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**Sustainable development: follow-up and implementation of the
SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and
the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the
Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of
Small Island Developing States**

Sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea for present and future generations

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report was prepared in response to General Assembly resolution [73/229](#), entitled “Towards the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea for present and future generations”, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report at its seventy-fifth session on the status of implementation of the resolution. A range of activities undertaken at the national and regional levels by Member States, international development partners and other stakeholders to advance the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea are highlighted in the report. In addition, the annex contains a report of the Association of Caribbean States on progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

* [A/75/150](#).



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution [73/229](#), entitled “Towards the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea for present and future generations”, the General Assembly recognized that the Caribbean Sea was an area with unique biodiversity and highly fragile ecosystems and that, when compared with all other large marine ecosystems, was surrounded by the largest number of countries in the world, many of which have a high degree of vulnerability occasioned by climate change, climate variability and associated phenomena and rely heavily on the marine environment for economic growth and sustainable development. The Assembly welcomed the continued efforts of Caribbean States to develop and implement regional initiatives to promote the sustainable management of the Caribbean Sea and recalled the creation of the Caribbean Sea Commission of the Association of Caribbean States. In that regard, the Assembly invited the international community to work with the region to develop and implement appropriate initiatives. The Assembly also invited the Association to submit a report to the Secretary-General on progress made in implementation of the resolution, for consideration by the Assembly at its seventy-fifth session (see annex).

2. In preparing the present report, information was obtained through desk research, inputs from Member States, United Nations system organizations and regional organizations operating in the Caribbean.¹

II. Blue economy and the wider Caribbean region

3. The Caribbean Sea covers less than 1 per cent of the world’s ocean area (2.75 million km²);² nonetheless, it directly supports the economies of 37 coastal and small island countries and territories. The World Bank anticipates that growth in the size of the region’s ocean economy will be significant in the coming decades, with key growth areas expected to be seafood, marine renewables, shipping and port infrastructure services, tourism and blue carbon, as carbon prices increasingly reflect the true value of coastal ecosystem services.

4. Another important emerging area is marine biotechnology – the use of marine organisms for industrial and other purposes involving the synthesis of compounds and identification of pharmacological properties. Those living marine resources have great potential for developing new food, biochemicals, biomaterials, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics, fertilizers and pest control products for a global marine biotechnology market. The potential is significant in particular for small island developing States, whose exclusive economic zones are particularly extensive. As such, it is important that countries regulate access to and the downstream use of marine genetic resources extracted from their exclusive economic zones with a view to ensuring mutually agreed access and benefit-sharing, in accordance with the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Nagoya Protocol on access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity. Marine genetic resources, and the issue of the sharing of the benefits they provide, are also among the topics being considered in the ongoing

¹ Inputs were received from Argentina, Curaçao, Guatemala, Japan, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Telecommunication Union, the Association of Caribbean States and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).

² Pawan Patil and others, “Toward a Blue Economy: A promise for Sustainable Growth in the Caribbean” (Washington D.C., World Bank, 2016).

negotiations for an implementing agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

5. The blue economy³ is more than the sum of all oceanic sectors: it is an approach that calls for the sustainable and integrated management of ocean and coastal spaces, resources and activities to drive economic growth while restoring, protecting and effectively managing ocean and coastal ecosystems. A national development strategy that also harnesses ocean assets will enable countries to promote sustainable growth, diversify economies, improve food security, support livelihoods, enhance shipping connectivity and reduce logistics costs, potentially reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels and build the resilience of coastal infrastructure. When underpinned by principles of equity, low-carbon development, resource efficiency and social inclusion, those strategies can assist in addressing several objectives in the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals. Furthermore, when gender considerations are mainstreamed, significant potential also exists to build more stable, resilient and sustainable communities.

6. Most countries in the wider Caribbean region have for some time contemplated the development of such strategies, with many Governments already deploying the building blocks necessary to support them. Investments have been made in some countries to develop the appropriate human capital and legal and institutional frameworks to support sustainable economic growth and development in the ocean. The challenge so far has been in developing and implementing effective legal and institutional ocean governance structures at the national and regional levels, ensuring cohesive, synergistic approaches to operationalizing those agendas and, for small island developing States, financing that agenda.

7. Balancing the interests of diverse stakeholders in a variety of economic sectors requires holistic, cross-sectoral and coordinated governance approaches. In that regard, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea provides the legal framework within which all oceanic activities must be carried out. It provides legal certainty regarding the extent of sovereignty or sovereign rights, jurisdictions and obligations of States, which is essential to the development of a sustainable blue economy. For most countries in the region, however, national legal and institutional frameworks are generally fragmented and adequate capacity is often not in place for effective implementation.

8. Economic benefits from oceans cannot be realized without also recognizing the pivotal role of coastal and marine resources, and how they are influenced by the effects of climate change and other anthropogenic impacts, such as pollution and resource overexploitation. A transboundary diagnostic analysis of the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems⁴ found that the major transboundary environmental threats affecting the wider Caribbean region were habitat degradation and ecosystem community modification, unsustainable fisheries and pollution. On that basis, in 2013, countries bordering and/or located within the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems region finalized and adopted a 10-year strategic action programme for the sustainable management of the shared living marine resources of the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems to contribute to the achievement of a long-term vision of a healthy marine environment in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems that

³ There is currently no common definition for a blue economy. A number of principles are emerging that can help guide countries in developing their own blue economy and enhancing regional cooperation.

⁴ See <https://clmeplus.org/app/uploads/2020/04/CLME-PDF-B-2007-Preliminary-TDA-overview.pdf>.

provided benefits and livelihoods for the well-being of the people of the region. The strategic action programme consists of six main strategies and four substrategies and has been designed to address priority problems in a holistic and integrative way.

9. Building knowledge and technical capacities in respect of the marine environment to facilitate effective participation in research, knowledge creation and development and to optimize national and regional capabilities to sustainably manage ocean resources is key to successfully implementing a blue economy approach. To that end, countries should ensure that education and related capacity-building programmes consider present and future needs in marine sciences, research, governance, innovation and technology development related to oceans. Relevant capacity-building initiatives and the transfer of appropriate marine technology, to Caribbean small island developing States in particular, will also be significant in building local knowledge and technical capacities.

10. Notwithstanding the progress made, several key barriers and management and policy gaps still hamper progress with regard to the blue economy in the wider Caribbean region. They include limited implementation of ecosystem approaches to marine resources management, limited understanding of blue economic development and poor understanding of the value chains of Caribbean fisheries, compounded by policy and institutional frameworks that are not designed to support value chains, resulting in lost opportunities for investment, marketing and the optimization of economic returns from fisheries products. In many instances, the economic and social sustainability pillars of countries' national action plans or ocean policies are often not well defined, which limits the relevance of those documents to the private sector, affecting buy-in and by extension opportunities for public-private partnerships and for financing growth and sustainable development in the ocean sector. Within the current context of low growth and high debt in many of the countries of the wider Caribbean region, significant public investments in the blue economy are constrained by the lack of adequate fiscal space and readily available financing. New forms of financing and the leveraging of private capital investments will be needed to operationalize the blue economy. In that regard, the necessary enabling conditions must be established to reduce risk and make investment more attractive.

III. Policy and institutional landscape for the sustainable management of the Caribbean Sea

11. Many of the countries in the wider Caribbean region have begun to rethink their development trajectories, focusing on policies that will build resilience and contribute to sustainable development. Emerging development frameworks are more focused on, inter alia, skills development, greater technological sophistication, the diversified production of goods and services and the sustainable management of natural resources. They also encompass the blue economy as one means of economic diversification.

12. Most of the countries in the wider Caribbean region have developed national integrated marine policy frameworks to manage their ocean space and marine resources sustainably, including by promoting coordination and synergies across the spectrum of policymaking bodies, implementing agencies and stakeholders. While their implementation status varies, they include diverse approaches, including the sustainable management of coastal and ocean resources, the expansion of marine protected areas and the establishment of clear maritime boundaries, investments in renewable energy, the development of sustainable infrastructure, the development of new enterprises and jobs and an emphasis on technological innovation, such as ocean mapping, for policy-planning purposes.

13. Some examples are Curaçao, whose national plans and programmes include the development of marine protected areas and management plans, fisheries management plans, strengthening relevant fisheries legislation and capacity development for marine spatial planning and for financing marine management plans. Belize, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico, through the Global Environment Facility (GEF) project entitled “Integrated Transboundary Ridges-to-Reef Management of the Mesoamerican Reef”, strengthened their national capacities for ridge-to-reef management approaches and enhanced regional collaboration for the management of the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef. The Blue Growth Coastal Master Plan of Grenada identifies opportunities for blue growth development in fisheries and aquaculture, aquaponics, blue biotechnology, research and innovation.

14. At the regional level, notable multilateral initiatives that provide support for effective development planning include the Caribbean Regional Oceanscape Project, a collaboration between the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States Commission and the World Bank that focuses on preserving and strengthening the resilience of coastal and marine resources and implementing regional policies to stimulate blue growth. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea are jointly implementing a United Nations Development Account project to support selected countries in the wider Caribbean region to develop evidence-based and policy-coherent oceans economy and trade strategies. So far, Barbados, Belize and Costa Rica have benefited from that project. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs is implementing a United Nations Development Account project to support Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Saint Lucia in developing and implementing appropriate enabling legal, institutional and policy frameworks to grow sustainable ocean-based economies and to derive economic benefits from harnessing the productive potential of their ocean spaces.

15. Despite the many policy and related institutional advances in the region, a number of key challenges exist, including the limited use of spatial planning tools to guide decision-making, fragmented or poorly designed legal and institutional frameworks and compliance and enforcement challenges at the national level. There is also a persistent lack of consistent data and statistics and government capacity to properly assess and manage coastal and marine resources. Effective national decisions on conservation and management of coastal and marine resources will require significant investments in data and statistics.

16. Limited investments in data for decision-making also affect the extent to which a country can successfully attract private sector investment across any economic activity related to the Caribbean Sea. Catalysing private sector investment is also at the heart of mobilizing the blue economy. Unless national strategies are crafted to build a favourable climate for private sector investment, that potential will continue to go untapped. While some countries have had moderate success in leveraging domestic resources and public investment, significant barriers still remain.

17. At the regional and subregional levels, the wider Caribbean region has seen a rise in the past three decades in the number of regional initiatives aimed at fostering the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea. Several regional and subregional organizations with some level of engagement in the governance of the ocean and its resources operate in the region and support those arrangements. Numerous national plans aimed at responding to those commitments and to emerging marine environmental issues have also been developed, including the Caribbean Environment Programme and the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena Convention), the Caribbean Sea Commission of the Association of Caribbean States, the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas and the Caribbean Community Common Fisheries Policy.

18. Multilateral environmental agreements also make up a significant part of the policy and legal landscape of the wider Caribbean region. States bordering the Caribbean Sea are party to a number of international and regional agreements that are relevant to the governance of ocean resources. Relevant global agreements include the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea; the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks; the Convention on Biological Diversity; the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; and the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as modified by the Protocol of 1978 relating thereto, with its six annexes.

19. The relevant regional agreements and instruments include the Cartagena Convention; the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas; the agreement establishing the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism and Caribbean Community Common Fisheries Policy; the Revised Statutes of the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission; the agreement establishing the Sub-Commission for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions; the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles; and the strategic action programme for the sustainable management of the shared living marine resources of the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems project. The International Maritime Organization has a regional office in Trinidad and Tobago and is supporting the Caribbean Memorandum of Understanding on Port State Control, the secretariat of which is in Jamaica. There is, however, considerable variation in capacity among countries to effectively implement and monitor those multilateral environmental agreements.

20. Civil society organizations play an important role in facilitating stakeholder engagement in ocean governance. The most prominent are the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute, which focuses on community involvement in coastal management; the Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organizations, which promotes the representation of fishers in regional fisheries matters in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM); and the Association of Marine Laboratories of the Caribbean, which provides a forum for the exchange of information among laboratories.

21. In addition, there are a number of region-wide multi-partner projects that respond to specific marine issues in the wider Caribbean region, including the GEF Caribbean Regional Fund for Wastewater Management, the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund Ecosystem-based Adaptation Facility and the GEF project Integrating Water, Land and Ecosystems Management in Caribbean Small Island Developing States.

A. Current activities of Caribbean States and other key stakeholders

Caribbean States

22. Several Member States actively engage in support programmes within the wider Caribbean region, including in technical cooperation interventions, the development of strategic partnerships with United Nations or other entities operating in the region and the provision of grants for specific projects. For example:

- Argentina relies on South-South and triangular cooperation to deliver support to the Caribbean. Partnerships with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture have been developed that focus on several SAMOA Pathway priority areas, such as sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth (Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture), food security and nutrition (FAO), health and

noncommunicable diseases (PAHO and CARICOM). Argentina stands ready to explore new opportunities for partnership with other international agencies and agencies operating in the region. Memorandums of understanding have also been concluded with several institutions in the wider Caribbean region, including the Association of Caribbean States, the Coordination Centre for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency.

- Japan, a long-standing development partner in the Caribbean region, has for many years provided financial and technical support with regard to fisheries, disaster risk reduction and climate change. More recently, the country has been delivering support through the Japan-Caribbean Climate Change Partnership (\$15 million), which is designed to strengthen the capacity of Caribbean countries to invest in climate change mitigation and adaptation technologies, as prioritized in their nationally appropriate mitigation actions and national adaptation plans. Support is also provided for the development of the fisheries sector in Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Saint Lucia; the improvement of fisheries facilities and equipment damaged by Hurricane Maria in Dominica; and support to Jamaica for the provision of related equipment to enhance maritime security and disaster response.

Efforts of the United Nations Environment Programme in the wider Caribbean region

23. The Cartagena Convention covers several aspects of marine pollution, for which the contracting parties must adopt specific measures. The Convention, which has been ratified by 25 States Members of the United Nations in the wider Caribbean region, covers the marine environment of the Gulf of Mexico, the Caribbean Sea and the adjacent areas of the Atlantic Ocean, south of the 30th parallel north and within 200 nautical miles of the Atlantic coasts of the contracting party States. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Caribbean Regional Coordinating Unit, which is the secretariat to the Cartagena Convention and its protocols, continues to actively promote accession to and ratification of the Convention's protocols, as well as activities for the implementation of the obligations under the protocols at the national and regional levels. The Caribbean Environment Programme also has a mandate to promote implementation in the wider Caribbean region of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals. The Programme's membership includes all countries in the wider Caribbean region except Brazil.

24. Partnerships also form a significant part of the workplan of the secretariat to the Cartagena Convention to support countries in meeting their obligations under the Cartagena Convention. Cooperation initiatives are undertaken, inter alia, through its regional activity centres and by way of linkages with its GEF-funded projects. Some of these include:

- Collaboration with the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic through a voluntary commitment that contributes to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 14. A total of \$2.5 million was received to focus on marine protected area management and capacity-building. Funding was also mobilized for the implementation of new activities on solid waste and marine litter within the framework of the updated Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter Management for the Wider Caribbean Region.
- The establishment of a memorandum of understanding with the Ocean Foundation in October 2019 to address the monitoring and mitigation of ocean

acidification in key marine ecosystems in States members of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region.

- The signing of a memorandum of cooperation between the secretariat to the Convention and the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism, which facilitates the joint development and implementation of several strategies, including the control and mitigation of impacts from marine invasive species in the region, such as monitoring the sargassum influx.
- The creation of a five-year, \$20 million project, entitled “Integrating Water, Land and Ecosystems Management in Caribbean Small Island Developing States”, which is a multifocal, regional project that builds upon the work of previous initiatives to address water, land and biodiversity resource management, as well as climate change in 10 participating countries. UNEP is the lead implementing agency for national and regional subprojects.

25. The UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme also supports blue economy approaches and integrated pollution prevention and marine biodiversity management in the wider Caribbean region. The new regional strategy for the Caribbean Environment Programme, adopted in 2019, will serve as a basis for the further development and implementation of approaches that focus on ocean-based economies and blue economy approaches. It will also provide more integrated support to contracting parties for meeting their obligations under the Cartagena Convention, the protocols thereto and related regional and global commitments. Through greater multi-stakeholder partnerships, as well as linkages with regional and global frameworks, the UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme will more effectively respond to the challenges facing the marine and coastal environment in the wider Caribbean region and enhance the delivery of results under its biennial workplans.

26. The UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme also contributes extensively to knowledge management, communications, awareness and outreach in the wider Caribbean region. Notable examples include “Sargassum white paper – Sargassum outbreak in the Caribbean: challenges, opportunities and regional situation” and several publications on marine pollution, including the 2019 publication *Marine Pollution in the Caribbean: Not a Minute to Waste*, the result of a collaborative partnership between the World Bank, the secretariat to the Cartagena Convention, the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States and the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science. The publication provides an assessment of the status and impacts of marine pollution in the Caribbean and recommendations to enhance the region’s resilience as it steers towards the blue economy.

27. Through its participation in the work of the UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme, Guatemala, for example, has developed a national hydrocarbon spill response plan, which guides the country in the event of an oil spill in the marine environment. The country also participates in the GEF Caribbean Regional Fund for Wastewater Management regional project focusing on building national capacities for improved wastewater management. In that regard, local governments have been targeted for capacity support in the design and development of treatment systems for domestic wastewater.

28. Under the United Nations Development Programme/GEF Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems project, the secretariat to the Cartagena Convention is providing support for the establishment of a permanent policy coordination mechanism and sustainable financing plan for ocean governance. Contracting parties have been requested to provide feedback on the possibility of the mechanism being hosted by the secretariat (a response is to be provided to the

Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems project coordination unit in the first quarter of 2020). A strategy is being further developed to reduce the impacts of excess nutrient loads on marine ecosystems in the Caribbean Sea and the adjacent North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem. It identifies areas for high-priority action to address nutrient pollution, including the most critically affected ecosystem types, as well as those with significant socioeconomic impacts for the region.

Efforts of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in the wider Caribbean region

29. FAO continues to support countries in the wider Caribbean region with their resilience-building efforts, including through the development of mobile apps for improving early warning and safety at sea and for assessing the vulnerability of coastal fishing villages to climate change. In addition, FAO is currently implementing a GEF-funded project entitled “Climate change adaptation in the Eastern Caribbean fisheries sector” for the period 2017–2020, which aims at increasing resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change impacts in the fishery and aquaculture sector of seven Eastern Caribbean countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago).

30. To further increase awareness and understanding of climate change impacts and vulnerability, a regional vulnerability and capacity assessment framework has been developed. The framework is also a useful tool for supporting the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 13. FAO also supported the inclusion of climate change adaptation and disaster risk management considerations in the Caribbean Community Common Fisheries Policy. As a result, several countries have since undertaken a review of their fisheries policies, plans and legislation to incorporate climate change adaptation and disaster risk management considerations.

31. FAO contributes extensively to knowledge management in the region. Emphasis has been placed on awareness-raising regarding the current science behind sargassum blooms, building knowledge networks to drive further research on sargassum and working with countries and local and regional partners to develop related mitigation plans.

32. Through the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission, collaborative activities were undertaken with the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism and the Central American Fisheries and Aquaculture Organization to generate scientific advice for sound policy and management plans for the sustainable development of marine resources. Among the issues attracting particular attention in 2019 were the management of spawning aggregations; the effective conservation, responsible management and trade of queen conch, flying fish, shrimps and groundfish; the sustainable use of moored fish aggregating devices; and decent working conditions in small scale fisheries.

33. FAO also contributed to furthering the blue economy in the wider Caribbean region. During the reporting period, several activities were undertaken related to improving value chains, improving fisheries laws and policy frameworks, improving fishing gear and technology, building and strengthening fisher organizations and improving data collection systems and science. An action plan to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal unreported and unregulated fishing in the region was endorsed in July 2019, for which implementation will begin shortly.

Efforts of the International Telecommunication Union in the wider Caribbean region

34. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has been focusing its efforts on emergency telecommunications in the Caribbean region. The ITU guidelines on national emergency telecommunication plans were prepared to assist national authorities and policymakers in developing a clear, flexible and user-friendly framework to support and enable the continued use of information and communications technology (ICT) networks and services in all phases of disaster management. The guidelines can be used to develop tailored contingency plans for emergencies caused by natural hazards. The first national emergency telecommunication plans in the Caribbean will be developed by Saint Lucia in 2020. The guidelines were developed through a consultative multi-stakeholder process, engaging States members of ITU and ICT private sector entities, as well as relevant United Nations entities, including the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster.

35. ITU plans to initiate the “Smart Sea” project in 2020. The project focuses on small-scale fishers who are vulnerable to the impact of climate change and suffer from additional vulnerabilities, including poverty and digital exclusion. A “Smart Sea” toolkit for disaster resilience and digital inclusion will reduce the risks that small-scale fishers face in their trips beyond the reach of communications services and with limited environmental information on which to make life-saving decisions. It will do so using ICT tools, which will have the additional benefit of bootstrapping their digital literacy. The project will consider the nature and extent of small-scale fishers’ vulnerability at sea; circumscribe applicable constraints and considerations; contemplate mitigation and response strategies; assess traditional and emerging technologies; collaboratively design and demonstrate a context-appropriate toolkit; and assess the pilot toolkit against a range of usability, scalability and sustainability criteria. Capacity-building and institutional collaboration are central to the project. While the key beneficiaries are the fishers themselves, the project will serve to transfer knowledge between partner agencies across multiple disciplines and sectors in the Caribbean and abroad.

36. National e-waste management policies have grown in importance in recent years as a result of the increasing volume of electronic and electric devices found in the sea. For the Caribbean region, ITU, in collaboration with the Caribbean Broadcasting Union, has developed model policies in the areas of environmental standards and electronic waste management and recycling, focusing in particular on television devices, mobile phones and computers. Specifically, these model policies: (a) set out mechanisms to control the import and/or production of devices that do not conform to the chosen digital television standard or that do not incorporate digital television tuners; and (b) provide for rational and environmentally sound processes for the recycling and safe disposal of e-waste, including television devices that are no longer functional following the digital switchover.

Efforts of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme in the wider Caribbean region

37. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) has reaffirmed its support for the plan of action adopted by the Caribbean Sea Commission. UN-Habitat has enhanced its support, including financial, technical and capacity-building assistance, to Caribbean countries and their regional organizations in their efforts to implement the plan of action in collaboration with the Association of Caribbean States.

38. UN-Habitat has also been using its advocacy and agenda-setting influence to accelerate sustainable urban development in the Caribbean region and has led a year-

long participatory process to develop the Caribbean Strategy for Informal Settlement Upgrading. The Strategy, which was launched during the tenth session of the World Urban Forum, held in Abu Dhabi in February 2020, builds on the Subregional Action Plan for the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda in the Caribbean. It promotes inclusive and resilient urban development and contributes to the achievement of target 11.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals and the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

39. UN-Habitat is supporting Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Dominica, Haiti, Jamaica and Saint Lucia with an assessment of human settlement vulnerabilities to climate change and the development of strategies and plans to systematically address climate risks and vulnerabilities. UN-Habitat also supports the mobilization of international finance to implement those strategies and plans through concrete projects aimed at improving the climate resilience of people living in cities and human settlements.

Efforts of the Trade Logistics Branch of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in the wider Caribbean region

40. As part of its technical assistance project entitled “Building capacities of developing countries to shift towards sustainable freight transport”, the Trade Logistics Branch of UNCTAD supports countries in designing, developing and implementing sustainable freight transport solutions and finance strategies. Notable outputs of the project include the development of a Caribbean sustainable freight transport strategy, a proposal for a regional sustainable logistics observatory in the Caribbean region (for ports and shipping) and the holding of a capacity-building workshop for drivers in Jamaica to implement ecological driving practices, which was held in partnership with Natural Resources Canada.

41. In the current time of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and given its impact on the global economy, ensuring the integrity of sustainable transport systems and value chains and building responsiveness to disruptions (in facing pandemics, climate change and other global challenges) is critical for all economies, in particular small island developing States. Promoting cooperation between public and private sectors, developing dedicated tools to collect data and monitor performance and facilitating access to finance to improve transport infrastructure and services and access to ICT and clean technologies, including through public-private partnerships, will be key.

42. UNCTAD, in collaboration with UNEP and with the financial support of the Government of Germany, is currently implementing the project “Climate resilient transport infrastructure for sustainable trade, tourism and development in small island developing States (2019–2020)”, which draws on earlier related work and includes a transferable methodology to assist in adaptation planning and flood-risk assessments of ports and airports in Jamaica and Saint Lucia.

43. In the area of knowledge management, in 2020 UNCTAD published a report entitled *Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation for Coastal Transport Infrastructure: A Compilation of Policies and Practices*, which was prepared to assist in the development of effective adaptation policies and response measures. The report details lessons learned as part of the work undertaken by UNCTAD over the past 10 years and indicates that successful adaptation strategies need to be underpinned by strong legal and regulatory frameworks, which can help to reduce exposure and/or vulnerability to the climate-related risks of coastal transport infrastructure and help to build resilience.

Activities of the Caribbean Sea Commission

44. Activities of the Caribbean Sea Commission are detailed in the annex to the present report. During the reporting period, the Commission continued to coordinate projects and activities aimed at preserving the Caribbean Sea, and focused on revitalizing its work to develop the concept of a “special area in the context of sustainable development”, with the ultimate goal of designating the Caribbean Sea as such an area.

B. Possible legal and financial implications of the concept of the Caribbean as a special area in the context of sustainable development

45. The call for the designation of the Caribbean Sea as a special area within the context of sustainable development was first made at a Caribbean ministerial meeting held in 1997 on the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. The Caribbean Sea Commission was created under the auspices of the Association of Caribbean States in 2006 and identified as the mechanism for pursuing the goal of designating the Caribbean Sea a special area in the context of sustainable development.

46. Any assessment of financial implications would first depend, inter alia, on the exact definition of the concept, the extent of its application, its legal status in international law and an assessment of intended impacts against a previously defined baseline. As detailed in previous reports of the Secretary-General, it is necessary to examine the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out, as well as other international instruments that implement or further develop its general principles.⁵ The Association of Caribbean States was not been able to advance that work during the reporting period. The work is an ongoing effort for the Association of Caribbean States (see annex).

C. Conclusion

47. Member States in the wider Caribbean region have continued in the current biennium to work collaboratively on behalf of their shared resource, the Caribbean Sea. They have been supported in their efforts by the international community, including partner Governments, intergovernmental organizations and the private sector. Their efforts address economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development and often include capacity-building components. In addition, an ecosystem-based approach has been adopted in many cases, which has allowed for the consideration of the cumulative impacts of environmental issues and challenges on the Caribbean marine environment and for policymakers to work across sectors to manage species and habitats, economic activities, conflicting uses and the sustainability of resources.

⁵ A/65/301, section III.

Annex

Report of the Caribbean Sea Commission of the Association of Caribbean States on progress made in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 73/229

I. Introduction

1. The Caribbean Sea is considered to be a semi-enclosed sea, and the most geopolitically complex large marine ecosystem in the world. This is owing to the fact that it has the highest number of countries of the world's large marine ecosystems, and the highest number of maritime boundaries of any large marine ecosystem in the world. The Caribbean Sea is considered to be the common patrimony of the peoples of the greater Caribbean region.¹ It is a fragile and complex marine area shared by countries of varying sizes and with different levels of progress in their sustainable development. The populations of those countries depend upon the sea for their development, and draw from it their cultural identity. Within the context of the growing adverse impacts of climate change, marine governance is essential for sustainable management, which can ensure the conservation and use of the marine environment and associated ecosystem services for present and future generations.
2. Management and preservation of this large geographic space can only be achieved through coherent ocean governance. Ocean governance is an integral part of sustainable development.
3. The Caribbean Sea Commission was conceptualized to promote the preservation, conservation and protection of the oceans in the greater Caribbean region, through regional concertation and cooperation. One of the primary goals of that mechanism, which was created under the auspices of the Association of Caribbean States, is to pursue the recognition of the Caribbean Sea as a special area within the context of sustainable development.
4. While the Commission was revitalized in 2015, the vision to pursue special area status started two decades prior with the Caribbean Sea Initiative. The creation of the Commission reflected the commitment of the members of the Association of Caribbean States to preserve and protect the Caribbean Sea. It has worked since then to coordinate efforts to achieve its goals.
5. The present report outlines progress made from 2018 to 2020 towards implementation of resolution 73/229 with reference to paragraphs 5, 6, 7, 22 and 26.

II. Managua plan of action for the period 2019–2021

6. In March 2019, Heads of State and Government of the States members of the Association of Caribbean States, as well as associate members, met in Managua, where they approved the Declaration of Managua and established a new action plan for the period 2019–2021.
7. The Declaration of Managua, under the theme “Uniting efforts in the Caribbean to face climate change”, recognized the importance of actions to tackle climate change and its effects on countries and territories of the region; underlined the importance of the Caribbean Sea as a common asset of its peoples; recognized the

¹ The coastal areas of the wider Caribbean region are considered to be particularly vulnerable to the effects of anthropogenic climate change, particularly sea level rise and extreme events such as hurricanes, given the large number of small island developing States.

vulnerability of small island developing States and the coastal zones of the Greater Caribbean and the Central American Isthmus; stressed the need to strengthen public policymaking and resource management processes for sustainable projects in adaptation, mitigation and loss and damage caused by climate change, as well as for strengthening resilience; adopted the action plan for the triennium 2019–2021 and instructed the Ministerial Council to ensure its implementation; and recognized the strategic role of the Association of Caribbean States.

8. The work programme for the Caribbean Sea Commission, established within the framework of the action plan of the Association of Caribbean States for the period 2019–2021, included the following actions and projects:

Actions:

- Recognition of the Caribbean Sea as a special zone in the context of sustainable development
- Version 2.0 of the report of the Caribbean Sea Ecosystem Assessment
- Second regional symposium of the Caribbean Sea Commission
- Ongoing update of the Caribbean Sea Commission database

Projects:

- Caribbean coral aquariums project (mitigation of the effects of climate change on the coral reefs of the Caribbean: breeding and propagation of stony corals and long-spined urchins to restore reefs)
- Biopharmaceutical sargassum project
- Sandy shorelines project
- Plastic and micro-plastic management project
- Wastewater treatment project

III. Deepening collaboration with regional and international partners

9. The Managua Declaration recognized the technical and financial resources offered by member States, associate members, founding observers, observer States, observer organizations and social actors and welcomed support for the implementation of the action plan for the triennium 2019–2021.

10. In fulfilment of its mandate regarding “regional consultation, cooperation, and concerted action”,² the Association has intensified its collaboration with regional and international partners on matters relating to climate change and disaster risk reduction with the aim of bringing about effective and sustainable solutions to mitigate against global warming and the other adverse effects of climate change, as well as its impacts on States members of the Association.

11. The Association of Caribbean States has 25 member States, 10 associate members and 28 observer countries. In addition to existing partnerships with donor countries such as the Netherlands, South Korea and Turkey for the execution of Caribbean Sea Commission projects, the Association, through its directorate for cooperation and resource mobilization, has been engaging with the Governments of Italy, Serbia and the United Arab Emirates. The partnerships formed by the

² Convention establishing the Association of Caribbean States, article III (1994).

Association include a combination of financial, technical and capacity-building resources for its members.

12. Significant efforts have been made by the Association to address the pervasive threat of sargassum seaweed. In June 2019, it participated in a high-level meeting on sargassum seaweed in Cancun, Mexico, alongside several countries of the region, including Belize, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and Trinidad and Tobago. The meeting resulted in the Association being designated as one of the main regional coordinating agencies for sargassum seaweed.

13. In October 2019, the Association coordinated the planning and execution of the first International Conference on Sargassum, which took place in Guadeloupe. The meeting, led by the Government of France, was the result of a collaborative effort among several regional and international partners, including the European Union, the Regional Council of Guadeloupe, the Territorial Collectivity of Martinique and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States. The forum provided an opportunity to examine and exchange points of view and experiences on diverse aspects related to sargassum blooms, including their origin and biological make-up; ecological, social and economic impacts; the financial and technical methods available; and collection and recycling techniques and innovations. Important outcomes of the conference included the signing of the Declaration on Sargassum by more than 20 countries in the Caribbean region, as well as a work programme on sargassum, which features, as a major deliverable, the creation of a Caribbean monitoring and warning centre.

14. The Association of Caribbean States participated in the Caribbean and the North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems meeting, held in Panama from 29 July to 1 August 2019, attended by more than 65 participants from 23 countries and 12 regional and international organizations. The objective of the meeting was for the countries of the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems region to assess the options for establishing a coordination mechanism for ocean governance in the wider Caribbean for the protection of marine ecosystems in order to avoid duplication of efforts by countries and regional organizations.

IV. Ongoing projects of the Caribbean Sea Commission

15. The flagship project of the Commission and the Association, entitled “Impact assessment of climate change on the sandy shorelines of the Caribbean”, referenced in the 2018 report of the Secretary-General ([A/73/225](#)), focuses on building the coastal resilience of members of the Association through the coordinated and enhanced monitoring of coastal erosion and sea level rise. The project was launched in 2017 with the contribution of \$4 million from the Korea International Cooperation Agency.

16. The project is also supported financially by Turkey and the Netherlands, which financed the inception phase of the project and facilitated the involvement of the Dutch associate members of the Association of Caribbean States, respectively.

17. Between 2018 and 2020, the project has operated in nine countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti, Jamaica, Panama and Trinidad and Tobago. Under component 2 (training), over 25 coastal technicians from those countries have received more than 200 hours of coastal monitoring training. The training sessions were hosted at the International Maritime University and coastal beaches in Punta Chame and Colón in Panama. In collaboration with the Korean Institute of Ocean Science and Technology, regional

scientists have also participated in two international coastal conferences in the Republic of Korea and the United States of America.

18. In 2018, a technical advisory group was established in the framework of the project, consisting of regional coastal experts, engineers and scientists from Barbados, Cuba, Guadeloupe and Puerto Rico. Each expert worked with one to three beneficiary countries and provided technical guidance to the national focal point representatives. The group serves as the primary technical advisory body to the project team. In addition to those five experts, the Ministry of Science and Technology of Cuba, which is the Project Technical Coordinator, is also a member of the technical advisory group.

19. Five technical advisory group meetings have been convened virtually and in person in Cuba and Trinidad and Tobago. With the assistance of the technical advisory group, the beneficiary countries have produced nine national coastal monitoring plans and nine lists of equipment to meet their unique coastal monitoring needs. The technical advisory group has also acted as the selection committee for component 4 of the project.

20. With the equipment lists, the project advances to full execution of component 3 (establishment of a regional monitoring network). Under the component, the project will procure and deliver a total of \$450,000 in equipment to the beneficiary countries in the third quarter of 2020.

21. Component 4 (beach rehabilitation projects) is also under way. Three countries have been awarded a project, including a detailed beach rehabilitation guide to improve one beach site. The first phase of the selection process began in July 2019 with a call for proposals among the participating countries. The technical advisory group then shortlisted five countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Panama and Trinidad and Tobago). In October of 2019, the experts visited each of the five countries to further evaluate their proposals and verify the information presented. In January 2020, the technical advisory group selected the final three countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Panama and Trinidad and Tobago). Each of the three countries will receive approximately \$250,000 for studies and rehabilitation work.

22. The partnership of the Association of Caribbean States with the CARIB-COAST Interreg project increased the scope of the sandy shorelines project and the availability of specialized training and capacity-building for participating countries of both projects. The CARIB-COAST Interreg project focuses on enhancing coastal erosion modelling and decision support in the French associate members of the Association of Caribbean States, namely Martinique, Guadeloupe and Saint Martin.

23. Other Caribbean institutions, including the Institute of Marine Affairs (Trinidad and Tobago), the University of the West Indies Mona and St Augustine campuses, the Coastal Protection Unit of the Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Works and Transport and the Regional Activity Centre for the Protocol for Specially Protected Areas and Wild Life, have also joined the project.

24. In October 2019, the Association of Caribbean States participated in the first CARIB-COAST meeting with the partners mentioned, which was held in Kingston. During the event, the above mentioned partners exchanged views and experiences, proposed possible areas of collaboration by 2020 and indicated their interest in conducting technical workshops in areas such as imaging. Field visits were also made to the University of the West Indies marine laboratory, located in Port Royal, the Palisadoes; the popular Hellshire Beach; and the Port of Kingston.

25. In addition to the two sandy shorelines projects mentioned, the Dutch associate members benefited from the project. The Netherlands has provided funding for two

Dutch associate member States to participate in the sandy shorelines project (Curaçao and Sint Maarten).

26. To accelerate implementation of the project, DECS staff, with technical support from Cuba, met with local focal points and agencies in Curaçao and Sint Maarten in October 2019. During the visits, the Cuban expert determined the status and monitoring equipment required by the two countries and visited several popular beaches affected by coastal erosion. The respective reports were delivered to the Embassy of the Netherlands, the focal points and the officials of the local ministries of Curaçao and Sint Maarten.

27. In December 2019, the Association of Caribbean States began the bidding process and hired two companies to procure and deliver coastal monitoring equipment to the above countries. The equipment's valuation is estimated at \$73,000.

28. Efforts are under way to complete the website of the Caribbean Sea Commission. The project, which was conceptualized in 2016, is expected to be completed in the third quarter of 2020. The website will be an important online portal that will house the Caribbean Sea Commission's databank infrastructure. One of the first contributions to the databank will be the coastal monitoring data from the countries that are participating in the sandy shorelines project.

V. Special area designation: defining the Caribbean Sea as a special zone

29. Since the previous report, the working group has not been convened, given that the country focal points have been changed. The Association and the Commission remain committed to reactivating the subcommissions this year and starting the work programme towards special area designation.

30. Critical to the achievement of a special area in the context of sustainable development is the internal consensus among members and associate members of the Association of Caribbean States regarding the definition of the concept of "special area". The Commission, with the support of its Legal and Scientific and Technical Subcommissions, is required to define "special area", emphasizing the three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) and recognizing their interlinkages.

31. The concept of special area must also clearly outline the possible legal and financial implications of the concept of the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development, without prejudice to relevant international law and taking into account the views expressed by member organizations and relevant regional organizations.

32. A call for nominations of new focal points will be initiated in the second quarter of 2020. Members of the Association of Caribbean States will be asked to designate representatives to serve on the Legal and Scientific and Technical Subcommissions.

33. In the third quarter of 2020, the Legal and Scientific and Technical Subcommissions of the Caribbean Sea Commission are expected to begin the work outlined in resolution [73/229](#) with the nomination of legal and scientific experts from across the greater Caribbean region.

34. It is expected that the work programme of the subcommissions will include research on global and regional agreements to which members of the Association are

a party,³ the existing definitions of “special area”,⁴ the shortcomings of extant agreements and their level of ratification among member States.

35. The Legal Subcommittee is expected to: (a) lead research on existing legal concepts of special area, particularly those that apply to the Caribbean Sea; and (b) examine the conceptual elements of a “special area” within the relevant international instruments and determine how they could be extended and/or applied to the concept of special area in the context of sustainable development.

36. The Scientific and Technical Subcommittee will provide scientific research in support of the argument that the Caribbean Sea is unique, as well as of the desires of member States with regard to the management of the Caribbean Sea. Those desires must reflect concerted effort towards the integrated management of the Caribbean Sea and include a mechanism based on participation and consensus-building, rather than on punitive actions.

37. A draft definition of special area that incorporates all of the considerations outlined above will be included in the next biennial report, to be presented to the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session, to be held in 2022.

38. During this process, the Caribbean Sea Commission will consult with appropriate bodies, such as the United Nations Environment Programme’s Caribbean Environment Programme (implementing agency for the Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities to the Cartagena Convention) and representatives from the secretariats of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Caribbean Development Bank.

³ In particular the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region and Protocols, the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

⁴ Annex V of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (International Maritime Organization), the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Cartagena Convention (United Nations Environment Programme Caribbean Environment Programme).