

Cartagena de Indias/Panama/Wider Caribbean Region, June 18, 2020

Milestone Decision on Ocean Governance for the Wider Caribbean

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More than twenty countries and fourteen organizations from the wider Caribbean convened virtually from 16-18 June 2020 under the Chairpersonship of the Government of Panama and with the support of the [UNDP/GEF CLME+ Project](#), to lay the foundations for a regional “ocean governance” Coordination Mechanism.

By doing so, meeting participants recognized the complexity of our marine and coastal environments, as well as the fact that decisions on its management are currently being made at both the national and (sub-)regional levels, and often serve different -and sometimes even conflicting- interests and needs. Cross-sectoral, multi-country dialogue therefore becomes critically important to safeguard our common marine heritage, for the benefit of all.

For this reason, the mechanism will seek to bring together countries and regional organizations to **enhance collaboration and coordination for the conservation and sustainable use of the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems**. Having achieved an agreement on its core aspects, it is believed that the mechanism can be made operational in the coming years.

Ms. Tricia Lovell, Antigua and Barbuda Deputy Chief Fisheries Officer (Ag) and National Focal of the CLME+ Project stated: “When we consider the complex geopolitical environment of the



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Wider Caribbean, **what we have achieved so far and are working towards implementing is unprecedented**. The Coordination Mechanism that is envisioned will hopefully improve the overall manner in which we collaborate as a region in the management of our shared marine space. The strides made at this meeting have definitely brought us closer to achieving this.”

In the meantime, a [prototype mechanism](#), put in place in 2017, will continue to provide important experiences and lessons. →

The marine ecosystems to be covered by the coordination platform comprise many unique features such as several of the World's largest global annual aggregations of emblematic species, including humpback whales, whale sharks and leatherback turtles. As a **global marine biodiversity and tourism hotspot**, and by hosting **important marine habitats** (e.g. coral reefs and mangroves) and **fisheries** (e.g. spiny lobster in the Caribbean and shrimp & groundfish along the North Brazil Shelf), the **region's marine environment is key to the lives and well-being of its peoples.**



The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI), who participated as Observer and was represented through its Executive Director, **Mrs. Nicole Leotaud**, expressed: "It is very encouraging to see the commitment made by countries to supporting coordinated and interactive ocean

governance in the region. This means that **opportunities are starting to be created for real engagement of civil society, fisherfolk and other resource users, the private sector and agencies working across all sectors relevant to the oceans.** Partnerships for a 'whole of society' approach are key if we are to protect oceans that support the well-being and livelihoods of so many Caribbean people".

While the marine ecosystems are known to be under **severe threat**, they continue to constitute **one of the region's most important assets for sustainable, and climate resilient socio-economic development.** Their sound protection and restoration over the next decade - declared by the United Nations General Assembly as the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration - will be **crucial for the region's future.**

Mr. Andrew Hudson, Head of the **UNDP** Water & Ocean Governance Programme, stated: "The economies, livelihoods and food security of the millions of people living in this region are heavily dependent on healthy and productive marine ecosystems. As one of the leading organizations promoting sustainable use of the world's large marine ecosystems through improved ocean governance, UNDP welcomes this decision by the governments and intergovernmental organizations. Once operational, this coordination mechanism can serve to ensure the sustainable, ecosystem-based management and governance of marine resources."

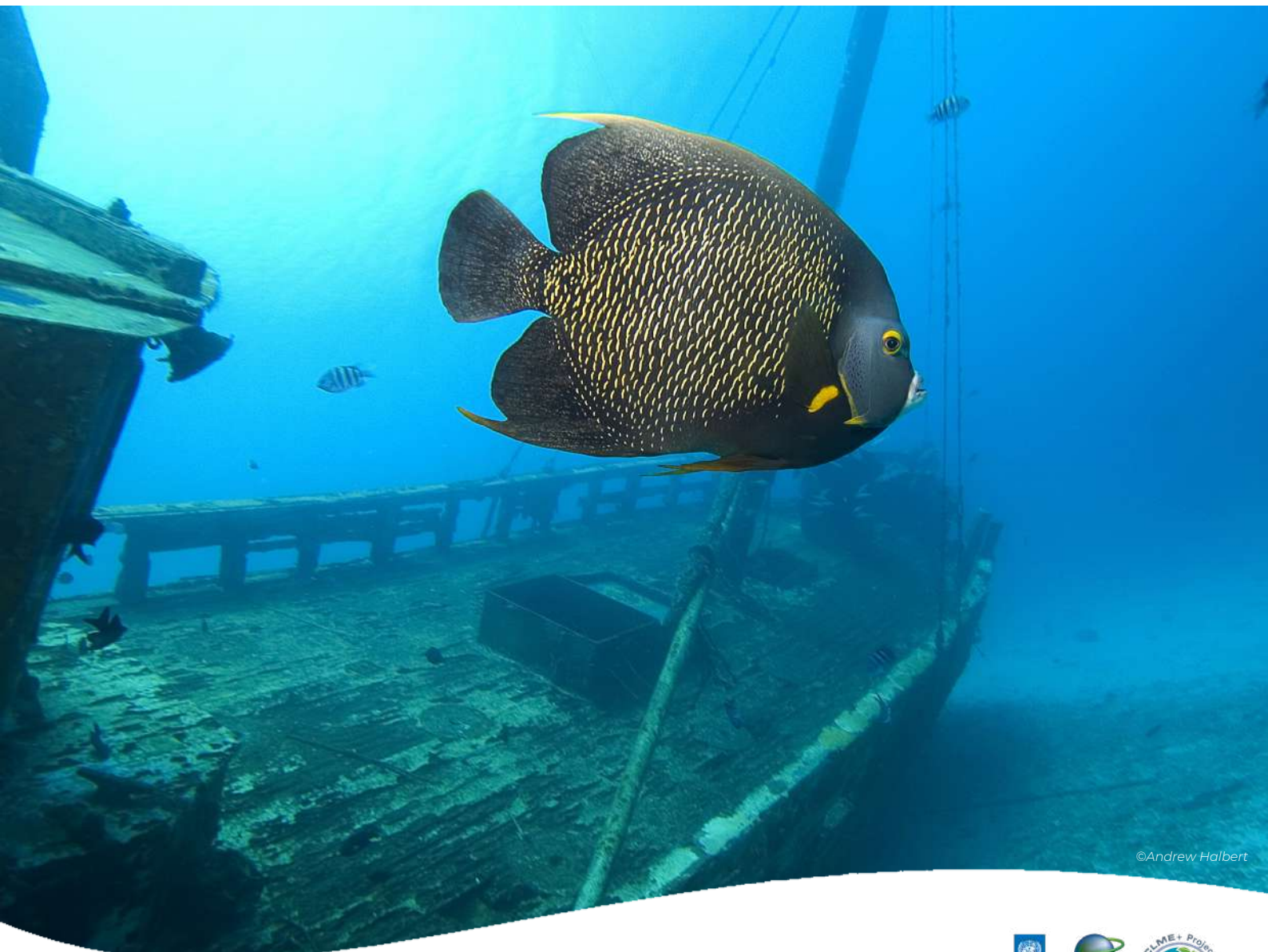
Meanwhile, **Mr. Salvador Nieto** and **Mr. Reinaldo Morales**, Executive Secretary and Executive Director of respectively **CCAD** and →

OSPESCA, of the Central American Integration System SICA, stated: "Taking into account that countries of the Central American Integration System (SICA in Spanish) have advanced in developing a region of opportunities through intersectoral synergies, which is reflected in the work conducted under the cooperative framework between the fisheries and the environmental sectors, **it is also essential to continue working with other bodies and organizations with whom we share important resources, such as the CARICOM and the Wider Caribbean region**, to safeguard the natural capital as the basis for sustainable socio-economic development."

What's next?

Work is now expected to continue, with negotiations being planned for the coming months on the detailed content of the mechanism's establishing document, while also undertaking fundraising efforts to secure its future implementation. **We kindly invite you to watch out for our next CLME+ Ocean Governance Brief!**

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- To find out more about the Coordination Mechanism, please visit its dedicated section on the CLME+ Hub (www.clmeplus.org/regional-coordination-mechanisms/)
 - For more detailed information on countries and organizations that supported the decision, please visit: www.clmeplus.org/regional-coordination-mechanisms/#CM



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About the CLME+ Project

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The CLME+ Project (2015-2020) is receiving funding through the International Waters Focal Area of the Global Environment Facility (thegef.org), The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the GEF implementing Agency. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), together with UNEP CEP (represented through the Cartagena Convention Secretariat), FAO-WECAFC, IOCARIBE of the IOC of UNESCO, CRFM, OSPESCA, OECS Commission, CANARI, CERMES and GCFI, are responsible for technical and administrative execution.

The milestone decision on ocean governance described in this brief was taken in response to a call for action under the CLME+ Strategic Action Programme (SAP, 2015-2025), and achieved in the context of the **inter-sessional Meeting of the Steering Committee of the UNDP/GEF “CLME+” Project**: “Catalyzing SAP implementation in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems”. **The innovative approach to this meeting** - held for the first time via videoconference including simultaneous translation - allowed for **significant financial savings** and a substantial amount of **avoided carbon dioxide emissions**.

For More Information:

Please visit the **CLME+ HUB** (www.clmeplus.org) and the CLME+ Project Website (clmeproject.org) or you can also contact the **CLME+ Project Coordination Unit** at: info@clmeproject.org



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