

Terms of Reference of the SPAW STAC *Ad Hoc* Working Groups

Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) to the Protocol concerning
Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) in the Wider Caribbean Region
Electronic consultation, July 2019



1. The First Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP) of the SPAW Protocol, Havana (24-25 September 2001), in its Decision I.7, awarded “*specific mandates to the STAC for the creation of ad hoc Working Groups to deal with those themes that, owing to their complexity or level of specialisation, thereby require [special attention]. These groups should deliver reports on their work to the STAC.*”

2. Three such *ad hoc* working groups, dedicated respectively to Protected Areas, to Species and to Exemptions, already exist and should be updated and re-endorsed by the contracting parties under these terms of reference.

3. *The Working Groups facilitate ongoing discussions on topics of interest to Contracting Parties and observers. There is no limited timeframe for Working Groups; they can remain in existence whilst there is a need for them. Once established, they remain an active standing committee unless otherwise designated by the STAC. They can result in the delivery of a set of recommendations on request by the STAC on preparation of the working documents for next STAC assembly.*

Requirements

4. Initiative: Working Groups are established by the STAC. The suggestion may originate from one or more Parties, the Secretariat including the SPAW-RAC or an observer or a RAN. They can be chaired by a contracting party of the SPAW Protocol or by the secretariat/SPAW-RAC, as decided by the STAC (see also paragraph 6). They are facilitated by the Secretariat. The existing dedicated working groups are currently all chaired by the SPAW-RAC.

5. Membership: Each Contracting party can designate up to two experts to a working group. Observers (Civil society organizations, non-member States or independent experts) can also nominate an expert to a working group as long as the total number of observer participants does not exceed the number of Parties to the SPAW Protocol (17 as of June 2019). All the experts are designated for their acknowledged scientific and technical competence, their availability and readiness to be responsive in the group, and to cover as much as possible the geographical and thematic scope of the working group. Once designated, they participate *intuitu personae*.

The secretariat receives all nominations for participation in the working group along with their scientific and technical qualifications of both Parties and observers. The final composition of the group is validated by the Bureau of the STAC along with the Secretariat, based on the above rules.

The working group may invite additional experts to address specific subjects as needed.

6. The Chair of the working group leads the members of the working group, ensuring that the working group completes its mandated tasks. In consultation with the Secretariat and the Bureau, the Chair of the working group is designated by the STAC and is responsible for ensuring that the *contracting parties and observers* are kept up to date on the work, and manages the roster of active participants in the working group.

7. Goal and tasks: Working Groups address issues or topics clearly identified by the STAC to facilitate continued discussions on topics of interest to the STAC. Specific tasks of the Working Group are mandated by the STAC and the tasks of existing Working Groups may be amended by the STAC.

8. Output: The results of the Working Group's work depends on the topic and charge of the group. The results may be recommendations on documents submitted to the STAC and the COP, or recommendations on specific issues requested by the STAC . Working Groups always report back to the STAC.

9. Way of working: Working Groups accomplish their work virtually. They are overseen by *the Chair of the Working Group* and assisted by the Secretariat/the SPAW-RAC if the chair is from a contracting Party. To ensure transparency in the process and review by all members and observers of the SPAW Protocol, interim reports will be distributed intersessionally through the Secretariat/the SPAW-RAC.

10. Decision making : Working groups are composed of experts. In case consensus cannot be reached on a specific task, the chair guarantees that the diversity of opinions are dutifully reflected in the feedback and reports to the *contracting parties and observers* and ultimately to the STAC.

11. Languages : The language for the working groups is English until the outputs become documents to be submitted for deliberation by the STAC . Once acknowledged as working documents for the STAC they must be produced into the three working languages (English, French and Spanish).

12. Submitted documents : With due consideration for the need to limit the extent of the documentation provided, but adhering to the adopted Guidelines for submission when required, national reports (official proposals for PAs, species and exemptions reports) or other proposals submitted for consideration by the STAC must be submitted 4 months before the next meeting of the STAC.

13. Timeframe: There is no limited timeframe for Working Groups unless so decided by the STAC; they can remain in existence as long as there is a need for them.

14. Budget: There is no structural budget available for Working Groups.

15. Communications: Working Groups use the "*teamwork*" platform for communication. Once designated, the members of the working groups will be invited to join a virtual platform created by SPAW-RAC for each working group;

Annex : current tasks of the ad hoc working group (to be updated after each STAC)

1. Specific tasks of the PA working group

1.1. Mandatory tasks :

- Review and provide the basis for recommendations on proposals from contracting parties to add new protected areas to the SPAW protocol annexes.
- Review when needed the procedure through which contracting parties can propose new protected areas to be listed as SPAW sites

1.2. Additional tasks from the priorities discussed during STAC 8 (not limited to):

- The development of a co-operation programme in support of listed protected areas and in keeping with the comments provided by the STAC, with particular attention to the review of gaps and needs, in order to analyse ecological connectivity among sites, and strengthen networking and capacities
- On proposition from the chair and in keeping with Article 19 and the para. 25 of the approved Guidelines and Criteria for listing protected areas, a reporting format on the status of the listed sites to Contracting Parties.

2. Specific tasks of the species working group

2.1. Mandatory tasks: review, evaluate, and provide recommendations (including the basis for any recommendations) on proposals from contracting parties to add new species to the SPAW Protocol annexes or change the listing status of species.

2.2. Additional tasks from the priorities discussed during STAC 8 (not limited to):

- Evaluate the status of parrotfish and other herbivores associated with coral reefs, seagrass beds and mangroves to determine whether any species or group of species may warrant listing in the SPAW Protocol Annexes, with due consideration to socio-cultural-economic and ecological dimensions, and provide results of reviews to the STAC;
- Address as priority the whale shark *Rhincodon typus* and the giant manta ray *Manta birostris*, as well as other species deemed a priority by the STAC. Part of this assessment could include an evaluation of the current listing of species (evaluate whether they are in the appropriate Annex, identify management needs of the species) .
- Develop priorities and strategies for regional collaboration on and implementation of management measures to improve protection of species listed under the Annexes of the Protocol.
- Discuss options for a simplified procedure for the listing of (critically) endangered and endangered species

3. Specific tasks of the exemption working group

3.1. Mandatory tasks : review for recommendation the exemptions reports submitted by contracting parties

3.2. Additional tasks from the priorities discussed during STAC 8 (not limited to):

- Encouraging the use of the adopted Reporting Format for Exemptions under Article 11(2) of the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife Protocol (SPAW) (UNEP(DEPI/CAR WG 38/3)
- Review the United States Exemptions Report (2017) and report to the STAC on their findings, as well as the Curacao Exemptions Report (2016) and any additional information that may be provided by the Government of Curacao since the original exemption report submission.

4. Specific tasks of the sargassum working group

4.1. Mandatory tasks agreed by STAC 8

- Develop clear objectives and responsibilities for the Working Group
- Establish coordination and collaboration with relevant regional and global initiatives in order to promote maximum impact of synergies and solutions to the Sargassum outbreaks.