Tackling Sargassum in the Caribbean: A policy perspective

Dr. Cesar TORO

IOCARIBE
IOC of UNESCO Subcommission for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions
Western Tropical Atlantic Countries

Western Tropical Atlantic Continental Coastal countries and the Caribbean SIDS are two distinct regions from the ocean sciences capacity and economic development point of view. Nevertheless, both are greatly depending on the ocean and coastal resources.

Caribbean Island countries are classified as middle income countries and most are Small Island Developing States (SIDS). This situation is indeed unique and brings a different set of dimension and challenges in-terms of ocean sciences and resilience.

SIDS principal features - smallness in geographical size and population; insularity; low resilience and high vulnerability to natural and human-made disasters and the impact of the global climate change; and high dependence on tourism.
A global framework that will ensure Ocean Science can help governments and societies achieve the major goals of our generation.

UN PROCESSES for SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- Biological Diversity/Aichi Biodiversity targets (CBD)
- Law of the Sea (UNCLOS + BBNJ + UNFSA)
- SIDS Action (SAMOA Pathway)
- Disaster Risk Reduction SENDAI Framework
- Climate Change/Paris Agreement (UNFCCC)
Sargassum Blooming: An emerging Issue

A new normal?

During the last decade, large quantities, reaching thousands of tons of sargassum have overwhelmed beaches throughout the Atlantic, harming coastal ecosystems and the economies of coastal communities. Since 2011, influxes of sargassum have become a recurrent event in both the Caribbean Sea and West Africa, and seem to be a “new normal” due in part to climate change and variability (Marechal et al. 2017).
Sargassum Blooming: An emerging Issue

A new normal?

These events have sparked off major discussions, and in particular the tourism and fisheries sectors demanded answers that required countries to assess their capacities to understand the phenomenon, to predict / forecast, manage and adapt.

A series of activities and actions have been taking place at national, sub-regional and regional levels addressing:

- Science and Technology
- Marine and Coastal Policy
- Management
Some Activities 1/2

- CERMES (UWI) 'Sargassum Management Brief' (Hinds et al. 2016)
- First regional Sargassum Symposium UWI September 2015.
- The Caribbean Sea Commission - A sargassum special session at a symposium 2015
- IOCARIBE of IOC UNESCO XIV Session Cartagena Colombia 2017
- GCFI Special session on sargassum every year since 2016 at their annual science meetings.
- Second regional Sargassum Symposium FAO and UWI 2018.
Some Activities 2/2

- IOC of IOC, IOCARIBE GOOS, GEO Blue Planet, UNEP CAR/CU and partners: Development of an integrated sargassum information and forecasting system for the Wider Caribbean 2018
- IOC of IOC UNESCO XV Session Aruba 2019
- The United Nations Environment - Caribbean Environment Programme (UNEP-CEP)
- 1st International Conference on Sargassum Guadeloupe France October 2019
- IOC of UNESCO has partnered with UNEP, the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management (GPNM), the IOC-SCOR GlobalHAB Programme and the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP) Task Team on Sargassum to organize a series of webinars on Sargassum in the Caribbean and West Africa 2020.
Sargassum Management Plans and Guidelines

(some examples)

National Plans:

- Dominican Republic
- Grenada
- Mexico
- Puerto Rico
- St. Kitts and Nevis
- St Lucia
- St. Vincent and the Grenadines
- USA

Sub-regional and Regional

- CRFM
- OECS
- ACS
- UNEP CAR/CU
Conclusions

• “The sustainable management of sargassum influxes will require both local action and regional **co-ordination and collaboration**, beyond areas under national jurisdiction. A better understanding of the geographic origin, causes, spatial and temporal patterns, management options, as well as the economic potential of sargassum is necessary if adaptive strategies are to be implemented” *(Hinds et al., 2016)*.

• “There is a critical need for comprehensive management planning for increased resilience to and benefit from sargassum influxes. Sargassum management planning should be addressed in the context of a phenomenon that is both currently a threat and opportunity.” *(Cox, et al., 2019)*

• A strong Inter-regional cooperation between the **Wider Caribbean** (Western Tropical Atlantic) and **West Africa** countries is needed.

• UN Decade of Ocean Sciences for Sustainable Development 2021-2030
감사합니다!
¡Muchas gracias!
Merci beaucoup!
Thank you!
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Спасибо
谢谢

ioc.unesco.org
iocaribe.ioc-unesco.org/
c.toro@unesco.org