

WORK PROGRAMME PRIORITIES (2016-2018)

PREFACE:

The Work Programme goals and priority activities were developed at the Second Joint Meeting of the Signatories to the Hamilton Declaration and the Sargasso Sea Commission, held in Key West Florida, 20-22 March 2016. Work Programme goals and priority activities should be read in conjunction with the text of the Hamilton Declaration on Collaboration for the Conservation of the Sargasso Sea. The Work Programme continues to operationalize the mandate of the Sargasso Sea Commission (Commission) set out in Annex II of the Declaration. Any aspects of the mandate not included below are beyond the scope of the current Work Programme and will be considered in the future.

Short-term priority activities would be envisaged to take place over a two-year period (2016-18). Long-term priority activities will be scoped over the two year time frame for implementation at a later date. The Commission now has seventeen (17) Collaborating Partners (identified on the website), and the Secretariat continues to identify other potential Collaborating Partners to assist in implementation of the Work Programme.

OVER-ARCHING GOALS

The Commission and Signatories reviewed the overarching goals agreed at the First Joint Meeting in October 2014 and endorsed the current overarching goals:

1. Promote international recognition of the unique ecological and biological nature and global significance of the Sargasso Sea.
2. Encourage scientific research to expand existing knowledge of the Sargasso Sea ecosystem in order to further assess its health, productivity and resilience.
3. Develop proposals for submission to existing regional, sectoral and international organizations to promote the objectives of the Hamilton Declaration.

The Commission also agreed to continue with the existing priority areas identified in 2014 and agreed the following short and long term items as priorities for action within the next biennium (2016-2018).

PRIORITY TWO-YEAR ACTIVITIES (2016-2018)

PRIORITY ONE: INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION OF ECOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE

Short term

- Commission Secretariat accepts interest from new Declaration Signatories and reaches out in a budget neutral way
- Invite Signatories to support text for Annual UN Oceans Resolution on Oceans and Law of the Sea
- Continue efforts re: MOUs/Collaboration Arrangements with Secretariats of regional or international entities
- Consider the issue of plastics as an important negative impact on the ecosystem and how Commission can contribute and consider involvement in UN consultative process on marine debris and the global partnership for marine litter

Long term

- Work with Signatories to update wording of UN Resolution
- Secretariat develops long term strategy for new Declaration Signatories

PRIORITY TWO: FISHERIES AND FISHERIES HABITAT CONSERVATION

Short term

- Secretariat tracks discussions at NAFO
- Commission team (as UK O/T delegation) continues to attend meetings of ICCAT Ecosystem Subcommittee and the ICCAT Commission to press for appropriate conservation measures for the Sargasso Sea, including using the Sargasso Sea as a pilot ecosystem for EBFM proposals

Long term

- Continue to work with the ICCAT Ecosystem Subcommittee to use the Sargasso Sea as a pilot ecosystem for EBFM proposals

PRIORITY THREE: IMPACTS FROM INTERNATIONAL SHIPPING

Short term

- Commission update of report of Cruise Ship activity in Bermuda
- Finalize “Risk/Threat Assessment” report
- Continue discussions with the Bermuda Government on a Memorandum of Understanding with selected cruise lines re voluntary restrictions in the Sargasso Sea regarding discharges
- Utilize link with World Ocean Council

Long term

- Work with signatories through IMO
- Explore possible avenues on ballast water issues via cruise ship industry

PRIORITY FOUR: IMPACTS TO THE SEAFLOOR AND SEABED

Short term

- Accept ICPC offer to review desk top report on new cables
- Attend Meetings of ISA as Observer
- Pursue opportunity to sign MOU with ISA if appropriate

Long term

- Work with the ICPC to jointly develop a set of best practices for cable laying in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction parts of the Sargasso Sea Area of Collaboration
- Develop MOU with ISA
- Pursue discussions about Areas of Particular Environment Interest in Sargasso Sea

PRIORITY FIVE: CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY SPECIES

Short term

- Work with CMS Secretariat and partners to assist with a Range State meeting for an *Anguilla anguilla* strategy during 2016
- Commission science reports for CMS Range States' meeting
- Continue collaboration with IAC Secretariat and explore areas of potential mutual interest in the implementation of the Work Programme
- Link Migratory Species data to NASA project
- Consider relevance of the CMS Pelagic Sharks MOU to the Sargasso Sea

Long term

- Work with CMS Secretariat in development of an MOU/Agreement under CMS with provision for protection for spawning area
- Reach out to the Dominican Republic to explore an extension of the Stellwagen National Marine Sanctuary and Bermuda EEZ Sister Sanctuary Agreement to a third partner, in line with the migratory route of humpback whales
- Augment the relationship between whale sanctuary authorities in Massachusetts and Bermuda and share lessons learned on management approaches such as whale watching guidelines
- Explore protection opportunities for the American eel (*Anguilla rostrata*); continue to build relationships and coordination between Canadian and US partners on American Eel protections

PRIORITY SIX: DEFINING ROLE IN DATA AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Short term

- Continue existing collaboration with NASA on COVERAGE oceanographic data display
- Continue to Collaborate with UNEP CAR on the *Sargassum* Basecamp Project
- Explore the role of the Commission website to serve as an information clearinghouse for information on *Sargassum*
- Follow up with IOCARIBE

Long term

- Assess future arrangements for COVERAGE oceanographic data display once pilot phase is complete – including housing and data management provision
- Consider further idea of a Regional Alliance under the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) framework
- Serve as a focal point for the gathering and exchange of information and data, develop a repository of information and scientific data relating to the condition of the Sargasso Sea ecosystem and make this publicly accessible
- Liaise with the Signatories, as well as with other governments in the region and appropriate national, regional and international organizations, including those with competence in adjacent marine areas, to obtain a better understanding of issues of common concern and interest through, where appropriate, developing exchange of data, sharing of databases and collecting data in standardized formats
- Explore engagement with recreational fisheries (catch and release monitoring/data)
- Explore further modes of communication of data, issues, products and threats