

## WORK PROGRAMME PRIORITIES (2015-2017)

### **PREFACE:**

The Work Programme goals and priority activities were developed at the first Meeting of the Sargasso Sea Commission, convened on 20-22 October 2014.

Work Programme goals and priority activities should be read in accordance with the full text of the *Hamilton Declaration on Collaboration for the Conservation of the Sargasso Sea*. The Work Programme attempts to operationalize the initial 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 will take place over a two-year period (2015-2017). Long-term priority activities will be scoped over the two year time frame for implementation at a later date. As the Commission plans to build on the progress made by the predecessor Sargasso Sea Alliance, some activities below will include work in the remainder of 2014.

The Commission Secretariat is currently in the process of identifying Collaborating Partners to assist in implementation of the Work Programme.

### **OVER-ARCHING 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 organisations to promote the objectives of the Hamilton Declaration.

## PRIORITY TWO-YEAR ACTIVITIES (2015-2017)

### **PRIORITY ONE: INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION OF ECOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE**

#### **Short-term**

- Invite Signatories to support text for UN Oceans Resolution for 2014 documenting signature of the Hamilton Declaration and establishment of the Commission.
- Invite OSPAR to re-cast the Sargasso Sea Alliance Secretariat Collaboration Arrangement as the Sargasso Sea Commission
- Commission Secretariat accepts interest from new Declaration Signatories.

#### **Long-term**

- Pursue MOUs/Collaboration Arrangements with Secretariats of relevant regional or international entities.
- Signatories support text in UN Oceans Resolution annually
- Secretariat develops long term strategy for new Declaration Signatories.

### **PRIORITY TWO: FISHERIES AND FISHERIES HABITAT CONSERVATION**

#### **Short-term**

- International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)- UK Overseas Territories delegation attends ICCAT Commission meeting in Nov. 2014 to continue to explore potential interest and support among Parties and to serve as resource regarding any related questions from the ICCAT Ecosystem Subcommittee report.
- Commission Secretariat tracks discussions at Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organisation regarding seamounts.

#### **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**

- Continue discussions with the Bermuda Government on a Memorandum of Understanding with selected cruise lines.

### **Long-term**

- Identify Signatories who may be interested in supporting discussions of shipping measures in a leadership role.
- Continue to pursue information on the effects of maritime shipping impacts to support future proposals to the International Maritime Organisation (IMO).

## **PRIORITY FOUR: IMPACTS TO THE SEAFLOOR AND SEABED**

### **Short-term**

- Produce outcome document from co-hosted workshop- Submarine Cables in the Sargasso Sea- Legal and Environmental Issues in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction-- 23 October 2014 in Washington, DC.
- Work with the cable laying industry and other partners 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.. The best practices statement could provide a proactive template for future development of MOUs between the ICPC and the Commission for this activity in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction.

### **Long-term**

- Continue discussions with the International Seabed Authority (ISA) Secretariat vis-à-vis exploration licenses and Areas of Particular Environmental Interest (APEI); seek a formal relationship between Commission and ISA.

## PRIORITY FIVE: CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY SPECIES

### Short-term

- Work with Monaco to support listing and also to support development of practical and constructive conservation activities if the European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) is listed in Appendix II of Convention on Migratory Species
- Seek to mobilize resources for a “range State” workshop for *Anguilla anguilla*.
- Pursue collaboration with the Ocean Tracking Network (regarding a symposium on the science, policy and legal aspects of eel conservation).
- Approve and finalize draft “Concept Note on the importance of *Sargassum* and the Sargasso Sea for Atlantic Sea Turtles”; co-publish as InterAmerican Turtle Convention IAC/SSC publication on both organisation’s websites.
- Continue collaboration with IAC Secretariat and explore areas of potential mutual interest in the implementation of the Work Programme.
- Pursue a formal MoU between the IAC Secretariat and the Commission.
- 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.

### Long-term

- After Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Appendix II listing, assist with a Range State meeting for an *Anguilla anguilla* strategy.
- 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*).

## PRIORITY SIX: DEFINING ROLE IN DATA AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

### Short-term

- Continue to work with NASA on oceanographic data display.
- Explore convening expert workshops on research priorities, remote sensing and ocean observing data and information for the Sargasso Sea.
- Consider forming a Regional Alliance under the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) framework.
- Explore the role of the Commission website to serve as an information clearinghouse for information on *Sargassum*.

**Long-term**

Further define the Commission role per Declaration mandate in these areas:

- 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 organisations, 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;