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Fourth Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP) to  
the Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land-Based  
Sources and Activities (LBS) in the Wider Caribbean  
Region

Roatan, Honduras, 4 June 2019

**PAPER ON EXPANDED ROLE OF REGIONAL ACTIVITY CENTRES  
TO THE CARTAGENA CONVENTION AND ITS PROTOCOLS WITHIN THE  
WIDER CARIBBEAN REGION**

*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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## 1. Background

The establishment and operations of Regional Activity Centres (RACs) and related Regional Activity Networks (RANs) have the potential of becoming one of the most effective ways for governments and CEP partner organizations to implement cooperative measures and programmes called for by the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols. Overall, RACs and RANs represent an institutional framework of technical cooperation consisting of regional and national institutions selected for the purpose of coordinating the implementation of CEP activities in a systematic manner.

The development of RACs and RANs was initially proposed to, and accepted by, CEP Member Governments in 1992 at the Sixth IGM through the presentation and adoption of the 1992 Concept Paper (UNEP(OCA)/CAR WG. 10/3). The RAC RAN Guidelines, adopted through Decision IV.1 of the *Thirteenth Intergovernmental Meeting on the Action Plan for the Caribbean Environment Programme and Tenth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region* held in September 2008 in Antigua and Barbuda, provides guidance on the establishment and operation of RACs and RANs under the Cartagena Convention. The guidelines are intended to assist Contracting Parties, other participating governments, organizations or institutions responsible for RACs and RANs (existing or proposed), and the Secretariat of the Cartagena Convention in the evaluation of the administration and implementation of existing RACs and RANs and to evaluate new RAC and RAN proposals as they arise. These guidelines are recommendatory in nature and not binding under international law.

In accordance with Decision IX, of the Tenth IGM, 7-11 May 2002, two RACs were established to support the Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities (LBS). These were established within the existing institutions of the Centro de Ingeniería y Manejo Ambiental de Bahías y Costas (CIMAB) in Cuba and the Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA) in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Second Meeting of the Interim Scientific Technical and Advisory Committee (ISTAC) to the LBS Protocol, held from 12 to 16 May 2003 in Managua, Nicaragua, decided to establish a Steering Committee for the LBS RACs and agreed on its composition, terms of reference and reporting requirements. Delays in the formal signing of host agreements has delayed the operationalization of these Steering Committees.

## 2. LBS RAC Support to the Secretariat

The LBS RACs have provided significant technical support to Contracting Parties and the Secretariat in the development and implementation of biennial Work Plans since 2002.

Some of those activities have included *inter alia* support for the:

1. Implementation of GEF Projects including IWCAM, REPCar, CReW, IWEco and CLME+;
2. Development of CEP Technical Reports (see summarized list below);
3. Monitoring and Assessment Working Group, which coordinated the development of the State of Convention Area Report (SOCAR) on pollution;
4. Host and/or conduct of training workshops on, nutrients, land-based sources of pollution, methodologies and indicators.
5. Convening of national and regional promotional workshops on the ratification and implementation of the LBS Protocol;
6. Design and development of GIS maps, as well as promotional and awareness material about the LBS Protocol;
7. Provision of training in GIS, environmental monitoring and laboratory analysis;

8. Convening and/or participating as resource persons in technical workshops on pollution and on the ratification and implementation of the LBS Protocol.

Some of the CEP Technical Reports developed with significant input and/or coordination of the LBS RACs include:

CEP TR 80	The LBS Protocol: Difficulties and Challenges for GEF-CReW project participating countries
CEP TR 78	GEF CReW: Assessment Report for select Countries in respect of the protocol concerning pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities (LBS Protocol)
CEP TR 67	Regional Network in Marine Science and Technology for the Caribbean: Know Why Network
CEP TR 57	Guidelines for the Collection, Preparation and Analysis of Organic Contaminants in Environmental Samples
CEP TR 56	Baseline Analysis on Domestic Wastewater Management in the Wider Caribbean Region
CEP TR 52	Domestic and Industrial Pollutant Loads and Watershed Inflows in the Wider Caribbean Region (Updated Technical Report 33)
CEP TR 49	Assessment and Management of Environmental Pollution Atlas
CEP TR 46	Opciones de tratamiento y disposición final de residuales domésticos y su relación con el Protocolo Fuentes Terrestres de Contaminación Marina (Región del Gran Caribe)
CEP TR 45	National Programmes of Action for the Protection of the Coastal and Marine Environment from Land-based Sources of Pollution: The Caribbean Experience
CEP TR 44	Needs Assessment Guidance to Develop National Plans for Domestic Wastewater Pollution Reduction
CEP TR 42	Proceedings of the Workshop on Adopting, Applying and Operating Environmentally Sound Technologies for Domestic and Industrial Wastewater Treatment for the Wider Caribbean Region
CEP TR 41	Best Management Practices for Agricultural Non-Point Sources of Pollution
CEP TR 40	Appropriate Technology for Sewage Pollution Control in the Wider Caribbean Region
CEP TR 29	Environmental Impact Assessment for the Establishment of a Marina/Small Craft Harbour in Southwest Tobago

### 3. Regional Activity Networks (RANs)

Under Section IX of the RAC/RAN Guidelines, “**Criteria for the Selection of RAC Institutions**”, specific criteria were identified for the selection of RAC Institutions. These include:

- Degree of Interest and Commitment to Cartagena Convention, Protocol, and RAC Objectives;
- Capacity to Perform the Function of a RAN: Technical, Human and Financial Resources, Geographic and Language Distribution, and Financial Capacity.

Several regional institutions have met the above criteria and been actively involved in supporting the work of the Cartagena Convention and the LBS Protocol. It is important that the COP recognizes these agencies as part of the LBS RAN.

#### **4. Enhancing the role of the LBS RACs**

While the LBS RACs have supported implementation of the Secretariat's biennial work plan approved at the COPs and IGM, it was envisaged that the RACs would play a greater role to mobilize financial resources, develop their own work plans, and/or be responsible for implementation of projects that assisted Contracting Parties in meeting their national obligations under the Cartagena Convention and the LBS Protocol.

The Secretariat has recently developed an updated CEP Strategy and there has been an increased demand of limited Secretariat staff to be more involved in resource mobilization, project development and implementation. There is in addition to increased reporting requirements, greater administrative demands and the ongoing provision of technical advice to Contracting Parties, as well as the preparation and implementation of new projects, e.g. GEF Projects and potentially Green Climate Fund Projects.

The recent signing of the host agreement between the United Nations Environment Programme and the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for hosting of the LBS RAC at the IMA and the expected signing of the Host Agreement with the Government of Cuba for CIMAB offers the Conference of Parties an opportunity to enhance and streamline the role of LBS Regional Activity Centres in the development and implementation of Programmes, Projects and Activities that support Contracting Parties in meeting their obligations under the LBS Protocol.

The RAC/RAN Guidelines provide specific guidance for the LBS RACs on the development of strategies and workplans which the Secretariat recommends could be operationalized during the 2019-2020 biennium. These include the development of LBS RAC Strategic Plans covering a six-year period, and which would be presented and approved at the next meeting of Contracting Parties of the Cartagena Convention.

These Strategic Plans would include:

- (a) Mission and Vision Statement for the RACs;
- (b) Objectives
- (c) Current landscape in the WCR:
  - 1) Trends and developments on pollution including consideration of the findings of the State of Convention Area Report; Regional Nutrients Reduction Strategy, Action Plan and Feasibility Assessment, Regional Marine Litter Action Plan & Strategy, and pollution priorities for the Wider Caribbean Region;
  - 2) Challenges countries are facing in addressing the pollution problems;
  - 3) Existing strategies and action plans that inform the actions of the RAC/RANs such as the new CLME+ Strategic Action Programme, updated CEP Strategy and recently adopted LBS/SPAW Road Map
- (d) Actions the RACs/RANs will take to help countries address the challenges. This will include the performance indicators and/or measurable environmental results that countries should measure and how RACs/RANs can help countries implement, consistent with the AMEP sub-programme workplan.

While the LBS RACs will continue to provide significant technical support and assist in the implementation of projects and/or activities as approved by the Contracting Parties for the 2019-2020 Work Plan and Budget, it is proposed, that in accordance with the RAC/RAN Guidelines, each LBS RAC, in consultation with the Secretariat and in accordance with development of their own Strategic

Plans, will also prepare a detailed biannual work plan and budget for approval/endorsement at the next meeting of Contracting Parties scheduled for end of 2020.

#### **5. Proposed LBS COP Decision(s)**

The Conference of Parties is being invited to consider the above and the recommendations provided below for informing a possible decision:

1. Request that the LBS RACs/RANs develop a Strategic Plan in consultation with the Secretariat and Contracting Parties;
2. Based on the recommendations of the LBS STAC, Decisions of the LBS COP and recommendations of reports such as SOCAR, assist the Secretariat in the mobilization of funds and development of specific projects and activities to respond to the needs to the Convention and the LBS Protocol;
3. Consider the formal recognition of specific regional technical agencies as part of the RAN. These agencies have played a significant support role to multiple pollution-related projects and activities implemented by the Secretariat. The following are agencies are proposed:
  - a. Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute as co-host for the Caribbean Regional Node for Marine Litter;
  - b. Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) who has served as co-executing agency for the Secretariat for the GEF IWCAM and IWEco Project;
  - c. INVEMAR
  - d. CATHALAC