



ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES  
ASOCIACION DE ESTADOS DEL CARIBE  
ASSOCIATION DES ETATS DE LA CARAIBE

## CARIBBEAN SEA COMMISSION

### Symposium: Challenges, Dialogue and Cooperation towards the Sustainability of the Caribbean Sea







**Association of Caribbean States (ACS)  
The Caribbean Sea Commission (CSC)**

**Symposium: Challenges, Dialogue and Cooperation  
towards the Sustainability of the Caribbean Sea**

**23rd and 24th November 2015, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago**



## **BACKGROUND**

The Caribbean Sea is a fragile and complex marine area that is shared by twenty five countries and eleven territories of varying sizes and stages of economic development and upon which the populations of those countries depend for their social, economic, cultural, climatic, aesthetic and other benefits. The reliance on the Caribbean Sea to derive these benefits however, has been the catalyst for the development of a number of debilitating phenomena on the sustainability of the marine environment. This circumstance has been compounded by natural phenomena like climate change which have also posed a threat to the viability of the Caribbean Sea. In this regard, recognition has been given to the need to develop strategies towards the preservation of the Caribbean Sea. The Caribbean Sea Commission was established in 2006 as a structured mechanism of the ACS to contribute to the protection of the Caribbean Sea within the context of sustainable development.

This endeavour, which has become known as the “Caribbean Sea Initiative” (CSI), has gained international recognition through the grant of several resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), the most recent of which was agreed to in 2012 and entitled “Toward the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea for present and future generations”.

In order to identify the scope of work that the CSC can undertake the ACS has engaged the services of a consultant to examine the critical issues that require consideration within the context of the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea with emphasis on the legal, economic and political implications of the activities that can be taken. The consultancy took place during June to September 2014 and culminated with the production of a final report, which suggests the necessity of undertaking actions which protect the Caribbean Sea and its resources.



## Project Description

The symposium is planned to be a two day event that will provide for the advancement of the dialogue for joint work surrounding the exposition of critical concerns pertaining to the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea and the actions and strategies, which it is hoped will help resolve them.

As part of the session discussions, participants will be directed to consider urgent themes that gravely affect the Caribbean Population, convinced of the necessity to work together in its solutions. Attendees will be invited to bring their expertise to bear on the highlighted issues in order to stimulate harmonised approaches across the region.

## Goals and objectives

It is anticipated that this meeting will provide the environment in which the steps to be taken to address the pertinent issues impacting the Caribbean Sea can be defined and specific strategies to address these concerns can be developed. The Meeting should provide:

- Specific activities that can be accomplished within the period 2015-2018 with tangible impact on the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea; particularly around three main themes: a) The threat of Sargassum Seaweed, b) The Erosion of Coastal Zones, c) The Invasive Species such as the Lionfish.

We aspire to count among the participants with a significant representation of international bodies that occupy with the aforementioned themes, academics and investigators, representation of the highest level of Ministries of Environment and Foreign Affairs, likewise institutional donors.

## Purpose

The CSC Symposium is geared towards creating a forum in which the members of the Caribbean Sea Commission will discuss with the other stakeholders who work in the area of sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea, and with entities similar to the CSC such as, the Helsinki Commission, with the aim of examining critical questions and sharing experiences to undertake joint actions towards the conservation and the protection of the Caribbean Sea. It is anticipated that the discussion will contribute to the strategy for the CSC taking into account the consultancy that was engaged to consider the topic of the possible strategies for concerted action in the preservation of the Caribbean Sea.





## THE URGENCY OF ACTING TOGETHER AND RIGHT NOW

In the Greater Caribbean region today, there is a sense of urgency regarding the problems affecting the Caribbean Sea and the sustainability of its resources. Many times in the past, experts of all nationalities have come together to discuss these issues. On this occasion, the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) has deemed it fitting to assemble representatives of governments, international organisations, donor institutions, experts in the field and academics, to engage in dialogue focussing specifically on the sensitive and serious matters that affect, in particular, the Caribbean Sea.

At present, the effects of global warming, climate change and other factors have exacerbated some of these problems, threatening the sustainability of the Caribbean Sea, such as the emergence of the sargassum seaweed, the overpopulation of the lionfish and coastal erosion, which have a direct impact on the economic, social and environmental development of this region.

In recent years, the proliferation of the sargassum seaweed in large areas in the Caribbean is destroying some of the region's most important tourist attractions, the beautiful beaches are being invaded by this seaweed and it has become a grave problem, affecting communities and the flow of tourists, which influences the economies of the countries whose resources are generated, to a large extent, by the tourism sector.

Another threat is the overpopulation of the lionfish. Lionfish are a venomous species of scorpion fish, natives of the coral reef ecosystems and neighbouring habitats of the Indo-Pacific region. Some specimens of these species were released - whether accidentally or deliberately - in the warm waters of the Atlantic Ocean, where they have settled as a highly problematic invasive species, representing a grave threat to the coral reefs of Bermuda, Florida, the Gulf of Mexico, the islands of the Caribbean, Central America and the northern region of South America. The invasive populations of lionfish have reached a high density and are causing indigenous marine communities grave distress. It has been shown that this species is reducing biological diversity, resulting in the decline of ecologically significant species and complicating efforts to repopulate species that hold economic importance.

In addition, coastal erosion is a problem that has intensified in recent years and which, in some way, is having social, economic and environmental repercussions, jeopardising the quality of life of coastal populations due to its impact on physical infrastructure and production activities.

Our ecosystems in the Caribbean Sea are being changed in different ways and at a high price for governments, inhabitants and the private sector. It is therefore important to reflect on and analyse the way in which governments, peoples, the private sector and other stakeholders could collaborate and pool their efforts in seeking pragmatic solutions and joint strategies and mechanisms that would allow the mitigation of such changes that threaten the sustainable development of the nations that share the Caribbean Sea.

