

# What is the SOCAR and how does it support policy makers?

## What's at stake?

The annual economic value of the ocean to the Wider Caribbean Region<sup>1,2</sup> is estimated conservatively as **US\$407 billion**, with **US\$53 billion** of this being for the Island States and Territories. Caribbean coral reef-associated tourism is valued at **US\$7.9 billion** and fisheries at **US\$5 billion**

<sup>1,2</sup> Patil et al (2016). <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/25061>; Spalding et al. 2018. <https://oceanwealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Reef-Adjacent-Tourism-Value-Caribbean-Study.pdf>

The *State of the Cartagena Convention Area: An Assessment of Marine Pollution from Land-based Sources and Activities in the Wider Caribbean Region (SOCAR)*<sup>3</sup> is the first regional study of how pollution from land-based sources (LBS) negatively affects the coastal and marine environment, what this means for our livelihoods, and economic and social wellbeing. It provides a quantitative baseline for monitoring and reporting under the Cartagena Convention and LBS Protocol. The report gives specific recommendations for local, national, sub-regional and regional actions to reduce marine pollution.

The SOCAR shows that **human health and the economic sectors upon which Caribbean people depend, such as tourism, are at significant risk due to marine pollution.** The report indicates that:

- **Poor agricultural practices** are the most important anthropogenic source of nutrients in our coastal waters.
- The **release of untreated domestic wastewater** into our coastal waters threatens the region's marine environment, public health, and sustainable development.
- **Contaminants emitted by industrial activities bioaccumulate in the marine food chain**; human hair samples from Caribbean islands show high concentrations of mercury.
- **Urgent action is needed to address increasing pollution threats to human health, livelihoods, and important economic sectors.**

<sup>3</sup> <http://gefcrew.org/carrcu/SOCAR-Final.pdf>

# Key Points

- The Caribbean marine environment is acutely degraded by pollution.
- Pollution poses a significant threat to human health, the environment, and sustainable economic development.
- Controlling pollution should be the top priority for the region.
- Preventing pollution is more cost-effective than addressing its impacts.
- If left unchecked, pollution will cost billions of dollars in economic and human health losses annually.
- We need collaborative, multi-stakeholder approaches at all levels (local, national, sub-regional and regional) to effectively address pollution threats.



## What can policy makers do to reduce LBS pollution?

- **Ratify and implement** the Cartagena Convention, LBS Protocol, and other regional and global pollution-related agreements.
- **Develop** formal agreements to assist with pollution data collection, analysis, and reporting.
- **Develop** common monitoring and data collection methodologies.
- **Invest in, scale up, and implement** best management practices and technologies for controlling, reducing and preventing pollution from all sources and activities.
- **Commit** to engaging in future regional, sub-regional and national assessments that support development of State of Pollution Reports and the implementation of the LBS Protocol.
- **Encourage** greater regional and sub-regional cooperation on marine pollution.

