Caribbean priorities for conservation and sustainable use of marine resources, oceans and seas

Report of Caribbean webinar held May 9th, 2014

1. Background
The international community is working to develop a set of post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which will replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as the overarching global development framework after 2015. As part of this process, CARICOM Member States are seeking to identify regional priorities and effectively negotiate these in the post-2015 SDGs process. This work is intimately linked with preparations for the Third International Conference of SIDS being held in Samoa in September 2014. SIDS have agreed that sustainable development priorities identified for Samoa should be reflected in the post-2015 agenda.

The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) has been working to provide technical assistance, independent input and analysis to support development and negotiation of a strong and coherent regional perspective, reflecting priorities of Caribbean stakeholders across countries, in the post-2015 SDG and SIDS processes. As part of this work, CANARI is facilitating a series of webinars to reach out to Caribbean stakeholders to elicit opinions on key issues drawn from the topic areas identified in the post-2015 process, as well as Caribbean priorities identified in the preparatory process for the SIDS 2014 conference. CANARI is conducting the webinars as part of a two-year programme of work by the Independent Research Forum (IRF), which is being funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

The specific objective of the webinars is to refine sustainable development priorities for the Caribbean and provide technical input to contribute to the identification of potential targets which can help to inform CARICOM negotiation in the SDGs and SIDS processes.

2. Scope of the focus area
For the focus area on “conservation and sustainable use of marine resources, oceans and seas,” the proposed global goal is to: “Take urgent and significant actions for the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources, oceans and seas.”

Recognising that interlinkages would exist between this goal and other goals, draft targets identified under this goal as of early May\(^1\) were:

\text{a) by 2030, prevent, control and reduce by x\% marine pollution and marine disposal of waste and tailings, including from land-based activities}
\text{b) by 2030, restore and protect marine ecosystems from destruction, including by halting and preventing ocean acidification}
\text{c) develop and ensure the full implementation of existing regional and international regimes governing oceans and seas, including for resources in areas beyond national jurisdictions}
\text{d) establish Marine Protected Areas, consistent with international law}
\text{e) by 2030, regulate harvesting to restore fish stocks to ecologically safe levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield, and support sustainable small-scale fisheries}
\text{f) by 2020, eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and destructive fishing practices}
\text{g) by 2030, eliminate fishing subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing}

\(^{1}\) This is taken from the latest working document available at \url{http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/focussdgs.html}.
3. Webinar topics and speakers
Recognising the breadth of the focus area, presenters in the webinar focused on discussing priorities for establishing ocean governance arrangements which would be critical for effective conservation and sustainable use of marine resources in the Caribbean Sea, as well as specific issues related to fisheries management.

- Ocean governance - What needs to be done at the regional level: Professor Robin Mahon, Professor of Marine Affairs and Director, Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES)
- Strategic actions for the sustainable management of shared living marine resources in the CLME+: Mr. Patrick Debels, Regional Project Coordinator, Sustainable Management of the Shared Marine Resources of the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem (CLME) and Adjacent Regions
- Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in the CARICOM region: Mr. Terrence Phillips, CANARI Senior Technical Officer and Manager of the Coastal and Marine Livelihoods and Governance Programme

4. Summary of key findings and recommendations
The Caribbean Sea is important for economic development, livelihoods, poverty reduction and food security in the region, and linkages need to be reflected with these focus areas in a global sustainable development agenda. Linkages with renewable energy (from marine sources) and climate change (coastal and marine ecosystems as carbon sinks) also need to be reflected. Conservation of the rich marine and coastal biodiversity is important, because of essential ecosystem services being provided (e.g. coastal protection, “blue forests” for carbon sequestration, living marine resources for fisheries and tourism).

The Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem (CLME) project transboundary diagnostic analysis (TDA) identified three key transboundary problems which are all inter-linked and which require effective governance and management of the resources in the Caribbean Sea. These are unsustainable fisheries, pollution and habitat degradation. As human pressures on the marine environment have grown exponentially, the capacity of ecosystems to provide the goods and services critical to livelihoods, socio-economic development and well-being has become increasingly impacted. Further aggravating effects are to be expected from climate change and sea-level rise. Among the root causes are: weaknesses in governance arrangements; limited human and financial resources; inadequate (access to) data and information; inadequate public awareness; insufficient consideration of the value of ecosystem goods and services in policy and decision-making; increasing population and cultural pressures; and trade and external dependency.

The fisheries sector in the CARICOM region is extremely important as it:
- employs over 120,000 persons, directly or indirectly, who are mostly from rural communities which lack other income earning opportunities;
- contributes to GDP: ranging from 7.2% in Belize to 0.02% in Trinidad and Tobago;
- is a major source of protein especially in rural communities which usually exhibit a higher percentage of poverty than the national average;
- earns over US $211 million per year from export; and
- is an important activity for the growing population of recreational fishers and diving enthusiasts, with the Caribbean being rated as a prime destination for international anglers.

Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing is a serious problem in the CARICOM region. At the global level, the response to IUU fishing was stimulated by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) which provides the framework for countries to exercise effective fisheries management. Other policy documents include the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement, FAO Compliance Agreement, FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, and the International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing (IPOA – IUU). Several commercially important fisheries exist in the region:
shrimp and groundfish fisheries of Guyana and Suriname; reef species of the Eastern Caribbean; conch and lobster fisheries of Jamaica, The Bahamas and Belize; and migratory pelagics such as wahoo, tuna, flying fish and dolphin fish roam through the area. Assessments have shown that there are high levels of exploitation resulting in a number of fully fished species, such as shrimp, spiny lobsters, conch and some reef species. The full extent of IUU fishing in the CARICOM region is not quantified, but it is known that poaching is a significant problem in countries with high value species such as conch and lobster stocks in Belize, Jamaica and The Bahamas, shrimp in Guyana and Suriname, and tunas in the Eastern Caribbean Islands. IUU fishing causes significant damage to fish stocks, marine biodiversity and the fragile marine ecosystems which also results in economic losses to states involved. The Castries (St. Lucia) Declaration on IUU Fishing demonstrates the region’s determination and commitment to protect the economic interests of CARICOM countries and to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing, but it needs to be implemented.

Recommendations for improved governance:

a. **Adopt a collaborative and integrated approach to governance of the Caribbean Sea that engages all countries and sectors:** Governance of coastal and marine resources across the Wider Caribbean (i.e. the islands as well as the bordering continental countries) is critical to enable management of transboundary resources of the Caribbean Sea. This will require addressing the sometimes competing interests of many sectors and countries. However, some key players (for example Venezuela, USA, Mexico and Columbia) are not currently engaged in regional governance structures and mechanisms. Climate change is not yet fully integrated into the governance arrangements for marine and coastal resources.

b. **Improve policy coherence:** The current policy landscape is extremely complex with 23 relevant global agreements and 75 regional agreements. There is no overarching policy guiding a cohesive and integrated approach to governance of the Caribbean Sea.

c. **Strengthen global governance:** At the global level, UN Oceans needs to be better resourced to be able to facilitate better integration among the various policies and address issues of relevance to SIDS.

d. **Address regional and national policy gaps:** Ratification of the CARICOM Common Fisheries Policy is still outstanding and many national fisheries policies are outdated or in draft.

e. **Establish a single coordinating entity for the Wider Caribbean with a mandate guided by a strategy document:** Policies are administered by various regional inter-governmental technical agencies. For example, administration of fisheries agreements is scattered across the CARICOM Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), Organización del Sector Pesquero y Acuícola de Centroamerica (OSPESCA), Organización Latinoamericana de Desarrollo Pesquero (OLDE-PESCA), International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT) and Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) covering various sub-regions and wider regions.

f. **Improve networking among regional organisations to facilitate coordination and collaboration:** Regional organisations are not sufficiently linked; for example OLDEPESCA is not well networked with the other regional fisheries organisations.

g. **Give governance of the Caribbean Sea more prominence on political agendas in the region:** Regional multipurpose organisations need to be engaged to facilitate and support this.

h. **Support implementation of the CLME+ project and related initiatives:** This GEF-funded regional proposal seeks to: strengthen and consolidate institutional, policy and legal frameworks; enhance capacity of key institutions and stakeholders; implement pilot and demonstration actions and facilitate replication and scaling up; and conduct feasibility studies on high-priority investment needs and opportunities.

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**Recommendations for sustainable fisheries:**

a. **Strengthen governance mechanisms to facilitate effective engagement of fisherfolk:** If fisherfolk are engaged it is more likely that their needs will be addressed and they will better comply with regulations and use sustainable fisheries practices.

b. **Implement the Castries (St. Lucia) Declaration on IUU fishing (2010):** This regional non-binding policy seeks to: enhance the effectiveness of monitoring, control and surveillance at the national and regional levels by creating and sustaining the necessary harmonised and contemporary legislative and regulatory regimes; encourage the development of the required capacity in national fisheries administrations; and foster an attitude of compliance among fishers which is intended to facilitate and support the management of fisheries nationally and regionally.

c. **Implement the CARICOM Regional Strategy to Combat IUUs:** This CRFM strategy includes regional level initiatives to strengthen legislation, promote bilateral and multi-lateral agreements among CARICOM states, harmonise and implement management measures, improve public awareness and involvement, and establish a Regional Working Group on IUU fishing. National initiatives include developing NPOAs - IUU and coastal / fisherfolk watch programmes.

Recommendations for biodiversity conservation:

   d. **Strengthen policies for conservation of marine and coastal biodiversity to implement the Aichi targets under the Convention on Biological Diversity:** The SPAW Protocol is one important policy that exists but policies are generally weak for conservation of marine and coastal biodiversity. Policies and implementation needs to focus on achieving the Aichi targets, which are existing commitments.

Additional recommendations for means of implementation:

   a. **Building capacity of all stakeholders is needed:** Building capacity of regional agencies, national public sector agencies, civil society, and resource users (particularly small scale fisherfolk) to effectively participate in governance and management is needed.

   b. **Harmonised indicators are needed:** Harmonised indicators are needed to guide data collection at the national level so that this can be relevant at the region and global levels.

   c. **Technology:** There is potential for enhanced use of technology to support governance of marine and coastal resources, for example the use of information and communications technologies such as mobile phones being piloted in the mFisheries project with fisherfolk.