

# Sargassum in the Caribbean and West Africa: *Key Challenges, Responses and Collaboration*

## Webinar Agenda

TUESDAY, 26 May 2020

East Africa: 17:00-18:30; West Africa: 15:00-16:30; Jamaica: 09:00-10:30

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### **BACKGROUND:**

Since 2011 there has been an explosion in the quantity of Sargassum Seaweed reaching the shores of countries in the Caribbean and West Africa inflicting severe socio-economic impacts, particularly to the tourism sector and coastal fisheries. **Pelagic Sargassum** is free-floating brown seaweed that blossoms naturally in the warm waters of the Sargasso Sea of the Northern Atlantic Ocean. The unprecedented recent invasion of Sargassum seaweed on coastal shores in West Africa and Caribbean shores is being attributed to factors that include warming of the ocean due to global climate change, discharge of nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus) from agricultural run-off and wastewater originating from point sources and from major river basins such as the Congo and Amazon Rivers, and the deposition of iron and nutrient-rich Saharan dust on the ocean.

Tackling this trans-Atlantic problem will require **regional and global coordinated action beyond national jurisdictions**. This will include addressing the source of the problem, that being nutrient loading and climate change stressors and the possibility where practical, collection of floating seaweed mats before reaching sensitive coastal areas. Implementing regional adaptive strategies will require greater understanding of the seasonal landing of seaweeds, including their growth dynamics, and their economic potential use. There is currently active research and experimentation on use of the seaweed as bio-fuel, soil ameliorants, fertilizers and livestock feed, opening-up possibilities for alternative 'green-economy' livelihoods for coastal communities. Recent reports on the invasion of Sargassum in West Africa and the Caribbean suggest that it is becoming a regional phenomenon, negatively impacting aquatic resources, fisheries, waterway, shorelines and tourism, with ecological and socio-economic impacts.

- a. **Ecological** – Unfortunately, there is very little knowledge of the ecological impacts of invasive seaweeds on the ecosystem in general which needs to be assessed. The assumption however is that massive influx of seaweed has resulted to potential disturbance of marine life living in the coastal zone (dead fish and sea turtles have been found when Sargassum washes onto the shore in massive quantities, showing the potential correlation, beach fouling, and coastal dead zones.
- b. **Socio-economic** – Massive Sargassum deposits on beaches has negative impact on the socioeconomic livelihood (tourism, fishery industries etc.) of coastal communities, hence the need to develop regional cooperation on ocean governance and ensure an ecologically friendly management (transformation and value-addition to animal feed and fertilizers etc.) intervention of the Sargassum seaweed.

The purpose of this webinar series, is to highlight key challenges, responses and collaboration of Sargassum in the context of the Caribbean and West Africa, as well as highlight efforts of the GESAMP Working Group on Sargassum, and build on outcomes of the recent Sargassum International Conference (Guadeloupe, October 2019).

## **WEBINAR AGENDA:**

### **Sargassum in the Caribbean and West Africa: Key Challenges, Responses and Collaboration**

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Time (Kenya time)	Agenda item	Discussant/Facilitator
17:00 - 17:10	Welcome remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Habib El-Habr, UNEP GPA</li> <li>Henrik Enevoldsen, IOC/UNESCO</li> </ul> <i>Facilitator: Joana Akrofi, UNEP Science Division</i>
17:10 - 17:30	Sargassum: Key issues and challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peter Kershaw, GESAMP</li> <li>Brian LaPointe, Marine Scientist</li> </ul> <i>Facilitator: Joana Akrofi, UNEP Science Division</i>
17:30 - 17:50	Sargassum: Regional Reflections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Caribbean Region</li> <li>West Africa (Abidjan Convention)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ileana Lopez, Cartagena Convention Secretariat, CEP, SPAW Protocol</li> <li>Sandrine Pivard, SPAW RAC Director</li> <li>Jaques Abe, Abidjan Convention</li> </ul> <i>Facilitator: Mahesh Pradhan, UNEP GPA GPNM</i>
17:50 – 18:00	Research Update on Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elisa Berdalet, Institute of Marine Sciences (ICM-CSIC)</li> </ul> <i>Facilitator: Mahesh Pradhan, UNEP GPA GPNM</i>
18:00 - 18:20	Sargassum: Challenges, Responses and Collaboration Q&A	<i>Facilitator: Mahesh Pradhan, UNEP GPA GPNM</i>
18:20 - 18:30	Conclusions and way forward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joana Akrofi, UNEP Science Division</li> <li>Mahesh Pradhan, UNEP GPA GPNM</li> </ul>

Registrations online at: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/812715421760261645>

For more information: [Milcah.Ndegwa@un.org](mailto:Milcah.Ndegwa@un.org)