

Expert Consultation on Operationalisation of the Caribbean Sea Commission

Building a science-policy interface for ocean governance in the Wider Caribbean

Association of Caribbean States - Caribbean Sea Commission

University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, Barbados, July 7-9, 2010

Consultation summary and messages for Caribbean marine resource policy-makers and other stakeholders

What is the Caribbean Sea Commission (CSC)?

The Association of Caribbean States (ACS) and partners have been pursuing the Caribbean Sea Initiative since 1998 through the UNGA Resolution (63-214) 'Towards the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea for present and future generations' at the UN General Assembly. In the process, the CSC was established in 2008 to promote and oversee the sustainable use of the Caribbean Sea.

What is the purpose of the CSC?

The CSC would have the following characteristics:

- It would make best use of the full range of information and expertise available in the region by creating an effective network;
- It would allow for two-way communication and information flow: upwards from information sources through an advisory mechanism to policy makers and back down for feedback and queries;
- Its processes would be regular and transparent.



Why hold the regional Consultation at this time?

Since the establishment of the CSC, the ACS and the CSC have been working towards developing appropriate structures and arrangements for its work.

The Expert Consultation on 'Operationalisation of the Caribbean Sea Commission - Building a science-policy interface for ocean governance in the Wider Caribbean,' was held to carry forward the process of establishing the CSC and its functions.

What did the Consultation set out to achieve?

The purpose of the Expert Consultation was to:

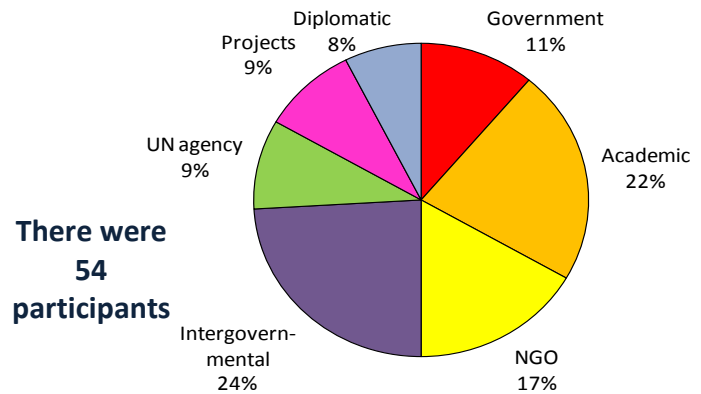
- Share information on the plans for and status of 'Operationalisation of the Caribbean Sea Commission' with critical partners;
- Obtain their feedback on the feasibility of the proposals and ideas for improvement of the plan;
- Build consensus on how the partners can work together to achieve the overall goal of ocean governance in the Wider Caribbean Region.

The Consultation was funded by the Government of Finland Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Where participants came from...



Who the participants were...



Opening speakers...



Hon Christopher Sinckler, MP
Acting Minister of Foreign
Affairs and Foreign Trade
Barbados



Prof Eudine Barriteau
Deputy Principal,
University of the West
Indies, Cave Hill Campus



HE Mr. Mikko Pyhala,
Ambassador of Finland to
CARICOM and the OECS



Dr. Angela Cropper
Deputy Executive Director
UNEP, Nairobi, Kenya
(by video)



Ambassador Luis Fernando
Andrade Falla, Secretary
General of the ACS

What does the UN Resolution 'Towards the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea for present and future generations' say?

The UNGA 'Recognizes that the Caribbean Sea is an area of unique biodiversity and a highly fragile ecosystem that requires relevant regional and international development partners to work together to develop and implement regional initiatives to

promote the sustainable conservation and management of coastal and marine resources, including, inter alia, the consideration of the concept of the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development, ...'

How is the Caribbean Sea Commission structured?

The Caribbean Sea Commission consists of:

- A Bureau (Chair, two Vice-chairs, and Secretariat);
- A Legal Sub-Commission;
- A Scientific and Technical Sub-Commission;
- A Governance, Public Information and Outreach Sub-Commission
- A Budget Committee.

The Sub-Commissions support the CSC mandate by:

- Clarifying information that the CSC needs to meet its mandate to provide advice to the ACS council;

- Identifying individuals, organizations or projects that can provide the expertise and information needed;
- Coordinating the acquisition, review and synthesis of the information needed;
- Formulating or overseeing the formulation of draft advisory documents for the CSC;
- Obtaining and providing clarification as requested by the CSC on any submitted draft advisory documents in a timely manner.

The consultation...

The Consultation was organised to address three topics that are key for the CSC:

1. Regional ocean governance architecture and the role of the CSC
2. The science-policy interface of the CSC
3. The information system to support the interface.

As a basis for discussion of how to adapt and proceed with the plans of the CSC, each topic started with presentations about CSC plans to date as well as those of many different partner organisations.

Next, in facilitated breakout sessions, Working Groups discussed the three consultation topics and provided their observations and recommendations.

The three topics...

Regional ocean governance architecture is about how the mandates and work of organisations in the Wider Caribbean Region interrelate to address ocean governance issues. What is the role of the CSC in this regional arrangement?

The science-policy interface is how the information from the many regional partners working on natural and human sciences can be used to provide policy makers with the best advice in a readily usable form. What is the role of CSC in this interface?

The information system is about arrangements for providing access to the information and expertise needed to support the science-policy interface.

Working group discussions for feedback and recommendations...



Working Groups discussed the three topics by addressing four questions:

1. What aspects of the approaches and proposals you have heard in the meeting seem feasible and beneficial in making the Caribbean Sea Commission more effective?
2. What aspects of these approaches and proposals would cause the most difficulty for implementation?
3. What aspects of these approaches and proposals would you change or improve to make the Caribbean Sea Commission more effective?
4. What would it take for you to buy into this overall process?

What participants concluded...

- That the Caribbean Sea is a common shared resource and that the function of the CSC should be to oversee and promote the sustainable use of the Caribbean Sea as a whole.
- That considerable expertise and information was available within the various groups present, but seldom used by decision makers.
- That the likely reason is that many sources are unconnected to science-policy interfaces.
- There is the need for a regional science-policy interface.
- That the CSC should focus on the connection between science, policy making and policy coherence at the regional level.
- That the proposed structure was workable with modifications.
- That they were committed to working together to build this interface.

What participants recommended...

Ideas, recommendations and constraints from the Working Groups are summarised in the following themes:

The CSC can promote cooperation at both regional and national levels by facilitating networking among existing formal bodies and promoting mechanisms needed to build consensus at national and regional levels. The CSC should work as much as possible through existing mechanisms and organisations to avoid overlaps and duplication of effort. It must clearly define its own role in relation to regional partners.

National level inputs and engagement are critical for success as decisions of the CSC are implemented by countries. Mechanisms are needed for obtaining national commitment for implementation

Clear planning should underlie the development of the CSC in all areas to produce clear definitions of the roles and functions of the CSC and its sub-commissions as well as of roles and responsibilities of partners. A Strategic Action Plan that includes regular evaluation of programmes to identify strengths, weaknesses and effectiveness is needed.

Legal arrangements are important and ultimately a legally binding instrument under which there could be consequences or sanctions will be needed to protect the resources of the Caribbean.

Dedicated financial and human resources are essential for the CSC to achieve its objectives. These include both start-up and sustainable

financing. The CSC needs a dedicated Secretariat with staff, funding, and appropriate location to support its work and that of the Sub-commissions.

Several key principles for success include: transparency of activities and open access to/sharing of information; inclusivity, with national and regional partners being fully engaged in planning and decision-making; efficiency and effectiveness, ensured through regular monitoring and evaluation.

The information system to support the science policy interface should be distributed rather than a central repository. It should provide a regional portal for data and information gathering and interpretation. It should facilitate equitable access to information in participating countries and by all organisations in the region.

Communication will be the key to the success of the CSC. Information and communication strategies are needed for policy makers, national and regional partners and the general public. Communication should promote bringing science to policy makers and help policy makers frame appropriate questions for scientists. Public information is a key element if the benefits of the CSC are to be recognized in the region

Capacity building is essential for success of the CSC especially the information system, owing to widely different capacities of countries to provide and generate information.

In conclusion, it was agreed that the proposed structure and operation of the CSC could provide considerable added-value to the current ocean governance arrangements in the Wider Caribbean Region.

The documents, presentations and full report of the Expert Consultation can be found at http://www.acs-aec.org/Events/CSea_Experts_Seminar.htm

The Consultation was organised by the Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES) University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, Barbados

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