNDP, requesting assistance in *“Catalysing Implementation of the Strategic Action Programme for the Sustainable Management of shared Living Marine Resources in the Caribbean and the North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems”*. This new five-year project (UNDP/GEF CLME+ Project; 2015-2020) is now seeking to catalyse region-wide adoption of the ecosystem-based management/ecosystem approach to fisheries (EBM/EAF). The USD 12,5 million GEF contribution includes funds to **strengthen and consolidate a Regional Governance Framework (RGF)** for marine resources management in the CLME+ region, and for the institutionalization –through this RGF– of an institutionalized, comprehensive, **integrated reporting mechanism**. UNEP-CEP consequently exercises a key co-executing role under the CLME+ Project.

1. Consolidating a Regional Governance Framework (RGF) for shared living marine resources management

Several inter-governmental organisations (IGOs) with mandates relative to the marine environment co-exist within the CLME+ region. These IGO’s differ among each other in terms of the geographic and thematic scope of their respective mandates. It is observed that both complementarity as well as partial overlap exists among such organizational mandates - a consequence of the existence of a variety of regional and sub-regional geopolitical integration mechanisms (e.g. the Regional Seas Programme of UN Environment, the CARICOM, the SICA and the OECS).

Taken together, these IGO’s provide the foundations for what is to become the “CLME+ RGF”: a collaborative “multi-level, nested Regional Governance Framework for shared living marine resources management”. Consolidation of this framework is a key outcome expected from the CLME+ SAP.

Under this consolidated RGF, the IGO’s are expected to seek better coordination of policies and actions, to ensure the protection and sustainable use of marine ecosystems and associated living resources.

At the over-arching regional level, UN Environment-CEP, in its role as Secretariat to the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols, has a mandate to work on pollution and habitats and marine wildlife-related initiatives in the Convention Area. It is therefore one of the main constituents of the RGF, with a key coordinating role.

Better coordination of actions under the CLME+ SAP also means coordination among UNEP-CEP’s AMEP and SPAW sub-programmes², closely related to the Protocol on Land-based Sources of Pollution (LBS) and the Protocol on Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW), respectively.

2. An integrated “State of the Marine Ecosystems” (SOME) reporting mechanism

Despite the existence of these multiple IGOs, and the fact that many programmes, projects and initiatives are currently under execution or being planned by these IGOs in the CLME+ region, to date no region-wide comprehensive and collaborative mechanism has been put in place that would allow the region to acquire a clear, integrated overview of the progress that is being obtained towards global or regional commitments and targets relative to the marine environment, set either at the global, regional or sub-regional level.

² AMEP: Programme on Assessment and Management of Environmental Pollution
SPAW: Programme on Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife



However, some early, piece-wise progress is being made: Article 16 of the Cartagena Convention calls for the periodic assessment of the state of the environment in the Convention area. In the case of the LBS Protocol, this requirement is further elaborated under its Article 7, which explicitly calls for the submission of reports on the State of the Convention Area (SOCAR). Likewise, periodic reports on the state of the region’s fisheries are brought to the biennial meetings of the WECAFC – the Regional Fisheries Body whose geographic scope includes the full Cartagena Convention Area.

Building upon these existing efforts and obligations, and in full recognition of the need to expand, combine and integrate these efforts among the IGOs that constitute the CLME+ RGF, **SAP Action 1.11 explicitly calls for the enhancement of the capacity to monitor, assess and report on the state of the marine ecosystems in the CLME+ region.**

The CLME+ Project will support the development of an integrated and collaborative assessment and reporting mechanism (SOME), departing from the monitoring and evaluation of progress in the implementation of the different Strategies and Actions under the CLME+ SAP.

The **“State of the Marine Ecosystems and shared Living Marine Resources in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems”** (CLME+ SOME Report) is envisaged as a key regional mechanism to inform about progress in the implementation of the 10-year CLME+ SAP, including advances in the regional programmes and initiatives such as the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols. It contemplates both the **periodic production** of a printed/pdf version of the report as well as the production of an online version dynamically linked to a network of data portals.

The CLME+ SOME will be built around the three transboundary problems identified in the TDAs: unsustainable fisheries; habitat degradation and pollution. Progress towards the targets of the regional CLME+ SAP will be linked to that of the global SDGs, especially SDG 14 on oceans, to sub-regional policies like the Eastern Caribbean Regional Ocean Policy and to international guidelines like the Code of Conduct for Sustainable Fisheries. SOME will be developed using the DPSIR methodology for environmental assessment, as well as the Governance Effectiveness Assessment Framework, and a suite of indicators on the state and trends of the marine environment.

SOME has the potential to serve as a framework to track regional progress towards internationally and regionally agreed goals, such as SDG14. Taking into account that the SOME will report on the status of CLME+ SAP implementation, including actions taken to address the three transboundary issues identified during the TDA phase, the SOCAR report is perceived to be an important contributor to the SOME mechanism, particularly with regards to actions taken to address and mitigate pollution from land-based sources.

3. TDA/SAP to SOME - from a project-driven initiative to an institutionalized, RGF-based long-term decision-support mechanism

Around the globe, the GEF-supported TDA/SAP approach has proven useful to plan and agree upon strategic action and for attracting and upscaling investment for reversing environmental degradation in the world’s large marine ecosystems. However, it is to be noted that GEF-supported adoption and implementation of the TDA-SAP approach has typically been project-based. In full consideration of the cyclical nature of the TDA-SAP process and of the need to ensure continuity of TDA/SAP efforts beyond the project lifespan, it is critically important that current GEF support for the CLME+ region is used to progressively institutionalize the TDA/SAP approach, so that the positive impacts from SAP implementation are not lost. It is therefore proposed to **foster continuity of the TDA/SAP approach through the institutionalization – through the CLME+ RGF – of the integrated SOME reporting mechanism.**



Conclusion

The marine environment of the Cartagena Convention Area is very important to the economies of the countries within or bordering this area. Many countries are highly dependent on marine-based tourism, and fisheries are important source of livelihoods and income. Improved ocean governance, through the adoption of an ecosystem-based management (EBM) approach, will result in sustainable livelihoods and well-being for the people of the region. It is in this regard that this Conference Paper seeks to highlight the links between the Cartagena Convention's State of the Convention Area Report (SOCAR) and the CLME+ State of the Marine Ecosystems (SOME) Report, and sees the institutionalization of the proposed SOME mechanism as a means to give continuity to the cyclical TDA/SAP approach, initialized in the CLME+ region with the support of the GEF.

In this regard, the Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Cartagena Convention may wish to consider the importance of the CLME+ SOME in institutionalizing the TDA/SAP approach, as well its contribution to the strengthening of the Regional Governance Framework.