The proposed science policy interface process for the Caribbean Sea Commission

Robin Mahon
Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES)
The University of the West Indies, Barbados

Expert Consultation on Operationalisation of the Caribbean Sea Commission

Building a science-policy interface for ocean governance in the Wider Caribbean

Association of Caribbean States - Caribbean Sea Commission

University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, Barbados, July 7-9, 2010

Issues of large scale and complexity in the Wider Caribbean

- Lots of technical work has been done
- Has had little impact on governance
- Many local efforts at management
- Uncoordinated and disconnected at regional level
- Duplication of effort

Science-policy interface purpose

The perceived need is for:

- A regular reporting and advisory process for the regional status of oceans and ocean governance in the Wider Caribbean Region
- A mechanism that can serve to alert policy makers about emerging regional issues that require policy intervention
- A mechanism that regional policy makers can use to obtain advice on matters of concern to them

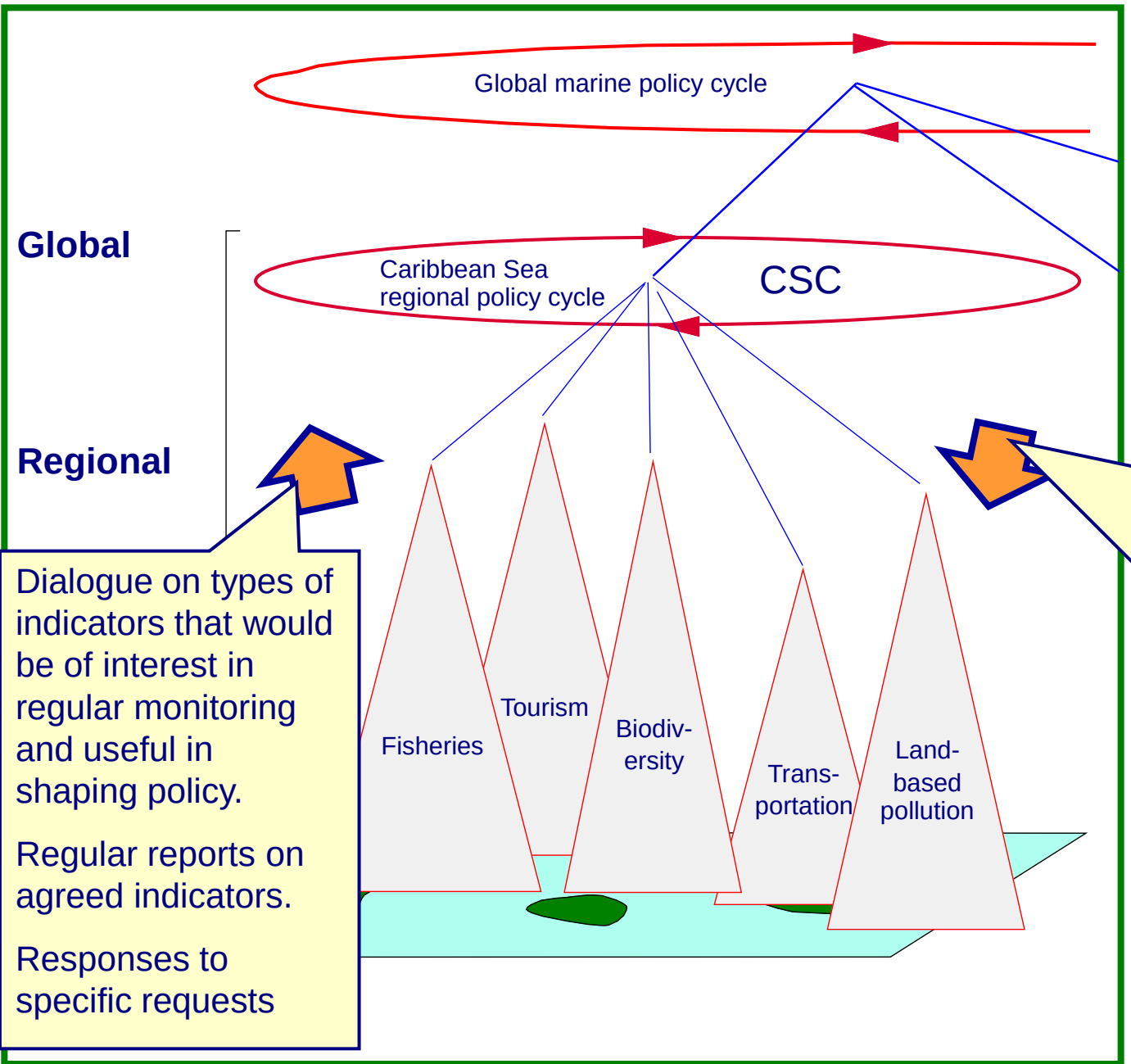
In November 2009 UNGA approved development of the 'Regular process for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socio-economic aspects'

Science-policy interface characteristics

As currently understood the overall mechanism would:

- Make best use of the full range of information and expertise available in the region by developing an effective network.
- Allow for communication and information flows in two directions
  - (1) upwards from information sources through synthesis mechanism to policy makers and
  - (2) downwards, the reverse direction, for feedback and queries.
- It would be regular and transparent.

Science-policy interface characteristics



Dialogue on types of indicators that would be of interest in regular monitoring and useful in shaping policy.

Regular reports on agreed indicators.

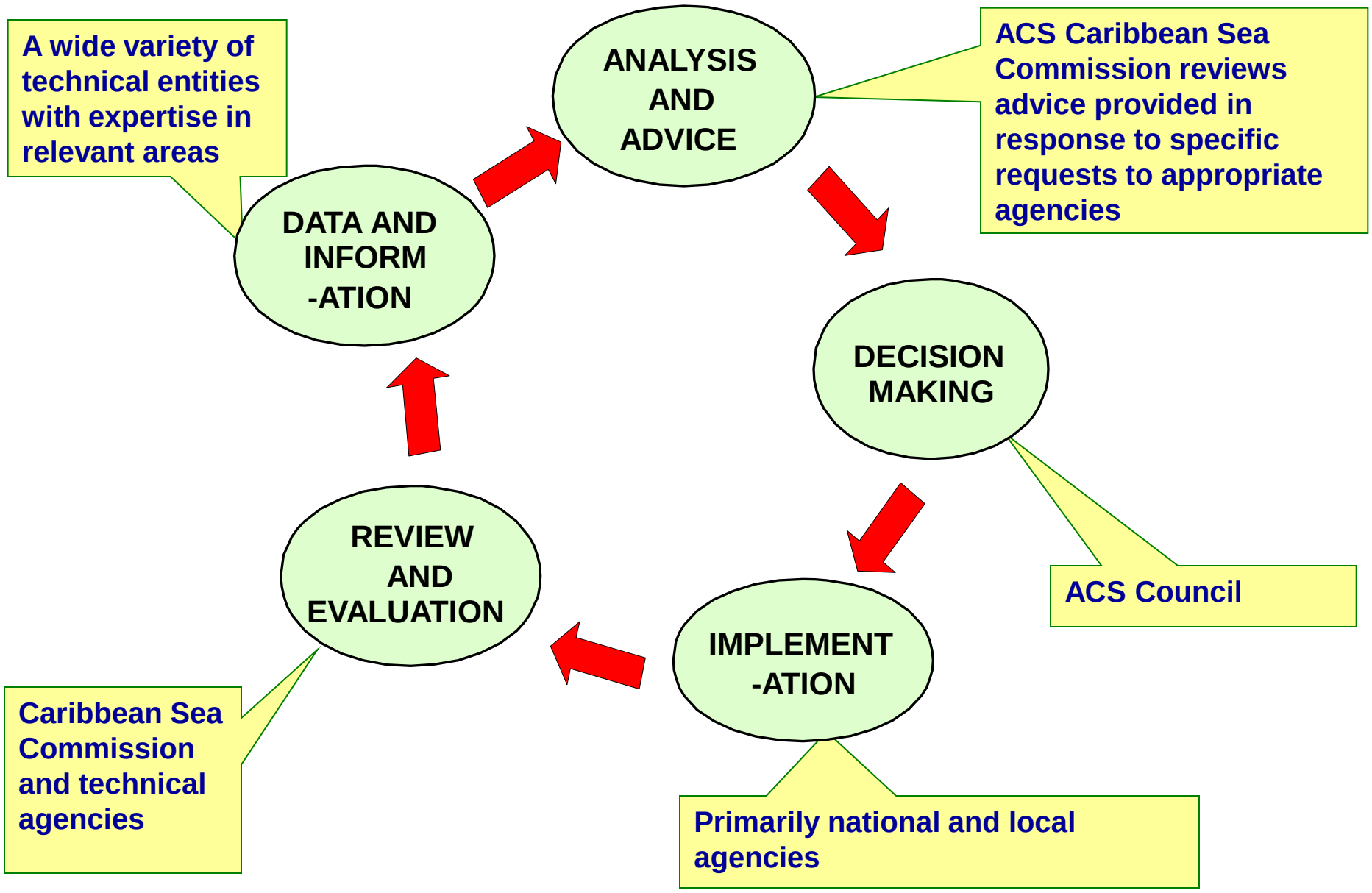
Responses to specific requests

Dialogue on types of indicators that would be of interest in regular monitoring and useful in shaping policy.

Specific requests for information and advice.

Feedback on information provided

Possible ACS policy cycle for living marine resources



What does this mean in technical terms

ACS/CSC……

- Must have access to timely and comprehensive information and analyses on matters of importance.
- This should be on a regular cycle, but…
- When gaps are identified, there can be activities targeted to filling those gaps

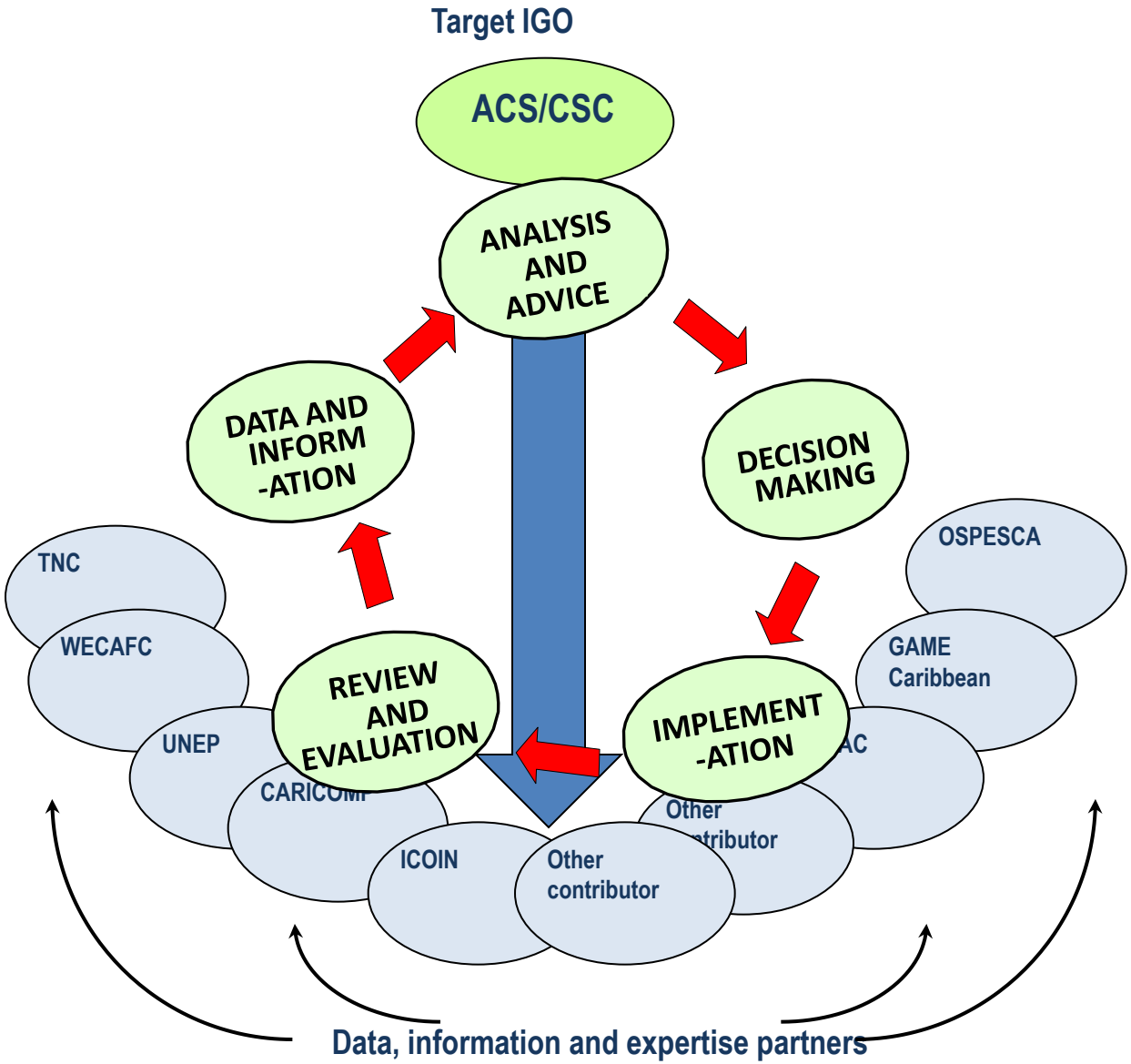
But…..

- Does not have resources to carry out the information gathering and analysis that would be required

So…..

- Must develop relationships with organizations and institutions already doing this in the region and promote their development to fill gaps

CSI/CSC – Science policy interface



Next steps:
Planning for operationalisation

Develop a clear plan for how to proceed over the next 4-5 years

- Engage partners
- Allow funders to see where they can contribute
- Communicate to the UNGA

Next steps: Key elements of the plan

- Seek funding
- Coordination of the CSC (secretariat?)
- Develop an information and expertise sharing network
- Take the Commission and it subcommissions through the review process by addressing some key science-policy questions
- Explicitly engage policy makers to determine their needs and interests

Use of indicators at the science policy interface

A 2001 study of 47 persons in Finland found the following.

- Indicators were most likely to be used conceptually as learning tools and symbolically in the political debate Direct use in decision-making was less likely

- The politicians named the most important criteria for useful indicators as:
  - Reliability,
  - Simplicity
  - Inclusion of longer trends
  - Comparability to other countries and regions.

- Other use factors included:
  - Timing in providing the indicators (at a right time)
  - Regular updating
  - Attractive presentation
  - Easy access

Thank you