



Climate Change and our Changing Oceans: The Case of *Sargassum* Seaweed Invasion on West Africa and Caribbean coasts

2nd Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

27 May 2016, UNEP HQ, Nairobi

Time: 17h00 to 18h00

Location: Conference Room 14

Pelagic *Sargassum* is free-floating brown seaweed that blossoms naturally in the warm waters of the Sargasso Sea of the Northern Atlantic Ocean. However since 2011 there has been an explosion in the quantities of *sargassum* reaching the shores of countries of the Caribbean and West Africa inflicting severe socio-economic impacts, particularly to the hospitality sector and coastal fisheries. This unprecedented invasion of the seaweed is being attributed to factors that include warming of the ocean due to global climate change, discharge of nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus) from agricultural runoff 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.

This Green Room event on the Atlantic sargassum seaweed invasion at UNEA is intended to draw attention of the wider environment community on the severe impacts of sargassum in West African and the Wider Caribbean States, and mobilize international support to address this new global environmental phenomenon.

Programme

Time	Discussion item	Lead
17:00 - 17:05	Opening and welcome	Christopher Cox, UNEP-GPA
17:05 - 17:15	Panel: Perspectives – West Africa: Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone	Hon. Amina Mohamed, Nigeria Hon. Abdoulaye Balde, Senegal Mrs. Haddijatou Jallow, Sierra Leone
17:15 - 17:25	Panel: Perspectives – Caribbean: Grenada, St. Kitts & Nevis, Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat	Hon. Alvin Da Breo, Grenada Mr. Alistair Eden Edwards, St. Kitts & Nevis, ASG Douglas Slater, CARICOM Secretariat
17:25 - 17:35	State of knowledge on the phenomenon	Sahr Abraham Grass-Sessay, WABICC/Abidjan Secretariat
17:35 - 17:45	Strategic directions in addressing the challenge; building partnerships	Abou Bamba, Abidjan Secretariat
17:45 - 17:55	Open discussion	
17:55 - 18:00	Wrap-up and final impressions	Christopher Cox, UNEP-GPA

Organizer: Governments of Sierra Leone and Nigeria

Partners:

- UNEP Abidjan Convention Secretariat
- UNEP Cartagena Convention Secretariat
- UNEP Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (GPA)
- USAID West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change (WABICC) Programme



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