

REPORT TO THE UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL

AS REQUESTED ON THE OPERATING PARAGRAPH 6 OF THE RESOLUTION A/RES/61/197:

“TOWARDS THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CARIBBEAN SEA FOR PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS”

INTRODUCTION

This Report covers the activities of the ACS in respect of actions highlighted in Resolution “Towards the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea for present and future generations” (A/RES/61/197), as well as other issues covered as set out in paragraph 11:

“Calls upon the international community, the United Nations system and the multilateral financial institutions, and invites the Global Environment Facility, within its mandate, to support actively the national and regional activities of the Caribbean States towards the promotion of the sustainable management of coastal and marine resources.”

The Report specifically dealt with the issues covered in paragraphs 1¹, 2², 3³, 4⁴ and 13⁵ of said Resolution.

Sets of activities are dealt in some details are:

1. Sustainable Tourism.
2. Caribbean Sea Commission.
3. Disaster Reduction.

¹ “Recognizes that the unique biodiversity and highly fragile ecosystem of the Caribbean Sea require that Caribbean States and relevant regional and international development partners work together to develop and implement regional initiatives to promote the sustainable conservation and management of coastal and marine resources including, inter alia, the further development of their concept of the designation of the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development, without prejudice to relevant international law;”

² “Takes note with interest of the creation by the Association of Caribbean States of the Commission on the Caribbean Sea;”

³ “Takes note of the effort of the Caribbean States too further develop their concept of the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development, without prejudice to relevant international law, and invites the international community to recognize such efforts;”

⁴ “Recognizes the efforts of the Caribbean countries to create conditions leading to sustainable development aimed at combating poverty and inequality, and in this regard notes with interest the initiatives of the Association of Caribbean States in the focal areas of sustainable tourism, trade, transport and natural disasters;”

⁵ “Calls upon Member States to improve as a matter of priority their emergency response capabilities and the containment of environmental damage, particularly in the Caribbean Sea, in the event of natural disasters or of an accident or incident relating to maritime navigation;”

**REPORT OF THE ACS SECRETARIAT TO THE 63rd SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATION GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**PLAN OF ACTION AND PRIORITIES OF THE CARIBBEAN SEA COMMISSION
EMANATING FROM THE WORK PROGRAMME**

I. INTRODUCTION

The Scientific Argument for Designating the Caribbean Sea as a Special Area in the Context of Sustainable Development

The peoples of the Caribbean are defined by the Sea whose shores they inhabit. In the rich diversity of cultures and nations making up the region, the one uniting factor is the marine ecosystem on which each ultimately depends.

If that ecosystem is under threat, so are the livelihoods of millions of people. The economic activity of the Caribbean is based to a very great extent on the bounty of the Sea and the natural beauty which attracts visitors from around the world – which in turn require the healthy functioning of complex physical and biological processes. The coral reefs and the seagrass beds, the white-sand beaches and the fish shoals of the open ocean: these are natural capital assets whose loss or degradation has huge implications for the development of the region.

Apart from the economic importance of the ecosystem, it shapes the lives of all the inhabitants of the Caribbean in ways which defy statistical analysis. The Sea and its coasts form the stage on which the cultural, spiritual and recreational life of the region is played out.

It may be united by its sea, but the Caribbean region is divided by its history. Five hundred years of settlement by Europeans, Africans, Asians and people from other parts of the Americas has bequeathed to the region a patchwork of independent states and numerous colonies administered by governments in a different hemisphere. This presents unique challenges to the establishment of the cooperative policies needed to manage this ecosystem for the common good, and to achieve the most secure long-term future for the Caribbean peoples.

The situation is made even more complex by the impact of decisions on the ecosystem of the Caribbean Sea. These decisions are usually made in parts of the world with no direct territorial link to the region: from the use of the waters for fishing by Asian fleets and by international shipping, including the transport of nuclear waste en route to the Panama Canal and oil shipments from the Middle East to refineries in the Gulf of

Mexico; to the pollution and sediments carried by rivers from deep inside the South American continent; and even the energy choices of societies throughout the world which have major implications for the Caribbean Sea, particularly in light of the threat of global warming.

These complex factors combine to create an urgent need for a new partnership between the international community and Caribbean Sea countries to secure a sustainable future for Caribbean peoples while respecting international norms and Conventions.

Four major global scientific integrated environmental assessment processes initiated or funded by the UN have recognized the central importance of the natural resources of the Caribbean Sea to the economic and social well-being of its peoples. These assessments have also recognized that the sustainability of the services provided by these resources is threatened by damaging human related activities.

For example, the Global International Waters Assessment (GIWA) completed in 2006 did a diagnostic of the reasons for the degradation of the Caribbean Sea and identified the main drivers of ecosystem degradation as coastal land use change, pollution and over-exploitation of natural resources. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA), completed in 2007 a further sub-global component called the Caribbean Sea Assessment (CARSEA) that assessed the major ecosystem services which contribute to human well-being. Caribbean Sea fisheries were determined to be worth more than one billion United States dollars per annum while the Caribbean was shown to be the most dependent region in the world on tourism. This assessment highlighted the lack of integrated management as a major driver of change and recommended the formation of Caribbean Sea Technical Commission to deal with the problem.

The Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) completed its main reports in 2007 and highlighted the particular vulnerability of the small islands of the Caribbean and low lying states of Central America to extreme events and disasters as well sea level rise and coral bleaching. The attendant loss of resources from climate change was projected to have a significant effect on among other things amenity value of the region for tourism. The Global Environmental Outlook 4 (GEO4) launched at the UN in 2007 further confirmed that effects such as climate change are additive to the already serious longstanding problems such as degraded coasts and polluted seas.

Three key messages can be highlighted from these assessments. First, some of the vital services which human communities derive from the Caribbean Sea ecosystem are being placed in jeopardy, often by the very activities and industries whose long-term future depends on the continuing provision of those services.

Second, a reduction in the stresses being placed on the natural functions of the Caribbean Sea will require new ways of working together amongst the disparate political authorities making up the region.

Finally, the combination of dependence on the integrity of its marine ecosystem and vulnerability to global forces beyond its control puts the Caribbean in a special position which merits recognition and concrete action by the international community.

The Sea and its People

The semi-enclosed Caribbean Sea Large Marine Ecosystem (LME) is a distinct ecological region, bounded to the North by the Bahamas and the Florida Keys, to the East by the Windward Islands, to the South by the South American continent, and to the West by the isthmus of Central America. Covering an area of more than 3.2 million square kilometres, it is the second largest sea in the world, after the Mediterranean. The Caribbean Sea is however special when compared to all other Large Marine Ecosystems (LME) in that it has the largest number of countries surrounding it in the world (Annex - Fig. 1). Further, the disproportionate number of maritime boundaries imposes special challenges with regard to governance of the living resources of the maritime space.

The Caribbean, home to more than 116 million people, is divided among 22 independent states, of which nine are continental countries of South and Central America, and the remainder islands and archipelagos. In addition, four colonial powers – the United States, the United Kingdom, France and the Netherlands – still exercise political control over eleven island territories in the region.

The complex political structure, produced by the historic struggles for control of the resources of the Caribbean, and reflecting a wide cultural diversity arising from that history, has left the region with a series of overlapping regional authorities exercising varying degrees of policy co-ordination over parts of the Sea. This creates a significant problem in the exercise of a holistic approach to the management of the Caribbean Sea ecosystem.

What unites the people inhabiting this region is a common dependence on two particular products of the marine ecosystem, referred to as ecosystem services. These are tourism and fishing. Both activities strongly illustrate the interdependence of human well-being, economics and the environment within the context of sustainable development.

Are people in the Caribbean more dependent on tourism and fishing than other seas of the world?

A few facts and figures help to justify why the Caribbean Sea is special in the context of sustainable development.

Tourism in the Caribbean is based on the high amenity value of its ecosystems. According to World Tourism and Travel Council (WTTC) assessment of the 14 major tourism regions of the world, relative to its size the island population of the Caribbean is more dependent on income from tourism than that of any other part of the world. In 2004, more than 2.4 million people were employed either directly or indirectly in travel and tourism, accounting for 15.5% of total employment, a proportion nearly twice as high as the global average. The sector contributed US\$28.4bn to the Gross Domestic

Product, 13% of the total, and US\$19bn or 16% of exported services and merchandise. Over one-fifth (21.7%) of all capital investment was linked to tourism, well over twice the global average. On several islands tourism accounts for more than 90% of GDP. The Wider Caribbean also has even more tourist visitors than the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), especially the Central American countries such as Cancun and Cozumel in Mexico as well as Costa Rica.

Twenty-five million tourists choose to holiday in the Caribbean each year, in large part in pursuit of a dream of sensuous relaxation shaped by its natural features – palm-fringed beaches, blue-green lagoons with crystal-clear water, opportunities to see multi-coloured fish swimming amongst coral reefs. Dependence on tourism, therefore, also implies dependence on the capacity of nature to continue providing the conditions which make the Caribbean such a popular destination. In cases such as the diving industry, this connection is so close that degradation of ecosystem quality can be measured directly in lost income.

Since tourism is the main economic activity of most of the Greater Caribbean States and the Caribbean Sea is recognized by the ACS Member States and Associate Members as a common asset and a potential unifier in their development,, the Leaders of the ACS signed the Convention Establishing the (STZC): the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Caribbean, in December 2001.

The Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Caribbean will expand as a network of communities and countries committed to ensure that tourism is not only providing economical benefits, but that this benefits are reaching all levels of the population, enhancing the protections of the natural and cultural values, today and in the future.

The process to select and evaluate destinations to become part of the STZC is one of the main projects being implemented. The objective is to further develop the sustainable tourism indicators as identified in the Convention and to create practical tools for destinations managers to monitor the sustainability of the tourism sector in their areas. The indicators in the STZC Convention can be categorized as: social, economic and environmental indicators: Five destinations have already been evaluated in the Pilot Phase. Seven other destinations are currently being evaluated.

Fishing is also a significant provider of jobs and income in the Caribbean. It is estimated that more than 200,000 people in the region are directly employed, either full-time or part-time, as fishers. In addition, some 100,000 work in processing and marketing of fish, with additional job opportunities in net-making, boatbuilding and other supporting industries. Assuming each person employed has five dependents, more than 1.5 million people in the Caribbean rely for their livelihood on commercial fishing. The activity also brings in approximately US\$1.2bn annually in export earnings (Annex - Fig. 2), with the United States the principal destination.

However, the true importance of fishing is not fully reflected in these figures. In a region where most of the population has access to the Sea, fish provide a vital resource

for poor communities in ways which do not always appear on the national accounts. It is estimated, for example, that fish products account for seven per cent of the protein consumed by people in the Caribbean region. Anything which damages the productivity of the marine food chain is therefore a significant threat both to the health and to the wealth of these societies.

A number of factors set the Caribbean apart and present particular problems in protecting fish stocks for future generations. One is the sheer variety of fish and invertebrates involved in commercial fishing. This makes it extremely difficult to monitor and manage the stocks sustainably.

Another problem arises from the lack of an agreed regional regime with responsibility for the resources of the Caribbean (Annex - Fig. 3). Existing arrangements enable fishing fleets from throughout the world to engage in a "free for all", placing added pressure on the marine life of the Sea. The CLME Project, however, proposes a nested fisheries governance framework in which the proposed resolution will provide a platform for cooperation between countries at the global level of the UNGA (Annex - Fig. 4).

In summary, there is evidence that environmental degradation is undermining development and threatens future development progress. They emphasize that Millennium Development Goal 7, Environmental Sustainability, is critical to the attainment of the other MDG goals and that more effective integrated policy responses are needed at all levels of governance.

These ideas have been generally accepted in Resolution 61/197 adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in its Sixty-first Session in 2006: Towards the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea for present and future generations. For example, at page 3 section 1 it "Recognizes that the unique biodiversity and highly fragile ecosystem of the Caribbean Sea require the Caribbean States and relevant regional and international development partners work together to develop and implement regional initiatives to promote the sustainable conservation and management of coastal and marine resources including, inter alia, the further development of their concept of the designation of the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development, without prejudice to relevant international law."

In order to advance the Resolution 61/197 at the UNGA the ACS Caribbean Sea Commission has worked together with regional and international development partners to develop the following significant regional initiatives for the sustainable conservation and management of the Caribbean Sea: (a) developed an institutional framework for Caribbean Sea governance, (b) prepared a legal framework and (c) collaborated with IOCARIBE, UWI and others in advancing the GEF (USD 6 million) funded Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem Project (CLME). .

II. PLAN OF ACTION

(i) INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

a. Entities being established:

The Caribbean Sea Commission has agreed to form:

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

The Bureau will be responsible for oversight of the work of the Commission, initiating actions in respect of relations with external entities and preparation of the annual report to the Ministerial Council.

The Sub-Commissions will be chaired by national experts.

(b) Composition and Terms of References of the Sub-Commissions

The Sub-Commissions will support the mandate of the CSC in three specific areas by:

- Clarifying the information that the CSC requires 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 consideration by the CSC;
- Obtaining and providing clarification as requested by the CSC on any submitted draft advisory documents in a timely manner.

The suggested areas of competence of the three Sub-Commissions are:

Scientific and Technical Sub-Commission – All scientific and technical aspects relating to the sustainable use of the Caribbean Sea, including but not limited to, status of scientific capacity, status of fisheries, drivers and pressures resulting in habitat degradation and pollution from various sources, and their socio-economic and ecological impacts on the Caribbean Sea;

Governance, Public Information and Outreach Sub-Commission – All institutional arrangements that may relate to the sustainable use of the Caribbean Sea, including but not limited to, status and role of regional and sub-regional bodies, national coordination, role of civil society, identification of stakeholders, consequences of decision-making affecting the sustainable use of the Caribbean Sea on stakeholders and delivery of information and awareness materials to stakeholders;

Legal Sub-Commission – All legal arrangements required among stakeholders that may be required to facilitate the sustainable use of the Caribbean Sea including but not limited to establishment of regional and sub-regional organizations, status and implications of MEAs. The major area of competence of the Legal Sub-Commission will be overseeing the good faith implementation of the legal regime adopted by the ACS Ministerial Council and taking all the legal steps necessary to promote the declaration of the Caribbean Sea as a Special Area in the Context of Sustainable Development.

These areas necessarily overlap and there will be close collaboration among these committees in their work.

The institutional recognition of the Caribbean Sea Commission

The CSC will sign memoranda of understanding with regional centres of expertise related to its work programme. Members of the Commission and its Sub-Commissions will recommend these centres.

(ii) LEGAL FRAMEWORK

I. Consistent with Agreement No. 14/07 and No. 3/08 – Secretary General will write the United Nations Secretary General requesting high-level DOALOS team to meet the mandate A/RES/61/197.

This would be prior to taking steps to set up the Conference on Oceans and Law of the Sea Experts.

II. ACS CONFERENCE OF OCEANS AND LAW OF THE SEA EXPERTS

1. Juridical Underpinnings

- (i) Convention Establishing the ACS.
- (ii) Ministerial Council Agreements No. 6/06, No. 14/07; and No. 3/08.
- (iii) A/RES/61/197 if the General Assembly of the United Nations.
- (iv) ACS Summit Declarations.

2. Objectives

- (i) To design a legal regime which will be legally binding upon the membership of the ACS and which will govern the operation and

implementation of the declaration of the Caribbean Sea as a Special Area in the context of Sustainable Development;

- (ii) The regime which will be formally adopted by the Ministerial Council of the Association, will operate:
 - (a) without prejudice to the existing rights and obligations of members of the Association.
 - (b) without prejudice to international law, particularly the international law of the sea.
 - (c) consistently with the spirit and operative paragraph of A/RES/61/197 and succeeding UNGA resolutions.

3. Preparatory Activities

- (i) Consultant to be contracted to Draft a Working Paper for the Conference – 2 months.
- (ii) Review of the Working Paper by the Legal and the Technical and Scientific Sub-Commissions of the Caribbean Sea Commission.
- (iii) Review and approval of the Working Paper, as revised by the Sub-Commissions, by the plenary of the Caribbean Sea Commission (CSC).

4. Participants in the Conference

- (i) The Legal Sub-Commission of the CSC.
- (ii) The Scientific and Technical Sub-Commission of the CSC.
- (iii) Oceans and Law of the Sea Experts of the Members and Associate Members.
- (iv) Representative of the Founding Observers of the ACS.
- (v) DOALOS.
- (vi) Observers from:
 - a) Interested third States.
 - b) Institutions of the United Nations System and competent international organizations.
 - c) Competent NGO's, academic institutions and other stakeholders.

5. Format and *Modus Operandi*

- (i) Six Sessions over a 12 – month period, which the possibility of it being extended, upon the motion of the Conference, with the concurrence of the

Commission.

- (ii) The Conference will be held in the host country, or if a Member of Associate Member of the ACS determines that is in a position to host the meeting.
- (iii) The Conference will work in the three official languages of the Association.
- (iv) The chairmanship of the Bureau of the Conference and any subsidiary entities established will be chaired utilizing the group method as practiced within the ACS. This is without prejudice to the Conference inviting
 - a) Expert Members of the Commission.
 - b) Founding Observers of the ACS; or
 - c) Other individuals or entities identified to preside over working groups charged with specific tasks aimed at facilitating the achievement of the Conference's objectives.
- (v) The ACS Secretariat will be Rapporteur to the Conference.

6. Financial Issues

The Conference will be financed from resources emanating from:

- (i) The Budget of the Commission.
- (ii) Financial assistance from individual Members or Associate Members of the ACS.
- (iii) Disinterested contributions from Third States of entities.
- (iv) Financial and/or Technical Assistance from United Nations System and the international community as stipulated in A/RES/61/197.
- (v) Members and Associate Members shall be responsible for financing the participation of their delegations.

7. Final Document

- (i) The Final Document of the Conference will be presented to the Ministerial Council for adoption and for transmission by the Ministerial Council to a Special Summit of Head of States or Government of the Association.
- (ii) The Host Head of State or Government of the Special Summit shall be requested to present the Final Document of the Conference to the United Nations General Assembly.

(iii) SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ISSUES

Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem Project (CLME)

The full CLME project proposal was given approval by the GEF on April 11, 2008 and implementation will begin shortly. The Global Environmental Facility (GEF) has approved USD 6 million and the countries of the region are providing more than USD 40 million of in kind support. The job of Regional Project Coordinator for the CLME project has been advertised and the appointee will assume office at IOCAROIBE in Cartagena, Colombia. The CLME Project will focus on fisheries governance initially. Further funding will have to be raised to expand the project to deal with other issues such as pollution.

Project Goal:

Sustainable management of the shared living marine resources of the Caribbean LME and adjacent areas through an integrated management approach that will meet WSSD targets for sustainable fisheries.

The specific objectives are:

- To identify analyze and agree upon major issues, root causes and actions required to achieve sustainable management of the shared LMRs in the Caribbean Sea LME in a manner that is consistent with relevant international agreements, e.g. the Law of the Sea, the UN Fish Stocks Agreement;
- To improve the shared knowledge base for sustainable use and management of the transboundary LMRs by compiling and sharing existing information, filling critical data gaps and improving databases for assessments, planning and policy formulation;
- To implement legal, policy and institutional reforms to achieve sustainable transboundary LMR management;
- To develop an institutional and procedural approach to LME level monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

Project Components

The key components of the Full Sized Project are:

- Characterise and analyse the root and underlying causes of trans-boundary issues relating to the management of marine resources in the CLME through the mechanism of a Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis and develop and agree on a Strategic Action Programme to address those causes.
- Compile and share existing sources of information required for good governance of marine resources, and identification and filling of knowledge gaps through appropriate technical programmes.

- Establish a culture of networking and cooperation among the countries for management of marine resources, focusing on strengthening existing institutions and structures.
- Establish a monitoring and evaluation framework for the ecosystem status of the CLME in line with the ecosystem management approach and SAP implementation.
- Create successes that serve as examples of how countries can collaborate to manage transboundary marine resources through 'Strengthening by doing'.
- The Association of Caribbean States and its Caribbean Sea Commission is expected to play a major role in the governance dimension of the project, thus ensuring that scientific and technical outputs find their way into the relevant national and regional policy cycle and consequential implementation.
- The ACS Secretariat will be taken the formal steps necessary to establish the association as a co-financing partner of the Project.

III. ACS HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON DISASTER REDUCTION

The Heads of State/Government of the ACS Members, in their 4th Summit held in Panama City, Panama on 29 July 2005, acknowledged the vulnerability of our countries and territories to disasters and the negative impact they on the efforts to ensure sustainable development. They also shared the idea that integrating disaster management and risk reduction into development policies and plans at all levels of government is the best way to combat vulnerability to disasters. Further, they reaffirmed the importance of international co-operation, particularly at the regional level, in order to strengthen the national and regional bodies dedicated to the disaster risk reduction.

In consequence, the ACS Special Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction set to organize a Conference to exchange experiences, lessons learnt and best practices in the areas of disaster risk reduction, as well as determine areas of intra-regional co-operation in view of the sheer number of initiatives in our region, the scant resources and the heterogeneity of the different actors.

The High-Level Conference on Disaster Reduction of the Association of Caribbean States was held 14-16 November 2007 in Saint-Marc, Republic of Haiti. This first-ever meeting on the subject for the countries of the Greater Caribbean was attended by delegations from 21 ACS Members (including Ministers, high-ranking disaster reduction specialists and experienced diplomats), over 18 international and regional organisations as well as members of civil society. In all, over 120 delegates participated in the Conference.

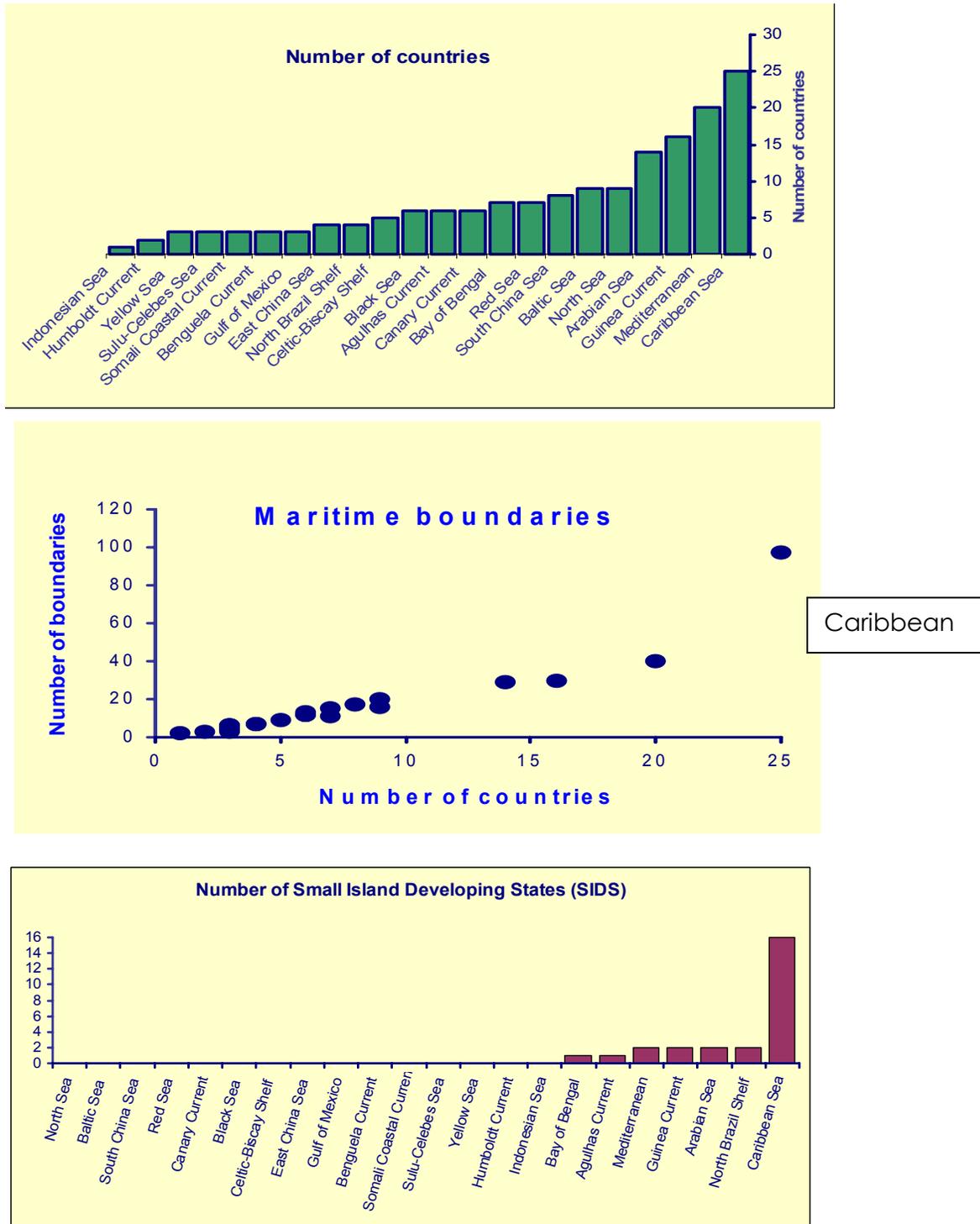
The Conference was financed by the government of the Republic of Haiti, ACS, UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), and the Government of the

Republic of Turkey. Crucial technical and other support was also provided by UNOCHA, UNISDR, IADB, UNECLAC, CDERA, CEPREDENAC, IFRC, PAHO and UNDP.

The *Saint-Marc Plan of Action*, as the Outcome of the Conference has been endorsed by the ACS Ministerial Council as a 27-point document which will soon inform the Work Programme for the ACS in the area of disaster risk reduction. The Saint-Marc POA takes into account, *inter alia*, the five priorities for action stemming from the Hyogo Framework for Action, adopted by the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, held in 2005.

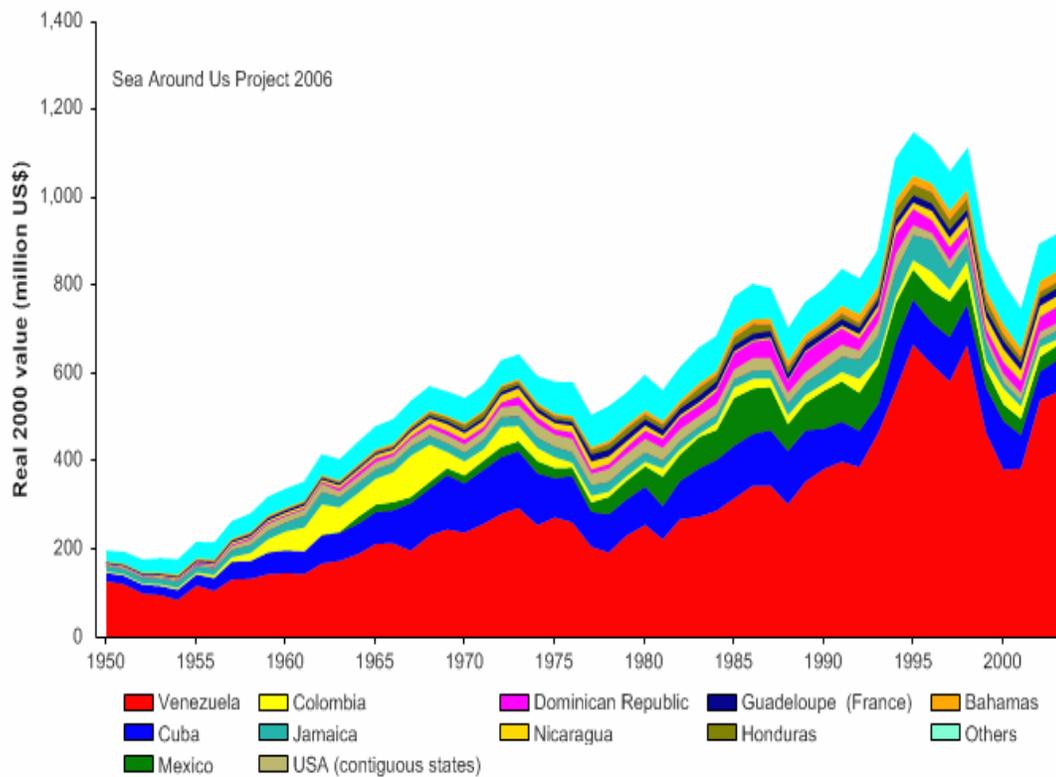
The Saint-Marc Conference is a milestone not only for the ACS, but for all the international and regional organizations involved in Disaster Reduction in the Greater Caribbean. The Conference raised the profile of the ACS as an ideal forum for bringing together countries that may vary greatly in size and culture but share the same vulnerabilities and creates a framework for deliverables in the work of the ACS in disaster risk reduction and its link to the international agenda agreed at the UN.

Fig. 1. Geopolitical complexity of the Caribbean Sea Large Marine Ecosystem



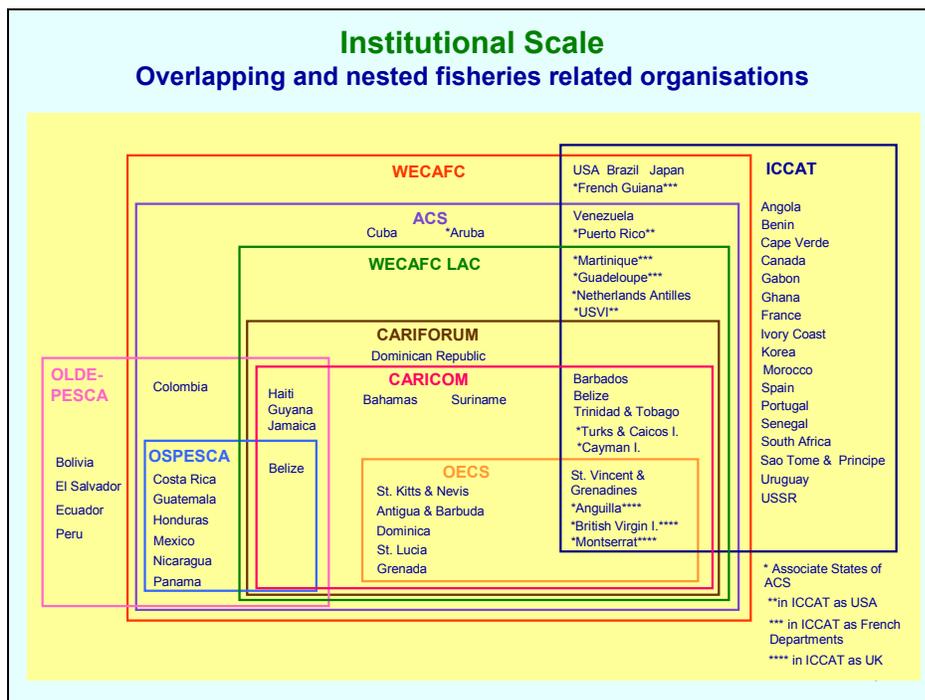
Source: Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem Project, University of the West Indies (UWI)

Fig.2. The annual value of Caribbean Sea Fisheries



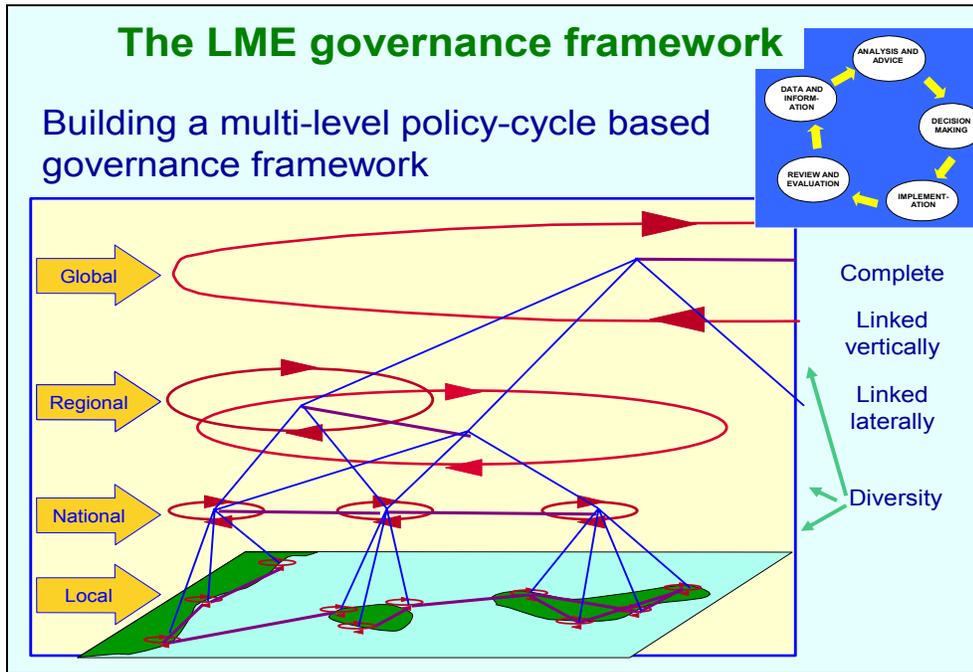
Source: Seas Around Us Project, University of British Columbia (UBC)

Fig. 3. Overlapping and Nested Fisheries Related Organisations in the Caribbean



Source: Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem Project, University of the West Indies (UWI)

Fig. 4. The LME Governance Framework



Source: Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem Project, University of the West Indies (UWI)