



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Date: September 18, 2014**

### **UNEP CEP will join Ocean Conservancy in *helping to turn the tide on ocean trash* on International Coastal Cleanup Day 2014**

**Kingston, 18 September:** Every day, eight million items become marine litter. To address this problem, Ocean Conservancy has designated the 20<sup>th</sup> of September as International Coastal Cleanup Day. It will be celebrated in over ninety seven countries and locations around the world where persons come together to clean up the seas, coasts, rivers and beaches. Marine litter is any processed material generated by humans which enters the environment. This is very harmful to human health and safety and kills and entangles marine animals. It also causes navigational hazards for ships and compromises the scenic beauty of natural coastal and aquatic environments. This Saturday, in Jamaica, UNEP's Caribbean Environment Programme (CEP) along with over two thousand volunteers will be participating in Jamaica Environment Trust's (JET) International Coastal Cleanup Day efforts in Fort Rocky, Palisadoes.

Regionally, UNEP CEP has been involved in several initiatives to address marine litter using an integrated solid waste management approach. This includes working with the Caribbean Youth Environment Network (CYEN) in updating the Caribbean Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter Management (RAPMaLi). This collaboration has led to the development of many initiatives including an online marine litter game for children. Christopher Corbin, the Programme Officer for the Assessment and Management of Environmental Pollution sub-programme at UNEP CEP noted: "that solid waste is a major problem and often humans do not make the connection on how their actions affect the environment." With the development of the UNEP-CAR/RCU's Kids' Game and web-based educational tools, UNEP CEP is connecting young people with their local environment, encouraging civic pride and addressing the lack of a strong educational foundation in scientific processes.

Other ongoing UNEP CEP initiatives include a Geographic Information System (GIS) for mapping solid waste facilities in the Wider Caribbean Region. This will identify how many waste dumps are in close proximity to water bodies, such as oceans, lagoons and rivers, and assist in measuring and minimizing the impact of garbage that often enters the seas and coastal areas after heavy rainfall.

Alessandra Vanzella-Khouri, Programme Officer for the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife sub-programme has noted that "marine litter has disastrous consequences for marine life. In fact, 50-80% sea turtles that are found dead are known to have ingested some form of marine debris". According to a recent UNEP supported report entitled "Valuing Plastic", it also entangles whales and dolphins and destroys critical habitats such as coral reefs. She further added that the Wider Caribbean Region heavily relies on these ecosystems for livelihoods and nutrition, and therefore it is critical that we put measures in place to protect them from the impacts of marine litter, especially plastics.

Echoing Mrs. Vanzella - Khouri's sentiments, Nelson Andrade Colmenares, the Regional Coordinator for UNEP CEP, added that "the impact of plastics are not only disastrous but expensive, generating USD 13 billion dollars in annual damages to marine ecosystems". UNEP CEP is doing its part to tackling this global problem, through its support of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML) which aims to "protect human health and the global environment by the reduction and management of marine litter."

International Coastal Cleanup Day is the largest global volunteer effort of its kind to clean up marine litter. Join UNEP CEP, JET and Ocean Conservancy in "**making a difference in wildlife and helping to turn the tide on ocean trash!**"

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Caption: "Participants carrying an old refrigerator found on the beach from last year's International Coastal Cleanup Day hosted by JET at Fort Rocky, Palisadoes, Jamaica"

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## **About UNEP's Caribbean Environment Programme (CEP)**

*The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) established the Caribbean Environment Programme (CEP) in 1981 under the framework of its Regional Seas Programme. It was developed taking into consideration the importance and value of the Wider Caribbean Region's fragile and vulnerable coastal and marine ecosystems, including an abundance of mainly endemic flora and fauna. A Caribbean Action Plan was adopted by the Countries of the Wider Caribbean Region (WCR) and that led to the development and adoption of the Cartagena Convention on 24 March 1983. This Convention is the first regionally binding treaty of its kind that seeks to protect and develop the marine environment of the WCR. Since its entry into force on 11 October 1986, 25 of the 28 Wider Caribbean Region countries have become contracting parties.*

*The Convention is supported by three Protocols:*

- Protocol concerning Cooperation in combating Oil Spills, which entered into force on October 11, 1986;*
- Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA), which entered into force on June 18, 2000;*
- Protocol concerning Pollution from Land-based sources and activities (LBS), which entered into force on August 13, 2010.*

*In addition, each Protocol is served by a Regional Activity Centre (RAC). These centres are based in Curacao (Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Information and Training Centre for the Wider Caribbean, RAC/REMPEITC) for the Oil Spills Protocol; in Guadeloupe (RAC/SPA RAC for the SPA Protocol and in Cuba, Centre of Engineering and Environmental Management of Coasts and Bays and in Trinidad & Tobago, the Institute of Marine Affairs, both for the LBS Protocol. As they endeavour to protect the Caribbean Sea and sustain our future, we look forward to their continued effort to preserve our Caribbean Sea by facilitating the implementation of the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols in the Wider Caribbean Region.*

*The Regional Coordinating Unit (UNEP-CAR/RCU), established in 1986, serves as the Secretariat to the Cartagena Convention and is based in Kingston, Jamaica.*

*To find out more about the UNEP CAR-RCU, please visit the website at [www.cep.unep.org](http://www.cep.unep.org) or follow us on [Facebook](#) and/or [Twitter](#).*