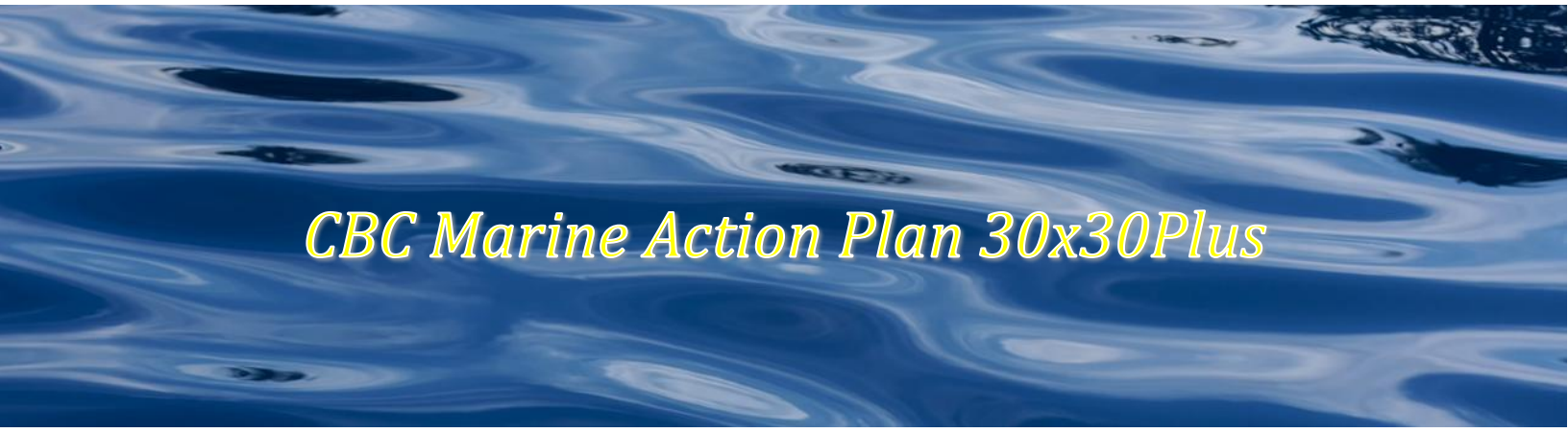
CARIBBEAN BIOLOGICAL CORRIDOR

Our space... our life



CBC Marine Action Plan 30x30Plus

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Introduction

The Caribbean Biological Corridor (CBC) is a subregional platform for South-South cooperation and multilevel environmental governance that promotes the conservation of terrestrial and marine biodiversity in the face of climate change, ecosystem degradation and species loss in the Greater Antilles. Its 2030 Strategic Plan establishes five guiding criteria for area-based conservation: ecological connectivity, effective conservation of priority ecosystems, climate resilience through nature-based solutions, sustainable local development, and multinational cooperation aligned with common goals.

The CBC's 30x30 Plus Marine Action Plan complements the CBC Strategic Plan to 2030 and builds on its governance mechanism, coordinating efforts among member countries[1] to strengthen a functional network of marine conservation areas notable for their biodiversity, comprising both Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs).

The purpose of this Action Plan is to achieve the effective conservation of at least 30% of the extent of priority ecosystems and critical habitats of the CBC marine domain, complementing national marine conservation strategies to ensure representativeness and connectivity at the subregional scale, support countries in implementing their strategies and contribute to global conservation targets.

The plan sets out actions and seeks concrete results in subregional governance, technical capacity, sustainable financing, community participation and knowledge management, thereby contributing to the achievement of Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).

The development of this framework was made possible through the support of the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), a key partner in facilitating the methodology through inclusive dialogue, the definition of strategic priorities, and the strengthening of the CBC's vision towards a subregional outcome for the GBF 30x30 target.

[1] Cuba, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Jamaica and Puerto Rico

Situational analysis

The context

The marine domain of the Greater Antilles, encompassing the jurisdictional waters of Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica and Puerto Rico, is of strategic importance for island and regional economies, climate resilience and biodiversity. The Greater Antilles are home to more than 90% of the population of the insular Caribbean and to the region's largest combined extent of seagrass meadows, mangroves and coral reefs (≈41,000 km^2).[2] Together, these ecosystems form a "blue belt" that buffers coastlines, supports livelihoods, and underpins tourism, local fisheries and seafood industries. In addition to these key coastal habitats, the combined EEZs of the Greater Antilles (~1.26 million km^2) contain vast, largely unexplored deep-water areas that harbor a wide range of pelagic and benthic habitats, from mesophotic to hadal, across deep plains, plateaus, ridges, slopes and seamounts.

Although the Caribbean Sea covers only about 0.8% of the global ocean, it is home to the highest diversity in the tropical Atlantic and is globally recognized as a marine biodiversity hotspot[3]. In essence, the Greater Antilles function as a corridor for pelagic sharks, commercially important fish, sea turtles, marine mammals and migratory birds. Ecological connectivity, maintained through both larval dispersal and animal movements, sustains fisheries productivity, genetic exchange and the recovery of key ecosystems such as coral reefs.

About 9.1 million people live within 5 km of the coast in the Greater Antilles[4]. Coastal and marine resources are the economic backbone of this population on the islands: tourism and travel contribute from about 6% of GDP in Puerto Rico to 29% in Jamaica[5]; while artisanal fisheries support between tens to hundreds of thousands of people on each island, contributing not only to local livelihoods, but also to island-wide economies. Artisanal fisheries contribute about US$210 million per year in Jamaica (around 24,000 fishers), generate about 100,000 jobs and account for approximately 1.5% of GDP in Haiti, and remain locally important in Puerto Rico (about US$5.6

[2] Calculated using the benthic habitat map of Schill et al. (2022) and the World Mangrove Atlas geospatial database, version 2021.

[3] United Nations Environment Programme- Caribbean Environment Programme (2020). The State of Nearshore Marine Habitats in the Wider Caribbean. Port-of-Spain: CANARI.

[4] Calculated using the LandScan Silver Edition (2024) population data layer.

[5] World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) (2019). Travel & Tourism in the Caribbean: Prospects for growth. In: WTTC Research Hub (https://researchhub.wttc.org/product/travel-tourism-in-the-caribbean-prospects-for-growth).

million dockside) [6] and include high-value fisheries in Cuba (about US$3.2 million per year from flat-fishing alone)[7].

In turn, this entire economy depends on the good health of reefs, mangroves and seagrass meadows. Their degradation causes beach erosion, increases storm-related losses, reduces visitor numbers, and undermine community livelihoods.

Existing data on the valuation of marine ecosystems illustrate what is at stake if their adequate and effective protection is not ensured in the Greater Antilles. For example, in Cuba, iconic reef systems such as those in the Jardines de la Reina and Punta Francés national parks show estimates of total economic value of up to US$34 million km^{-2} $year^{-1}$, with tourism values of up to US$312,000 km^{-2} $year^{-1}$, on a par with or exceeding global[8] assessments. In the Dominican Republic, the combined goods and services provided by coral reefs, mangroves, seagrass meadows and coastal marshes are valued at US$1.792 billion annually (~1.58% of GDP), reflecting their roles in coastal protection, blue carbon sequestration, fisheries and tourism[9].

Status of area-based marine conservation in the Greater Antilles

Area-based conservation remains partial and uneven in the Greater Antilles. As of May 2025, marine protection in Jamaica accounted for about 1% of total marine waters[10], including the EEZ; Haiti and Puerto Rico were at about 2%; and Cuba at about 5%; the Dominican Republic is the only exception, having surpassed 30% following recent designations of large marine sanctuaries. This pattern confirms the strong coastal bias of current networks: coral reefs and mangroves are comparatively better represented, while seagrass meadows, pelagic corridors and deep benthic ecosystems remain underrepresented, particularly across the vast deep-water areas. Although better covered by current MPAs, only about one fifth of mapped seagrass meadows (6,472 km^2 out of 29,345 km^2) lie within them. Coverage of mangrove and coral reef within the overall protected area network totals 904 km^2 and 4,000 km^2, respectively. Mangroves have already lost approximately 412 km^2 since 1996

[6] FAO (2019). Fishery and Aquaculture Country Profiles. https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/facp/search

[7] Angulo-Valdés, J., Pina-Amargós, F., Figueredo-Martín, T., Fujita, R., Haukebo, S., Miller, V., Boné-Morón, E., & Whittle, D. (2022). Managing marine recreational fisheries in Cuba for sustainability and economic development with emphasis on the tourism sector. Marine Policy. Vol 145. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2022.105254.

[8] Figueredo-Martín, T., López-Castañeda, L., & Pina-Amargós, F. (2023). Economic Valuation of the Coral Reefs of Jardines de la Reina and Punta Francés National Parks, Cuba. At Coral Reefs of Cuba. Springer. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-031-36719-9_21.

[9] Ruiz de Gauna, I., Greño, F., Torres, X., & Galarraga, I. (2024). Economic Valuation of Ecosystem Services Provided by Blue Economy Ecosystems in the Dominican Republic . https://doi.org/10.18235/0013217

[10] Protection coverage figures were calculated by the CBC Secretariat using an updated version of the WDPA and geospatial information on total marine extent by country, habitat distribution, deep-sea geomorphological forms, and marine ecological units.

owing to land-use change, deforestation and pollution[11]. Coral reefs face increasing pressures from bleaching, disease, invasive species, coastal development, overfishing and ocean warming.

Despite the crucial importance of ecological connectivity for local and national economies, it has not yet been systematically integrated into the design of the marine protected area network, leaving many sites functionally isolated, and transboundary corridors inadequately protected. A coordinated subregional design is still lacking, and many sites may therefore remain functionally isolated from one another.

Pressures on the coastal and marine ecosystems of the Greater Antilles are cumulative and intensifying. Overfishing and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing practices erode fish stocks and food security, while coastal development fragments habitats and compromises critical ecological functions. Land-based pollution increases nutrient and contaminant loads, reducing water quality and exacerbating thermal stress. At the same time, climate change is altering baseline conditions through warming, acidification, more frequent and severe storms, and sea level rise. The spread of invasive species further undermines ecosystem function and resilience.

A strategic response to this situation should include the expansion and articulation of MPAs and OMECs ensuring their effective management. It should also integrate ecological connectivity into the design of the conservation network, strengthen monitoring, scientific research and enforcement, and establish mechanisms that generate benefits for coastal communities. In this way, it would help consolidate a coherent and coordinated subregional network of MPAs and OECMs that strengthens connectivity and the effectiveness of conservation management, while also incorporating measures in offshore and deep-water areas. This network would contribute to protecting the region's biodiversity, improving management effectiveness, and supporting local and regional blue economies.

[11] Global Mangrove Watch

Enabling conditions and challenges

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Challenges
High marine biodiversity, great coverage of coastal marine ecosystems.	High seas, pelagic and deep-water habitats are insufficiently assessed and underrepresented in the current conservation network. Existing MPAs are generally small and nearshore, often located less than 10 km from the main islands.	Blue carbon finance, debt-for-nature swaps and sustainability-oriented tourism can diversify financing and accelerate the design of MPA and OECM networks.	Climate change intensifies coral bleaching, disease outbreaks, the spread of invasive species, storm damage and sea-level rise, increasing costs and uncertainty for long-term management.
Policy momentum (for example, the Dominican Republic exceeded 30% of its marine space under protection). A multi-country subregional environmental platform (CBC) has been in place since 2007	Enforcement and monitoring capacity is limited: countries report limited vessels and equipment for control and surveillance, few ecological monitoring stations, weak data infrastructure, and understaffed ranger forces.	A CBC-facilitated subregional marine conservation spatial planning (MSCP) process can integrate connectivity criteria, standardize methods, and help establish and coordinate transboundary marine corridors. Mutual benefits can be achieved by reconciling the interests of the tourism, fisheries and conservation sectors.	Economic pressure from unsustainable coastal development, fisheries and tourism competes with conservation space and enforcement.
Experience of co-management and community participation (Jamaica, Cuba, Dominican Republic; joint bodies in Puerto Rico)	Legal and policy gaps limit scale-up: OECMs lack legal recognition in several jurisdictions; overlapping agency mandates persist, as does the absence of comprehensive marine conservation spatial planning (MSCP) frameworks.	Recognition and reporting on OECMs in fisheries and multiple-use seascapes can close coverage and equity gaps while supporting livelihoods.	Governance instability and the scarcity of alternative livelihoods increase dependence on the unsustainable extraction of natural resources.
Strong cultural links to the sea and growing public awareness efforts.	Managing large offshore MPAs and potential OECMs is especially difficult with current assets and budgets; Countries highlight fragmented and outdated control technologies and a patrol capacity that is not adapted to offshore management.	Surveillance and monitoring technologies (e.g., data platforms, remote sensing) and regional knowledge-sharing can increase effectiveness at a lower marginal cost.	Coral disease outbreaks and invasive taxa add uncertainty;

Long-term vision for Target 3 of the Global Biodiversity Framework in the CBC marine domain:

A thriving and effective subregional area-based conservation network that safeguards marine biodiversity, contributes to the livelihoods and resilience of communities, and unites the Greater Antilles through participatory and inclusive marine conservation.

Goal to 2035

By 2035, the CBC marine conservation network, comprising MPAs and OECMs, will have expanded to protect and restore at least 30% of the total extent of priority coastal and marine ecosystems and key[12] habitats in ecologically representative, well-connected and effectively managed areas, thereby ensuring biodiversity conservation, the long-term provision of ecosystem services, and the community resilience under equitable, participatory, inclusive and sustainable governance.

[12] Identified and agreed as priorities for the CBC initiative

Objectives and key results

Objectives	Key results	Indicators	Means of verification	Assumptions
1. By 2028, marine governance within the CBC will be strengthened through greater equitable, transparent and coordinated participation of key stakeholders, and through the alignment of subregional policies that enable the effective management of a functional and sustainable marine area-based conservation network.	-The CBC governance mechanism engages and incorporates new sectoral and local actors to support decision-making related to the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources. -An MPA-OECM multi-stakeholder coordination mechanism for the CBC (standing working group) has been established and is operational. -Policy and legal frameworks are reviewed and aligned, and regional policy guidelines are jointly developed to promote GBF Target 3. -A network of empowered communities and local actors is actively participating in the CBC's regional marine area-based conservation initiatives. -Positions on conservation based on marine areas are coordinated and articulated among the CBC countries for international negotiation processes. (e.g. CDB, CITES, WHO, SPAW).	-Relevant actors participating in marine decision-making within the CBC. -Inclusive and participatory CBC MPA-OMEC coordination mechanism (Area-based marine conservation working group) developed and operational. -Subregional framework of governance policies and guidelines for MPAs and OMECs harmonized and designed jointly with CBC countries. -Local actors involved in the CBC's policies and governance dialogues related to MPA/OMEC.	-Operating manual of the CBC MPA-OECM coordination mechanism and annual reports, including active representation by country. -Reports on stakeholder participation at local and subregional levels. -Policies, guidelines and documents of subregional legal models of MPA/OECMs.	-Political support for subregional policy alignment and stakeholder participation remains strong. -Language barriers are addressed through interpretation services, and through meetings and workshops using inclusive and participatory methodologies.

Objectives	Key results	Indicators	Means of verification	Assumptions
		-Coordinated and agreed subregional positions among CBC countries for international negotiations on marine conservation.		
2. By 2030, establish and operationalize, in accordance with national plans and strategies, an effectively managed and well-connected subregional network of MPAs and OECMs in the Greater Antilles, ensuring ecological integrity and the sustained provision of key ecosystem services to local communities.	-The CBC countries implement the joint agreement[13] to develop a marine conservation spatial planning (MSCP) process for the collaborative design and management of the MPA/OECM network of the Greater Antilles, while promoting the systematic exchange of information, with full respect for national priorities and sensitivities. -The foundations are laid and the development begins of a subregional coordination mechanism for control and surveillance, including the application of standardized	-The MSCP and the roadmap for its implementation endorsed by the CBC parties. A subregional coordination mechanism to support surveillance and monitoring established and operational. -Joint or regionally coordinated AMP/OMEC monitoring, surveillance and	-Ministerial approval of the results of the MSCP exercise and of the roadmap for its implementation. -Reports on spatial analysis and ecological and socio-economic assessments. -MSCP Documents -Reports on effective management of the	-Political will for voluntary subregional commitments. -Scientific and technical cooperation between the CBC countries is maintained.

[13]Agreement number 9 of the Scientific-Technical Committee of the Caribbean Biological Corridor of February 2025.

Objectives	Key results	Indicators	Means of verification	Assumptions
	technologies for monitoring and data management. [14] -MPA/OECM planning, management effectiveness assessment and monitoring tools are standardized to ensure consistency, comparability and the application of best practices across the region, while also consolidating the CBC MPA/OECM network monitoring framework. -A subregional network of AMP/OECM managers is established -A subregional capacity-building programme is implemented for the planning, monitoring, surveillance and effective management of marine conservation areas.	control activities conducted and reported annually. -Regional guidelines on MPA/OECM management tools jointly developed and adopted.[15] -MPA/OECM managers trained in the issues prioritized by the coordination mechanism.	CBC MPA/OMEC network. -Capacity needs assessment -Peer-to-peer exchanges are supported -Report on training activities. -Evaluation reports of the program beneficiaries	

[14]For example, SMART, EarthRanger, Skylight, Marine Traffic, etc.

[15]Including, but not limited to: - Management plans, - Climate change adaptation plan, - Risk mitigation, - Entry fee methodologies and other MPA/OMEC services, - AMP/OMEC CBC network monitoring, evaluation and learning framework.

Objectives	Key results	Indicators	Means of verification	Assumptions
3. By 2030, strengthen the resilience of coastal communities through the diversification of sustainable livelihoods and leveraging the ecosystem services provided by the subregional network of conservation areas.	Multi-sectoral partnerships are established to implement a sustainable livelihoods programme for the benefit of coastal communities within the MPA/OECM network. A communication and outreach strategy on conservation and sustainable use is jointly developed at the regional and local levels.	-Coastal communities participating in and benefiting from sustainable livelihood programmes related to MPAs/OECMs and their ecosystem services. -Improved community awareness and perception of the benefits of conservation. -Sustainable and diversified livelihoods established in coastal communities that are linked to and support MPAs and OMECs.	-Socioeconomic surveys. -Project monitoring data. -Case studies and testimonials.	-Communities have equitable access to resources and decision-making processes.

Objectives	Key results	Indicators	Means of verification	Assumptions
4. By 2030, mobilize financial resources for the effective management of the CBC area-based conservation network.	Financial mechanisms established through the CBC support area-based conservation in the Greater Antilles.	-Financial resources mobilized to support the management of the CBC MPA/OMEC network. -Sustainable financing mechanisms established or strengthened to support the management of MPAs/OECMs. -Sites in the conservation network with sustainable financing plans in place.	-Financial reports -Agreements between donors and partners. - Financial Reports of the CBC-CBF trust fund account, including details of financial flows to the CBC MPA/OMEC Network Action Plan.	-Long-term donor commitment and political commitment to conservation financing.

Objectives	Key results	Indicators	Means of verification	Assumptions
5. By 2030, the CBC will have a knowledge management system with platforms that generate, integrate, standardize and facilitate access to monitoring information, combining scientific and traditional knowledge to support decision-making and facilitate regional reporting on effective, inclusive, participatory and adaptive area-based conservation management.	The CBC Integrated Knowledge Management System is strengthened to provide information and data on marine ecosystems, species and conserved areas to inform decision-making for adaptive management and greater effectiveness of the subregional MPA/OMEC network.	-Improved CBC knowledge management system. -Stakeholders accessing and using the CBC knowledge management platforms for conservation decision-making.	-Analysis of knowledge platforms. -Training and use reports. -Documentation supporting decision-making.	Stakeholders are willing to share data and respect the contributions of traditional knowledge.

Glossary

1. MPAs: Marine Protected Areas
2. CBC: Caribbean Biological Corridor
3. CBD: Convention on Biological Diversity
4. CITES: Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
5. GBF: Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework
6. IUU: Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing
7. OECM: Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measure
8. WHO: World Health Organization
9. MSCP: Marine Spatial Conservation Planning and Marine Spatial Conservation Plan
10. GDP: Gross Domestic Product
11. SPAW: Protocol for Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife.
12. WCS: Wildlife Conservation Society
13. EEZ: Exclusive Economic Zone