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Third Meeting of the Scientific, Technical and
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concerning Pollution from Land based Sources and
Activities in the Wider Caribbean.

Miami, Florida, USA, 31 October to 2 November 2016

**REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON
ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT (SOCAR)**

For reasons of economy and the environment, Delegates are kindly requested to bring their copies of the Working and Information documents to the Meeting, and not to request additional copies.

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Working Group (WG) Members: Stephanie Adrian (Chair) – US; Andrew Horan, Troy Pierce, Hugh Sullivan, and Rona Rathod (US); Darryl Banjoo (RAC-IMA); Ana Karen Embarcadero Luna and Maria del Carmen Porras Perez Guerrero (Mexico); Angela Franklin and Frank Grogan (Guyana); Arelys Fuentes (Panama); Paulette Kolbusch and Danneille Townsend (Jamaica); Linroy Christian (Antigua and Barbuda); Marlen Perez (RAC-CIMAB); Marko Tosic (EAFIT University, Colombia)

Working Group focus – Development of first SOCAR for the Wider Caribbean Region taking into consideration the availability of data and sensitivities regarding sharing of national water quality data; identification of opportunities to enhance countries' abilities to monitor water quality both in the short term and the long term; provide the Secretariat with national data and share other relevant information on water quality standards, testing methodologies, and data quality, related to the water quality parameters agreed to by the LBS Parties.

Updates on activities and outputs approved by the LBS Parties at the LBS COP2 in Cartagena, Colombia:

- Development of the SOCAR report – A proposed outline for the State of the Convention Area Report (SOCAR) was approved by the Parties at LBS COP2 (Decision 5). Following COP 2, the Working Group (WG) met via teleconference eleven times and in-person once to further define the parameters of the SOCAR and to discuss the methodology for attaining and presenting data. UNEP CEP hired a consultant to steer the development of the SOCAR and to develop a draft report based on the input from the Working Group. The consultant, Ms. Sherry Heileman, effectively came on board in July 2016 and was able to meet via teleconference with the WG members twice before UNEP-CEP hosted an in-person workshop with the WG members, Ms. Heileman and other technical experts, to provide the input needed to begin the SOCAR development. The meeting was held in Jamaica from August 15-17, 2016. Regional and Global technical experts included representatives from the GEF-CLME+ program, the Global Programme of Action, GRID Arendal, and the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA).
- Submission of national water quality datasets- To date, eight countries have submitted water quality data to the Secretariat. Those include: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Guyana, Mexico, Trinidad and Tobago, and, the United States. Each dataset covers a range of parameters, only some of which are common among the countries and are therefore amenable to aggregating at the sub-regional level.
- Formation of Data Sub-group – During the in-person SOCAR development meeting in August 2016, the participants agreed that a sub-group to look specifically at the data

collection, data quality and data analysis was needed. The sub-group is chaired by Dr. Linroy Christian from Antigua and Barbuda and met once prior to the STAC via teleconference and exchanged information via email. A data call from the Secretariat was made to all the LBS countries for submission of national or, if not available, other data on the SOCAR parameters, by November 15th for the SOCAR along with a data template. The sub-group reviews with the Secretariat and contributes to the analysis of the data as needed based on the sub-group's Terms of Reference. Raw water quality data will NOT be presented in the SOCAR because of sensitivities associated with sharing of such data. Instead, data will be displayed in terms of the "Good-Fair-Poor" ratings agreed to by the Parties at the 2nd LBS COP. However, the Secretariat has requested the countries to submit the raw data since these are needed for the analysis such as aggregating national level data to the sub-regional scale. A second data sub-group teleconference took place the week prior to the LBS COP and an in-person meeting was held the day before the COP with those WG members who were attendance for the COP.

- Update on key areas of focus

- ✓ Delineation of Class I and Class II Waters – The WG agreed to designate all coastal waters as Class I and would determine a distance from the coast to designate as Class II waters. The WG understands that some coastal waters would most likely require a Class II designation and possibly some offshore waters with coral reefs might classify as Class I waters and this will be explored during the development of the SOCAR. For the purpose of the 1st SOCAR, countries would share national data when possible on Class I water quality parameters and global data from UNEP or other verified sources, if available, on Class II waters, also known as open waters. Further consideration would be given to possibilities for monitoring Class II waters in subsequent SOCARS.
- ✓ Data Sensitivity – The WG determined previously that the approach to addressing sensitive data issues, indicating poor water quality around beaches and environmentally sensitive areas, would be addressed by showing the analysis of the raw data as opposed to the raw data itself. The Parties approved using the "Good-Fair-Poor" distinction for the SOCAR parameters.

- Identification of linkages to complimentary efforts

- ✓ The Secretariat has provided to the WG various programmes, projects, activities, reports and fact sheets that are complimentary to the SOCAR, including data collection and assessment efforts of the CLME+; World Ocean Assessment; National Plans of Action; UNEP Global Environment Outlook (GEO); Transboundary Water Assessment Programme; Global International Waters Assessment and the Global and Regional Platforms for wastewater, nutrients and marine litter; UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's, goal 14 on oceans); Regional Seas indicators

- ✓ UNDP/GEF CLME+ and GEF IWeco projects provided resources to the Secretariat to host the in-person SOCAR development meeting in August 2016 in Jamaica and for hiring of the consultant.

Working Group products since STAC 2:

- Acceptable ranges for SOCAR parameters in Class I Waters to accompany the Acceptable Limits in Effluent Discharged into Class I Waters as stipulated in the Protocol
- Questionnaire regarding monitoring water quality and laboratory capacity
- List of optimal standard methodologies for monitoring SOCAR parameters
- LBS Working Group Draft Summary of Questionnaires submitted
- SOCAR-related documents
 - SOCAR methodology, annotated outline and workplan with roles and responsibilities
 - SOCAR reference parameters and sources of global socioeconomic datasets
 - SOCAR template and guidance for compilation and submission of national water quality and socioeconomic data

Potential LBS STAC Recommendations to the 3rd LBS COP for consideration:

1. Recommendation that Parties support inclusion of marine litter as a priority land based source of pollution in addition to wastewater and nutrients based on the associated Caribbean Platforms and the increased impact of these pollutants on coastal and marine ecosystems and human health.

1bis. Contracting Parties may wish to consider using the current pilot Trash Free Waters Initiative being implemented by the Secretariat in Jamaica and Panama as a model for developing similar activities aimed at reducing land-based sources of marine litter/solid waste/plastics in their respective countries.
2. Recommendation that Parties strengthen laboratory capacity within their own countries to monitor LBS parameters and to maximize the financial support provided from projects such as GEF IWeco and potentially GEF CReW+.
3. Recommendation that Parties agree that there may be health effects from microplastics, created upon degradation of plastic material, and to support efforts by the Secretariat to share information and research efforts aimed at developing monitoring methodologies for microplastics that should be incorporated into water quality monitoring programs. Many

of the issues relating to plastics and microplastics have been documented in recent UNEP reports and a fact sheet prepared by the Secretariat.

4. Recommendation related to the further development and finalization of the SOCAR – e.g. acceptance of the specific good-fair-poor ranges currently under development by the data sub-group, and submission of raw national water quality data, or other data if not available, on the understanding that these data will not be made public without prior written consent by the countries.
5. Recommendation to the Secretariat to work with Contracting Parties/Countries to identify/mobilize financial resources from existing projects and/or develop new project proposals to respond to the new priorities identified under SOCAR.

New Recommendations by the Working Group post-LBS STAC3:

1. Recommendation that Parties support continued work of LBS Working Group toward further development of the SOCAR and supporting activities.
2. Recommendation that Parties allow use of national or other available data if national data is lacking, for the purpose of development of the first SOCAR.
3. Countries that have not yet done so to submit national water quality data for SOCAR.
4. Countries take action to improve their capability for water quality monitoring/data collection and reporting.
5. Countries make an effort to classify their waters into Class I and Class II, as prescribed in Annex 3 of the LBS Protocol.