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## SARGASSUM INFLUX CHAMPIONS: Civil Society on the frontline

### KEY MESSAGES:

- The sargassum crisis is likely to continue into the unforeseen future.
- Responses to addressing the issue have generally been reactive rather than proactive.
- Significant gaps remain in information and understanding, as well as effectiveness of response strategies.
- There is general consensus that part of the response should consider influxes an economic opportunity as much as a threat.
- The arena is now very dynamic with the entry of many players with varying, sometimes competing interests.
- No formal attempt has been made to explore opportunities for promoting synergies to avoid unnecessary duplication.

Civil society organisations (CSOs) have an important role to play in:

- Shifting mindsets to view sargassum as an opportunity rather than a threat.
- Supporting the science-policy interface through research and development initiatives.
- Advancing innovation in the development of cutting edge technology to promote effective clean-up/harvest operations.
- Fostering innovation in the development of sargassum uses.
- Advocating for a harmonised regulatory framework to support sargassum product development.

This summary document is based on the updated UNEP-CEP Sargassum White Paper. The brief:

- Provides key messages that highlight the complexity of the sargassum crisis in the region.
- Details the role civil society can play in addressing the sargassum issue and exploring opportunities.
- Outlines notable ongoing initiatives being championed by civil society organisations (CSOs) in the Caribbean.
- Highlights important civil society players in the Caribbean region.
- Presents priority actions for CSOs aimed at supporting adaptation and resilience to this phenomenon.

## Interventions:

In the last decade, CSOs in the Caribbean have been making strides in leading note-worthy sargassum related initiatives. Notable initiatives include:

-  Beach clean ups
-  Communication products
-  Social media engagement
-  Podcasts
-  Workshops, symposia, conferences
-  Webinars
-  Art advocacy initiatives
-  Research and development
-  Monitoring and Forecasting initiatives
-  Innovations in Collection/Harvesting equipment
-  Development of sargassum uses
-  Implementation of projects and programmes in collaboration with government partners. Click [here](#) for more information.

## Champions:

Several regional CSOs, NGOs, and academic institutions have been collaborating on the initiatives outlined previously. These include but are not limited to:




Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism  
Caribbean Natural Resources Institute  
Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organisations  
Caribbean Water and Wastewater Association  
Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute  
Marine Conservation without Borders  
The Nature Conservancy  
Waitt Institute

### ACADEMIA

Greater Antilles: DR – Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo  
CIBIMA; PR – Universidad de Puerto Rico  
French Caribbean – Université des Antilles  
Central America: UNAM (Mexico); University of Belize  
Environmental Research Institute  
USA: Florida International University, University of South Florida,  
University of Southern Mississippi, Texas A&M University



## Policy Actions

-  Employ innovative communication tools to raise the awareness of the general public and shift mindsets to view sargassum as an opportunity.
-  Advocate for public-private partnerships to support applied research for sargassum product development.
-  Promote synergies between existing initiatives to avoid duplication.
-  Address disconnects and gaps in coordination and collaboration through networking and improved inter-sectoral linkages.
-  Advocate for sargassum-specific policies, protocols and standards to support sustainable sargassum-related businesses and protect public and environmental health.

## Other tools and information sources

- [UNEP-CEP Sargassum White Paper 2021](#)
- [UNEP-CEP SPAW RAC Sargassum online forum](#)
- [SargNet Listserve: join here](#)
- [Sargassum hub](#)
- [UWI-CERMES website](#)
- [Sargassum Podcast](#)



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