

## **CARICOM Submission for Inputs to the Concept Paper for Theme 7 of the Partnership Dialogues: Enhancing the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources**

### **Integrated ocean governance**

Ocean ecosystem goods and services are critical for the survival of people in all countries, especially in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) such as those comprising the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). Effective ocean governance is essential if those ecosystem services are to be sustained for present and future generations, as is the purpose of all of the SDG14 targets. As articulated in most international agreements ocean governance must be ecosystem-based if critical ecosystem functions are to be sustained. Effective ocean governance requires arrangements that conform to internationally accepted principles such as of transparency, accountability, inclusivity, subsidiarity, efficiency, etc. To be effective, such arrangements will require (a) integration across the many sectors that use and impact the oceans and (2) interactions among the several levels of ocean governance, from local to global. **The Caribbean Community is of the view that there is a need for focused attention on these arrangements if the global community is to make significant progress towards SDG14 and related targets by 2030.**

Despite longstanding recognition of the need to address the above requirements for ocean governance, arrangements for marine ecosystems are fragmented and in many cases ineffective. For biodiversity, fisheries, pollution and climate change alone these arrangements include 23 global and more than 120 regional agreements<sup>i</sup>. While fragmentation is a major issue, there is an overall global pattern to these arrangements that can be useful in determining the way forward. There are six major global networks for the key issues mentioned above that are primarily led by UN agencies each comprising a global secretariat and several regional sub-bodies. In addition there are about 16-18 regional networks that include the regional sub-bodies, 'indigenous'<sup>ii</sup> regional organisations, regional arms of global NGOs and regional NGOs. **Together these global and regional networks if rationalized, connected and strengthened could provide a working global ocean governance framework for oceans that will enable achievement of the SDG14 targets<sup>iii</sup>.**

The global networks are the business of UN agencies and are supposed to be coordinated by UN Oceans. UN Ocean has been deemed largely ineffective due to lack of focus and resources. Strengthening UN oceans is a critical part of strengthening global ocean governance. Without this focus it will be difficult to achieve SDG14 target C pertaining to implementing international law as reflected in UNCLOS which underlays the pursuit of all other SDG14 targets. However, the full set of global arrangements is larger than the mandate of UN Oceans and there is the need for a mechanism with broader reach to provide integration and support connectivity of global and regional arrangements. Without this, the likelihood of significant progress towards SDG14 target c, will be substantially diminished.

In addition to strengthening global level arrangements, there must be a focus on strengthening regional networks; the level at which much of the governance action must take place. This is especially important for SDG14 Target 7, pertaining to increased economic benefits for SIDS. Ocean management capacity is notably weak for SIDS which must take collaborative regional approaches if they are to be successful. Caribbean Community Member States are located in SIDS rich region, the Wider Caribbean, that is arguably the most geopolitically complex in the world. Regional level cooperation efforts are fundamental for effective ocean governance in SIDS rich regions such as this. CARICOM has been promoting efforts at establishing and strengthening ocean governance arrangements within this region for decades. Progress has been steady but slow. To support the achievement of SDG targets for marine pollution (14.1), marine and coastal ecosystems (14.2), sustainable fisheries (14.4, 14.6, 14.b), and

science-based decision making (14a), regional level efforts must be accelerated and regional networks of arrangements strengthened substantially.

Strengthening regional networks of arrangements must include treating them as entities, not just collections of unconnected organisations that happen to share the same ocean space. It must include analysis of gaps, overlaps and interactions among organisations and the identification and strengthening of coordinating mechanisms. Some SIDS rich regions, such as the Pacific Islands Region, The Wider Caribbean, the Mediterranean and the Western Indian Ocean are actively and explicitly working on developing regional ocean governance approaches. There are lessons to be learned and shared among these regions. There are also lessons to be learned from other regions, both developed and developing, with fewer SIDS; for example the emerging arrangements for the Arctic, the North East Atlantic and the South East Pacific.

The Caribbean Community has been working with its partners in Wider Caribbean region on analyzing and improving regional ocean governance arrangements and is interested in sharing its experiences with other regions as well as learning from theirs. It is proposed that the topic of regional ocean governance arrangements and their place in global ocean governance can be taken by the Partnership Dialogue on the theme “Enhancing the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea”. CARICOM proposes that the Secretary General of the Conference could address the issue of ‘strengthening regional ocean governance networks’ having regard to the following focus questions :

- What have we learned from regional ocean governance initiatives around the world?
- What must we do to strengthen ocean governance at the regional level in all regions of the world?
- How should the global-regional nexus for ocean governance be structured, managed and monitored?

The Caribbean Community is of the view that support for the strengthening of regional ocean governance and linking it with global governance arrangements will be essential for the achievement for the SGD14 targets. They will provide the context within which all processes and actions towards these targets will be planned and implemented.

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<sup>i</sup> UNESCO IOC and UNEP (2016). The Open Ocean: Status and Trends. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Nairobi. Chapter 3: Governance

[http://www.geftwap.org/publications/copy\\_of\\_TWAPVolume5OpenOcean.pdf/view](http://www.geftwap.org/publications/copy_of_TWAPVolume5OpenOcean.pdf/view)

<sup>ii</sup> Indigenous regional organisations refers to organisations established by the countries of a region. They may be sector specific, e.g. fisheries, tourism, or multipurpose.

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.geftwap.org/publications/twap-assessment-of-governance-arrangements-for-the-ocean-vol-2/view>