



منظمة الأغذية  
والزراعة  
للأمم المتحدة

联合国  
粮食及  
农业组织

Food  
and  
Agriculture  
Organization  
of  
the  
United  
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Organisation  
des  
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pour  
l'alimentation  
et  
l'agriculture

Продовольственная и  
сельскохозяйственная  
организация  
Объединенных  
Наций

Organización  
de las  
Naciones  
Unidas  
para la  
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Alimentación

## WESTERN CENTRAL ATLANTIC FISHERY COMMISSION (WECAFC)

### SEVENTEENTH SESSION

Miami, United States of America, 15-18 July 2019

**Institutionalizing a regional collaborative, integrated mechanism for assessment and reporting on the state of the marine environment and its contributions to a sustainable ocean economy in the wider Caribbean region**

The purpose of this paper is to inform participants of the 17<sup>th</sup> Session of the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) about the ongoing collaborative efforts to develop and institutionalize a regional, long-term mechanism for the integrated assessment and periodic reporting on the State of the Marine Environment and Associated Economies (SOMEE), including fisheries; and to request the member countries' continued support for and participation in this process.

#### **Suggested Action by the Commission**

Noting WECAFC Resolution WECAFC/XVII/2019/18 related to the CLME+ SOMEE, FAO-WECAFC member countries are invited to:

- Request the Secretariat to continue to collaborate and coordinate with its member countries, the CLME+ PCU and ICM members as well as with the Interim Fisheries Coordination Mechanism (IFCM) to support the institutionalization of the SOMEE mechanism, including pursuing alignment and synergy between the WECAFC-SOFIA and SOMEE reporting efforts and the incorporation of those elements of the SOMEE mechanism that fall within the WECAFC's area of mandate into the WECAFC's work programme;
- Share data and information with WECAFC for preparation of the SOMEE fisheries sections and subchapters; and
- Request the Secretariat to help facilitate and encourage review by WECAFC member countries of draft SOMEE fisheries-related content, including the development process of the spiny lobster subchapter.

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The State of the Marine Environment and Associated Economies (SOMEE) is envisaged as a key regional mechanism to support decision making at the regional and sub-regional levels. Its aim is to create awareness, track progress (including towards the Sustainable Development Goals), and inform and trigger action (for example, by supporting enhanced, synergistic policy development, decision-making and programming). SOMEE will not only assess environmental problems, but will also highlight opportunities for the contribution of the region's living marine resources to human wellbeing, development of sustainable blue economies, and disaster risk reduction as well as climate change mitigation and resilience. The paper also aims to highlight the proposed further improvement, alignment, mainstreaming and expansion of regional reporting efforts on fisheries resources, including those undertaken through the WECAFC, into this integrated reporting mechanism. For more information on SOMEE, see [SOMEE Information Booklet](#)

The aforementioned efforts are being supported through the UNDP/GEF Project (2015-2021) "*Catalysing Implementation of the Strategic Action Programme for the Sustainable Management of shared Living Marine Resources in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem*" (CLME+ Project). This Project is supporting the implementation of the politically-endorsed 10-year (2015-2025) CLME+ Strategic Action Programme (SAP) to assist the region in achieving its aspirations towards climate resilient socio-economic development including a sustainable ocean economy. To date the SAP has been endorsed by 26 countries, covering also 8 Overseas Territories. Specifically, the SAP addresses root causes of habitat degradation, marine pollution, and unsustainability of fisheries, which were identified as priority marine environmental issues through Transboundary Diagnostic Analyses (TDAs) conducted under the predecessor UNDP/GEF "CLME" Project (2009-2014). Two of these root causes relate to weaknesses in governance arrangements and inadequate (access) to data and information to support enhanced decision-making.

To address the first root cause, efforts are currently being undertaken to consolidate a region-wide, multi-level collaborative network, consisting of governmental departments and Inter-Governmental Organizations (IGOs) with a core mandate on the marine environment (Figure 1): the CLME+ Regional Governance Framework (RGF). As part of these efforts, a consultancy is currently being facilitated through the CLME+ Project to determine the form and functions of a (permanent) Coordination Mechanism for integrated ocean governance.

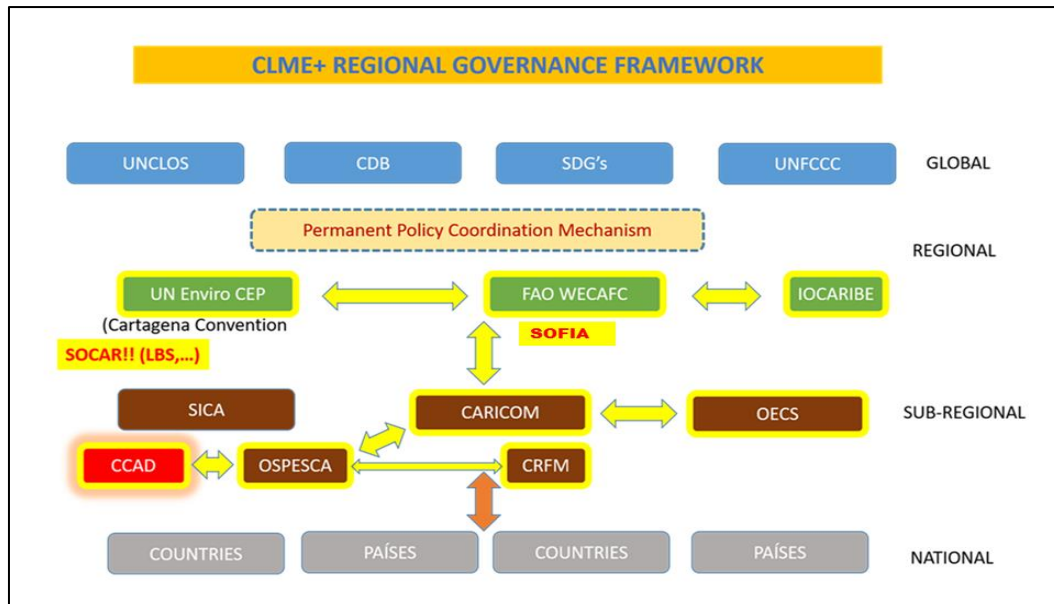


Figure 1. CLME+ Regional Governance Framework

In the meantime, a CLME+ SAP Interim Coordination Mechanism (ICM) has been established among eight regional IGOs, among which is FAO-WECAFC (Figure 2). The ICM has as part of its mandate: supporting the development and institutionalization of the SOMEE reporting mechanism. The CLME+ Project Coordination Unit acts as the (interim) Secretariat for the mechanism.

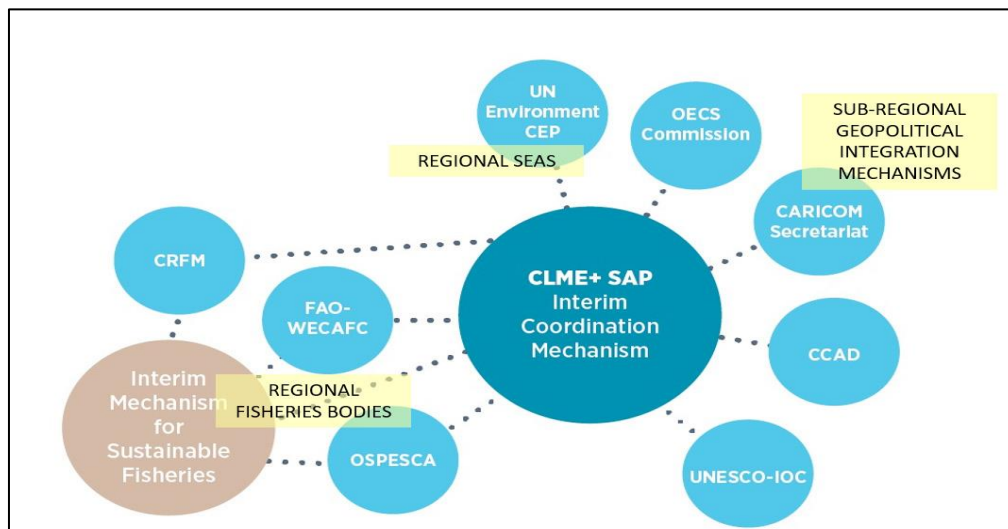


Figure 2. Structure of the CLME+ SAP Interim Coordination Mechanism

### INSTITUTIONALIZING A MECHANISM FOR ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING ON THE STATE OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT AND ASSOCIATED ECONOMIES

In response to the call by the CLME+ SAP for the enhancement of the capacity to monitor, assess and report on the state of the marine ecosystems in the CLME+ region, the CLME+ Project is supporting the development and institutionalization of the SOMEE mechanism. While several regional organizations are mandated to undertake assessments of the status of the marine

environment or associated living resources, assessments have been often “ad hoc” and fragmented, and have not explicitly explored the link between environmental state and governance, human wellbeing, and economies in an integrated manner. Another constraint is that the assessment methodologies including analytical frameworks and approaches vary across thematic areas and responsible organizations, and even between subsequent reporting efforts. These inconsistencies make it challenging to produce and periodically reproduce integrated, holistic assessments that allow tracking of progress and measuring distance-to-target, and as such maximizing usefulness for enhanced decision-making. SOMEE aims to address this by building on and integrating existing reporting efforts, such as the FAO State of Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA) and the UN Environment Cartagena Convention state of land-based pollution and marine habitats, and by allowing the region to formally adopt a standardized reporting approach.

Sustainability of the SOMEE approach will be accomplished by embedding the collaborative, periodic development of the SOMEE reports within the mandates of the IGOs that form the foundation for the CLME+ RGF (CLME+ SAP ICM). Overall coordination of the SOMEE mechanism is expected to be one of the core responsibilities of the Coordination Mechanism.

### **SOMEE approach**

SOMEE will adopt a story-telling approach by addressing a series of linked questions (Figure 3) to convey key messages, building on the “DPSIR” Driver (D) - Pressure (P) - Status (S) - Impact (I) - Response (R) Analytical Framework and the Governance Effectiveness Assessment Framework to explore current, past and possible future conditions of marine habitats, biodiversity and fish stocks, what this means for human wellbeing and our economies, and why current (or future) conditions may be different from what society desires and from the targets it sets for itself. SOMEE will also explore what has been and can be done to progressively close the gap between current conditions and our societal aspirations. The annotated outline of the SOMEE report, which is structured along the DPSIR Framework, has been endorsed by the CLME+ countries and the constituents of the respective ICM members.

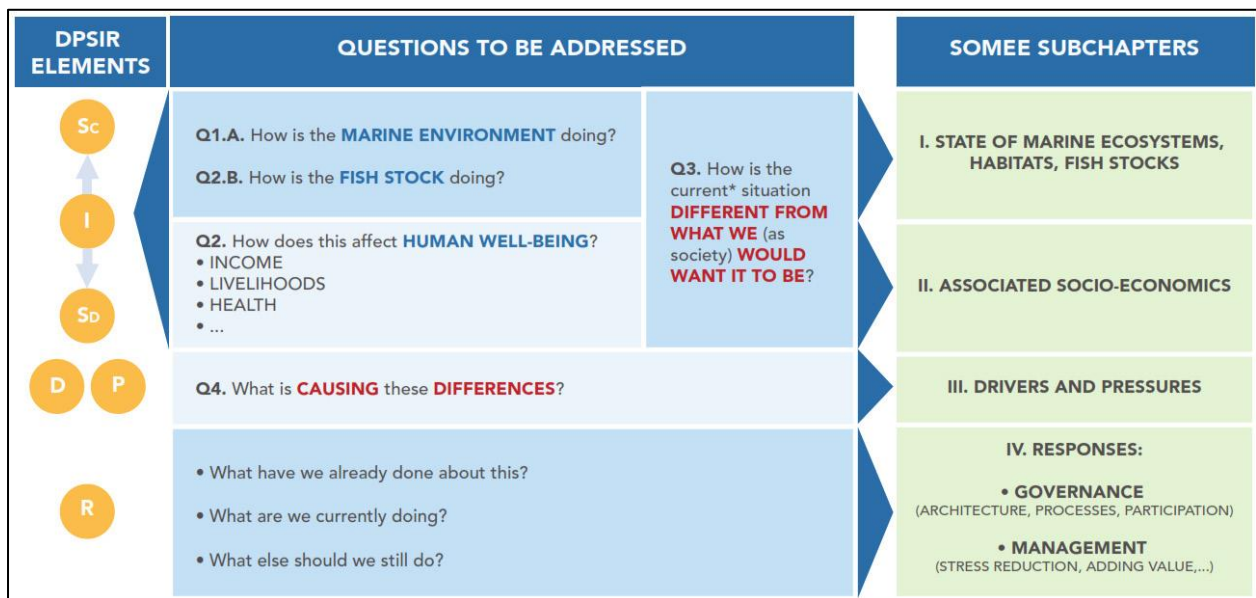


Figure 3. Questions to be addressed by the SOMEES assessment

### Development of the first version of the SOMEES report

A phased approach is being adopted for the development of the SOMEES report, with initial focus on development of a sub-set of chapters and subchapters:

- Introduction (PCU and ICM, among others)
- State of the marine environment: Land-based pollution (UN Environment-Caribbean Environment Programme) and overview of fish stocks (FAO-WECAFC)
- Ecosystem approach to fisheries for the Caribbean spiny lobster (OSPESCA)
- Ecosystem-based management for the Reefs Sub-Ecosystem- Status of nearshore marine habitats (UN Environment- Caribbean Environment Programme)

The other SOMEES subchapters will be developed at a later stage. All chapters are expected to highlight the linkage between living marine resources, and associated socio-economic benefits and/or societal aspirations. The Caribbean spiny lobster subchapter is being developed as a prototype, which is to be used as an example for the development of the other fisheries-related subchapters of the report. WECAFC constituents will be invited to review the spiny lobster subchapter, and feedback and guidance on the “way forward” will be sought at the WECAFC Session, so that a consolidated example chapter can be produced that serves to steer further SOMEES development.

The main SOMEES products will be a static report, which will be periodically updated, and a more dynamic, online version of the report. Launch of the first SOMEES report is expected to take place in early 2020.

## **WECAFC contributions to the first SOMEE report**

WECAFC is a key partner in the development and institutionalization of the SOMEE mechanism, given the relevance of its mandate and its anticipated role under the CLME+ RGF. Contributions to SOMEE will be provided by Member States through the WECAFC Secretariat as well as by the Secretariat. Of particular importance is FAO's global SOFIA and WECAFC-SOFIA process and reports, which share common target audiences with the SOMEE. WECAFC has committed to contributing fisheries-related content for the SOMEE report and to provide material for the SOMEE online portal, drawing on FAO fisheries statistics and other sources of information, and in alignment with their formal mandate and role in the region.

Whereas the WECAFC-SOFIA is expected to contribute key material for the development of the SOMEE sections on fisheries, the information is expected to be expanded by FAO to more fully embrace the different elements of the SOMEE narrative (status and trends of governance and management actions, drivers and pressures, socio-economics).

## **Requirements for institutionalizing and sustaining the SOMEE mechanism**

Institutionalizing the SOMEE mechanism will require the following, among others:

- Supporting the establishment of a regional coordinating body (Secretariat of the CLME+ Coordinating Mechanism).
- Assigning coordination of periodic SOMEE development as part of the latter mechanisms'/body's mandate.
- Formally adopting a common assessment methodology, reporting structure and report development approach across the ICM membership.
- Formalizing commitments by partners, for example, long-term obligation reflected in institutional mandates, medium term strategies and work programmes, meeting decisions of governing bodies, and modified terms of reference (e.g., Joint Working Groups, scientific committees).
- Decisions by individual IGO's (including WECAFC) conducive to such institutionalization process

Sustaining the SOMEE mechanism will require the following, among others:

- Filling data gaps through research and improved data collecting and monitoring programmes.
- Strengthening human and institutional capacity for assessment and reporting.
- Meeting financial needs to adequately conduct the assessment and reporting exercise.