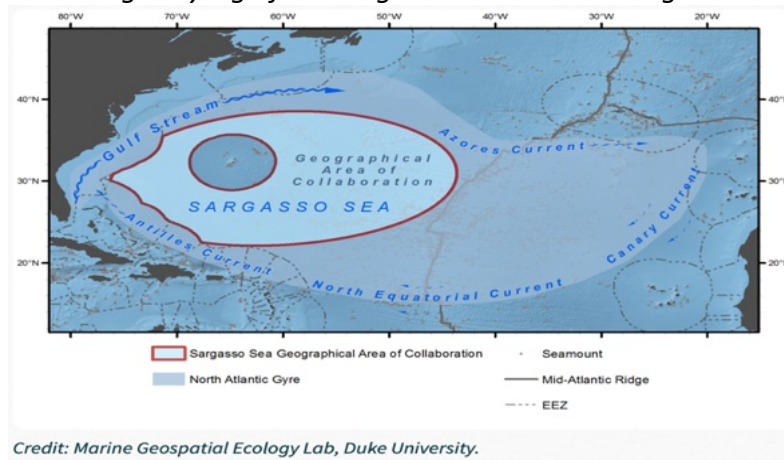


The GEF-UNDP-UNESCO-IOC Sargasso Sea Project¹

“Strengthening stewardship through cooperation in an economically and biologically significant high seas area – the Sargasso Sea”



The Sargasso Sea – global importance

The [Sargasso Sea](#) is a unique and iconic high seas ecosystem. It contains inherent ecological value, is a haven for biodiversity as habitat, foraging and spawning grounds, and as a migratory corridor. There is emerging recognition of the crucial role the Sargasso Sea plays in the wider ecosystem, ranging from the Atlantic Ocean to the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico; it contains substantial natural resources which could deliver considerable resultant socio-economic benefits.

As with all the world’s oceans, keeping the Sargasso Sea healthy and sustainably productive predominantly hinges on the balance between appropriate utilisation of these natural resources and the conservation of the biodiversity that comprise these resources. This balance is enabled by effective collaboration between the numerous actors undertaking conservation, stewardship, or commercial industrial activities.

The stewardship of the Sargasso Sea falls to the signatories of the [Hamilton Declaration²](#), who take a balanced approach to the conservation of this ecosystem and its sustainable use. To achieve this balance a very clear understanding of the human impact on this ecosystem is required, together with knowledge of the potential benefits resulting from sustainable management practices within a suitably collaborative and fair regulatory environment. Whilst high seas areas, like the Sargasso Sea, appear remote and seem as if they belong to no one, they are the responsibility of all – their condition is inextricably linked to the health of our entire planet.

The Sargasso Sea GEF-UNDP-UNESCO-IOC Project

The overall objective of this almost USD\$3M, 4-year Project is to facilitate a collaborative, cross-sectoral, and sustainable stewardship mechanism for the Sargasso Sea, through improvement of the knowledge base and strengthened frameworks for collaborative management and governance. As such this Project is focused on the sustainable utilisation and conservation of biodiversity in the Sargasso Sea. Increasing human use illustrates the importance and urgency of generating an evidence-based understanding of the cumulative impacts of human activities in this area. The impact of climate change, such as increased ocean acidification and reducing/changing ocean oxygen levels are now well studied and understood. But better understanding of the threats to the Sargasso Sea ecosystem and its marine life, and the impacts from direct human activity such as fishing, shipping, and other commercial activities like seabed exploration/exploitation, Sargassum harvesting, and cable-laying is also needed.

¹ The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is a global partnership among 183 countries, international institutions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and the private sector to address global environmental issues while supporting national sustainable development initiatives. It provides grants for projects related to six focal areas: biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation, the ozone layer, and persistent organic pollutants. The GEF International Waters focal area targets transboundary water systems, such as river basins with water flowing from one country to another, groundwater resources shared by several countries, or marine ecosystems bounded by more than one nation.

² The Hamilton Declaration (2014) is a non-binding political statement. The Signatories agree to hold a regular Meeting of Signatories and endorse the establishment of a Sargasso Sea Commission to encourage and facilitate voluntary collaboration toward the conservation of the Sargasso Sea.

To achieve this, the GEF Project has 4 discrete components, involving several contributory agencies and partners³. The first component, a detailed *Socio-Ecosystem Diagnostic Analysis* (SEDA), is currently underway to produce science-based evidence of potential threats and their impacts on the Sargasso Sea ecosystem. Subsequently, a *Strategic Action Programme* (SAP) will identify the priority actions and strategic partnerships necessary to address these threats. Whilst the SAP will be negotiated, it will be endorsed by the key stakeholders of the Sargasso Sea, who are focused on strengthening the stewardship and conservation of this important marine ecosystem. Subsequently an *Implementation Roadmap* will be produced, detailing the partnerships and cooperation required to ensure sustainability of these natural resources. The final component will create defined *Knowledge Management* activities to allow clear communication to all stakeholders, whilst capturing lessons and best practices; this will ensure ongoing and effective Project *Monitoring and Evaluation*.

Advantages in contributing to this Project

One of the most fundamental underpinning characteristics of this Project is collaboration amongst the key stakeholders of the Sargasso Sea, be they ‘Guardians’, ‘Users’ or ‘Beneficiaries’⁴. The high seas nature of the Sargasso Sea and its status as an Area Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ)⁵ means that any stewardship or governance measures put in place are voluntary. That said, whilst not mandatory, ever-increasing regulatory, economic, and societal pressures facing commercial industrial ocean users, make adherence to voluntary practices not just highly desirable but perhaps essential for their future business.

The engagement we seek is envisaged to consist of an initial online “one-to-one” discussion to fully introduce the Project, addressing any questions or concerns. This would be followed by larger cross-sector stakeholder engagement events, (in-person, on-line or hybrid), potentially aligned with other maritime-focused events to maximise participation, allowing discussion and debate amongst all parties and stakeholders. Taking place every 6 months or so⁶, these events will enable greater collaboration to increase common understanding.

As a result of this proactive cross-sector engagement particularly, but not exclusively, during the *Strategic Action Programme* (SAP) negotiation phase, you will have a voice. By explaining the commercial drivers and/or constraints related to your Sargasso Sea area activity, you will be able inform and influence the debate whereby the Hamilton Declaration Signatories, supported by the Sargasso Sea Commissioners, reach decisions on appropriate stewardship measures. But your contribution to this project could be greater still and yet more impactful. As a Sargasso Sea user, you may be willing to contribute non-commercially sensitive environmental or ecosystem data of spatial/temporal-relevance, that could prove invaluable for the *Socio-Ecosystem Diagnostic Analysis* (SEDA) baseline being undertaken now, and/or for future scientific analyses.

Most crucially perhaps, by agreeing to engage you will be contributing to the protection of the unique and iconic ecosystem that is the Sargasso Sea, for future sustainable use by all.

Wider Applicability

This Project’s successful demonstration of the sustainable use of natural resources alongside improved conservation of the Sargasso Sea marine ecosystem could have global applicability. Clear evidence of the positive impact of scientific monitoring, data-sharing and effective multi-stakeholder collaboration on socio-economic and food-security benefits, could provide a replicable model that could be employed in other high seas areas. As a result, organisations and commercial entities who have been involved in this Project could see significant economic and reputational advantages; we hope you are willing to become a part of this globally important endeavour.

³ The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the GEF implementing agency for the project, and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (IOC-UNESCO) was selected to serve as UNDP Implementing Partner (Executing Agency). IOC will work closely with stakeholders for the project, including UNDP, the Sargasso Sea Commission and its Signatory Governments, GEF-eligible beneficiary countries, and other partners, including the Bermuda Institute of Ocean Sciences, the Duke University Marine Geospatial Ecology Lab, the Imperial College London Centre for Environmental Policy, the University of Edinburgh, the World Maritime University, and the French Global Environment Facility (FFEM).

⁴ ‘Guardians’: principally focused on the conservation of the Sargasso Sea, either directly or indirectly. ‘Users’: who realise direct or indirect commercial gain from legal exploitation of the natural resources within, or that pass through, the Sargasso Sea. ‘Beneficiaries’: all others globally, who derive benefit from the Sargasso Sea, whether consequent of its guardianship or commercial use, but are neither active ‘Guardians’ nor ‘Users’.

⁵ Marine Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ), commonly called the high seas, are areas of ocean for which no one nation has sole responsibility for management. These make up 40% of the surface of our planet, comprising 64% of the surface of the oceans, and nearly 95% of its volume.

⁶ Up to 5 events envisaged: notionally during May/Jun 24; Sep/Oct 24; Mar/Apr 25; Sep/Oct 25; May/Jun 26.

Sargasso Sea GEF Project: Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

1 Purpose & Linkages

The Sargasso Sea GEF Project Stakeholder Engagement Strategy (SES) identifies the means of engagement and interaction with and between the stakeholders and the Project. First developed as part of the overall GEF Project documentation¹ and now reviewed and revised it will continue to evolve as the Project develops. It must be dynamic as it seeks to continuously identify additional stakeholders and allow those to engage who may not have done so during the earlier stages of the Project. It must also encompass the longer-term stakeholder interaction processes and how these will be maintained and sustained beyond the life of this specific Project.

The Sargasso Sea Project constitutes a pilot at the regional level within Component 3 of the overarching Common Oceans Program aimed at *'Improving stakeholder coordination and engagement in multi-sectoral processes addressing governance and management of ABNJ'*. Consequently, the main objectives of the Sargasso Sea Project are to build better and more effective stakeholder engagement in order to demonstrate the sustainable use of ABNJ living resources and improved conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services within this Sargasso Sea EBSA/marine Ecosystem arising from the Project, and to support and sustain the medium-term continuation of effective stewardship, scientific monitoring and associated socioeconomic and food security benefits through interactive partnerships and stakeholder collaboration which will provide a model for achieving the overall Project Goal that can be replicated and scaled-up elsewhere as applicable.

Furthermore, the GEF Global Child Project (GCP) Concept will create and maintain a partnership among all of the child projects and stakeholders, underpinned by a Partnership Strategy that the partners (and, in particular, the implementing agencies of the child projects) will agree to, enabling the GCP to effectively support the coordination among child projects as well as facilitate collaboration and integration.

2 Background

The Sargasso Sea constitutes a fundamentally important part of the world's ocean due to an interdependent mix of physical oceanography, its ecosystems and its role in global-scale ocean and earth-system processes. It contributes significantly to local as well as global economies both directly from fisheries for highly migratory species (including European and American eels), coral reefs, whale watching and "turtle tourism", and indirectly from its role in climate regulation, conservation of genetic diversity and biogeochemical cycling. It is also an important transit route for shipping between Europe and North America. As a unique high seas marine ecosystem, the Sargasso Sea is home to numerous endemic species and essential habitat for a very large number of others. It is an important migratory route for many commercially important species, such as Anguillid eels, bill fishes and tunas, as well as non-commercial species such as whales and turtles. It is also the only known spawning area for the critically endangered European eel (*Anguilla Anguilla*) and the endangered American eel (*A. rostrata*), both of which are at the centre of what has recently become a global multi-million-dollar industry as a result of the rise in their popularity as a food item. The goods and services associated with the Sargasso Sea have a direct as well as indirect inherent value to many countries outside of its borders. The current price of glass eels (the early life stage of the species that develop prior to they enter river mouths on return from the sea) stands at \$5,500 per kilo. In addition, the Sargasso Sea has an inherent socioeconomic value to humankind because of its existence as a unique ecosystem and home to rare and charismatic species. Based on the best available science, the Sargasso Sea has been estimated to contribute significant values to the global community in the order of multi-millions to billions of US\$.

¹ http://www.sargassoseacommission.org/storage/documents/PIMS_6526_Sargasso_ProDoc_REV_220323.pdf

The 'Development Challenge' for this Project has identified six primary areas for further review in order to identify any threats and impacts to the Project area:

1. Overall need for a more detailed understanding of the ecosystem and its various physical, chemical, and biological interactions;
2. Improvements in the identification and understanding of appropriate responses to the effects of changes within the ecosystem (including Global Warming and Acidification) on the Sargasso Sea Ecosystem;
3. Improved coordination within and between fisheries management activities and monitoring within the Sargasso Sea;
4. A review and assessment of management strategies of Eel fisheries in 'Home ranges' and how they may be affected by changes in the Sargasso Sea Ecosystem;
5. Improved information on Shipping and Vessel Routes and Impacts with the intention of providing information to relevant bodies;
6. Identifying other Commercial Activities within the Sargasso Sea Ecosystem.

Furthermore, it has identified one of the outstanding solutions to these needs as '*more stakeholder collaboration and interaction in management of activities and reduction in threats and risks to the ecosystem*'. This Stakeholder Engagement Strategy (SES) articulates the Project's approach to stakeholder engagement, interaction, and collaboration, including the primary stakeholder groups, how they shall be engaged, and how they can collaboratively participate in the project.

3 Stakeholder Engagement – Objectives & Principles

The Stakeholder Engagement Strategy (SES) was initially designed to ensure meaningful engagement of stakeholders in both the Socio-Ecosystem Diagnostic Analysis (SEDA) and Strategic Action Programme (SAP) drafting processes through appropriate mechanisms including workshop(s) and dialogue. We continue to seek to implement systematic, inclusive, and communicative processes to involve those affected by, contributing to, or otherwise influencing the Project and its outputs. As stewardship of the Sargasso Sea does not end with this Project, this stakeholder engagement activity seeks to build the foundations to create enduring stakeholder relationships enabling long-term stewardship, extending beyond any pre-existing engagement. We also seek to demonstrate a process that can be replicated and scaled, providing an approach that can be translated to future projects in other geographical locations worldwide.

This SES aims to develop stronger cooperation and coordination between those parties that have a vested interest in the '*guardianship*' of the Sargasso Sea and the various entities with commercial, industrial interests or management mandates relating to the Sargasso Sea area. It is intended that this will help to promote and implement stronger and more effective cross-sectoral management and stewardship of the Sargasso Sea ecosystem. The existing collaborations and partnerships already have some considerable history of success which will help further ensure the long-term uptake and sustainable impact of this Project into the future. In particular, there will be close and regular engagement with the Hamilton Declaration signatories as key guiding stakeholders to the Project. There will also be proactive engagement with the appropriate existing and mandated regional bodies to promote a more effective science-based approach for the ecosystem, a process that will also assist in identifying further data needs and sources to populate the SEDA.

The stakeholder engagement plan will be implemented according to five basic principles that will aim to ensure its effectiveness and inclusiveness:

- **Participation:** Open representation and participation of stakeholders will be facilitated at all levels and across all relevant sectors, ensuring diverse voices are heard.
- **Gender equity:** Project design and implementation will be responsive to gender-sensitive considerations including the specific capacity development needs of women, the youth, and marginalised/vulnerable groups.
- **Respect for cultural diversity:** Project design and implementation will respect existing customs, traditions, and forms of organisation and decision-making. Engagement activities will be culturally sensitive.
- **Communication and transparency:** Care will be taken to design and implement a communication strategy that guides messages coherently to specific stakeholder groups and audiences targeted by the Project. Adequate communication will help avoid unrealistic/false expectations or erroneous interpretations between actors. Information will be provided transparently, without marginalising any stakeholder groups.
- **Partnerships and synergies:** Continuous efforts will be made to ensure mapping of other interventions with similar objectives as the Project, or initiatives that are related to the same thematic scope as the Project. Opportunities will be explored to establish synergies that can help to maximize Project impact and avoid duplication of efforts.

The main objective of the SES is to ensure that the interests and priorities of the different stakeholder groups and sectors are considered during relevant phases of Project development and implementation, including:

- **Informing stakeholders:** Ensuring understanding and awareness of project goals, approaches, intentions and expected outcomes.
- **Generating project buy-in:** Securing support by targeted partners and beneficiaries and building common ownership amongst stakeholders.
- **Seeking synergies & partnerships:** Identifying opportunities for collaboration, co-financing, institutional co-operation, and for leveraging the resources and expertise of engaged stakeholders.
- **Identifying priorities & strategies:** Identifying priority interventions for the Project's success and developing strategies to successfully implement and achieve the intended Project outcomes.
- **Validating strategies:** Ensuring that intervention strategies and targets align with stakeholder expectations and the intended Project outcomes, enabling regular validation with key stakeholders (e.g. the Hamilton Declaration signatories).
- **Facilitating feedback:** Implementing participatory monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, encouraging open and regular Project feedback from all stakeholder groups.
- **Establishing grievance mechanisms:** Providing a structured, transparent, accountable, and responsive process to address concerns and complaints.

4 Identifying & Engaging Project Stakeholders

The Project will work with a diverse range of stakeholders including the Sargasso Sea Commission, the Signatories to the Hamilton Declaration, beneficiary government representatives, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), private sector, and academic and research institutions, with the aim of strengthening stewardship approaches in line with an ecosystem-based conservation and sustainable use strategy, that embraces adaptive management toward climate change and other potential impacts on the Sargasso Sea ecosystem, and subsequently the socioeconomic well-being of the dependent beneficiary countries.

In developing the SES, the Project has created a high-level stakeholder map encompassing key stakeholder groups. This has been socialised and validated with the established and pre-existing stakeholder community at a SES development workshop, and will guide engagement throughout the Project. This map is neither fixed nor exhaustive as it must be dynamic and flexible in keeping with the very long-term aspirations of this Project. The mechanisms by which each stakeholder group might contribute to the Project have also been identified, as well as which processes (SEDA and/or SAP) require their inputs.

As the Sargasso Sea is an Area Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) and therefore hundreds of kilometres from any local communities, this area is not fished or exploited by any recreational fishing organisations or dependent communities as such. However, there are a variety of opportunities to expand Private Sector stakeholder engagement. The Sargasso Sea Commission already had a range of Collaborating Partners prior to the development of this Project. These include important Private Sector players or their representative intergovernmental bodies such as the International Cable Protection Committee, and tourism bodies such as LookBermuda and Non-Such Expeditions. Further to this, the Project plans to engage with the Cruise Lines International Association (the world's largest cruise industry trade association), the International Chamber of Shipping (the global trade association for shipowners and operators) and the World Shipping Council (representing the 'voice' of liner shipping and working closely with policymakers and industry groups across the globe).

It is clear that when considering the stewardship of a large area beyond national jurisdiction, there will be significant stakeholder diversity; successful stewardship, therefore, will be contingent on achieving broad consent of proposed interventions and actions, and participation in their implementation. This necessitates starting with the broadest possible view of stakeholders, refining this in order to target and prioritise engagement activities. We may characterise stakeholders into broadly three (non-exclusive) stakeholder types, based on how they interact with the Sargasso Sea:

- **'Guardians'**: principally focused on the conservation of the Sargasso Sea, either directly or indirectly.
- **'Users'**: who realise direct or indirect commercial gain from legal exploitation of the natural resources within, or that pass through, the Sargasso Sea.
- **'Beneficiaries'**: all others globally, who derive benefit from the Sargasso Sea, whether consequent of its guardianship or commercial use, but are neither active *'Guardians'* nor *'Users'*.

The Project will seek to engage stakeholders from all categories. However, these stakeholders may contribute different types of input, relevant at different points in the Project timeline. The Project itself has two distinct overarching sequential parts and outputs. The first is the Socio-Ecosystem Diagnostic Analysis (SEDA), followed by the Strategic Action Programme (SAP). To better understand our stakeholders, their inputs, and the Project's engagement priorities these must both be considered.

5 The Socio-Ecosystem Diagnostic Analysis (SEDA)

The main technical role of the Socio-Ecosystem Diagnostic Analysis (SEDA) is to identify, quantify, and set priorities for environmental problems that threaten the long-term integrity and sustainability of the ecosystem. In particular, the SEDA aims to:

- A. Identify, quantify & prioritise the problems within the ecosystem.
- B. Gather and interpret information on the environmental impacts and socio-economic consequences of each problem.
- C. Analyse the immediate, underlying, and root causes for each problem, and in particular identify specific practices, sources, locations, and human activity sectors from which environmental degradation arises or threatens to arise.
- D. The root cause analysis is accompanied by a comprehensive governance analysis since the underlying causes of the vast majority of environmental problems stem from selected policy and other governance failures and gaps.

The SEDA provides the factual basis for the formulation of the Strategic Action Programme, but the SEDA is also part of a larger, facilitative process of engagement and consultation with all the key stakeholders from the initial SEDA steps through to the subsequent development of alternative solutions during the formulation of the Strategic Action Programme.

6 The Strategic Action Programme (SAP)

The Project will then translate the information from the SEDA into a Strategic Action Programme (SAP) that defines what actions need to be taken for effective management of the areas and by whom. The SAP will confirm partnerships and sustainability, including management, administrative and financial requirements. The SAP will be a negotiated policy-level document which the various and appropriate stakeholders to the Sargasso Sea ecosystem and its goods and services will sign up to and implement. Essentially, the SAP will be agreed and implemented by the various signatories to the Hamilton Declaration along with the partners to the Sargasso Sea Commission (SSC). The SAP development process will therefore include close engagement with and input from the Private Sector and other important stakeholders as potential partners, striving for their full engagement and contribution to the immediate and longer-term sustainability of actions endorsed under the SAP. It is in the nature of a high-seas environment that Governance is by consent, underlining the need for stakeholder engagement, participation and relationship building as a pre-requisite for effective stewardship. For the purposes of stakeholder engagement this implies two top-level stakeholder categories:

- A. **The SEDA-related Stakeholders.** This would be those entities or individuals who are providing the scientific background and baseline, identifying the threats and impacts, and assisting to identify the ecosystem value and goods & services that the Sargasso Sea Geographical Area of Collaboration (GAC) supports. It will include those parties to advise on appropriate conservation and stewardship measures needed to maintain or improve ecosystem quality. Essentially, this group of stakeholders will include the scientific experts and the 'Guardians' of the welfare of the Sargasso Sea GAC.
- B. **The SAP-related Stakeholders.** This stakeholder group would include those entities that 'make use' of the Sargasso Sea either directly or indirectly, or which have a mandate to manage certain aspects and activities within and/or adjacent to the GAC (e.g. fisheries, shipping, seabed exploitation, security, etc.). These are the 'Users', 'Beneficiaries' and/or 'Managers' of the Sargasso Sea.

We note that these groups aren't mutually exclusive, there will be deeply engaged SEDA stakeholders who are necessarily SAP stakeholders (e.g., Hamilton Declaration signatories), and stakeholders naturally affected by the SAP and its measures, but who might also contribute data/expertise in support of the SEDA if properly engaged.

7 Generic Forms of Contribution & Support from Stakeholders:

Before considering the stakeholder groups in more detail, and establishing a sectoral stakeholder map, it is worth defining at a high-level how we envisage stakeholders contributing to the Project. An analysis was undertaken to determine what generic supporting activities could be of value to the Project; this was validated in the October 2023 Stakeholder Engagement workshop. The list of 13 generic forms of activity below describes a broad set of complementary activities that stakeholders could be engaged in, contributing positively to the Project:

- **Participation, Feedback & Input:** the foundational form of stakeholder engagement is basic participation, being willing to receive Project information, and to provide feedback & input to the SEDA and SAP processes through direct communication (e.g. interviews), structured programmes of feedback (e.g. questionnaires), or by participating in Project stakeholder events (e.g. workshops).
- **Data Sharing & Contributions:** Providing data relevant to marine ecosystems, human activities, and other pertinent areas.
- **Research Collaborations:** Engaging in joint research initiatives, sharing expertise, resources, and findings.
- **Sustainable Practices:** Adopting and promoting practices that align with conservation and sustainable use of marine resources.
- **Funding & Resources:** Mobilising financial resources, offering grants, or supporting conservation initiatives.
- **Awareness & Advocacy:** Raising awareness about the project's goals and advocating for marine conservation.
- **Policy Development & Legal Insights:** Offering insights into existing laws, developing new policies, seeking innovative solutions in existing frameworks.
- **Technological Solutions:** Developing and implementing technologies that aid in conservation, monitoring, and sustainable use.
- **Training & Capacity Building:** Organising workshops, training sessions, and seminars to enhance or translate skills and knowledge; improve equitability.
- **Monitoring & Assessment of Compliance:** Monitoring to ensure compliance with marine protection measures and regulations; ground truthing.
- **Public Engagement & Feedback:** Engaging with the broader public, gathering feedback, and addressing concerns aligned with Project activities and goals.
- **Economic & Business Initiatives:** Developing business models and economic strategies that support conservation goals.
- **Cultural & Traditional Knowledge:** Sharing insights rooted in historical and cultural ties to the marine environment.

We note that the first area, Participation, Feedback & Input, reflects the core objectives and principles of the Project's Stakeholder Engagement Strategy. All additional general forms of contribution and support are neither expectations placed upon stakeholders, nor requirements for engagement. Rather, these are additional forms of participation that would benefit the Project and that could be provided by willing, highly-engaged, stakeholders – in doing so building desired common ownership within the stakeholder community, which may support the Project's long-term sustainability, efficacy, and goals.

8 Map of Key Stakeholder Groups



Figure 1: Map of stakeholder groups (not exhaustive).

These forms of contribution also provide a window into the wider stakeholder groups relevant to the Project, which extend beyond the direct ‘Guardians’ and ‘Users’, to indirect stakeholders who could also provide some of the forms of contribution above.

Based on this, our top-level categories of ‘Guardians’, ‘Users’ and ‘Beneficiaries’, and on our consideration of SEDA and SAP related stakeholders, we have derived a set of stakeholder groups relevant to the Project. This was tested with core stakeholders at the October 2023 Stakeholder Engagement workshop, where an initial version of the stakeholder map was presented; additions were discussed and included. The validated map – which is shown in Figure 1 is not exhaustive. It remains open to extension in the future, and will be tested with stakeholders at engagement events throughout the Project to ensure it is as comprehensive and contemporary as possible. The stakeholder groups, and their potential forms of input to the SEDA and SAP processes, are described below.

9 Stakeholder Groups & Potential Input Areas to SEDA & SAP Processes

9.1 Academia, Experts & International Organisations

<i>Academia, Research, & Educational Institutions</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
Academia, research, and educational institutions are likely to form part of the core Guardian community and influence both the SEDA and SAP processes. They are already significantly engaged, and actively contribute to the socio-ecosystem analysis within the SEDA. Maintained engagement with this stakeholder group is needed now and in the long term, as they are able to contribute the scientific analysis underpinning evidence presentation, stewardship decisions and measures of efficacy.	
Research Projects: Identify existing studies on the Sargasso Sea ecosystem, providing valuable data and insights.	Relevant input to the SEDA.
Research Projects: Continued partnership on in-depth studies on the Sargasso Sea ecosystem, providing valuable data and insights.	Potentially part of the SAP and long-term Project goals.
Education & Awareness: Develop educational programmes and materials that promote marine conservation.	Ongoing during the SEDA and SAP.

<i>Climate Change & Oceanography Experts & Scientists</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
Forming a sub-category of academia and research, particular attention should be drawn to expertise in climate change and oceanography, for both the relevance of their expertise to high-seas ecosystems, and the significance of climate changes as a motivator for change.	
Climate Modelling: Capture information from models and predictions on how climate change will impact the Sargasso Sea.	Relevant as input to the SEDA.
Climate Modelling: Continue to gather information from models and predictions on how climate change will impact the Sargasso Sea for adaptive management during SAP implementation.	Potentially part of the SAP, with ongoing updates throughout SAP implementation.
Adaptive Strategies: Develop strategies to help the marine ecosystem adapt to changing climate conditions.	These mechanisms and strategies could be input to SAP development, and undertaken in SAP implementation.

<i>International Environmental Organisations, NGOs & Philanthropists</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
International environmental organisations, NGOs, and Philanthropists might contribute to core research activities, but they may also play a role in advocacy and publicity of stewardship initiatives, and in resourcing long-term stewardship. These organisations may also be key stakeholder nodes, providing efficient access to relevant stakeholder networks.	
Research and Conservation Initiatives: Conduct research projects that provide insights into marine conservation needs.	Partnership opportunities to be identified in SAP development.
Funding and Resources: Mobilise resources and funding for conservation projects and initiatives.	To be identified in SAP development, and undertaken in implementation.

9.2 Extractive And Sea-Space Industrial Users

<i>Fisheries, Regional Fisheries Management Bodies, & Aquaculture</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
<p>Fisheries are a core 'User' stakeholder group. RFMOs such as NAFO and ICCAT already show valuable engagement with the project, and this will be needed for SAP consultation and compliance to stewardship. Engaging with the breadth of the fisheries industry is challenging. However, if RFMOs are made into project champions they may play a unique role as interlocutors with wider fisheries. Fisheries also collect and hold valuable, but commercially sensitive, data; mechanisms for access and use in the context of SSC stewardship would be valuable.</p>	
<p>Current Fishing Practices: Capture all relevant information on current fishing activities (species, catches, by-catch, IUU, etc)</p>	<p>Relevant as input to the SEDA.</p>
<p>Sustainable Fishing Practices: Adopt & promote sustainable fishing methods that reduce harm to the marine ecosystem.</p>	<p>Relevant to the SAP development and implementation, with pre-existing ongoing work with RFMOs.</p>
<p>Data Sharing: Provide data on fish stocks, catch rates, and other relevant information to inform conservation strategies.</p>	<p>Relevant to SEDA & SAP processes, with a need for regular updates through SAP implementation. Pre-existing ongoing work with RFMOs.</p>
<i>Pharmaceutical and Biotech Industries</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
<p>Harvest of marine genetic resource is an area of significant economic value but highly uneven access, with direct relevance to ocean stewardship the BBNJ agreement. These industries are clearly 'users' of the high-seas, however they may also be positioned to uniquely benefit from improvements to biodiversity and ecosystem health consequent of stewardship. This scientifically advanced and data-rich sector could play a contributing role in ecosystem monitoring, but may also be subject to limiting measures, making them a stakeholder in all senses.</p>	
<p>Sustainable Harvesting: Ensure that the harvesting of marine genetic resources is done sustainably.</p>	<p>Relevant to SAP development and implementation.</p>
<p>Research Collaborations: Collaborate with conservationists to study marine biodiversity, leading to potential medical breakthroughs</p>	<p>Relevant to SAP development and implementation.</p>
<i>Seabed Mining</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
<p>Issues of seabed mining are potentially peripheral to the Sargasso Sea. However, the potential for long-distance travel of sediment and pollution from mineral extraction has been suggested by research and modelling. Considering the gyre of the Sargasso Sea, there is a risk of distant seabed mining activities adversely affecting the region. In the context of this project, this stakeholder group may only have second-order or indirect involvement. However, it is worth noting as a relevant type of stakeholder for high-seas stewardship activities more widely.</p>	
<p>Less Destructive Extraction: Develop and enact less destructive seabed mining techniques to reduce ecosystem harm.</p>	<p>Relevant to identify in SAP development and work on in SAP implementation.</p>
<p>Data Sharing: Provide environmental and ecosystem data gleaned as part of their seabed exploration activities.</p>	<p>Relevant input to the SEDA, and a part of SAP development and implementation.</p>

<i>Fisheries, Eel Range States</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
<p>There are five American Eel Range States: Dominican Republic, Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica, and Morocco. All report a fairly wide distribution of eels in their rivers and coastal systems. In-country consumption is limited (with the exception of Asian communities) and eels are primarily for export to Asian and North American markets, where there is a high demand. The fishery has both economic importance for the countries and direct livelihood importance for the fishermen. Eel fishing can be an important subsistence activity for poorer families in these countries. In Haiti for example, although eel is not commonly consumed in country, eel fishing improves the economic conditions for many fishing families who are otherwise discouraged from other forms of traditional fishing due to material costs.</p>	
<p>Data input: Provide data on eel migration, catch rates, and other relevant information to inform conservation strategies.</p>	<p>Ongoing work with eel range states relevant to the SEDA. Need for regular input and updates during SAP development and implementation.</p>
<p>Current Fishing Practices: Capture information on current fisheries practices and management requirements related to main range states for European and American eels.</p>	<p>Relevant input to the SEDA.</p>
<p>Sustainable Fishing Practices: Adopt and promote sustainable management measures and fishing methods within range states and management bodies.</p>	<p>Ongoing working with the RFMOs, relevant to SAP development and implementation.</p>

<i>Shipping, Maritime Transportation, & Maritime Infrastructure Organisations</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
<p>Marine traffic is a key 'User' stakeholder group for this project. Transit of vessels through the Sargasso Sea directly affects the ecosystem health, and changes or restrictions to this are potential stewardship outcomes (including, e.g., recommended transit speeds and/or routes). Strong relationships with this sector will be key for the SAP process and implementation of any resultant stewardship measures. Increasingly parts of maritime transport are seeking to make a positive ESG impact, these organisations may be key advocate for the project, and potentially contributors. Data contribution from maritime transport is also relevant, noting vessels are effectively platforms of opportunity.</p>	
<p>Impact of Shipping: Detailed review of shipping movements, types, impacts/threats from maritime transport and other maritime activities within the Sargasso Sea area.</p>	<p>Relevant input to the SEDA.</p>
<p>Safe Navigation Practices: Implement practices that reduce the risk of accidents, spills, or disturbances to the marine environment.</p>	<p>These will be key aspects of SAP development, undertaken in SAP implementation.</p>
<p>Infrastructure Development: Design and implement marine infrastructure that minimizes environmental impact.</p>	<p>Potentially relevant to SAP development / implementation.</p>

9.3 Legal, Regulatory, Enforcement & Technology

<i>Legal & Regulatory Bodies</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
Legal & regulatory bodies may be important indirect and direct stakeholders for the SAP process and implementation of stewardship measures. This may include policy development, and establishing mechanisms that help to broaden accountability. There is a strong pre-existing legal expertise within the core project stakeholder group.	
Current Legal and Regulatory mechanisms: Relevant to and impacting on activities within the Sargasso Sea Area.	Relevant input to the SEDA.
Policy Development: Develop and amend policies that support marine conservation goals.	Requirements to be identified in SAP development, and undertaken during SAP implementation.
Legal Workshops: Organise workshops to discuss legal implications and potential regulatory changes.	Relevant to SAP development and implementation.

<i>Maritime Security & Policing Community</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
The maritime security and policy community may be key enablers to effective stewardship. Their experience in maritime domain awareness and response can be drawn upon to formulate technically and operationally feasible stewardship approaches, and to implement these. Notions of enforcement and policing are challenging in the high seas, but they may play a role in improving accountability of actions in high seas areas.	
Monitoring and Assessment of Compliance: Utilise their authority and resources to monitor and assess successful delivery of marine protection measures and regulations.	Potentially relevant source of inputs to the SEDA, important to SAP development and implementation.
Surveillance & Monitoring: Presence, availability and potential use of advanced surveillance technologies to monitor activities in the Sargasso Sea.	Potentially relevant source of inputs to the SEDA, important to SAP development and implementation

<i>Satellite Earth Observation, Technology, Data, & AI Companies</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
Sophisticated Big Data & Artificial Intelligence (AI) solutions are likely to play a critical role in capturing, analysing & interpreting ecosystem information, modelling the impact of stewardship approaches, and monitoring the efficacy of measures. Earth observation & remote sensing data contain a wealth of information, but extracting this often requires nuanced cutting-edge approaches. Outside of the academic research community, the expertise for this, and in some cases enabling data-sources, are held by the data science and technologies sector – building awareness & participation in this community could provide access to new solutions, data, and enable capacity building.	
Data Analysis & Modelling: Use of advanced analytics and AI to analyse marine data, providing insights for conservation.	Relevant as input to the SEDA and to SAP development and implementation.
Technological Solutions: Develop technologies that aid in monitoring, conservation, and sustainable use of marine resources.	Relevant to SAP development and implementation.

9.4 Environmental & Financial Institutions

<i>Financial Institutions</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
Investment is increasingly tied to environmental and sustainability considerations; financial institutions may provide a route to building participation, compliance with stewardship, & potentially pathways to long-term financial support, particularly if underpinned by new/growing economies from good ocean stewardship.	
Current and Potential Financing Options: Identify funding that will support the necessary activities for SAP implementation.	Important to SAP development and implementation, for sustainable long-term Project implementation.
Green Financing: Offer financial products and services that support sustainable marine projects.	Identify need in SAP development, reflected in implementation.
Investment Screening: Ensure investments align with marine conservation goals, promoting sustainable practices.	Identify need in SAP development, reflected in implementation.

<i>Carbon Sequestration and Blue Carbon Approaches</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
Blue carbon & carbon sequestration approaches are growing in value and may provide a mechanism to fund and support stewardship goals through new economic models. However, the compatibility of these approaches will also need to be assessed in the context of ecosystem impact, noting that some approaches may change or disrupt the ecosystem in currently unassessed ways (e.g., sargassum sinking). This stakeholder group could be 'Guardian', 'User', & 'Beneficiary' of the Sargasso Sea.	
Carbon-related goods and services role of Sargasso Sea: Identify the role that the Sargasso Sea plays currently in carbon sequestration.	Relevant input to the SEDA.
Carbon Offset Initiatives: Develop and promote initiatives that offset carbon emissions through marine conservation.	Identify need in SAP development, reflected in implementation.
Research & Development: Innovate in blue carbon technologies and practices that enhance marine carbon sequestration.	Identify need in SAP development, reflected in implementation.

<i>Waste Management and Recycling Entities</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
The gyre of the Sargasso Sea results in it trapping significant quantities of plastic waste and microplastics. The full impact of these plastics on the ecosystem and food chain are not completely understood. However, efforts to limit and address this may form part of stewardship. As impact of microplastics on human health is better understood, this may also link to fisheries in the region. This stakeholder group may contribute to activities to remove waste pollution, and contribute to identifying measures to reduce it.	
Marine Waste Presence: Identify the main sources, quantities and impacts of waste materials into the Sargasso Sea.	Important input to the SEDA.
Marine Waste Reduction: Implement strategies to reduce marine waste, especially plastic, which can harm the ecosystem.	Need to be identified from the SEDA, and strategies assessed in SAP development, and undertaken in SAP implementation.
Recycling Initiatives: Promote and facilitate recycling programs specific to marine waste, reducing the environmental impact.	Need to be identified in SAP development and undertaken in SAP implementation.

<i>Marine Renewable Energy Sector</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
As marine renewable energy increasingly moves further from shore, and looks to take potentially more innovative forms (e.g., floating solar), this sector may have relevance to high-seas areas in the future. This may also be indirect, for example in the context of biomass generation and transportation.	
Clean Energy Initiatives: Develop and implement renewable energy solutions that reduce carbon emissions in marine settings.	Need to be identified in SAP development, with potential relevant to SAP implementation.
Research and Development: Innovate in marine energy technologies that are environmentally friendly.	Potentially part of SAP implementation.

9.5 Indigenous & Local Communities

<i>Local Tourism Industry</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
The tourism industry is a significant beneficiary and user of the Sargasso Sea, both directly (e.g., cruises, whale watching) and indirectly (e.g., via benefits of ecosystem health/biodiversity on abutting EEZ tourism). Therein, there is an argument that tourism will benefit significantly from successful stewardship, and it can play a part through a greater focus on supporting eco-tourism, advocacy of the project and its goals, and opportunistic data capture or citizen science initiatives. That may also enable crowd funding and charitable activities.	
Eco-Tourism Initiatives: Identify, develop & promote tourism activities that educate visitors about marine conservation.	Relevant to identify in the SEDA, and reflect promotion of in SAP development and implementation.
Sustainable Business Practices: Adopt business practices that minimise the environmental impact of tourism activities.	Identify need in SAP development, reflected in implementation.

<i>Recreational Users Community</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
The recreational community, e.g., yachting, may benefit project goals through developing & participating in citizen science/data gathering activities, advocating for the project, and providing philanthropic contributions. Stewardship measures may also restrict freedom of activities, so this is a varied stakeholder that is presently 'user' or 'beneficiary', but may also become 'guardian'.	
Citizen Science Initiatives: Engage in data collection and monitoring activities, providing valuable insights from a user perspective.	Important to build into SAP development and implementation.
Awareness and Advocacy: Promote sustainable recreational practices within their networks, fostering a culture of conservation.	Important to build into SAP development and implementation, potentially reflecting SEDA outputs.

<i>Indigenous & Local Communities & Businesses</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
Indigenous & local communities, and the economies around these, are intrinsically Sargasso Sea stakeholders due to historical/cultural ties. They are likely economic beneficiaries, and powerful advocates for successful stewardship. They may also help affect stewardship/monitoring if facilitated by capacity building/resource.	
Traditional Knowledge: Request shared insights and practices rooted in historical/cultural ties to marine environment.	Important input to the SEDA.
Local Business Initiatives: Develop/promote business practices aligning with marine conservation goals.	Important to build into SAP development and implementation.

10 Prioritising Stakeholder Engagement:

This list above highlights the wide-ranging stakeholders, and their respective inputs, relevant to the Project's SEDA and SAP processes and longer-term Project continuation. Realising engagement across these stakeholder groups will be a significant activity. Engagement with representatives and key members of each stakeholder group should be realised but will require sequencing and prioritisation. In order to make stakeholder engagement prioritisation decisions objective and transparent criteria for prioritisation have been developed and validated with core project stakeholders. These are listed, in order of importance, below:

1. **Core Project Stakeholders.** Those stakeholders who are core to all aspects of the Project's development, delivery, and continuation – the Hamilton Declaration signatories and the Sargasso Sea Commissioners & Secretariat.
2. **Stakeholder agreement to contribute to the SEDA process in a timely manner.** The SEDA process precedes SAP development, and is expected to be completed by mid-2024, engaging with stakeholders who have knowledge, data, or evidence necessary for the SEDA is the foremost priority at this stage.
3. **Current stakeholder impact on the Sargasso Sea ecosystem** (positive or negative, and informed by SEDA outputs). The SEDA outputs will reveal which stakeholder groups (and activities therein) have the most significant impact on the Sargasso Sea ecosystem; it is likely their participation will be required for successful SAP development and implementation, therefore making them a priority for engagement.
4. **Stakeholder willingness to engage, participate and/or contribute.** Willingness to engage with the Project is an important factor for engagement; we will seek and prioritise stakeholders willing to champion the project and its values within each group.
5. **Stakeholder capability to help with implementation the SAP** (including improving compliance) and/or long-term data-gathering and monitoring activities). Following SAP development there will be a process of implementation and long-term support; the stakeholders, and stakeholder groups, most important to this activity will be prioritised.
6. **Stakeholder readiness to advocate for the Project.** Wide and effective advocacy is necessary to generate Project buy-in, synergies, partnerships and broaden awareness; establishing this will be important to long-term Project support.
7. **Stakeholder ability to contribute to the project's long-term financial sustainability.** Much like advocacy, financial sustainability will be fundamental to the Project's longevity and goals; identifying and pro-actively engaging with stakeholders able and willing to contribute financially will be key.
8. **Stakeholder expertise to contribute to capacity building activities.** Stakeholders that could deliver capacity building programmes due to their core competencies or sectoral characteristics.

Stakeholders and stakeholder groups will be considered with respect to these criteria in order to focus and sequence stakeholder engagement activity appropriately within the Project's resource and time envelopes. This will enable categorisation in 4 priority groups:

- **Priority 0:** Those responsible for Sargasso Sea Stewardship and decision making: the Hamilton Declaration signatories and the Sargasso Sea Commissioners & Secretariat.
- **Priority 1:** Those who are *essential* for the SEDA process, or the development or implementation of the SAP.
- **Priority 2:** Those whose contributions to the SEDA and/or SAP development or implementation would be *highly desirable*.
- **Priority 3:** Those whose contributions to the SEDA and/or SAP development or implementation would be *beneficial*.

The criteria for stakeholder prioritisation will be reviewed with stakeholders at appropriate engagement events, and the assignment of stakeholders to priority groups will be agreed by the GEF Project CTA and validated by the Priority 0 stakeholders if deemed necessary.

This completes the overall stakeholder engagement process: describing the purpose and principles of stakeholder engagement, the top-level types of stakeholders and their roles in the SEDA and SAP processes, the general forms of stakeholder input, the sector groupings of stakeholders, how we anticipate each group can contribute to the SEDA and SAP processes, and, lastly, how engagement will be prioritised throughout the Project.

The detailed Master Stakeholder Map is a live document and as such it will be retained in a suitable on-line location, accessible to those who need it. It will be updated throughout the life of the Project by the Project core Stakeholder Engagement Team, to ensure all Stakeholder Engagement activity remains focused where the Project most needs it.

11 Project Engagement Methodologies

Methodologies used by the Project to target and engage stakeholders and beneficiaries will depend on the actor, and the stage of Project implementation.

- **Participation, Feedback & Input:** the foundational form of stakeholder engagement is basic participation, being willing to receive Project information, and to provide feedback & input to the SEDA and SAP processes through direct communication (e.g. interviews), structured programmes of feedback (e.g. questionnaires), or by participating in Project stakeholder events (e.g. workshops).
- **Project Board/Steering Committee:** Meetings of the PSC will be organised on a regular basis to ensure relevant partners remain actively engaged in monitoring progress and steering the implementation of Project activities towards its intended outcomes.
- **Workshops:** Workshops, some with specific themes, will be used to inform and actively engage larger groups of stakeholders in consultation processes, generating buy-in and sharing knowledge.
- **A Communications Office:** The Project has engaged and contracted an officer whose responsibility is to capture and communicate information as appropriate to the relevant stakeholders (See 'Communication' below).
- **Strategic / informal meetings:** Meetings will be held bilaterally or with groups with the purpose to inform stakeholders and/or obtain agreement on issues of importance for successful Project implementation. Group meetings will also form an important means of communication at the community level.
- **Expert consultations:** Recognised experts in thematic areas will consult and inform stakeholders on strategic aspects of the Project.
- **Exchange visits:** Project partners and beneficiaries at the national level may be selected to participate in visits to other Projects in order to exchange knowledge and learn from good practices and successful approaches implemented elsewhere that could be replicated within the Project.

From time to time, as deemed appropriate by the Project Steering Committee (PSC) or requested by other stakeholders, a formal full Stakeholder Consultation Workshop may be called to discuss specific issues and/or update all parties on progress within the Project Components and their Deliverables. At other times, groups of stakeholders with specific interest or concerns (e.g., Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs), NGOs, Private Sector) may request the Project to convene an open Stakeholder Meeting for discussion of pre-selected issues and concerns. The outcome and proposed solutions to the issues and concerns raised will then be carried forward to a formal Stakeholder Consultation Workshop (to be convened no less than 6 weeks after the open Stakeholder Meeting) by selected representation (e.g., from the NGO and/or other stakeholder groups).

Full and transparent stakeholder involvement in Project activities and in delivery of its objectives will be encouraged and supported. This includes the understanding that all stakeholders should have access to the knowledge needed for them to support, understand, and contribute to the review, monitoring and effectiveness of regulations and management initiatives.

12 Communication

In addition to the abovementioned engagement tools, the Project has a Communication Strategy that will take into consideration this stakeholder engagement strategy and which can be adapted depending on the stage of the Project, and in response to feedback from stakeholders (as well as responding to the grievance mechanism where necessary and if required).

Contents and format of information dissemination will be specifically adapted to targeted audiences, their educational background, cultural contexts, and languages, in order to obtain the highest possible levels of understanding and buy-in, including through the following mechanisms:

- **Brochures/flyers/newsletters:** Printed materials will be used for sharing Project summaries and knowledge products with stakeholders (Government representatives, scientific community, the broader public as appropriate).
- **Radio, TV, newspapers, press releases:** The media will be used to reach broader stakeholder groups globally, mobilise support and raise awareness on Project activities / relevant environmental topics.
- **Exhibitions:** Posters, photos, banners, and/or short videos may be produced for display in national and international fora and fairs.
- **Policy briefs:** To inform decision-makers on recommendations, lessons learned and good practices resulting from Project implementation and enable replication/upscaling, policy briefs may be developed for sharing with Government stakeholders.
- **Progress reports:** Reports produced as part of Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) processes (e.g. UNDP GEF PIR) will be shared with the Steering Committee, UNDP, donor(s), as well as other relevant stakeholders (as appropriate).
- **Lessons and Best Practices:** Lessons learned (positive and negative) from the Project will be captured at both mid-term and at the end of the Project for dissemination and replicability. A close relationship will be developed with IW:LEARN to ensure that Project progress as well as lessons and best practices are made available through that UNDP GEF website.
- **Online media:** The Project will share progress updates and good practices to the general public through online media, including a Project Website with links to and from the websites of the Project and the Sargasso Sea Commission, the partner Fonds Français Pour L'Environnement Mondial (FFEM) Project and other websites that may be related to ABNJ/BBNJ. Posts may include stories, photographs, photo-blogs, short video's etc. To reach national and global audiences, the Project could also consider establishing accounts on social media including Facebook, X, Instagram, and YouTube.

13 Stakeholder Engagement Timetable & Format

A considerable amount of Stakeholder Engagement activity has already taken place within the Project. An Inception Phase workshop with stakeholder attendance occurred at the beginning of the Project, followed by the development and adoption of an initial Stakeholder Engagement Strategy, establishment of a Grievance Mechanism and development and adoption of a Communications and Awareness Strategy.

Other regular or *ad hoc* engagement activities will be programmed throughout the life of the Project. The Project Steering Committee will meet at least every 6-9 months, which will ideally be coincident with other Project and stakeholder activity as many of the attendees will be key contributors to several events. Formal, at least twice-yearly Stakeholder Consultation workshops, regular informal meetings, and expert consultations and potential exchange visits will also be programmed on an opportunity

basis, again as key contributors and stakeholders are available. A mixture of in-person, on-line and hybrid formats will be employed, to suit all participants, seeking to ensure lack of resource to travel does not inadvertently exclude or reduce contributions.

A proposed indicative Stakeholder Engagement work-plan for the 12-month period between Mar-24 and Feb-25 has been produced; a detailed work-plan beyond Feb-25 has not been completed. As a “live” document this work-plan will be maintained and updated by the Project Core Stakeholder Engagement Team. It is recommended that each 12-monthly work-plan period is further divided into more manageable, more detailed 4-monthly work-plans, which can be created on a rolling, forward-looking basis. This will deliver a considerably more agile and effective work-plan as it will allow assimilation of new information and inputs from newly recruited Key Stakeholders, as well as lessons learned by the Project Team from earlier activity, to be rapidly applied, thus delivering far more effective stakeholder engagement.

14 Resources and Responsibilities

The Project Coordinator will be responsible for ensuring implementation of the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy and achieving its objectives. They will mobilise the Project Team and partners to conduct the specified stakeholder engagement activities noted above and to manage the grievance mechanism (see below) if / as required, according to the objectives and principles of the plan. They will allocate resources from the Project budget and funds as appropriate to support stakeholder engagement. The Project will set aside resources for sufficient, effective stakeholder engagement as detailed in the Stakeholder Engagement work-plan, through an annual Workplan & Budget review, with adoption and approval by the Project Steering Committee.

15 Grievance Mechanism

In case any grievances exist among Project beneficiaries, stakeholders, or partners, they will initially be encouraged to direct these to the Project Coordination Unit (PCU), providing sufficient background information in order to assess the cause of the grievance and identify possible solutions. If the PCU, based on its assessment of the seriousness and complexity of the problem, is not able to provide a solution the grievance may be escalated to the relevant (Government) partners and/or the Project Board (PB)/Steering Committee (PSC). The PB/PSC may decide to organise an ad hoc meeting in order to address the issue, or, if appropriate depending on the urgency, park the issue until the next planned regular meeting.

All grievances should be adequately documented and flagged by the PCU, including the causes, responses, and outcomes of actions taken to address them. In case of grievances that may directly/indirectly hamper Project implementation and/or affect the reputation of the organisation, the UNDP Bureau for Policy & Programme support should be notified immediately through the Head, Water and Ocean Governance Programme.

UNDP recognises that even with strong planning and stakeholder engagement, unanticipated issues can still arise. Therefore, its social & environmental compliance reviews and stakeholder response mechanisms are underpinned by an Accountability Mechanism² with two key components: a Social & Environmental Compliance Review Unit (SECU) to respond to claims that UNDP is not in compliance with applicable environmental and social policies; and a Stakeholder Response Mechanism (SRM) that ensures individuals, peoples, and communities affected by Projects have access to appropriate grievance resolution procedures for hearing and addressing Project related complaints and disputes.

The Accountability Mechanism is available to all of UNDP’s Project stakeholders. SECU investigates concerns about non-compliance with UNDP’s Social and Environmental Standards and Screening Procedure raised by Project affected stakeholders and recommends measures to address findings of non-compliance. The Stakeholder Response Mechanism helps Project-affected stakeholders, UNDP’s

² <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/accountability/audit/secu-srm.html>

partners (Governments, NGOs, businesses) and others jointly address grievances or disputes related to the social and/or environmental impacts of UNDP-supported Projects.

Existing national and sector forums may also provide important opportunities for stakeholders to provide feedback on Project implementation. Utilisation of existing structures and processes to engage stakeholders is encouraged, as this may provide opportunities for issues to be raised before they develop into more significant grievances. However, such fora would not substitute for specific Project Grievance Redress Mechanisms (GRM3) that may be required.

Accessibility is a key principle for any accountability mechanism. Since accessibility starts with awareness raising, the Project Coordinator will need to take responsibility for ensuring that Project-affected people and communities are informed of UNDP's Accountability Mechanism and the GRM. The stakeholder engagement process provides a key entry point to do this awareness raising and ensure that information about UNDP's Accountability Mechanism is made available to all Project beneficiaries and partners. Communication materials are available in the online SES Toolkit⁴ to support this effort.

16 Monitoring & Reporting

Participatory Project Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) is a key part of the Results-based Management (RBM) approach practiced by UNDP and GEF for all Projects. Similarly, stakeholder engagement activities will be integrated in the M&E processes for this Project to provide sufficient information for adaptive stewardship decision-making. Beneficiaries and Project partners will be encouraged to participate in different steps of the process, including design and verification of the logical framework and its indicators, tracking tools, reviews, field visits for monitoring progress, etc. The Project will also ensure regular dissemination of progress reports to relevant stakeholders for inputs, reviews, feedback, and information sharing purposes.

The Project will use standard UNDP approaches and procedures for M&E processes (see the Project Monitoring & Evaluation Plan for full details).

Annex A: Stakeholders during Project & Stakeholder Engagement Programme Development

Annex B: Stakeholder Activity during Project & Stakeholder Engagement Development to-date

³ https://info.undp.org/sites/bpps/SES_Toolkit/SES%20Document%20Library/Uploaded%20October%202016/Supplemental%20Guidance_Grievance%20Redress%20Mechanisms.pdf

⁴ https://info.undp.org/sites/bpps/SES_Toolkit/SitePages/Communication%20Materials.aspx

17 Annex A: Stakeholders during Project & Stakeholder Engagement Programme Development

The tables below list the stakeholders that were engaged in the project development and submission process and in the Stakeholder Engagement programme development. It further lists the processes and venues in which they were variously involved and which discussions and negotiations supported the project development process.

17.1 Stakeholders with input to the Project Development Process and Project Document

<i>Name</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>
Andrew Hudson	United Nations Development Programme
Julian Barbière	Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO
David Vousden	Lead Project Consultant
Dr David Freestone	Sargasso Sea Commission
Teresa Mackey	Sargasso Sea Commission
Dr Tammy Warren	Sargasso Sea Commission
Professor Stephen de Mora	Sargasso Sea Commission
Professor Howard Roe	Sargasso Sea Commission
Mark Spalding	Sargasso Sea Commission
Wilfred Moore	Sargasso Sea Commission
Frederico Cardigos	Sargasso Sea Commission
Kristina Gjerde	President Sargasso Sea Project Inc.(SSPI)
Kevin Monkman	Treasurer SSPI
Dan Laffoley	Board Members SSPI
Maya Gold	Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Rick Vaughan	Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Nelson Garcia Marcano	Government of the Dominican Republic
Craig Powell	Government of Bahamas
Lowri Griffiths	UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
Elizabeth McLanahan	US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Victoria Luu	US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Murray Roberts	The University of Edinburgh/I-Atlantic
Ellen Kenchington	Fisheries and Oceans Canada/I-Atlantic
Fred Kingston	Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization
Pat Halpin	Marine Geospatial Ecology Lab, Duke University
Corrie Curtice	Marine Geospatial Ecology Lab, Duke University
Jesse Cleary	Marine Geospatial Ecology Lab, Duke University
Professor Nick Bates	Bermuda Institute of Ocean Sciences (BIOS)
Laurence Kell	Imperial College London
John Mumford	Imperial College London
Ronán Long	World Maritime University
Jorge Jimenez	MARVIVA
Janique Etienne	Fonds Français pour L'Environnement Mondial (FFEM)
Joelle Richards	Ocean University Brest
Cesar Toro	IOCARIBE Sub-Commission Secretariat
Laamiri Badr	Government of Morocco
Dr Billy Causey	NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
Felipe Mora Porteiro	Governo dos Açores (Government of Azores)
HE Minister Walton Brown	Government of Bermuda
Dr Rozy Azhar	Government of Bermuda
Nadia Bouffard	Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Mrs. Gina Ebanks-Petrie	Cayman Islands
HE Tidiani Couma	Government of Monaco
Philip Weech	Bahamas Environment Science and Technology Commission
Ronald Smith-Berkeley	British Virgin Islands Ministry of Natural Resources and Labour

<i>Name</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>
Dr Brian Luckhurst	Government of Bermuda
Professor Laurie Kell	Imperial College London
Professor Murray Roberts	The University of Edinburgh
Professor Chris Wold	Lewis & Clark Law School
Dr Eric Lindstrom/Dr Vardis Tsontos	NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory
Ambassador David Balton	Wilson Center, DC
Professor David Johnson	UK
Gary Melvin	ICCAT
Michael Lodge/Alfonso Ascencio-Herrera	International Seabed Authority
Dr Bradnee Chambers/Melanie Virtue	Convention on Migratory Species
Fredrik Haag	International Maritime Organization
Lisa Svensson	UN Environment, Nairobi
Dr Matthew Gollock	London Zoological Society
Dr Lorna Inniss	UNEP Cartagena Convention
Walter Roban	Bermuda Government
Florian Botto	Permanent Mission of Monaco to the United Nations
Peter Oppenheimer	US Government
Keke Motsepe	South Africa
Phénia Marras – Aït Razouk	France
Fae Sapsford	Sargasso Sea Commission
Haydée Rodriguez	MarViva
Kimberley Galvez	NOAA
Denis Bailly	University of Brest, Ocean University Initiative Coordinator
Mishal Hamid	IOC-UNESCO
Kasey Cantwell	NOAA Okeanos Explorer
Natalie Degger	IOC-UNESCO
Pedro Neves	Governmental Focal Point – The Azores
Rolanda Davis	Government of The Bahamas
Ronan Long	World Maritime University
Ana Colaço	Sargasso Sea Commissioner

17.2 Stakeholders with input to Stakeholder Engagement at October 2023 Workshop

<i>Name</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>
David Freestone	SSC
David Vousden	SSC
Ana Colaço	Commissioner
Murray Roberts	Commissioner
Wilfred Moore	Commissioner
Alex Rogers	Rev Ocean
Ronan Long	World Maritime University
Beatrice Smith	Duke University
Jesse Cleary	Duke University
Jorge Jiménez	MarViva
Aurelie Spadone	IUCN
Brian Luckhurst	Imperial College London
Melanie Virtue	CMS
Joëlle Richard	UBO
Denis Bailly	UBO
Charline Guillou	UBO
Jessika Woroniak	Hamilton Signatory – Canada
Jake Rice	DFO – Ret.
Viktoria Varga Lences	FAO Common Oceans
Elizabeth McLanahan	Hamilton Signatory – United States of America (NOAA)
Lowri Griffiths	Hamilton Signatory – United Kingdom
Nelson Marcano	Hamilton Signatory – Dominican Republic
Anthony Thompson	Deep Sea Fisheries Project – Common Oceans
Kevin Fleming	NLAI
Kieran Bjergstrom	NLAI
<i>Online</i>	
Fae Sapsford	SSC
Camille Manel	ICCAT
Minna Epps	IUCN
Wariaghli Fatima	University Mohammed V
Nick Bates	BIOS, Arizona State University
Sonia Caicedo	MarViva
Brynhildur Benediktsdóttir	NAFO

18 Annex B: Stakeholder Activity during Project & Stakeholder Engagement Development to-date

<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Outcome</i>
March 2019, Bermuda – Next Steps to Strengthen Stewardship of the Sargasso Sea	General endorsement and support of the GEF project concept. The concept note was discussed at the Bermuda Signatories meeting, followed by further review by the Signatories and Commissioners. The Project Development consultant revised the concept note in light of these comments.
April 2019, Rome – Common Oceans Meeting	The project was presented, discussed and well-received by participants.
July 2019, Bahamas – GEF Project Review Meeting	The Commission, Signatories, UNDP, and other partners met in The Bahamas and discussed plans to submit to the GEF Council. The GEF process was discussed, including the need to submit a PIF and to carry out an EDA and create an SAP. The preferred implementing agency was agreed to be UNDP, while the executing agency was still under discussion.
January 2020, Rome	The inclusion of the project in the Common Oceans program was negotiated – it was allocated \$3 million of the overall \$30 million program. FAO incorporated the UNDP submission as a child project in the ABNJ programme, and submitted documentation to GEF in April 2020.
December 2020: Project Development Inception Workshop	The project had now been approved for development by the GEF Council. Progress to date was summarized, and the structure of the project was presented to stakeholders.
October 2021 – Validation Workshop	The Project Document was circulated to a wide representation of stakeholders prior to the Validation Workshop. Stakeholder comments to the project document were discussed. It was agreed that IOC-UNESCO would be the Implementing Partner/Executing Agency and the project document was successfully validated for submission to the GEF Council.
October 2023 – Initial Stakeholder Engagement development Workshop	This workshop socialised the first updated Stakeholder Engagement Plan post Project commencement to a group of established stakeholders including some representatives of Hamilton Declaration signatory states. The proposed Stakeholder Engagement Programme was presented, the stakeholder groups and forms of stakeholder participation were discussed and validated, and feedback was received on preferred mechanisms for involvement and frequency of communications and meetings.

Engagement Method	Engagement Objectives	Types of Detailed Activity to be Undertaken	Priority Grouping: 0, 1, 2, 3
-------------------	-----------------------	---	-------------------------------

All activity periodicities & dates are i

Strategic Meetings	Validating Strategies & Identifying Priorities	Stakeholder Engagement Activity Feedback & Receiving Strategic Direction from Sargasso Sea Hamilton Signatories	0
Project Board / Steering Committee	Identifying Priorities & Strategies / Grievance Sharing	Stakeholder Engagement Activity Feedback & Receiving Strategic Direction from GEF Project	1
Workshops	Informing Stakeholders / Seeking synergies & partnerships / Facilitating Feedback	Preparation for & delivery of Key Stakeholder Workshops & other events	1 & 2 & 3
Participant Feedback & Input	Validating Strategies / Facilitating Feedback	Collation & Feedback of outcomes from stakeholder recruitment or results from Workshops / Strategic Meetings	1 & 2 & 3

Informal Meetings	Generating Project Buy-in / Seeking Synergies & Partnerships	SEDA / SAP Priority Stakeholder Recruitment related to areas of focus	1 & 2 & 3
Project Comms Activity	Informing Stakeholders	Activity to share / communicate SE activity, progress or specific events e.g., Reports / Workshops / Board Meetings	1 & 2 & 3
Expert Consultations	Generating Project Buy-in / Seeking Synergies & Partnerships / Validating Strategies	Engagement with experts to inform project development	N/A
Exchange Visits	Seeking Synergies & Partnerships	Knowledge exchange to learn from good practices and/or successful approaches implemented elsewhere	N/A

Project Engagement Methods:

Participation, Feedback & Input: the foundational form of stakeholder engagement is basic participation, being 'provide feedback & input to the SEDA and SAP processes through direct communication (e.g. interviews), structured questionnaires), or by participating in Project stakeholder events (e.g. workshops)

questionnaires), or by participating in Project stakeholder events (e.g. workshops).

Project Board/Steering Committee: Meetings of the PSC will be organized on a regular basis to ensure relevant monitoring progress and steering the implementation of Project activities towards its intended outcomes.

Workshops: Workshops will be used to inform and actively engage larger groups of stakeholders in consultation knowledge.

A Communications Office: The Project will engage/contract an officer whose responsibility will be capturing info as appropriate to the relevant stakeholders (See 'Communication' below).

Strategic / informal meetings: Meetings will be held bilaterally or with groups with the purpose to inform stakeholder importance for successful Project implementation. Group meetings will also form an important means of communication.

Expert consultations: Recognised experts in thematic areas will consult and inform stakeholders on strategic aspects.

Exchange visits: Project partners and beneficiaries at the national level may be selected to participate in visits to

Preferred Engagement
Format: In Person /
Hybrid / Online

Month /
Week

Mar-24

Apr-24

May-24

9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

Indicative/illustrative - dates not specific / c

In Person / Hybrid

Hamilton Joint Meeting

Hamilton Signatory & Commissioner Meetings

In Person / Hybrid

In Person / Hybrid

Preparation for Shipping Ind Workshop

IMO Workshop

On-Line

Feedback

Feedback

On-Line

Shipping Focus

Shipping Focus

SEDA Focus

On-Line

Comms

Comms

On-Line

Achieved on an opportunity basis, as Project need

In Person

Achieved on an opportunity basis, as Project need

4-month rolling Stakeholder Engage

willing to receive Project information, and to
ured programmes of feedback (e.g.

SEP Engagement Objectives:

Informing stakeholders: Ensuring understanding and awareness of proje

Generating project buy-in: Securing support and appropriation buy part

committed stakeholders, and appropriation by targeted partners and bo

partners remain actively engaged in
processes, generating buy-in and sharing
information and communicating this information
holders and/or obtain agreement on issues of
communication at the community level.
jects of the Project.
other Projects in order to exchange

committed stakeholders. and appropriation by targeted partners and be
Seeking synergies & partnerships: Identifying opportunities for collaboration
leveraging the resources and expertise of engaged stakeholders.
Identifying priorities & strategies: Identifying priority interventions for the
successfully implement and achieve the intended Project outcomes.
Validating strategies: Ensuring that intervention strategies and targets align
Project outcomes, enabling regular validation with key stakeholders (e.g.
Facilitating feedback: Implementing participatory monitoring and evaluation
feedback from all stakeholder groups.
Establishing grievance mechanisms: Providing a structured, transparent,
and complaints.

↓ Jun-24 Jul-24 Aug-24 Sep

21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37

confirmed

GEF Project Board Steering Committee

Preparation for SEDA Wrap-up Workshop SEDA Workshop

Hamilton Joint Meeting

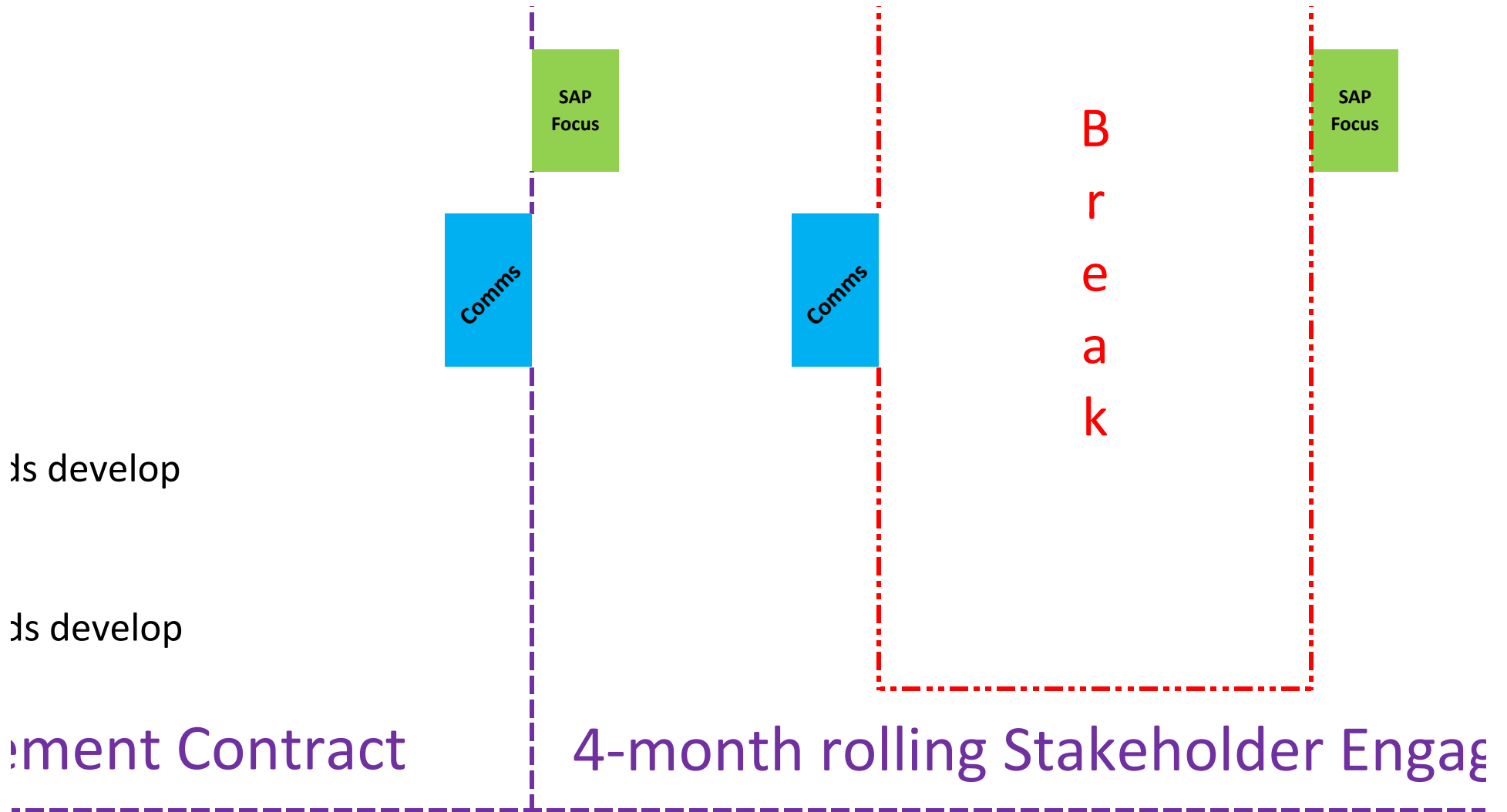
Hamilton Signatory & Commissioner Meetings

S
u
m
m
e
r

Feedback

Feedback

Feedback



ect goals, approaches, intentions and expected outcomes.
 ners and building common ownership amongst
 efficiencies

Communications Methods:

Brochures/flyers/newsletters: Printed materials will be used
 the broader public as appropriate).

Radio, TV, newspapers, press releases: The media will be used

beneficiaries.
ation, co-financing, institutional co-operation, and for
he Project's success and developing strategies to
align with stakeholder expectations and the intended
(the Hamilton Declaration signatories).
ation mechanisms, encouraging open and regular Project
, accountable and responsive process to address concerns

Radio, TV, newspapers, press releases: The media will be used for environmental topics.

Exhibitions: Posters, photos, banners, and/or short videos may be developed for sharing with Government stakeholders.

Policy briefs: To inform decision-makers on recommendations, policy briefs will be developed for sharing with Government stakeholders.

Progress reports: Reports produced as part of M&E processes (where appropriate).

Lessons and Best Practices: Lessons learned (positive and negative) will be developed with IW:LEARN to ensure a close relationship will be developed with IW:LEARN to ensure

Online media: The Project will share progress updates and go beyond the Project and the Sargasso Sea Commission, the partner FFEM F

Sept-24

Oct-24

Nov-24

Dec-24

38

39

40

41

42

43

44

45

46

47

48

49

50

51

52



GEF Project Board Steering Committee

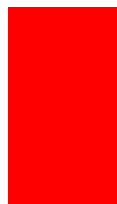


Preparation for SAP Kickoff Workshop

SAP Workshop

Feedback

Hamilton Joint Meeting



Preparation for Fishing Ind Workshop

Fishing Workshop

Feedback

Feedback

C
h
r
i
s
t
m

Comms

Fishing Focus

Comms

Fishing Focus

Focus TBD

Comms

a
s
B
r
e
a
k

gement Contract

4-month rolling Stakeholde

for sharing Project summaries and knowledge products with stakeholders (Government representatives, scienti
d to reach broader stakeholder groups globally, mobilize support and raise awareness on Project activities and

to reach broader stakeholder groups globally, mobilize support and raise awareness on Project activities and

may be produced for display in national and international fora and fairs.

Lessons learned and good practices resulting from Project implementation and enable replication/upscaling, p

Reports (e.g. UNDP GEF PIR) will be shared with the Steering Committee, UNDP, donor(s), as well as other relevant stake

holders (e.g. UNDP GEF PIR) will be captured at both mid-term and at the end of the Project for dissemination and re

ports that Project progress as well as lessons and best practices are made available through that UNDP GEF website.

Lessons learned and good practices to the general public through online media, including a Project Website with links into and from th

Project Website and other websites that may be related to ABNJ/BBNJ. Posts may include stories, photographs, photo-bl

Stakeholder Group Title

Hamilton Declaration Signatories of Sargasso Sea Commission

Non-signatory States & Government Monitoring Organisations

Satellite Monitoring, Technology & Data Companies

Maritime Security & Policing Organisations

Climate & Oceanography Experts

International Convention & Legal Organisations

International Conservation & Environmental Organisations

Academia, Educational Institutes & Research Vessel Operators

Tourism / Cruise, Recreational Users & Maritime Heritage Sectors

Waste, Recycling, Carbon Sequestration Entities

Indigenous/Local Communities & Businesses

Marine Transport & Infrastructure Planners

Extractive Industries

Marine Renewable Energy Sectors

Private Philanthropic Individuals & Organisations

Financial Institutions, Marine Insurers & Blue Carbon

Name / Details

Azores (2014)
Bermuda (2014)
Monaco (2014)
United Kingdom (2014)
United States (2014)
British Virgin Islands (2016)
The Bahamas (2016)
Canada (2016)
The Cayman Islands (2017)
Dominican Republic (2018)
Sargasso Sea Secretariat

France
Spain
Caribbean Nations
US National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
European Union (Copernicus)
OSPAR

NASA
Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS)
European Space Agency (ESA)
Global Fishing Watch
MDA Space
Skylight
Iceye
Windward AI
Amazon Web Services (AWS)
Microsoft Azure
Google Cloud
IBM
SAS
Starboard Maritime Intelligence

US Coast Guard
Canadian Coast Guard
Bermudan Coast Guard
NATO
Interpol (Maritime)

US National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
NASA (COVERAGE)
UK National Oceanography Centre (NOC)

IMO: International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI)

UNCLOS Secretariat
International Cable Protection Committee (ICPC)
International Seabed Authority (ISA)
International Maritime Organisation (IMO)

International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)
Inter-American Sea Turtle Convention (IAC)
International Whaling Commission (IWC)
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)
Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)
Cartagena Convention on Marine Environment of Wider Caribbean Area
Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) UNESCO
IUU Fishing Action Alliance
MarViva
International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
Agence Francais de Biodiverite (AFB)
Fonds Francais pour l'environnement mondial (FFEM)

Bermuda Institute of Ocean Sciences (BIOS)
National Oceanography Centre (NOC)
RevOcean
Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution
NOAA: Research Vessels
Duke University: Marine Geospatial Ecology Laboratory (MGEL)
Centre for Environmental Policy: Imperial College
Edinburgh University (iAtlantic Project)
EU: ATLAS
UK National Environmental Research Council (NERC)
FR: Institut Universitaire Europeen de la Mer (IUEM)
World Maritime University (WMU) - Sasakawa: Global Ocean Institutue (GOI)

Bermuda Tourist Board
Bermuda Tourism Authority
Government of Bermuda - Dept of Environment & Natural resources: Marine Heritage
GoSea
OceanRace
MSC Cruises
Oceania Cruises
Holland America Line
P&O Cruises
Cunard Line
Celebrity Cruises
Viking Cruises

International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (IMO-MARPOL)
Discarded / Lost Fishing Gear

Plastics
Carbon Removal

Bermuda "Chamber of Commerce"
Bermuda Foundation
Bermuda Shipping & Maritime Authority
Bermuda Marine & Ports Services
US-based
Caribbean-based

AP Moller-Maersk
Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC)
CMA CGM Group
COSCO Shipping Group
Evergreen
Hapag-Lloyd

North Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO)
International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)
Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC)
Atlantic Fisheries
Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)
Best Aquaculture Practices (BAP)
Seafields: Sargassum Harvesting
Seabed Mining - The Metals Company
Seabed Mining - Loke Marine Minerals / UK Seabed Resources (UKSR)
Deep Sea Mining Alliance (DSMA): Members
Ocean Pharmaceutical
Pharmamar
Biopharma
State-owned Companies, Agencies, Ministries

Solar
Wind
Wave
Hydrothermal

Oceana
Pew: Ocean Conservation
Ocean Census
Marine Conservation Society (MCS)
Ocean Conservancy
Sea Shepherd Conservation Society
Marine Mammal Center
The Nature Conservancy
Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF)

World Wildlife Fund (WWF)

Blue Marine Foundation

Development Banks (e.g., IADB)

World Bank

International Finance Corporation (IFC) - Deep Blue

IUCN (Blue Natural Capital Financing Facility (BNCF))

Green Finance Platform

UN GEF

World Economic Forum

UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

Allianz Commercial

Zurich Insurance Group Ltd (Switzerland)

Axa S.A. (France)

Aon Plc (UK)

Website (if relevant)

<http://www.sargassoseacommission.org>

<https://www.noaa.gov>

<https://www.copernicus.eu/en>

<https://www.ospar.org>

<https://www.nasa.gov>

<https://ceos.org>

<https://www.esa.int>

<https://globalfishingwatch.org>

<https://mda.space/en/>

<https://www.skylight.global>

<https://www.iceye.com>

<https://windward.ai>

https://aws.amazon.com/?nc2=h_lg

<https://azure.microsoft.com/en-gb>

<https://cloud.google.com>

<https://www.ibm.com/us-en>

https://www.sas.com/en_gb/home.html#

<https://starboard.nz/>

<https://www.uscg.mil>

<https://www.ccg-gcc.gc.ca/index-eng.html>

<https://www.gov.bm/articles/bermuda-coast-guard-unit>

<https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/index.htm>

<https://www.interpol.int/en/Crimes/Maritime-crime>

<https://www.noaa.gov>

<https://www.earthdata.nasa.gov/learn/articles/coverage-supports-new-users#:~:text=COVERAGE%2>

<https://noc.ac.uk>

<https://imli.org>

<https://www.un.org/depts/los/index.htm>

<https://www.iscpc.org>

<https://www.isa.org.jm>

<https://www.imo.org>

<https://www.iccat.int/en/>

<http://www.iacseaturtle.org/defaulteng.htm>

<https://iwc.int/en/>

<https://cites.org/eng>

<https://www.cms.int>

<https://www.unep.org/cep/who-we-are/cartagena-convention>

<https://www.ioc.unesco.org/en>

<https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/founding-iuu-fishing-action-alliance-stimulate-ambition-and-action>

<https://marviva.net/en/we-love-the-sea/>

<https://www.iucn.org>

<https://www.ofb.gouv.fr/en>

<https://www.ffem.fr/en/page-thematique-axe/aquatic-ecosystems-0>

<https://bios.asu.edu/ship-ops/>

<https://noc.ac.uk/facilities/ships>

<https://www.revocean.org>

<https://www.whoi.edu>

<https://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/technology/vessels/vessels.html>

<https://mgel.env.duke.edu>

<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/environmental-policy/>

<https://www.iatlantic.eu>

<https://www.eu-atlas.org>

<https://www.ukri.org/councils/nerc/>

<https://www-iuem.univ-brest.fr/?lang=en>

<https://www.wmu.se/goi>

<https://www.gotobermuda.com>

<https://www.gov.bm/department/tourism>

<https://environment.bm/marine-heritage>

??

<https://www.theoceanrace.com>

<https://www.msccruises.co.uk>

<https://www.oceaniacruises.com>

<https://www.hollandamerica.com/en/gb>

<https://www.pocruises.com>

<https://www.cunard.com/en-gb>

<https://www.celebritycruises.com>

<https://www.vikingcruises.co.uk/oceans#noscroll>

<https://www.imo.org/en/About/Conventions/Pages/International-Convention-for-the-Prevention-of>

<https://www.bermudachamber.bm>
<https://bermudacommunityfoundation.org>
<https://www.gov.bm/department/bermuda-shipping-and-maritime-authority>
<https://www.gov.bm/department/marine-and-ports>

<https://www.maersk.com>
<https://www.msc.com>
<https://www.cma-cgm.com>
<https://lines.coscoshipping.com/home>
<https://www.evergreen-marine.com/emc/>
<https://www.hapag-lloyd.com/en/home.html>

<https://www.nafo.int>
<https://www.iccat.int/en/>
<https://www.fao.org/wecafc/ar/>
<https://www.atlantic-fisheries.net>
<https://www.msc.org/en-us>
<https://www.bapcertification.org/Home>
<https://www.seafields.eco>
<https://metals.co>
<https://lokemm.com>
<https://www.deepsea-mining-alliance.com/en-gb/members>
<https://oceanpharmaceutical.com>
<https://pharmamar.com/en/>
<https://biopharma.co.uk>

<https://oceana.org>
<https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/topics/oceans>
<https://oceanconsensus.org>
<https://www.mcsuk.org>
<https://oceanconservancy.org>
<https://seashepherd.org>
<https://www.marinemammalcenter.org>
<https://www.nature.org/en-us/>
<https://eifoundation.org/what-we-do/ocean>

<https://www.worldwildlife.org>
<https://www.bluemarinefoundation.com>

<https://www.iadb.org/en>
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/home>
<https://www.ifc.org/en/insights-reports/2023/blue-carbon-finance-in-coastal-ecosystems>
<https://www.iucn.org/our-work/projects/blue-natural-capital-financing-facility-bncff>
<https://www.greenfinanceplatform.org>
<https://www.thegef.org>
<https://www.weforum.org>
<https://unfccc.int>
<https://commercial.allianz.com>
<https://zurich.co.uk>
<https://www.axa.com>
<https://www.aon.com/unitedkingdom/default.jsp>

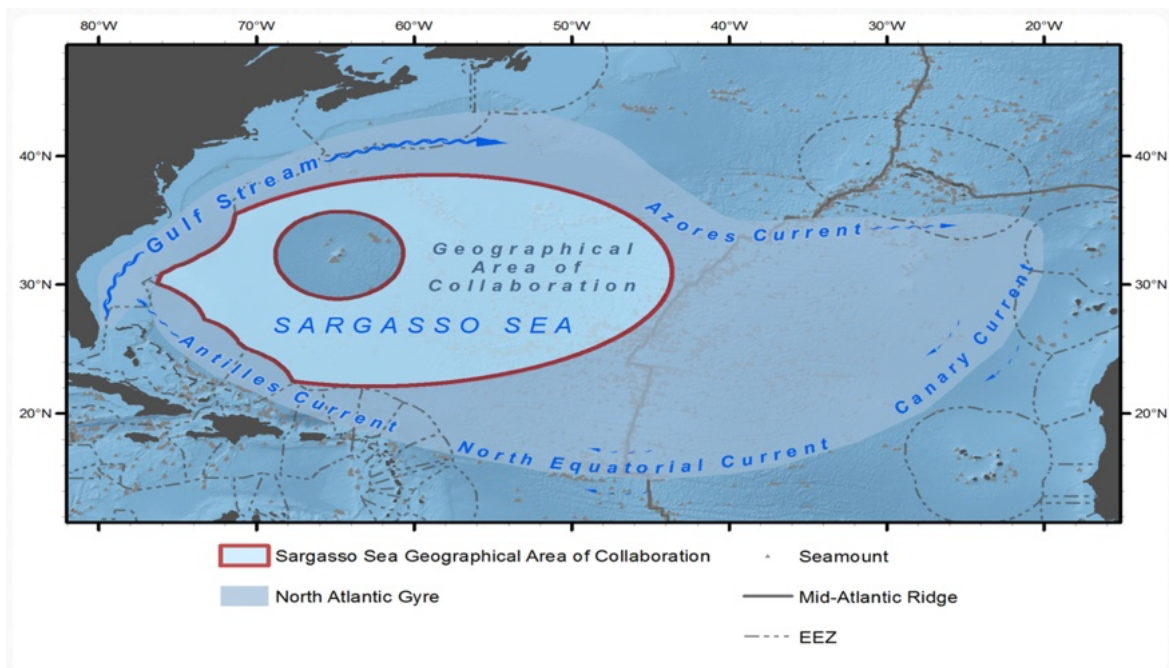
0is%20an%20acronym%20for,parameters%20pertaining%20to%20the%20four



GEF Project: Strengthening the Stewardship of an Economically & Biologically Significant High Seas Area – the Sargasso Sea

Stakeholder Engagement Strategy Consultancy Report

17 January 2024



Credit: Marine Geospatial Ecology Lab, Duke University.

Produced by:



Document Information

Client	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
Project Title	GEF Project: Stakeholder Engagement Strategy Consultancy
Deliverable Number	D04
Report Title	Stakeholder Engagement Strategy Consultancy Report
Report Version	FINAL
Report Version Date	17 January 2024
Lead Authors	Name: Kevin P Fleming & Dr Kieran N Bjergstrom Organisation: NLA International Ltd
Project Manager	Kevin P Fleming Kevin.Fleming@nlai.blue NLA International Ltd
Circulation	1. Client 2. Project Files
File Name	Del 4-GEF Project-Stakeholder Engagement Strategy Consultancy Report-FINAL
File Location	NLA International Ltd: SharePoint

© UNESCO 2024.

Table of Contents

DOCUMENT INFORMATION	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS	3
GLOSSARY	4
1 INTRODUCTION	5
1.1 DELIVERABLE 1.....	5
1.2 DELIVERABLE 2.....	5
1.3 DELIVERABLE 3.....	5
1.4 DELIVERABLE 4.....	5
2 CONTRACT METHODOLOGY, ACTIVITY & ACHIEVEMENTS	5
2.1 DELIVERABLES 1 & 2	5
2.2 DELIVERABLE 3.....	6
2.3 DELIVERABLE 4.....	6
2.4 PROJECT STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT DOCUMENT SET	6
3 SARGASSO SEA GEF PROJECT: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY	7
3.1 PURPOSE & LINKAGES	7
3.2 BACKGROUND.....	7
3.3 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT – OBJECTIVES & PRINCIPLES.....	8
3.4 IDENTIFYING & ENGAGING PROJECT STAKEHOLDERS.....	10
3.5 THE SOCIO-ECOSYSTEM DIAGNOSTIC ANALYSIS (SEDA).....	11
3.6 THE STRATEGIC ACTION PROGRAMME (SAP).....	11
3.7 GENERIC FORMS OF CONTRIBUTION & SUPPORT FROM STAKEHOLDERS:	12
3.8 MAP OF KEY STAKEHOLDER GROUPS	13
3.9 STAKEHOLDER GROUPS & POTENTIAL INPUT AREAS TO SEDA & SAP PROCESSES.....	14
3.9.1 ACADEMIA, EXPERTS & INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS.....	14
3.9.2 EXTRACTIVE AND SEA-SPACE INDUSTRIAL USERS	15
3.9.3 LEGAL, REGULATORY, ENFORCEMENT & TECHNOLOGY.....	17
3.9.4 ENVIRONMENTAL & FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS.....	18
3.9.5 INDIGENOUS & LOCAL COMMUNITIES	19
3.10 PRIORITISING STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT:	20
3.11 PROJECT ENGAGEMENT METHODOLOGIES.....	21
3.12 COMMUNICATION	22
3.13 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT TIMETABLE & FORMAT	22
3.14 RESOURCES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.....	23
3.15 GRIEVANCE MECHANISM	23
3.16 MONITORING & REPORTING.....	24
3.17 ANNEX A: STAKEHOLDERS DURING PROJECT & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT	25
3.17.1 STAKEHOLDERS WITH INPUT TO THE PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS AND PROJECT DOCUMENT	25
3.17.2 STAKEHOLDERS WITH INPUT TO STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AT OCTOBER 2023 WORKSHOP	27
3.18 ANNEX B: STAKEHOLDER ACTIVITY DURING PROJECT & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT TO-DATE	28
4 APPENDICES	29
4.1 KEY STAKEHOLDER REQUEST: 2-PAGER (SCREENSHOT).....	29
4.2 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT WORK-PLAN (SCREENSHOT).....	31

Glossary

ABNJ	Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction
AI	Artificial Intelligence
BBNJ	Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
FFEM	Fonds Français Pour L'Environnement Mondial
GAC	Geographical Area of Collaboration
GCP	Global Child Project
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanisms
IOC	Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PB	Project Board
PCU	Project Coordination Unit
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RBM	Results-based Management
RFMO	Regional Fisheries Management Organisations
SAP	Strategic Action Programme
SECU	Social & Environmental Compliance Review Unit
SEDA	Socio-Ecosystem Diagnostic Analysis
SES	Stakeholder Engagement Strategy
SRM	Stakeholder Response Mechanism
SSC	Sargasso Sea Commission
UN	United Nations
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

1 Introduction

In September 2023 the Blue Economy Solutions Company, NLA International Ltd, were contracted by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (IOC-UNESCO) to further develop the existing Stakeholder Engagement Programme for the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Project: *Strengthening the Stewardship of an Economically & Biologically Significant High Seas Area – the Sargasso Sea*. This contract, to be delivered over approximately 4 months, consisted of four specific but linked deliverables; this report is the fourth and final deliverable. Once accepted, this signifies completion of this contract in full.

1.1 Deliverable 1

Enabled by close initial dialogue and collaboration with the GEF Project Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) and the Sargasso Sea Commission (SSC) Secretariat, and through contact with the main Socio-Ecosystem Diagnostic Analysis (SEDA)-related and selected Strategic Action Programme (SAP)-related Stakeholders, develop, and deliver a draft Key Stakeholder Map to include principal stakeholders, their areas of interest, potential roles and responsibilities, and potential support.

1.2 Deliverable 2

In collaboration with the GEF Project CTA and the Sargasso Sea Commission Secretariat, plan and organise the technical content for an initial Stakeholder Engagement Workshop (including subsequent readout report), focusing on the SEDA process. Finalise the Key Stakeholder Map (Deliverable 1) based on feedback from this Stakeholder Engagement Workshop and the various partners, participants, and stakeholders.

1.3 Deliverable 3

Using the original Stakeholder Engagement Programme, produced as part of the GEF Project Documentation, further develop and refine the draft Stakeholder Engagement Strategy to include a Key Stakeholder Map and work-plan for approval and adoption by the Project.

1.4 Deliverable 4

By means of a final report, detail contract activity and achievements, including delivery of a mature Stakeholder Engagement Strategy with a suitably detailed work-plan for delivering of this Strategy for the lifetime of the Project.

2 Contract Methodology, Activity & Achievements

2.1 Deliverables 1 & 2

Due to reasons of timing and efficiency, the first two deliverables were combined and submitted to GEF Project CTA on 26 October 2023. They included a detailed readout report from the NLAI-led initial Stakeholder Engagement Workshop held at The University of Edinburgh on 5th October 2023, including the full slide-deck and a list of participants. This workshop enabled detailed discussion with many stakeholders who had been instrumental in Project progress to-date. It gave the opportunity to outline our proposed Stakeholder Engagement Strategy which, along with the Key Stakeholder Map, were both successfully validated drawing many positive comments and suggestions from the expert audience.

2.2 Deliverable 3

Following on from successful delivery of the initial Workshop and suitably informed and enabled by discussions during this event and subsequently, the draft Stakeholder Engagement Strategy taken from the original GEF Project documentation, was reviewed, developed, and refined. A mature draft strategy also containing a draft Key Stakeholder Engagement request “2-pager” document and an outline Stakeholder Engagement work-plan, was submitted to the Project CTA on 7th December 2024.

2.3 Deliverable 4

The final deliverable for this contract is this document. It details contract activity and achievements to-date, contains a mature Stakeholder Engagement Strategy ([Section 3](#)), a final “Stakeholder Engagement Request “2-pager” ([Section 4.1](#)) which will be essential in engaging and recruiting new key stakeholders to the Project, and a suitably detailed work-plan for the next 12-month period ([Section 4.2](#)). This work-plan, derived from the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy, contains a number of proposed stakeholder engagement objectives, methodologies, and types of activities, together with recommended periodicities to achieve the best stakeholder engagement possible; of course, this will depend on available Project resources. The work-plan is designed to successfully deliver the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy for at least the lifetime of this Project. Notwithstanding, there is no reason why this Strategy cannot continue to be employed to strengthen the stewardship of the Sargasso Sea and other economically & biologically significant high seas areas beyond national jurisdiction elsewhere, on this our only planet, far into the future.

2.4 Project Stakeholder Engagement Document Set

This contract has delivered four discrete but inter-related Project documents. In addition to being integrated into this final report, for convenience they are also provided as separate attachments to this report. They are:

1. **Stakeholder Engagement Strategy:** a document that should be reviewed periodically to ensure it remains fit for purpose and that incorporates new information as well as inputs from newly recruited Key Stakeholders and other experts and participants.
2. **Key Stakeholder Request: “2-pager”:** a brief précis document to briefly introduce the project. It can easily be shared with those individuals or organisations identified as potential Key Stakeholders to inform them of the Project aims and their potential role within it.
3. **Stakeholder Engagement Work-plan:** a “live” document that details various types of engagement objectives, methods, and activity. It is agile and flexible to respond to lessons and can be updated on a rolling, forward looking basis as the Project develops.
4. **Key Stakeholder Map:** a “live” document detailing organisations or individuals identified as potential Key Stakeholders. It should be reviewed and updated periodically throughout the life of the Project to ensure relevance is maintained.

Fundamental to this Project, it is recommended that this Project Stakeholder Engagement Document Set should be “owned” and periodically reviewed and updated by the Project Core Stakeholder Engagement Team as the Project progresses.

3 Sargasso Sea GEF Project: Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

3.1 Purpose & Linkages

The Sargasso Sea GEF Project Stakeholder Engagement Strategy (SES) identifies the means of engagement and interaction with and between the stakeholders and the Project. First developed as part of the overall GEF Project documentation¹ and now reviewed and revised it will continue to evolve as the Project develops. It must be dynamic as it seeks to continuously identify additional stakeholders and allow those to engage who may not have done so during the earlier stages of the Project. It must also encompass the longer-term stakeholder interaction processes and how these will be maintained and sustained beyond the life of this specific Project.

The Sargasso Sea Project constitutes a pilot at the regional level within Component 3 of the overarching Common Oceans Program aimed at *'Improving stakeholder coordination and engagement in multi-sectoral processes addressing governance and management of ABNJ'*. Consequently, the main objectives of the Sargasso Sea Project are to build better and more effective stakeholder engagement in order to demonstrate the sustainable use of ABNJ living resources and improved conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services within this Sargasso Sea EBSA/marine Ecosystem arising from the Project, and to support and sustain the medium-term continuation of effective stewardship, scientific monitoring and associated socioeconomic and food security benefits through interactive partnerships and stakeholder collaboration which will provide a model for achieving the overall Project Goal that can be replicated and scaled-up elsewhere as applicable.

Furthermore, the GEF Global Child Project (GCP) Concept will create and maintain a partnership among all of the child projects and stakeholders, underpinned by a Partnership Strategy that the partners (and, in particular, the implementing agencies of the child projects) will agree to, enabling the GCP to effectively support the coordination among child projects as well as facilitate collaboration and integration.

3.2 Background

The Sargasso Sea constitutes a fundamentally important part of the world's ocean due to an interdependent mix of physical oceanography, its ecosystems and its role in global-scale ocean and earth-system processes. It contributes significantly to local as well as global economies both directly from fisheries for highly migratory species (including European and American eels), coral reefs, whale watching and "turtle tourism", and indirectly from its role in climate regulation, conservation of genetic diversity and biogeochemical cycling. It is also an important transit route for shipping between Europe and North America. As a unique high seas marine ecosystem, the Sargasso Sea is home to numerous endemic species and essential habitat for a very large number of others. It is an important migratory route for many commercially important species, such as Anguillid eels, bill fishes and tunas, as well as non-commercial species such as whales and turtles. It is also the only known spawning area for the critically endangered European eel (*Anguilla Anguilla*) and the endangered American eel (*A. rostrata*), both of which are at the centre of what has recently become a global multi-million-dollar industry as a result of the rise in their popularity as a food item. The goods and services associated with the Sargasso Sea have a direct as well as indirect inherent value to many countries outside of its borders. The current price of glass eels (the early life stage of the species that develop prior to they enter river mouths on return from the sea) stands at \$5,500 per kilo. In addition, the Sargasso Sea has an inherent socioeconomic value to humankind because of its existence as a unique ecosystem and home to rare and charismatic species. Based on the best available science, the Sargasso Sea has been estimated to contribute significant values to the global community in the order of multi-millions to billions of US\$.

¹ http://www.sargassoseacommission.org/storage/documents/PIMS_6526_Sargasso_ProDoc_REV_220323.pdf

The ‘Development Challenge’ for this Project has identified six primary areas for further review in order to identify any threats and impacts to the Project area:

1. Overall need for a more detailed understanding of the ecosystem and its various physical, chemical, and biological interactions;
2. Improvements in the identification and understanding of appropriate responses to the effects of changes within the ecosystem (including Global Warming and Acidification) on the Sargasso Sea Ecosystem;
3. Improved coordination within and between fisheries management activities and monitoring within the Sargasso Sea;
4. A review and assessment of management strategies of Eel fisheries in ‘Home ranges’ and how they may be affected by changes in the Sargasso Sea Ecosystem;
5. Improved information on Shipping and Vessel Routes and Impacts with the intention of providing information to relevant bodies;
6. Identifying other Commercial Activities within the Sargasso Sea Ecosystem.

Furthermore, it has identified one of the outstanding solutions to these needs as ‘*more stakeholder collaboration and interaction in management of activities and reduction in threats and risks to the ecosystem*’. This Stakeholder Engagement Strategy (SES) articulates the Project’s approach to stakeholder engagement, interaction, and collaboration, including the primary stakeholder groups, how they shall be engaged, and how they can collaboratively participate in the project.

3.3 Stakeholder Engagement – Objectives & Principles

The Stakeholder Engagement Strategy (SES) was initially designed to ensure meaningful engagement of stakeholders in both the Socio-Ecosystem Diagnostic Analysis (SEDA) and Strategic Action Programme (SAP) drafting processes through appropriate mechanisms including workshop(s) and dialogue. We continue to seek to implement systematic, inclusive, and communicative processes to involve those affected by, contributing to, or otherwise influencing the Project and its outputs. As stewardship of the Sargasso Sea does not end with this Project, this stakeholder engagement activity seeks to build the foundations to create enduring stakeholder relationships enabling long-term stewardship, extending beyond any pre-existing engagement. We also seek to demonstrate a process that can be replicated and scaled, providing an approach that can be translated to future projects in other geographical locations worldwide.

This SES aims to develop stronger cooperation and coordination between those parties that have a vested interest in the ‘*guardianship*’ of the Sargasso Sea and the various entities with commercial, industrial interests or management mandates relating to the Sargasso Sea area. It is intended that this will help to promote and implement stronger and more effective cross-sectoral management and stewardship of the Sargasso Sea ecosystem. The existing collaborations and partnerships already have some considerable history of success which will help further ensure the long-term uptake and sustainable impact of this Project into the future. In particular, there will be close and regular engagement with the Hamilton Declaration signatories as key guiding stakeholders to the Project. There will also be proactive engagement with the appropriate existing and mandated regional bodies to promote a more effective science-based approach for the ecosystem, a process that will also assist in identifying further data needs and sources to populate the SEDA.

The stakeholder engagement plan will be implemented according to five basic principles that will aim to ensure its effectiveness and inclusiveness:

- **Participation:** Open representation and participation of stakeholders will be facilitated at all levels and across all relevant sectors, ensuring diverse voices are heard.
- **Gender equity:** Project design and implementation will be responsive to gender-sensitive considerations including the specific capacity development needs of women, the youth, and marginalised/vulnerable groups.
- **Respect for cultural diversity:** Project design and implementation will respect existing customs, traditions, and forms of organisation and decision-making. Engagement activities will be culturally sensitive.
- **Communication and transparency:** Care will be taken to design and implement a communication strategy that guides messages coherently to specific stakeholder groups and audiences targeted by the Project. Adequate communication will help avoid unrealistic/false expectations or erroneous interpretations between actors. Information will be provided transparently, without marginalising any stakeholder groups.
- **Partnerships and synergies:** Continuous efforts will be made to ensure mapping of other interventions with similar objectives as the Project, or initiatives that are related to the same thematic scope as the Project. Opportunities will be explored to establish synergies that can help to maximize Project impact and avoid duplication of efforts.

The main objective of the SES is to ensure that the interests and priorities of the different stakeholder groups and sectors are considered during relevant phases of Project development and implementation, including:

- **Informing stakeholders:** Ensuring understanding and awareness of project goals, approaches, intentions and expected outcomes.
- **Generating project buy-in:** Securing support by targeted partners and beneficiaries and building common ownership amongst stakeholders.
- **Seeking synergies & partnerships:** Identifying opportunities for collaboration, co-financing, institutional co-operation, and for leveraging the resources and expertise of engaged stakeholders.
- **Identifying priorities & strategies:** Identifying priority interventions for the Project's success and developing strategies to successfully implement and achieve the intended Project outcomes.
- **Validating strategies:** Ensuring that intervention strategies and targets align with stakeholder expectations and the intended Project outcomes, enabling regular validation with key stakeholders (e.g. the Hamilton Declaration signatories).
- **Facilitating feedback:** Implementing participatory monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, encouraging open and regular Project feedback from all stakeholder groups.
- **Establishing grievance mechanisms:** Providing a structured, transparent, accountable, and responsive process to address concerns and complaints.

3.4 Identifying & Engaging Project Stakeholders

The Project will work with a diverse range of stakeholders including the Sargasso Sea Commission, the Signatories to the Hamilton Declaration, beneficiary government representatives, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), private sector, and academic and research institutions, with the aim of strengthening stewardship approaches in line with an ecosystem-based conservation and sustainable use strategy, that embraces adaptive management toward climate change and other potential impacts on the Sargasso Sea ecosystem, and subsequently the socioeconomic well-being of the dependent beneficiary countries.

In developing the SES, the Project has created a high-level stakeholder map encompassing key stakeholder groups. This has been socialised and validated with the established and pre-existing stakeholder community at a SES development workshop, and will guide engagement throughout the Project. This map is neither fixed nor exhaustive as it must be dynamic and flexible in keeping with the very long-term aspirations of this Project. The mechanisms by which each stakeholder group might contribute to the Project have also been identified, as well as which processes (SEDA and/or SAP) require their inputs.

As the Sargasso Sea is an Area Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) and therefore hundreds of kilometres from any local communities, this area is not fished or exploited by any recreational fishing organisations or dependent communities as such. However, there are a variety of opportunities to expand Private Sector stakeholder engagement. The Sargasso Sea Commission already had a range of Collaborating Partners prior to the development of this Project. These include important Private Sector players or their representative intergovernmental bodies such as the International Cable Protection Committee, and tourism bodies such as LookBermuda and Non-Such Expeditions. Further to this, the Project plans to engage with the Cruise Lines International Association (the world's largest cruise industry trade association), the International Chamber of Shipping (the global trade association for shipowners and operators) and the World Shipping Council (representing the 'voice' of liner shipping and working closely with policymakers and industry groups across the globe).

It is clear that when considering the stewardship of a large area beyond national jurisdiction, there will be significant stakeholder diversity; successful stewardship, therefore, will be contingent on achieving broad consent of proposed interventions and actions, and participation in their implementation. This necessitates starting with the broadest possible view of stakeholders, refining this in order to target and prioritise engagement activities. We may characterise stakeholders into broadly three (non-exclusive) stakeholder types, based on how they interact with the Sargasso Sea:

- **'Guardians'**: principally focused on the conservation of the Sargasso Sea, either directly or indirectly.
- **'Users'**: who realise direct or indirect commercial gain from legal exploitation of the natural resources within, or that pass through, the Sargasso Sea.
- **'Beneficiaries'**: all others globally, who derive benefit from the Sargasso Sea, whether consequent of its guardianship or commercial use, but are neither active *'Guardians'* nor *'Users'*.

The Project will seek to engage stakeholders from all categories. However, these stakeholders may contribute different types of input, relevant at different points in the Project timeline. The Project itself has two distinct overarching sequential parts and outputs. The first is the Socio-Ecosystem Diagnostic Analysis (SEDA), followed by the Strategic Action Programme (SAP). To better understand our stakeholders, their inputs, and the Project's engagement priorities these must both be considered.

3.5 The Socio-Ecosystem Diagnostic Analysis (SEDA)

The main technical role of the Socio-Ecosystem Diagnostic Analysis (SEDA) is to identify, quantify, and set priorities for environmental problems that threaten the long-term integrity and sustainability of the ecosystem. In particular, the SEDA aims to:

- A. Identify, quantify & prioritise the problems within the ecosystem.
- B. Gather and interpret information on the environmental impacts and socio-economic consequences of each problem.
- C. Analyse the immediate, underlying, and root causes for each problem, and in particular identify specific practices, sources, locations, and human activity sectors from which environmental degradation arises or threatens to arise.
- D. The root cause analysis is accompanied by a comprehensive governance analysis since the underlying causes of the vast majority of environmental problems stem from selected policy and other governance failures and gaps.

The SEDA provides the factual basis for the formulation of the Strategic Action Programme, but the SEDA is also part of a larger, facilitative process of engagement and consultation with all the key stakeholders from the initial SEDA steps through to the subsequent development of alternative solutions during the formulation of the Strategic Action Programme.

3.6 The Strategic Action Programme (SAP)

The Project will then translate the information from the SEDA into a Strategic Action Programme (SAP) that defines what actions need to be taken for effective management of the areas and by whom. The SAP will confirm partnerships and sustainability, including management, administrative and financial requirements. The SAP will be a negotiated policy-level document which the various and appropriate stakeholders to the Sargasso Sea ecosystem and its goods and services will sign up to and implement. Essentially, the SAP will be agreed and implemented by the various signatories to the Hamilton Declaration along with the partners to the Sargasso Sea Commission (SSC). The SAP development process will therefore include close engagement with and input from the Private Sector and other important stakeholders as potential partners, striving for their full engagement and contribution to the immediate and longer-term sustainability of actions endorsed under the SAP. It is in the nature of a high-seas environment that Governance is by consent, underlining the need for stakeholder engagement, participation and relationship building as a pre-requisite for effective stewardship. For the purposes of stakeholder engagement this implies two top-level stakeholder categories:

- A. **The SEDA-related Stakeholders.** This would be those entities or individuals who are providing the scientific background and baseline, identifying the threats and impacts, and assisting to identify the ecosystem value and goods & services that the Sargasso Sea Geographical Area of Collaboration (GAC) supports. It will include those parties to advise on appropriate conservation and stewardship measures needed to maintain or improve ecosystem quality. Essentially, this group of stakeholders will include the scientific experts and the 'Guardians' of the welfare of the Sargasso Sea GAC.
- B. **The SAP-related Stakeholders.** This stakeholder group would include those entities that 'make use' of the Sargasso Sea either directly or indirectly, or which have a mandate to manage certain aspects and activities within and/or adjacent to the GAC (e.g. fisheries, shipping, seabed exploitation, security, etc.). These are the 'Users', 'Beneficiaries' and/or 'Managers' of the Sargasso Sea.

We note that these groups aren't mutually exclusive, there will be deeply engaged SEDA stakeholders who are necessarily SAP stakeholders (e.g., Hamilton Declaration signatories), and stakeholders naturally affected by the SAP and its measures, but who might also contribute data/expertise in support of the SEDA if properly engaged.

3.7 Generic Forms of Contribution & Support from Stakeholders:

Before considering the stakeholder groups in more detail, and establishing a sectoral stakeholder map, it is worth defining at a high-level how we envisage stakeholders contributing to the Project. An analysis was undertaken to determine what generic supporting activities could be of value to the Project; this was validated in the October 2023 Stakeholder Engagement workshop. The list of 13 generic forms of activity below describes a broad set of complementary activities that stakeholders could be engaged in, contributing positively to the Project:

- **Participation, Feedback & Input:** the foundational form of stakeholder engagement is basic participation, being willing to receive Project information, and to provide feedback & input to the SEDA and SAP processes through direct communication (e.g. interviews), structured programmes of feedback (e.g. questionnaires), or by participating in Project stakeholder events (e.g. workshops).
- **Data Sharing & Contributions:** Providing data relevant to marine ecosystems, human activities, and other pertinent areas.
- **Research Collaborations:** Engaging in joint research initiatives, sharing expertise, resources, and findings.
- **Sustainable Practices:** Adopting and promoting practices that align with conservation and sustainable use of marine resources.
- **Funding & Resources:** Mobilising financial resources, offering grants, or supporting conservation initiatives.
- **Awareness & Advocacy:** Raising awareness about the project's goals and advocating for marine conservation.
- **Policy Development & Legal Insights:** Offering insights into existing laws, developing new policies, seeking innovative solutions in existing frameworks.
- **Technological Solutions:** Developing and implementing technologies that aid in conservation, monitoring, and sustainable use.
- **Training & Capacity Building:** Organising workshops, training sessions, and seminars to enhance or translate skills and knowledge; improve equitability.
- **Monitoring & Assessment of Compliance:** Monitoring to ensure compliance with marine protection measures and regulations; ground truthing.
- **Public Engagement & Feedback:** Engaging with the broader public, gathering feedback, and addressing concerns aligned with Project activities and goals.
- **Economic & Business Initiatives:** Developing business models and economic strategies that support conservation goals.
- **Cultural & Traditional Knowledge:** Sharing insights rooted in historical and cultural ties to the marine environment.

We note that the first area, Participation, Feedback & Input, reflects the core objectives and principles of the Project's Stakeholder Engagement Strategy. All additional general forms of contribution and support are neither expectations placed upon stakeholders, nor requirements for engagement. Rather, these are additional forms of participation that would benefit the Project and that could be provided by willing, highly-engaged, stakeholders – in doing so building desired common ownership within the stakeholder community, which may support the Project's long-term sustainability, efficacy, and goals.

3.8 Map of Key Stakeholder Groups



Figure 1: Map of stakeholder groups (not exhaustive).

These forms of contribution also provide a window into the wider stakeholder groups relevant to the Project, which extend beyond the direct ‘Guardians’ and ‘Users’, to indirect stakeholders who could also provide some of the forms of contribution above.

Based on this, our top-level categories of ‘Guardians’, ‘Users’ and ‘Beneficiaries’, and on our consideration of SEDA and SAP related stakeholders, we have derived a set of stakeholder groups relevant to the Project. This was tested with core stakeholders at the October 2023 Stakeholder Engagement workshop, where an initial version of the stakeholder map was presented; additions were discussed and included. The validated map – which is shown in Figure 1 is not exhaustive. It remains open to extension in the future, and will be tested with stakeholders at engagement events throughout the Project to ensure it is as comprehensive and contemporary as possible. The stakeholder groups, and their potential forms of input to the SEDA and SAP processes, are described below.

3.9 Stakeholder Groups & Potential Input Areas to SEDA & SAP Processes

3.9.1 Academia, Experts & International Organisations

<i>Academia, Research, & Educational Institutions</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
Academia, research, and educational institutions are likely to form part of the core Guardian community and influence both the SEDA and SAP processes. They are already significantly engaged, and actively contribute to the socio-ecosystem analysis within the SEDA. Maintained engagement with this stakeholder group is needed now and in the long term, as they are able to contribute the scientific analysis underpinning evidence presentation, stewardship decisions and measures of efficacy.	
Research Projects: Identify existing studies on the Sargasso Sea ecosystem, providing valuable data and insights.	Relevant input to the SEDA.
Research Projects: Continued partnership on in-depth studies on the Sargasso Sea ecosystem, providing valuable data and insights.	Potentially part of the SAP and long-term Project goals.
Education & Awareness: Develop educational programmes and materials that promote marine conservation.	Ongoing during the SEDA and SAP.

<i>Climate Change & Oceanography Experts & Scientists</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
Forming a sub-category of academia and research, particular attention should be drawn to expertise in climate change and oceanography, for both the relevance of their expertise to high-seas ecosystems, and the significance of climate changes as a motivator for change.	
Climate Modelling: Capture information from models and predictions on how climate change will impact the Sargasso Sea.	Relevant as input to the SEDA.
Climate Modelling: Continue to gather information from models and predictions on how climate change will impact the Sargasso Sea for adaptive management during SAP implementation.	Potentially part of the SAP, with ongoing updates throughout SAP implementation.
Adaptive Strategies: Develop strategies to help the marine ecosystem adapt to changing climate conditions.	These mechanisms and strategies could be input to SAP development, and undertaken in SAP implementation.

<i>International Environmental Organisations, NGOs & Philanthropists</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
International environmental organisations, NGOs, and Philanthropists might contribute to core research activities, but they may also play a role in advocacy and publicity of stewardship initiatives, and in resourcing long-term stewardship. These organisations may also be key stakeholder nodes, providing efficient access to relevant stakeholder networks.	
Research and Conservation Initiatives: Conduct research projects that provide insights into marine conservation needs.	Partnership opportunities to be identified in SAP development.
Funding and Resources: Mobilise resources and funding for conservation projects and initiatives.	To be identified in SAP development, and undertaken in implementation.

3.9.2 Extractive And Sea-Space Industrial Users

<i>Fisheries, Regional Fisheries Management Bodies, & Aquaculture</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
<p>Fisheries are a core ‘User’ stakeholder group. RFMOs such as NAFO and ICCAT already show valuable engagement with the project, and this will be needed for SAP consultation and compliance to stewardship. Engaging with the breadth of the fisheries industry is challenging. However, if RFMOs are made into project champions they may play a unique role as interlocutors with wider fisheries. Fisheries also collect and hold valuable, but commercially sensitive, data; mechanisms for access and use in the context of SSC stewardship would be valuable.</p>	
<p>Current Fishing Practices: Capture all relevant information on current fishing activities (species, catches, by-catch, IUU, etc)</p>	<p>Relevant as input to the SEDA.</p>
<p>Sustainable Fishing Practices: Adopt & promote sustainable fishing methods that reduce harm to the marine ecosystem.</p>	<p>Relevant to the SAP development and implementation, with pre-existing ongoing work with RFMOs.</p>
<p>Data Sharing: Provide data on fish stocks, catch rates, and other relevant information to inform conservation strategies.</p>	<p>Relevant to SEDA & SAP processes, with a need for regular updates through SAP implementation. Pre-existing ongoing work with RFMOs.</p>

<i>Pharmaceutical and Biotech Industries</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
<p>Harvest of marine genetic resource is an area of significant economic value but highly uneven access, with direct relevance to ocean stewardship the BBNJ agreement. These industries are clearly ‘users’ of the high-seas, however they may also be positioned to uniquely benefit from improvements to biodiversity and ecosystem health consequent of stewardship. This scientifically advanced and data-rich sector could play a contributing role in ecosystem monitoring, but may also be subject to limiting measures, making them a stakeholder in all senses.</p>	
<p>Sustainable Harvesting: Ensure that the harvesting of marine genetic resources is done sustainably.</p>	<p>Relevant to SAP development and implementation.</p>
<p>Research Collaborations: Collaborate with conservationists to study marine biodiversity, leading to potential medical breakthroughs</p>	<p>Relevant to SAP development and implementation.</p>

<i>Seabed Mining</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
<p>Issues of seabed mining are potentially peripheral to the Sargasso Sea. However, the potential for long-distance travel of sediment and pollution from mineral extraction has been suggested by research and modelling. Considering the gyre of the Sargasso Sea, there is a risk of distant seabed mining activities adversely affecting the region. In the context of this project, this stakeholder group may only have second-order or indirect involvement. However, it is worth noting as a relevant type of stakeholder for high-seas stewardship activities more widely.</p>	
<p>Less Destructive Extraction: Develop and enact less destructive seabed mining techniques to reduce ecosystem harm.</p>	<p>Relevant to identify in SAP development and work on in SAP implementation.</p>
<p>Data Sharing: Provide environmental and ecosystem data gleaned as part of their seabed exploration activities.</p>	<p>Relevant input to the SEDA, and a part of SAP development and implementation.</p>

<i>Fisheries, Eel Range States</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
<p>There are five American Eel Range States: Dominican Republic, Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica, and Morocco. All report a fairly wide distribution of eels in their rivers and coastal systems. In-country consumption is limited (with the exception of Asian communities) and eels are primarily for export to Asian and North American markets, where there is a high demand. The fishery has both economic importance for the countries and direct livelihood importance for the fishermen. Eel fishing can be an important subsistence activity for poorer families in these countries. In Haiti for example, although eel is not commonly consumed in country, eel fishing improves the economic conditions for many fishing families who are otherwise discouraged from other forms of traditional fishing due to material costs.</p>	
<p>Data input: Provide data on eel migration, catch rates, and other relevant information to inform conservation strategies.</p>	<p>Ongoing work with eel range states relevant to the SEDA. Need for regular input and updates during SAP development and implementation.</p>
<p>Current Fishing Practices: Capture information on current fisheries practices and management requirements related to main range states for European and American eels.</p>	<p>Relevant input to the SEDA.</p>
<p>Sustainable Fishing Practices: Adopt and promote sustainable management measures and fishing methods within range states and management bodies.</p>	<p>Ongoing working with the RFMOs, relevant to SAP development and implementation.</p>

<i>Shipping, Maritime Transportation, & Maritime Infrastructure Organisations</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
<p>Marine traffic is a key 'User' stakeholder group for this project. Transit of vessels through the Sargasso Sea directly affects the ecosystem health, and changes or restrictions to this are potential stewardship outcomes (including, e.g., recommended transit speeds and/or routes). Strong relationships with this sector will be key for the SAP process and implementation of any resultant stewardship measures. Increasingly parts of maritime transport are seeking to make a positive ESG impact, these organisations may be key advocate for the project, and potentially contributors. Data contribution from maritime transport is also relevant, noting vessels are effectively platforms of opportunity.</p>	
<p>Impact of Shipping: Detailed review of shipping movements, types, impacts/threats from maritime transport and other maritime activities within the Sargasso Sea area.</p>	<p>Relevant input to the SEDA.</p>
<p>Safe Navigation Practices: Implement practices that reduce the risk of accidents, spills, or disturbances to the marine environment.</p>	<p>These will be key aspects of SAP development, undertaken in SAP implementation.</p>
<p>Infrastructure Development: Design and implement marine infrastructure that minimizes environmental impact.</p>	<p>Potentially relevant to SAP development / implementation.</p>

3.9.3 Legal, Regulatory, Enforcement & Technology

<i>Legal & Regulatory Bodies</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
<p>Legal & regulatory bodies may be important indirect and direct stakeholders for the SAP process and implementation of stewardship measures. This may include policy development, and establishing mechanisms that help to broaden accountability. There is a strong pre-existing legal expertise within the core project stakeholder group.</p>	
<p>Current Legal and Regulatory mechanisms: Relevant to and impacting on activities within the Sargasso Sea Area.</p>	<p>Relevant input to the SEDA.</p>
<p>Policy Development: Develop and amend policies that support marine conservation goals.</p>	<p>Requirements to be identified in SAP development, and undertaken during SAP implementation.</p>
<p>Legal Workshops: Organise workshops to discuss legal implications and potential regulatory changes.</p>	<p>Relevant to SAP development and implementation.</p>

<i>Maritime Security & Policing Community</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
<p>The maritime security and policy community may be key enablers to effective stewardship. Their experience in maritime domain awareness and response can be drawn upon to formulate technically and operationally feasible stewardship approaches, and to implement these. Notions of enforcement and policing are challenging in the high seas, but they may play a role in improving accountability of actions in high seas areas.</p>	
<p>Monitoring and Assessment of Compliance: Utilise their authority and resources to monitor and assess successful delivery of marine protection measures and regulations.</p>	<p>Potentially relevant source of inputs to the SEDA, important to SAP development and implementation.</p>
<p>Surveillance & Monitoring: Presence, availability and potential use of advanced surveillance technologies to monitor activities in the Sargasso Sea.</p>	<p>Potentially relevant source of inputs to the SEDA, important to SAP development and implementation</p>

<i>Satellite Earth Observation, Technology, Data, & AI Companies</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
<p>Sophisticated Big Data & Artificial Intelligence (AI) solutions are likely to play a critical role in capturing, analysing & interpreting ecosystem information, modelling the impact of stewardship approaches, and monitoring the efficacy of measures. Earth observation & remote sensing data contain a wealth of information, but extracting this often requires nuanced cutting-edge approaches. Outside of the academic research community, the expertise for this, and in some cases enabling data-sources, are held by the data science and technologies sector – building awareness & participation in this community could provide access to new solutions, data, and enable capacity building.</p>	
<p>Data Analysis & Modelling: Use of advanced analytics and AI to analyse marine data, providing insights for conservation.</p>	<p>Relevant as input to the SEDA and to SAP development and implementation.</p>
<p>Technological Solutions: Develop technologies that aid in monitoring, conservation, and sustainable use of marine resources.</p>	<p>Relevant to SAP development and implementation.</p>

3.9.4 Environmental & Financial Institutions

<i>Financial Institutions</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
Investment is increasingly tied to environmental and sustainability considerations; financial institutions may provide a route to building participation, compliance with stewardship, & potentially pathways to long-term financial support, particularly if underpinned by new/growing economies from good ocean stewardship.	
Current and Potential Financing Options: Identify funding that will support the necessary activities for SAP implementation.	Important to SAP development and implementation, for sustainable long-term Project implementation.
Green Financing: Offer financial products and services that support sustainable marine projects.	Identify need in SAP development, reflected in implementation.
Investment Screening: Ensure investments align with marine conservation goals, promoting sustainable practices.	Identify need in SAP development, reflected in implementation.

<i>Carbon Sequestration and Blue Carbon Approaches</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
Blue carbon & carbon sequestration approaches are growing in value and may provide a mechanism to fund and support stewardship goals through new economic models. However, the compatibility of these approaches will also need to be assessed in the context of ecosystem impact, noting that some approaches may change or disrupt the ecosystem in currently unassessed ways (e.g., sargassum sinking). This stakeholder group could be 'Guardian', 'User', & 'Beneficiary' of the Sargasso Sea.	
Carbon-related goods and services role of Sargasso Sea: Identify the role that the Sargasso Sea plays currently in carbon sequestration.	Relevant input to the SEDA.
Carbon Offset Initiatives: Develop and promote initiatives that offset carbon emissions through marine conservation.	Identify need in SAP development, reflected in implementation.
Research & Development: Innovate in blue carbon technologies and practices that enhance marine carbon sequestration.	Identify need in SAP development, reflected in implementation.

<i>Waste Management and Recycling Entities</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
The gyre of the Sargasso Sea results in it trapping significant quantities of plastic waste and microplastics. The full impact of these plastics on the ecosystem and food chain are not completely understood. However, efforts to limit and address this may form part of stewardship. As impact of microplastics on human health is better understood, this may also link to fisheries in the region. This stakeholder group may contribute to activities to remove waste pollution, and contribute to identifying measures to reduce it.	
Marine Waste Presence: Identify the main sources, quantities and impacts of waste materials into the Sargasso Sea.	Important input to the SEDA.
Marine Waste Reduction: Implement strategies to reduce marine waste, especially plastic, which can harm the ecosystem.	Need to be identified from the SEDA, and strategies assessed in SAP development, and undertaken in SAP implementation.
Recycling Initiatives: Promote and facilitate recycling programs specific to marine waste, reducing the environmental impact.	Need to be identified in SAP development and undertaken in SAP implementation.

<i>Marine Renewable Energy Sector</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
As marine renewable energy increasingly moves further from shore, and looks to take potentially more innovative forms (e.g., floating solar), this sector may have relevance to high-seas areas in the future. This may also be indirect, for example in the context of biomass generation and transportation.	
Clean Energy Initiatives: Develop and implement renewable energy solutions that reduce carbon emissions in marine settings.	Need to be identified in SAP development, with potential relevant to SAP implementation.
Research and Development: Innovate in marine energy technologies that are environmentally friendly.	Potentially part of SAP implementation.

3.9.5 Indigenous & Local Communities

<i>Local Tourism Industry</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
The tourism industry is a significant beneficiary and user of the Sargasso Sea, both directly (e.g., cruises, whale watching) and indirectly (e.g., via benefits of ecosystem health/biodiversity on abutting EEZ tourism). Therein, there is an argument that tourism will benefit significantly from successful stewardship, and it can play a part through a greater focus on supporting eco-tourism, advocacy of the project and its goals, and opportunistic data capture or citizen science initiatives. That may also enable crowd funding and charitable activities.	
Eco-Tourism Initiatives: Identify, develop & promote tourism activities that educate visitors about marine conservation.	Relevant to identify in the SEDA, and reflect promotion of in SAP development and implementation.
Sustainable Business Practices: Adopt business practices that minimise the environmental impact of tourism activities.	Identify need in SAP development, reflected in implementation.

<i>Recreational Users Community</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
The recreational community, e.g., yachting, may benefit project goals through developing & participating in citizen science/data gathering activities, advocating for the project, and providing philanthropic contributions. Stewardship measures may also restrict freedom of activities, so this is a varied stakeholder that is presently 'user' or 'beneficiary', but may also become 'guardian'.	
Citizen Science Initiatives: Engage in data collection and monitoring activities, providing valuable insights from a user perspective.	Important to build into SAP development and implementation.
Awareness and Advocacy: Promote sustainable recreational practices within their networks, fostering a culture of conservation.	Important to build into SAP development and implementation, potentially reflecting SEDA outputs.

<i>Indigenous & Local Communities & Businesses</i>	<i>Input Areas</i>
Indigenous & local communities, and the economies around these, are intrinsically Sargasso Sea stakeholders due to historical/cultural ties. They are likely economic beneficiaries, and powerful advocates for successful stewardship. They may also help affect stewardship/monitoring if facilitated by capacity building/resource.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional Knowledge: Request shared insights and practices rooted in historical/cultural ties to marine environment. 	Important input to the SEDA.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Business Initiatives: Develop/promote business practices aligning with marine conservation goals. 	Important to build into SAP development and implementation.

3.10 Prioritising Stakeholder Engagement:

This list above highlights the wide-ranging stakeholders, and their respective inputs, relevant to the Project's SEDA and SAP processes and longer-term Project continuation. Realising engagement across these stakeholder groups will be a significant activity. Engagement with representatives and key members of each stakeholder group should be realised but will require sequencing and prioritisation. In order to make stakeholder engagement prioritisation decisions objective and transparent criteria for prioritisation have been developed and validated with core project stakeholders. These are listed, in order of importance, below:

1. **Core Project Stakeholders.** Those stakeholders who are core to all aspects of the Project's development, delivery, and continuation – the Hamilton Declaration signatories and the Sargasso Sea Commissioners & Secretariat.
2. **Stakeholder agreement to contribute to the SEDA process in a timely manner.** The SEDA process precedes SAP development, and is expected to be completed by mid-2024, engaging with stakeholders who have knowledge, data, or evidence necessary for the SEDA is the foremost priority at this stage.
3. **Current stakeholder impact on the Sargasso Sea ecosystem** (positive or negative, and informed by SEDA outputs). The SEDA outputs will reveal which stakeholder groups (and activities therein) have the most significant impact on the Sargasso Sea ecosystem; it is likely their participation will be required for successful SAP development and implementation, therefore making them a priority for engagement.
4. **Stakeholder willingness to engage, participate and/or contribute.** Willingness to engage with the Project is an important factor for engagement; we will seek and prioritise stakeholders willing to champion the project and its values within each group.
5. **Stakeholder capability to help with implementation the SAP** (including improving compliance) and/or long-term data-gathering and monitoring activities). Following SAP development there will be a process of implementation and long-term support; the stakeholders, and stakeholder groups, most important to this activity will be prioritised.
6. **Stakeholder readiness to advocate for the Project.** Wide and effective advocacy is necessary to generate Project buy-in, synergies, partnerships and broaden awareness; establishing this will be important to long-term Project support.
7. **Stakeholder ability to contribute to the project's long-term financial sustainability.** Much like advocacy, financial sustainability will be fundamental to the Project's longevity and goals; identifying and pro-actively engaging with stakeholders able and willing to contribute financially will be key.
8. **Stakeholder expertise to contribute to capacity building activities.** Stakeholders that could deliver capacity building programmes due to their core competencies or sectoral characteristics.

Stakeholders and stakeholder groups will be considered with respect to these criteria in order to focus and sequence stakeholder engagement activity appropriately within the Project's resource and time envelopes. This will enable categorisation in 4 priority groups:

- **Priority 0:** Those responsible for Sargasso Sea Stewardship and decision making: the Hamilton Declaration signatories and the Sargasso Sea Commissioners & Secretariat.
- **Priority 1:** Those who are *essential* for the SEDA process, or the development or implementation of the SAP.
- **Priority 2:** Those whose contributions to the SEDA and/or SAP development or implementation would be *highly desirable*.
- **Priority 3:** Those whose contributions to the SEDA and/or SAP development or implementation would be *beneficial*.

The criteria for stakeholder prioritisation will be reviewed with stakeholders at appropriate engagement events, and the assignment of stakeholders to priority groups will be agreed by the GEF Project CTA and validated by the Priority 0 stakeholders if deemed necessary.

This completes the overall stakeholder engagement process: describing the purpose and principles of stakeholder engagement, the top-level types of stakeholders and their roles in the SEDA and SAP processes, the general forms of stakeholder input, the sector groupings of stakeholders, how we anticipate each group can contribute to the SEDA and SAP processes, and, lastly, how engagement will be prioritised throughout the Project.

The detailed Master Stakeholder Map is a live document and as such it will be retained in a suitable on-line location, accessible to those who need it. It will be updated throughout the life of the Project by the Project core Stakeholder Engagement Team, to ensure all Stakeholder Engagement activity remains focused where the Project most needs it.

3.11 Project Engagement Methodologies

Methodologies used by the Project to target and engage stakeholders and beneficiaries will depend on the actor, and the stage of Project implementation.

- **Participation, Feedback & Input:** the foundational form of stakeholder engagement is basic participation, being willing to receive Project information, and to provide feedback & input to the SEDA and SAP processes through direct communication (e.g. interviews), structured programmes of feedback (e.g. questionnaires), or by participating in Project stakeholder events (e.g. workshops).
- **Project Board/Steering Committee:** Meetings of the PSC will be organised on a regular basis to ensure relevant partners remain actively engaged in monitoring progress and steering the implementation of Project activities towards its intended outcomes.
- **Workshops:** Workshops, some with specific themes, will be used to inform and actively engage larger groups of stakeholders in consultation processes, generating buy-in and sharing knowledge.
- **A Communications Office:** The Project has engaged and contracted an officer whose responsibility is to capture and communicate information as appropriate to the relevant stakeholders (See 'Communication' below).
- **Strategic / informal meetings:** Meetings will be held bilaterally or with groups with the purpose to inform stakeholders and/or obtain agreement on issues of importance for successful Project implementation. Group meetings will also form an important means of communication at the community level.
- **Expert consultations:** Recognised experts in thematic areas will consult and inform stakeholders on strategic aspects of the Project.
- **Exchange visits:** Project partners and beneficiaries at the national level may be selected to participate in visits to other Projects in order to exchange knowledge and learn from good practices and successful approaches implemented elsewhere that could be replicated within the Project.

From time to time, as deemed appropriate by the Project Steering Committee (PSC) or requested by other stakeholders, a formal full Stakeholder Consultation Workshop may be called to discuss specific issues and/or update all parties on progress within the Project Components and their Deliverables. At other times, groups of stakeholders with specific interest or concerns (e.g., Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs), NGOs, Private Sector) may request the Project to convene an open Stakeholder Meeting for discussion of pre-selected issues and concerns. The outcome and proposed solutions to the issues and concerns raised will then be carried forward to a formal Stakeholder Consultation Workshop (to be convened no less than 6 weeks after the open Stakeholder Meeting) by selected representation (e.g., from the NGO and/or other stakeholder groups).

Full and transparent stakeholder involvement in Project activities and in delivery of its objectives will be encouraged and supported. This includes the understanding that all stakeholders should have access to the knowledge needed for them to support, understand, and contribute to the review, monitoring and effectiveness of regulations and management initiatives.

3.12 Communication

In addition to the abovementioned engagement tools, the Project has a Communication Strategy that will take into consideration this stakeholder engagement strategy and which can be adapted depending on the stage of the Project, and in response to feedback from stakeholders (as well as responding to the grievance mechanism where necessary and if required).

Contents and format of information dissemination will be specifically adapted to targeted audiences, their educational background, cultural contexts, and languages, in order to obtain the highest possible levels of understanding and buy-in, including through the following mechanisms:

- **Brochures/flyers/newsletters:** Printed materials will be used for sharing Project summaries and knowledge products with stakeholders (Government representatives, scientific community, the broader public as appropriate).
- **Radio, TV, newspapers, press releases:** The media will be used to reach broader stakeholder groups globally, mobilise support and raise awareness on Project activities / relevant environmental topics.
- **Exhibitions:** Posters, photos, banners, and/or short videos may be produced for display in national and international fora and fairs.
- **Policy briefs:** To inform decision-makers on recommendations, lessons learned and good practices resulting from Project implementation and enable replication/upscaling, policy briefs may be developed for sharing with Government stakeholders.
- **Progress reports:** Reports produced as part of Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) processes (e.g. UNDP GEF PIR) will be shared with the Steering Committee, UNDP, donor(s), as well as other relevant stakeholders (as appropriate).
- **Lessons and Best Practices:** Lessons learned (positive and negative) from the Project will be captured at both mid-term and at the end of the Project for dissemination and replicability. A close relationship will be developed with IW:LEARN to ensure that Project progress as well as lessons and best practices are made available through that UNDP GEF website.
- **Online media:** The Project will share progress updates and good practices to the general public through online media, including a Project Website with links to and from the websites of the Project and the Sargasso Sea Commission, the partner Fonds Français Pour L'Environnement Mondial (FFEM) Project and other websites that may be related to ABNJ/BBNJ. Posts may include stories, photographs, photo-blogs, short video's etc. To reach national and global audiences, the Project could also consider establishing accounts on social media including Facebook, X, Instagram, and YouTube.

3.13 Stakeholder Engagement Timetable & Format

A considerable amount of Stakeholder Engagement activity has already taken place within the Project. An Inception Phase workshop with stakeholder attendance occurred at the beginning of the Project, followed by the development and adoption of an initial Stakeholder Engagement Strategy, establishment of a Grievance Mechanism and development and adoption of a Communications and Awareness Strategy.

Other regular or *ad hoc* engagement activities will be programmed throughout the life of the Project. The Project Steering Committee will meet at least every 6-9 months, which will ideally be coincident with other Project and stakeholder activity as many of the attendees will be key contributors to several events. Formal, at least twice-yearly Stakeholder Consultation workshops, regular informal meetings,

and expert consultations and potential exchange visits will also be programmed on an opportunity basis, again as key contributors and stakeholders are available. A mixture of in-person, on-line and hybrid formats will be employed, to suit all participants, seeking to ensure lack of resource to travel does not inadvertently exclude or reduce contributions.

A proposed indicative Stakeholder Engagement work-plan for the 12-month period between Mar-24 and Feb-25 has been produced; a detailed work-plan beyond Feb-25 has not been completed. As a “live” document this work-plan will be maintained and updated by the Project Core Stakeholder Engagement Team. It is recommended that each 12-monthly work-plan period is further divided into more manageable, more detailed 4-monthly work-plans, which can be created on a rolling, forward-looking basis. This will deliver a considerably more agile and effective work-plan as it will allow assimilation of new information and inputs from newly recruited Key Stakeholders, as well as lessons learned by the Project Team from earlier activity, to be rapidly applied, thus delivering far more effective stakeholder engagement.

3.14 Resources and Responsibilities

The Project Coordinator will be responsible for ensuring implementation of the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy and achieving its objectives. They will mobilise the Project Team and partners to conduct the specified stakeholder engagement activities noted above and to manage the grievance mechanism (see below) if / as required, according to the objectives and principles of the plan. They will allocate resources from the Project budget and funds as appropriate to support stakeholder engagement. The Project will set aside resources for sufficient, effective stakeholder engagement as detailed in the Stakeholder Engagement work-plan, through an annual Workplan & Budget review, with adoption and approval by the Project Steering Committee.

3.15 Grievance Mechanism

In case any grievances exist among Project beneficiaries, stakeholders, or partners, they will initially be encouraged to direct these to the Project Coordination Unit (PCU), providing sufficient background information in order to assess the cause of the grievance and identify possible solutions. If the PCU, based on its assessment of the seriousness and complexity of the problem, is not able to provide a solution the grievance may be escalated to the relevant (Government) partners and/or the Project Board (PB)/Steering Committee (PSC). The PB/PSC may decide to organise an ad hoc meeting in order to address the issue, or, if appropriate depending on the urgency, park the issue until the next planned regular meeting.

All grievances should be adequately documented and flagged by the PCU, including the causes, responses, and outcomes of actions taken to address them. In case of grievances that may directly/indirectly hamper Project implementation and/or affect the reputation of the organisation, the UNDP Bureau for Policy & Programme support should be notified immediately through the Head, Water and Ocean Governance Programme.

UNDP recognises that even with strong planning and stakeholder engagement, unanticipated issues can still arise. Therefore, its social & environmental compliance reviews and stakeholder response mechanisms are underpinned by an Accountability Mechanism² with two key components: a Social & Environmental Compliance Review Unit (SECU) to respond to claims that UNDP is not in compliance with applicable environmental and social policies; and a Stakeholder Response Mechanism (SRM) that ensures individuals, peoples, and communities affected by Projects have access to appropriate grievance resolution procedures for hearing and addressing Project related complaints and disputes.

² <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/accountability/audit/secu-srm.html>

The Accountability Mechanism is available to all of UNDP’s Project stakeholders. SECU investigates concerns about non-compliance with UNDP’s Social and Environmental Standards and Screening Procedure raised by Project affected stakeholders and recommends measures to address findings of non-compliance. The Stakeholder Response Mechanism helps Project-affected stakeholders, UNDP’s partners (Governments, NGOs, businesses) and others jointly address grievances or disputes related to the social and/or environmental impacts of UNDP-supported Projects.

Existing national and sector forums may also provide important opportunities for stakeholders to provide feedback on Project implementation. Utilisation of existing structures and processes to engage stakeholders is encouraged, as this may provide opportunities for issues to be raised before they develop into more significant grievances. However, such fora would not substitute for specific Project Grievance Redress Mechanisms (GRM3) that may be required.

Accessibility is a key principle for any accountability mechanism. Since accessibility starts with awareness raising, the Project Coordinator will need to take responsibility for ensuring that Project-affected people and communities are informed of UNDP’s Accountability Mechanism and the GRM. The stakeholder engagement process provides a key entry point to do this awareness raising and ensure that information about UNDP’s Accountability Mechanism is made available to all Project beneficiaries and partners. Communication materials are available in the online SES Toolkit⁴ to support this effort.

3.16 Monitoring & Reporting

Participatory Project Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) is a key part of the Results-based Management (RBM) approach practiced by UNDP and GEF for all Projects. Similarly, stakeholder engagement activities will be integrated in the M&E processes for this Project to provide sufficient information for adaptive stewardship decision-making. Beneficiaries and Project partners will be encouraged to participate in different steps of the process, including design and verification of the logical framework and its indicators, tracking tools, reviews, field visits for monitoring progress, etc. The Project will also ensure regular dissemination of progress reports to relevant stakeholders for inputs, reviews, feedback, and information sharing purposes.

The Project will use standard UNDP approaches and procedures for M&E processes (see the Project Monitoring & Evaluation Plan for full details).

Kevin Fleming
Project Manager

Annex A: Stakeholders during Project & Stakeholder Engagement Programme Development
Annex B: Stakeholder Activity during Project & Stakeholder Engagement Development to-date

Appendix 1: Key Stakeholder Request: 2-pager (Screenshot)
Appendix 2: Stakeholder Engagement Work-plan (Screenshot)

Attachments:

1. Stakeholder Engagement Strategy (pdf)
2. Key Stakeholder Request: 2-pager (pdf)
3. Stakeholder Engagement Work-plan (spreadsheet)
4. Key Stakeholder Map (spreadsheet)

³ https://info.undp.org/sites/bpps/SES_Toolkit/SES%20Document%20Library/Uploaded%20October%202016/Supplemental%20Guidance_Grievance%20Redress%20Mechanisms.pdf

⁴ https://info.undp.org/sites/bpps/SES_Toolkit/SitePages/Communication%20Materials.aspx

3.17 Annex A: Stakeholders during Project & Stakeholder Engagement Programme Development

The tables below list the stakeholders that were engaged in the project development and submission process and in the Stakeholder Engagement programme development. It further lists the processes and venues in which they were variously involved and which discussions and negotiations supported the project development process.

3.17.1 Stakeholders with input to the Project Development Process and Project Document

<i>Name</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>
Andrew Hudson	United Nations Development Programme
Julian Barbière	Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO
David Vousden	Lead Project Consultant
Dr David Freestone	Sargasso Sea Commission
Teresa Mackey	Sargasso Sea Commission
Dr Tammy Warren	Sargasso Sea Commission
Professor Stephen de Mora	Sargasso Sea Commission
Professor Howard Roe	Sargasso Sea Commission
Mark Spalding	Sargasso Sea Commission
Wilfred Moore	Sargasso Sea Commission
Frederico Cardigos	Sargasso Sea Commission
Kristina Gjerde	President Sargasso Sea Project Inc.(SSPI)
Kevin Monkman	Treasurer SSPI
Dan Laffoley	Board Members SSPI
Maya Gold	Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Rick Vaughan	Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Nelson Garcia Marcano	Government of the Dominican Republic
Craig Powell	Government of Bahamas
Lowri Griffiths	UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
Elizabeth McLanahan	US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Victoria Luu	US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Murray Roberts	The University of Edinburgh/I-Atlantic
Ellen Kenchington	Fisheries and Oceans Canada/I-Atlantic
Fred Kingston	Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization
Pat Halpin	Marine Geospatial Ecology Lab, Duke University
Corrie Curtice	Marine Geospatial Ecology Lab, Duke University
Jesse Cleary	Marine Geospatial Ecology Lab, Duke University
Professor Nick Bates	Bermuda Institute of Ocean Sciences (BIOS)
Laurence Kell	Imperial College London
John Mumford	Imperial College London
Ronán Long	World Maritime University
Jorge Jimenez	MARVIVA
Janique Etienne	Fonds Français pour L'Environnement Mondial (FFEM)
Joelle Richards	Ocean University Brest
Cesar Toro	IOCARIBE Sub-Commission Secretariat
Laamiri Badr	Government of Morocco
Dr Billy Causey	NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
Felipe Mora Porteiro	Governo dos Açores (Government of Azores)
HE Minister Walton Brown	Government of Bermuda
Dr Rozy Azhar	Government of Bermuda
Nadia Bouffard	Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Mrs. Gina Ebanks-Petrie	Cayman Islands
HE Tidiani Couma	Government of Monaco
Philip Weech	Bahamas Environment Science and Technology Commission
Ronald Smith-Berkeley	British Virgin Islands Ministry of Natural Resources and Labour

<i>Name</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>
Dr Brian Luckhurst	Government of Bermuda
Professor Laurie Kell	Imperial College London
Professor Murray Roberts	The University of Edinburgh
Professor Chris Wold	Lewis & Clark Law School
Dr Eric Lindstrom/Dr Vardis Tsontos	NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory
Ambassador David Balton	Wilson Center, DC
Professor David Johnson	UK
Gary Melvin	ICCAT
Michael Lodge/Alfonso Ascencio-Herrera	International Seabed Authority
Dr Bradnee Chambers/Melanie Virtue	Convention on Migratory Species
Fredrik Haag	International Maritime Organization
Lisa Svensson	UN Environment, Nairobi
Dr Matthew Gollock	London Zoological Society
Dr Lorna Inniss	UNEP Cartagena Convention
Walter Roban	Bermuda Government
Florian Botto	Permanent Mission of Monaco to the United Nations
Peter Oppenheimer	US Government
Keke Motsepe	South Africa
Phénia Marras – Aït Razouk	France
Fae Sapsford	Sargasso Sea Commission
Haydée Rodriguez	MarViva
Kimberley Galvez	NOAA
Denis Bailly	University of Brest, Ocean University Initiative Coordinator
Mishal Hamid	IOC-UNESCO
Kasey Cantwell	NOAA Okeanos Explorer
Natalie Degger	IOC-UNESCO
Pedro Neves	Governmental Focal Point – The Azores
Rolanda Davis	Government of The Bahamas
Ronan Long	World Maritime University
Ana Colaço	Sargasso Sea Commissioner

3.17.2 Stakeholders with input to Stakeholder Engagement at October 2023 Workshop

<i>Name</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>
David Freestone	SSC
David Vousden	SSC
Ana Colaço	Commissioner
Murray Roberts	Commissioner
Wilfred Moore	Commissioner
Alex Rogers	Rev Ocean
Ronan Long	World Maritime University
Beatrice Smith	Duke University
Jesse Cleary	Duke University
Jorge Jiménez	MarViva
Aurelie Spadone	IUCN
Brian Luckhurst	Imperial College London
Melanie Virtue	CMS
Joëlle Richard	UBO
Denis Bailly	UBO
Charline Guillou	UBO
Jessika Woroniak	Hamilton Signatory – Canada
Jake Rice	DFO – Ret.
Viktoria Varga Lences	FAO Common Oceans
Elizabeth McLanahan	Hamilton Signatory – United States of America (NOAA)
Lowri Griffiths	Hamilton Signatory – United Kingdom
Nelson Marcano	Hamilton Signatory – Dominican Republic
Anthony Thompson	Deep Sea Fisheries Project – Common Oceans
Kevin Fleming	NLAI
Kieran Bjergstrom	NLAI
<i>Online</i>	
Fae Sapsford	SSC
Camille Manel	ICCAT
Minna Epps	IUCN
Wariaghli Fatima	University Mohammed V
Nick Bates	BIOS, Arizona State University
Sonia Caicedo	MarViva
Brynhildur Benediktsdóttir	NAFO

3.18 Annex B: Stakeholder Activity during Project & Stakeholder Engagement Development to-date

<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Outcome</i>
March 2019, Bermuda – Next Steps to Strengthen Stewardship of the Sargasso Sea	General endorsement and support of the GEF project concept. The concept note was discussed at the Bermuda Signatories meeting, followed by further review by the Signatories and Commissioners. The Project Development consultant revised the concept note in light of these comments.
April 2019, Rome – Common Oceans Meeting	The project was presented, discussed and well-received by participants.
July 2019, Bahamas – GEF Project Review Meeting	The Commission, Signatories, UNDP, and other partners met in The Bahamas and discussed plans to submit to the GEF Council. The GEF process was discussed, including the need to submit a PIF and to carry out an EDA and create an SAP. The preferred implementing agency was agreed to be UNDP, while the executing agency was still under discussion.
January 2020, Rome	The inclusion of the project in the Common Oceans program was negotiated – it was allocated \$3 million of the overall \$30 million program. FAO incorporated the UNDP submission as a child project in the ABNJ programme, and submitted documentation to GEF in April 2020.
December 2020: Project Development Inception Workshop	The project had now been approved for development by the GEF Council. Progress to date was summarized, and the structure of the project was presented to stakeholders.
October 2021 – Validation Workshop	The Project Document was circulated to a wide representation of stakeholders prior to the Validation Workshop. Stakeholder comments to the project document were discussed. It was agreed that IOC-UNESCO would be the Implementing Partner/Executing Agency and the project document was successfully validated for submission to the GEF Council.
October 2023 – Initial Stakeholder Engagement development Workshop	This workshop socialised the first updated Stakeholder Engagement Plan post Project commencement to a group of established stakeholders including some representatives of Hamilton Declaration signatory states. The proposed Stakeholder Engagement Programme was presented, the stakeholder groups and forms of stakeholder participation were discussed and validated, and feedback was received on preferred mechanisms for involvement and frequency of communications and meetings.

4 Appendices

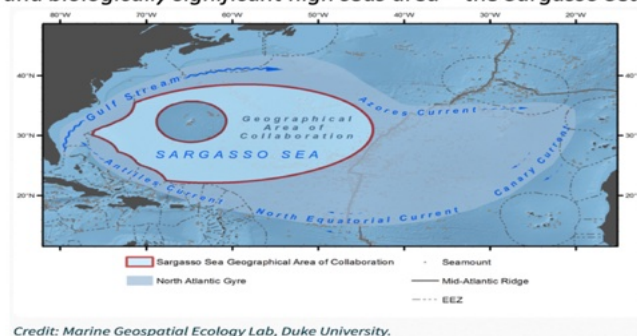
4.1 Key Stakeholder Request: 2-pager (Screenshot)

Note: the Master Stakeholder Engagement Request document is retained in pdf format (with live links) to allow wide and easy sharing. This is a screenshot of that document for illustrative purposes only.



The GEF-UNDP-UNESCO-IOC Sargasso Sea Project¹

“Strengthening stewardship through cooperation in an economically and biologically significant high seas area – the Sargasso Sea”



The Sargasso Sea – global importance

The [Sargasso Sea](#) is a unique and iconic high seas ecosystem. It contains inherent ecological value, is a haven for biodiversity as habitat, foraging and spawning grounds, and as a migratory corridor. There is emerging recognition of the crucial role the Sargasso Sea plays in the wider ecosystem, ranging from the Atlantic Ocean to the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico; it contains substantial natural resources which could deliver considerable resultant socio-economic benefits.

As with all the world’s oceans, keeping the Sargasso Sea healthy and sustainably productive predominantly hinges on the balance between appropriate utilisation of these natural resources and the conservation of the biodiversity that comprise these resources. This balance is enabled by effective collaboration between the numerous actors undertaking conservation, stewardship, or commercial industrial activities.

The stewardship of the Sargasso Sea falls to the signatories of the [Hamilton Declaration²](#), who take a balanced approach to the conservation of this ecosystem and its sustainable use. To achieve this balance a very clear understanding of the human impact on this ecosystem is required, together with knowledge of the potential benefits resulting from sustainable management practices within a suitably collaborative and fair regulatory environment. Whilst high seas areas, like the Sargasso Sea, appear remote and seem as if they belong to no one, they are the responsibility of all – their condition is inextricably linked to the health of our entire planet.

The Sargasso Sea GEF-UNDP-UNESCO-IOC Project

The overall objective of this almost USD\$3M, 4-year Project is to facilitate a collaborative, cross-sectoral, and sustainable stewardship mechanism for the Sargasso Sea, through improvement of the knowledge base and strengthened frameworks for collaborative management and governance. As such this Project is focused on the sustainable utilisation and conservation of biodiversity in the Sargasso Sea. Increasing human use illustrates the importance and urgency of generating an evidence-based understanding of the cumulative impacts of human activities in this area. The impact of climate change, such as increased ocean acidification and reducing/changing ocean oxygen levels are now well studied and understood. But better understanding of the threats to the Sargasso Sea ecosystem and its marine life, and the impacts from direct human activity such as fishing, shipping, and other commercial activities like seabed exploration/exploitation, Sargassum harvesting, and cable-laying is also needed.

¹ The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is a global partnership among 183 countries, international institutions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and the private sector to address global environmental issues while supporting national sustainable development initiatives. It provides grants for projects related to six focal areas: biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation, the ozone layer, and persistent organic pollutants. The GEF International Waters focal area targets transboundary water systems, such as river basins with water flowing from one country to another, groundwater resources shared by several countries, or marine ecosystems bounded by more than one nation.

² The Hamilton Declaration (2014) is a non-binding political statement. The Signatories agree to hold a regular Meeting of Signatories and endorse the establishment of a Sargasso Sea Commission to encourage and facilitate voluntary collaboration toward the conservation of the Sargasso Sea.



To achieve this, the GEF Project has 4 discrete components, involving several contributory agencies and partners³. The first component, a detailed *Socio-Ecosystem Diagnostic Analysis (SEDA)*, is currently underway to produce science-based evidence of potential threats and their impacts on the Sargasso Sea ecosystem. Subsequently, a *Strategic Action Programme (SAP)* will identify the priority actions and strategic partnerships necessary to address these threats. Whilst the SAP will be negotiated, it will be endorsed by the key stakeholders of the Sargasso Sea, who are focused on strengthening the stewardship and conservation of this important marine ecosystem. Subsequently an *Implementation Roadmap* will be produced, detailing the partnerships and cooperation required to ensure sustainability of these natural resources. The final component will create defined *Knowledge Management* activities to allow clear communication to all stakeholders, whilst capturing lessons and best practices; this will ensure ongoing and effective Project *Monitoring and Evaluation*.

Advantages in contributing to this Project

One of the most fundamental underpinning characteristics of this Project is collaboration amongst the key stakeholders of the Sargasso Sea, be they *'Guardians'*, *'Users'* or *'Beneficiaries'*⁴. The high seas nature of the Sargasso Sea and its status as an Area Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ)⁵ means that any stewardship or governance measures put in place are voluntary. That said, whilst not mandatory, ever-increasing regulatory, economic, and societal pressures facing commercial industrial ocean users, make adherence to voluntary practices not just highly desirable but perhaps essential for their future business.

The engagement we seek is envisaged to consist of an initial online "one-to-one" discussion to fully introduce the Project, addressing any questions or concerns. This would be followed by larger cross-sector stakeholder engagement events, (in-person, on-line or hybrid), potentially aligned with other maritime-focused events to maximise participation, allowing discussion and debate amongst all parties and stakeholders. Taking place every 6 months or so⁶, these events will enable greater collaboration to increase common understanding.

As a result of this proactive cross-sector engagement particularly, but not exclusively, during the *Strategic Action Programme (SAP)* negotiation phase, you will have a voice. By explaining the commercial drivers and/or constraints related to your Sargasso Sea area activity, you will be able to inform and influence the debate whereby the Hamilton Declaration Signatories, supported by the Sargasso Sea Commissioners, reach decisions on appropriate stewardship measures. But your contribution to this project could be greater still and yet more impactful. As a Sargasso Sea user, you may be willing to contribute non-commercially sensitive environmental or ecosystem data of spatial/temporal-relevance, that could prove invaluable for the *Socio-Ecosystem Diagnostic Analysis (SEDA)* baseline being undertaken now, and/or for future scientific analyses.

Most crucially perhaps, by agreeing to engage you will be contributing to the protection of the unique and iconic ecosystem that is the Sargasso Sea, for future sustainable use by all.

Wider Applicability

This Project's successful demonstration of the sustainable use of natural resources alongside improved conservation of the Sargasso Sea marine ecosystem could have global applicability. Clear evidence of the positive impact of scientific monitoring, data-sharing and effective multi-stakeholder collaboration on socio-economic and food-security benefits, could provide a replicable model that could be employed in other high seas areas. As a result, organisations and commercial entities who have been involved in this Project could see significant economic and reputational advantages; we hope you are willing to become a part of this globally important endeavour.

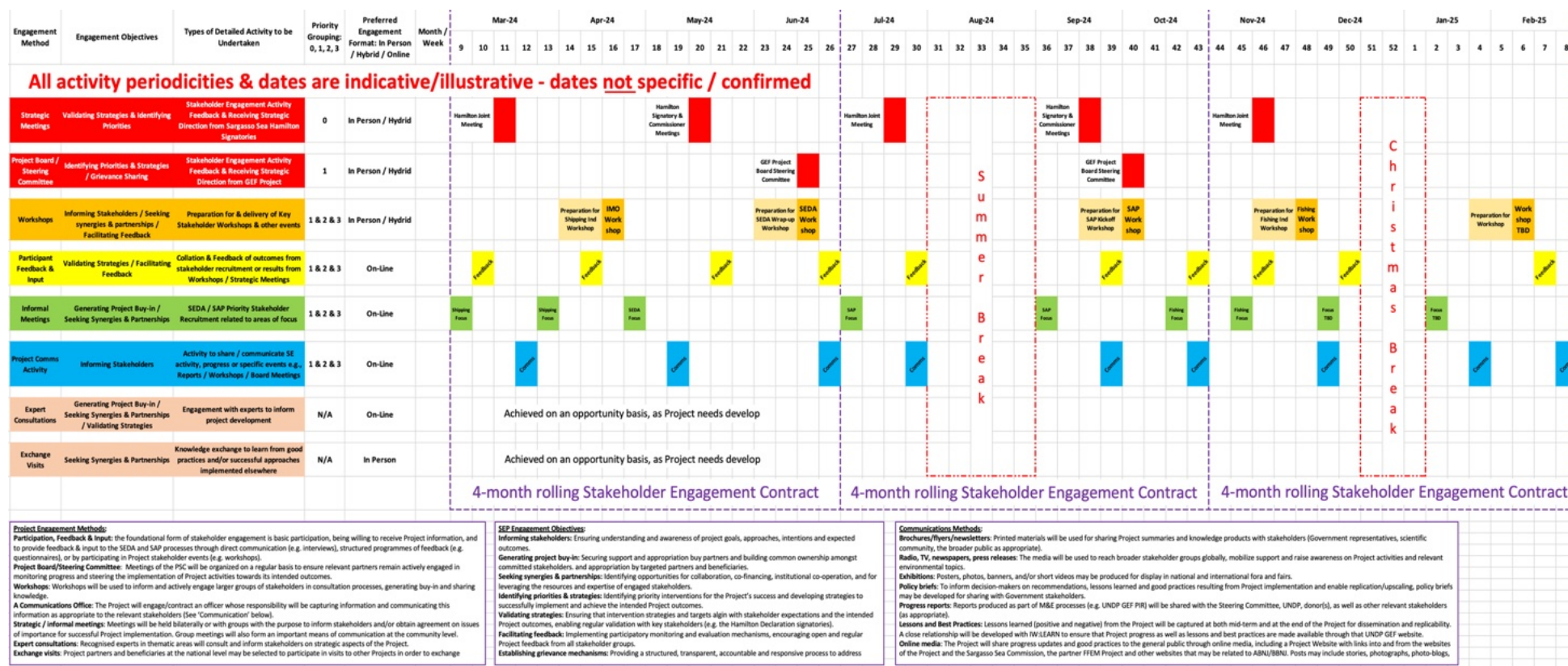
³ The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the GEF implementing agency for the project, and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (IOC-UNESCO) was selected to serve as UNDP Implementing Partner (Executing Agency). IOC will work closely with stakeholders for the project, including UNDP, the Sargasso Sea Commission and its Signatory Governments, GEF-eligible beneficiary countries, and other partners, including the Bermuda Institute of Ocean Sciences, the Duke University Marine Geospatial Ecology Lab, the Imperial College London Centre for Environmental Policy, the University of Edinburgh, the World Maritime University, and the French Global Environment Facility (FFEM).

⁴ *'Guardians'*: principally focused on the conservation of the Sargasso Sea, either directly or indirectly. *'Users'*: who realise direct or indirect commercial gain from legal exploitation of the natural resources within, or that pass through, the Sargasso Sea. *'Beneficiaries'*: all others globally, who derive benefit from the Sargasso Sea, whether consequent of its guardianship or commercial use, but are neither active *'Guardians'* nor *'Users'*.

⁵ Marine Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ), commonly called the high seas, are areas of ocean for which no one nation has sole responsibility for management. These make up 40% of the surface of our planet, comprising 64% of the surface of the oceans, and nearly 95% of its volume.

⁶ Up to 5 events envisaged: notionally during May/Jun 24; Sep/Oct 24; Mar/Apr 25; Sep/Oct 25; May/Jun 26.

4.2 Stakeholder Engagement Work-plan (Screenshot)



Notes:

1. The Master “live” Stakeholder Engagement work-plan is retained in Excel format; this is a screenshot for illustrative purposes only.
2. A detailed work-plan beyond Feb-25 has not been completed. As a “live” document this work-plan will be maintained and updated by the Project Core Stakeholder Engagement Team. It is recommended that each 12-monthly work-plan period is further divided into more manageable, more detailed 4-monthly work-plans, which can be created on a rolling, forward-looking basis. This will deliver a considerably more agile and effective work-plan as it will allow assimilation of new information and inputs from newly recruited Key Stakeholders, as well as lessons learned by the Project Team from earlier activity, to be rapidly applied, thus delivering far more effective stakeholder engagement.