

International Conference on Sargassum, 23-26 October 2019

The States and Organisations which endorse the following declaration,

Having regard to:

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, of 25 September 2015;

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), of 9 May 1992;

The international climate agreement, or the Paris Agreement, of 12 December 2015;

Resolution A/RES/72/73 (XI-292) of the United Nations General Assembly proclaiming the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) and tasking the UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) with preparing an implementation plan in consultation with Member States, United Nations partners and other relevant stakeholders;

The Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment in the Wider Caribbean Region, known as the Cartagena Convention, of 24 March 1983;

The note by the Secretariat of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on the implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities for the 2012-2018 period (UNEP/GPA/IGR.4/3/Rev.1), of 11 September 2018;

The Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, of 14 November 2014 and the Caribbean SIDS Midterm Review of the SAMOA Pathway, the San Pedro Declaration, of 9th August 2018;

The Sargassum White Paper adopted at the Eighth Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA) in the Wider Caribbean Region on 6 December 2018;

The Tenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP) to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA) in the Wider Caribbean Region on 3 June 2019;

Article 6 of the Treaty of Chaguaramas establishing the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) signed on 4 July 1973;

Article 4 of the Treaty of Basseterre establishing the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) signed on 18 June 1981;

Article 3 of the Convention Establishing the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) signed on 24 July 1994;

The St Georges Declaration of Principles for Environmental Sustainability adopted by Member States of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) signed in 2001 and revised in 2006;

The statement on the challenges and opportunities of Sargassum at the fifth meeting of the OECS Council of Ministers in Brades (Montserrat) on 11 July 2018, and endorsed at the sixth meeting in Fort-de-France (Martinique) on 16 May 2019;

The references to Sargassum in the 2019-2021 ACS Action Plan, adopted at the Summit in Managua (Nicaragua) on 29 March 2019;

The minutes of the High-Level Meeting on Sargassum held in Cancún (Mexico) on 27 June 2019, and especially paragraph 20 on continuing ACS projects and holding a technical meeting to define a strategy;

The IOC of UNESCO Subcommission for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions (IOCARIBE) Recommendation SC-IOCARIBE XV-9 made at its XV Session held in Oranjestad, Aruba May 6-10, 2019;

The national and regional efforts to address the issue of Sargassum, and drawing on the Mexican government's Science, Technology and Innovation Programme to address, adapt to and mitigate the arrival of pelagic Sargassum in the Mexican Caribbean, and the need to organize a concerted strategy in the Greater Caribbean Region;

The report by French Senator Dominique Théophile on the Fight against Sargassum Seaweed in the Greater Caribbean Region: prevention and regional cooperation strategies, of 5 February 2019;

Considering:

The urgent threat posed by massive Sargassum seaweed landings on the sustainable development of the Greater Caribbean in its social, economic, environmental and cultural dimensions, and in particular on the agriculture, tourism and fishing industries of the Region;

The consequences of these landings and their disposal on the marine environment, fresh water sources, aquifers, water tables and coastlines, in terms of protecting ecosystems, flora and fauna;

The potential health impacts on populations exposed to Sargassum;

The intensifying recurrence of Sargassum landings and the need to factor this into sustainable development plans and partnerships and related operational strategies and plans;

The need to come up with ways of using this potential resource that comply with the principles of sustainable, inclusive and responsible development;

The international mobilization following the Sargassum call for projects led by the French National Research Agency (ANR), and the interest in ensuring that the widest possible group of research stakeholders contributes to improving knowledge and identifying innovative solutions;

The many national and regional initiatives and the need to organize a concerted strategy for the Greater Caribbean Region;

The negative impact of the phenomenon on the budgets of affected States and territories, particularly on the vulnerable economies of SIDS;

The desire expressed by States, territories and regional integration organizations of the Greater Caribbean Region to strengthen their cooperation in tackling the massive and recurrent Sargassum landings;

Have agreed as follows:

Article 1: A “Caribbean Programme for Sargassum” will be set up, financed by the European Territorial Cooperation Fund (INTERREG) and led by the Guadeloupe Region. In addition to the French Government, the INTERREG partnership includes the Territorial Community of Martinique, the Territorial Community of French Guiana, the Territorial Community of Saint-Barthélemy, the Territorial Community of Saint-Martin, the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), the French Environment and Energy Management Agency (ADEME), the French Development Agency (AFD), and the French Agency for Biodiversity (AFB).

Article 2: The “Caribbean Programme for Sargassum” will have the following missions:



1. Strengthening cooperation between Caribbean States and territories in the field of environmental and natural habitat protection in order to face challenges and seize opportunities, by boosting the sharing and dissemination of knowledge, methods and tools, including forecasting, detection, collection, impact management and use;
2. Building Caribbean States' and territories' capacities to respond to massive Sargassum landings by pooling best practices in priority areas such as the prevention of landings, coastal protection, use and the development of a legislative framework;
3. Researching, collating and disseminating of data on the social, economic and legal aspects of Sargassum and its management;
4. Enhancing public awareness and knowledge on all aspects of the Sargassum phenomenon, including the impacts of runoff from land based activities into rivers and the sea;
5. Enhancing the protection of populations by implementing detection mechanisms and pooling health information for the monitoring of at-risk populations;
6. Supporting scientific research, as well as technological development and innovation as it regards Sargassum
7. Identifying commercial uses deemed viable and encourage investment;
8. Developing swift and effective responses to emergencies by improving forecasting information on landings in the zone.

Article 3: These missions will be carried out, in part or in full, through the following actions:

1. The creation of a Caribbean platform dedicated to collecting scientific and technical data on Sargassum with a view to making them available to public stakeholders, the Private Sector and the general public;
2. The establishment of a warning and monitoring centre, which will manage the remote sensing and monitoring of air quality throughout the Caribbean Basin.

Article 4: States and local authorities, in accordance with their competencies, will do their utmost to remove, as swiftly as possible, Sargassum seaweed that has landed on coastlines, using best practices, until the process is complete.

Article 5: Pursuant to the principles and rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO), States and local authorities will support, in accordance with their competencies, the commercial and scientific use of Sargassum seaweed, in compliance with international commitments to sustainable, inclusive and responsible development.

Article 6: States Parties to the Cartagena Convention will strengthen the joint work of the Protocols Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA) and Land-Based Sources (LBS) as appropriate. They will also assess the appropriateness and feasibility of eventually developing a Protocol to the Convention in order to address global issues.

Article 7: States, territories and member organizations of the “Caribbean Programme for Sargassum” will work within the Cartagena Convention’s dedicated technical working group. They are aware of the need to create a permanent coordination space to sustain their cooperation will propose extending the working group’s mandate, and will work on sustaining and managing cooperation alongside the IOC of UNESCO Sub Commission for the Caribbean Sea and Adjacent Regions (IOCARIBE).

Article 8: States and international organizations will encourage the “Caribbean Programme for Sargassum” to collaborate with IOCARIBE, its Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) and Harmful Algae in the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions (ANCA) programmes, and the multi-hazard information and forecasting system for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions, as well as with the United Nations Environment’s Global Programme of Action for the protection of the marine environment from land based activities (GPA). They will support the inclusion of the Sargassum thematic into the proposed resolutions for adoption by the 5th United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA 5) in 2021.

Article 9: The objectives set out in the “Caribbean Programme for Sargassum” will be included in the work of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), and particularly the work within the Caribbean Sea Commission (CSC), in order to develop projects and activities in line with these objectives.

Article 10: States and regional organizations will continue to promote studying and managing the potential social, economic and health impacts of Sargassum seaweed and, in particular, will continue to mobilize the scientific, technical and other resources to address this issue.

Article 11: States and regional organizations will task the coordinator of the “Caribbean Programme for Sargassum” with examining the possibility of holding a Conference for Donors in 2020 with a view to identifying sustainable solutions appropriate for Caribbean SIDS to help them meet the cost of equipment, technical and technological support for the collection and appropriate end use of Sargassum.

Article 12: The coordinator of the “Caribbean Regional Programme for Sargassum” must draw up a roadmap and/or action plan based on the structure of said Programme, which must include five components: a) modelling monitoring and reporting, b) maritime logistics, c) land-based logistics and d) utilization e) appropriate disposal.