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**UNEP CEP TO DEVELOP FIRST REGIONAL STATE OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT REPORT FOR THE CARIBBEAN SEA**

**Kingston, Jamaica, June 6, 2014** - As countries *“Raised their Voices and Not the Sea Level”* in celebration of World Environment Day, and commemorated World Oceans Day under the theme *“Together We Have the Power to Protect the Oceans”,* UNEP’s Caribbean Environment Programme has committed to develop the first **State of Marine Environment Report for the Caribbean Sea**.

Nelson Andrade Colmenares, Coordinator of the Kingston-based UNEP office, which also serves as Secretariat to the Cartagena Convention for the Protection and Development of the Caribbean Sea, highlighted that *“The development of such a report will be critical to obtain a better understanding of the current status of our coastal and marine resources, to identify trends as well as new threats*”. The UNEP CEP has been based in Jamaica for the past 27 years working with many partners to protect and sustain the Caribbean Sea and the goods and services which it provides for the people of the Wider Caribbean Region.

The sustainable development of the Wider Caribbean Region will require improved management of the region’s fragile marine resources and according to Andrade, *“reliable and credible scientific data and information will be an invaluable decision-making tool, and assist in the evaluation of the effectiveness of existing national policies, laws and regulations.*”

The first State of Marine Environment Report for the Caribbean will build upon efforts by many regional agencies, projects and partners who have been working with UNEP CEP for the protection and development of the Wider Caribbean Region. The detailed content and approach will be discussed at an upcoming meeting of regional technical and scientific experts to be held in Nicaragua from June 10th to 13th who will be discussing a range of issues relating to the pollution of the marine environment.

The Caribbean Environment Programme is one of the UNEP's Regional Seas Programmes, which celebrates its 40th Anniversary this year – International Year for SIDS. More than 143 countries participate in the 13 Regional Seas Programmes globally and it has emerged as an inspiring example of how to implement a regional approach to protecting the coastal and marine environment while effectively managing the use of natural resources.

Mr. Christopher Corbin, Programme Officer with responsibility for Pollution at the UNEP CEP office, outlined that as the Secretariat begins the development of this regional report, new communication and outreach materials have also been developed that will be launched on World Oceans Day this year. These include a new website (www.cep.unep.org) and a new Video that showcases the value of the Caribbean Sea, major sources and impacts of pollution and the benefits of regional agreements such as the Cartagena Convention and the Protocol Concerning Pollution from land-based Sources and Activities (LBS Protocol).

Poor land use and agricultural practices and the lack of effective wastewater and industrial treatment contribute a range of pollutants such as sediment, fertilizers, pesticides, heavy metals, pathogens, oil and nutrients directly or indirectly into the Caribbean Sea. Pollution not only poses threats to human health but can negatively impact on coral reefs which provide USD 375 million in goods and services annually to coastal economies through activities such as tourism, fisheries and maritime transportation.

These new communication and outreach efforts along with the increased use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter will ensure that information on the marine environment is not only used to improve national and regional decision-making but to improve awareness of why we need to protect the Caribbean Sea and its vulnerable yet valuable resources.

 -575 words-

For further information please contact, Miss Pietra Brown ,United Nations Volunteer-Communications Officer , at UNEP CEP by telephone: +876-922-9267-9,Fax:+876- 922-9292, Email: pb@cep.unep.org.Also, feel free to visit the website at: <http://www.cep.unep.org>, our Facebook page at UNEP-Caribbean Environment Programme and out Twitter @UNEP\_CEP.

**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 ofmainly 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 (SPAW), 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/SPAW RAC for the SPAW Protocol and in Cuba, Centre of Engineering and Environmental Management of Coasts and Bays and in Trinidad & Tobago, theInstitute 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 and the SPAWProtocol, please visit the* [*www.cep.unep.org*](http://www.cep.unep.org)