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SARGASSO SEA  
COMMISSION

## STRENGTHENING THE STEWARDSHIP OF AN ECONOMICALLY AND BIOLOGICALLY SIGNIFICANT HIGH SEAS AREA – THE SARGASSO SEA

Project Validation Workshop

Evolution of the Project To Date

David Vousden -

Lead Project Development Consultant

# Project History

The Project was conceptualised through a preliminary draft Concept Note in September 2018

Original plan was to submit a Medium-Sized project to GEF through UNDP

Following agreement from the Commission and the Signatories it was decided to move ahead and:

- Develop and finalise a formal Concept Paper
- Develop a Project Information Form (PIF) for submission through UNDP to GEF
- Incorporate as a Child Project into the GEF 7 Common Oceans ABNJ Program
- Submit a request for a Project Preparation Grant to fund development of a Full Project Document (as proposed by GEF)

The ABNJ Programme, PIF Child Project and PPG request were finalised and endorsed early in 2020, approved by GEF Council in June 2020, and a PPG Initiation Plan was adopted in May 2020

# Procedural Background

Project is part of an overall global GEF Programmatic Approach entitled Common Oceans - Sustainable utilization and conservation of biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. This incorporates a number of other 'Child' projects. These include:



Two global projects that will promote more sustainable management of tuna and deep-sea fisheries (FAO)



A third project that seeks to build capacity to improve cross-sectoral collaboration and coordination on key ABNJ issues at global level (UNEP)



A fourth project that examines multi-sectoral governance (stewardship) in a pilot area, the Sargasso Sea (UNDP)

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A fifth project will ensure effective coordination, communication, partnerships, lesson learning and knowledge management (FAO lead)

Supporting the Sargasso Project = UNDP (Implementing Agency) and IOC-UNESCO (Executing Agency)

## Some of the Potential Threats Identified in the Project Concept Document (April 2020) and Requiring further study

**Pollution:** Surface pollutants, including plastics, accumulate in the central Sargasso Sea as a result of the encircling currents which trap water

**Fishing:** There is evidence from Global Fishing Watch (and other sources) of increasing commercial fishing vessel activity in this area of traditionally low fishing effort.

**Shipping:** The Sargasso Sea lies within one of the world's busiest international shipping areas and is crossed by a large number of vessels each year

**Other Commercial Activities:** Other potential commercial pressures and threats include the continued interest in harvesting Sargassum, the possible impacts of submarine telecommunication cables and possible future seabed exploration and mining

**Climate Change and Acidification:** Long-term measurements show rises in surface ocean temperature and increases in salinity in the upper 300m. Such changes affect the warm sub-tropical convergence by potentially causing a shift in ocean currents, which, in turn, could impact on spawning of eels and migration of larvae to the rivers of Europe, N Africa and America

# Main Barriers identified in the Project Concept Document to Mitigation and/or removal of Threats

To counter actual/potential threats and impacts, certain causes/barriers need to be resolved including:

- Poor understanding of ecosystem features and associated socio-economics
- Absence of sufficient time-data or active response on IUU fishing
- The Sargasso Sea hosts the Hydrostation S and associated BATS time series, yet there is no existing ecosystem-based management system using these data.
- Potential impacts from seabed mining if there were an allotment of global exploration licences
- Absence of a mechanism to identify and propose response measures to impacts and threats to the Sargasso Sea area
- Limited capacity for addressing the barriers and constraints to the removal or mitigation of threats and impacts, (funding and available/accessible expertise and resources)

This effectively represents the Baseline situation which will continue in the absence of any further action by the partners and stakeholders through a GEF-funded project

# Improvements to the Baseline

## Changes to the Baseline

- Effective and collaborative long-term stewardship of this important ecosystem
- On-going scientific monitoring that is supporting and guiding this stewardship mechanism
- Goods and services maintained to support socioeconomic dependence and food security globally
- Improved conservation status for an EBSA/ marine ecosystem
- Sharing of best lessons for widespread adoption of practices and lessons as appropriate

# Long-Term Goals

## Long-Term Goals Aligned to Overall Program

- Successful demonstration of sustainable use of ABNJ living resources and improved conservation of BBNJ in a changing environment
- On-going lessons and best practices shared in support of collaboration globally for such a stewardship process through knowledge management and outreach
- Information suite captured and updated for better analysis of BBNJ

These will be achieved through a series of Components, Outcomes and Outputs through Activities funded both by GEF and by co-financing partners

# End-of-Project Landscape

- ✓ A Strategic Action Programme adopted and endorsed which defines the actions required to sustainably conserve this ecosystem with a work-plan and identified budgeting, roles, partnerships and associated co-funding and other resources
- ✓ Development and adoption of a broader ecosystem-based stewardship approach for the Sargasso Sea addressing the issues identified by the Hamilton Declaration
- ✓ Ongoing monitoring of baseline parameters as established in the Ecosystem Diagnostic Analysis, thereby identifying trends and changes in impacts, threats, causes and improvements and guiding recommendations for responses
- ✓ Guidelines and briefings developed by the Commission and circulated to appropriate bodies
- ✓ Lessons and best practices captured from the EDA-SAP process for this possible replication in other areas



Thank you for  
your Attention  
and your Inputs

