



## Statement from the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI)

### The power of including civil society and coastal communities in the blue economy

UN Ocean Conference Side-Event: 'A Blue Commonwealth'

6 June 2017, 13:15 – 14:30, Conference Room 12, United Nations Headquarters, New York

The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) appreciates the opportunity to share a civil society perspective on blue economy as part of this side event on 'A Blue Commonwealth' and thanks the Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth Foundation for facilitating this.

CANARI is an independent regional technical non-profit institute working across the Caribbean islands for nearly 30 years. We have worked extensively with fisherfolk and local, national and regional civil society organisations on marine and coastal conservation, development of sustainable livelihoods and exploring the green economy concept in the Caribbean context. From this perspective, we would like to deliver a strong message on **the importance of focusing on social equity and good governance as core principles within a Blue Charter**.

The 'blue economy' concept emerged at the 2012 Rio Summit as an approach emphasising an ocean-driven economy. There would still appear to be no universally agreed definition of the concept but various initiatives are underway exploring opportunities for economic diversification and growth in areas as diverse as fisheries, energy, tourism, transport and health. While the concept of a 'blue economy' is evolving, there is an appreciation that it is fundamentally premised on the sustainable use and conservation of marine and coastal ecosystems and resources. However, the social equity and inclusive governance dimensions are being lost in many top-down initiatives focusing on major developments in key sectors for 'blue growth' and 'green jobs', including through development of coastal infrastructure. These initiatives risk becoming disconnected from the very people they are intending to benefit, particularly poor vulnerable coastal communities. Development can be 'blue washed' and the ultimate purposes highjacked.

There are practical examples of blue economy in action, drawing on the power of civil society, resource users and community enterprises. For example:

- Fisherfolk have a growing voice and seat at the table in decision-making about governance and management of marine and coastal resources at global, regional, national and local levels. Globally, they were involved in the development of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines) which take a Human Rights Based approach to the development of the immensely important small-scale fisheries sector. At the Caribbean Community level, a Gender in Fisheries Team (Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies of the University of the West Indies, Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organisations, CANARI and Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism Secretariat) is spearheading an initiative to develop a protocol on the SSF Guidelines, with a focus on Gender, for the Caribbean Community Common Fisheries Policy.

- National and local civil society organisations and community resource users are engaged in co-management arrangements for management of marine protected areas as well as resources outside of protected areas. They are delivering local ecosystem-based actions (such as mangrove and coral reef restoration) to conserve ecosystems, build resilience to climate change and natural disasters and deliver co-benefits for livelihoods. Payments for ecosystem services are being explored for delivery of sustainable finance to support local stakeholders.
- Small and micro community enterprises are using coastal and marine ecosystems to deliver economic, environmental and social co-benefits. Interest in 'green' and 'social' enterprises and impact investing is growing. CANARI is supporting these enterprises to assess how they are making choices about trade-offs in delivery of co-benefits and build resilience and 'climate proof' their businesses along the value chain. We are developing an online Caribbean Green Economy Knowledge Platform to showcase case studies of community enterprises in the Caribbean delivering economic, environmental and social co-benefits.

To deliver on the promise of a Blue Charter, support would be needed to expand these practical innovative efforts by civil society, fisherfolk and other resource users, local communities and community enterprises. This must involve sharing knowledge, building capacity, strengthening enabling policy frameworks and providing spaces for civil society to have an effective voice in the process.