

COM:ES Roadmap to 2030

Technical Assistance in the Preparation of Documentation and
Technical Papers for 10th Meeting of the Council of Ministers
for Environmental Sustainability (COM:ES 10)

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ACRONYMS

AOSIS Alliance of Small Island States

CANARI Caribbean Natural Resources Institute

CBD Convention on Biological Diversity

CITES Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

CMS Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

COM:ES Council of Ministers with competence for matters of Environmental Sustainability

EEZ Exclusive Economic Zone

ESD Environmental Sustainability Division of the OECS Commission

IAS Invasive Alien Species

IWRM Integrated Water Resource Management

LBS Land-Based Sources

MARPOL The International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships

MBD Maritime Boundary Delimitation

MEA Multilateral Environmental Agreement

MS Member State of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States

OECS Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States

ROP Rules of Procedure for OECS Council of Ministers

RTB Revised Treaty of Basseterre (2010)

SES Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

SGD St. George's Declaration of Principles for Environmental Sustainability

SIDS Small Island Developing States

SPAW Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife

UNCCD United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

UNCLOS United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

UNFCCC United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

1. The Revised Treaty of Basseterre Establishing the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Economic Union (RTB), in Article 9, mandates the establishment of Councils of Ministers to advise and make recommendations to the OECS Authority, the highest decision-making body of the OECS. Article 9 states, “The Council of Ministers shall be responsible to the OECS Authority. It shall take action on any matters referred to it by the OECS Authority and shall have the power to make recommendations to the OECS Authority”.
2. The Council of Ministers with responsibility for matters of environmental sustainability that is established under the RTB is known as COM:ES.
3. Article 24 (Environmental Sustainability) of the RTB states that “Each Protocol Member State shall implement the St. George's Declaration of Principles for Environmental Sustainability in the OECS (SGD) to minimize environmental vulnerability, improve environmental management and protect the region's natural (including historical and cultural) resource base for optimal social and economic benefits for Member States.”
4. The SGD derived from a mandate by OECS Ministers of the Environment at the third meeting of the Environment Policy Committee in September 1999 for the (then) OECS Secretariat to develop an OECS Charter for Environmental Management. The SGD was signed by OECS Ministers of the Environment in April 2001 and set out the broad framework for environmental management within the Member States of the OECS.
5. In 2017 the COM:ES mandated the OECS Commission to activate the process and mechanism for the revision and updating of the SGD, consistent with current national and regional circumstances, priorities, and international frameworks.
6. The OECS Authority, at its 70th Meeting in June 2021, adopted the Revised St. George's Declaration (SGD 2040), mandated the OECS Commission to intensify the implementation of SGD 2040, and encouraged the regional and international agencies to coordinate and align actions at the national and regional levels to be in support of and consistent with SGD 2040.
7. The COM:ES endorsed a framework for regional strategic prioritization of the implementation of SGD 2040 that consists of three cross-cutting themes, namely Strong Institutions, Sound Intelligence, and Smart Investments, applied across three pathways, viz., (i) Advancing Sustainable Economy Approaches, (ii) Building Resilience in Ecosystems, Communities and Sectors, and (iii) Championing Island Systems Management.
8. The OECS Commission has decided to use the occasion of the upcoming 10th regular meeting of the OECS Council of Ministers on Environmental Sustainability, to be held from 12 to 13 July in Anguilla, as an opportunity for Ministers to engage in some reflection on the progress that has been made over the first decade of COM:ES, and to chart the direction for the period to 2030.

CONTEXT

This analysis is being conducted during a period when several features loom large on the regional and global landscapes. Among these are:

1. A continuous, ominous warming trend, with the last 8 years being the hottest over the recorded history of the planet, and a consequential steady worsening of the impacts of climate change.
2. Insufficient global ambition to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, with the best-case scenario being average warming of 2.6°C above industrial levels, which would be catastrophic for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the OECS, the wider Caribbean and the larger Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).
3. The Russia-Ukraine War, which has caused a sharp surge in world oil prices, which in turn has dramatically increased the cost of electricity and transportation (as well as food prices), in a region that is very heavily dependent on imported fossil fuels for its energy supply.
4. The recovery of the Member States of the OECS from the devastating economic and social effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which worsened the debt:GDP ratios of all the countries and further constrained their capacity to respond to the impacts of climate change and to achieve the goals and targets of the 2030 Development Agenda.
5. The proliferation of the invasive alien species sargassum seaweed across the Caribbean, and the serious economic, social, and environmental impacts this is having on every island within the OECS.
6. Worsening water security caused by reduced precipitation from climate change, increased evaporation because of warmer temperatures, slower recharge of aquifers due to reduced rainfall, gradual salinization of groundwater sources from sea level rise, and damage to watersheds from inappropriate land use practices.
7. Increasing food insecurity caused by rising food prices in a region that remains heavily dependent on imported food products to service the needs of the dominant and important tourism and hospitality sector.
8. Limited fiscal space within all the countries, which makes it difficult for many of them to provide the increasing human resource capacity required to treat adequately with myriad multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and an increasingly complex and interconnected environmental and natural resource management agenda.
9. Additionally, the SGD 2040 succinctly lays out several challenges that exist in the domestic and regional environment that constrain programme implementation. These are:
 - i. inadequate capacity for implementation of policy, plans and programmes;
 - ii. poorly structured and resourced institutions;
 - iii. limited and onerous access to financial resources,
 - iv. inadequate allocation of resources;
 - v. difficulty in ensuring inter-agency and inter-sectoral coordination;
 - vi. insufficient human resource capacity;
 - vii. inadequate education, awareness and outreach; and
 - viii. paucity of reliable data.

FINDINGS

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The Revised St. George's Declaration (SGD 2040) articulates six strategic priorities, namely:

- A. Climate and Disaster Resilience
- B. Biodiversity and Ecosystems
- C. Land and Water
- D. Chemicals, Pollution and Waste
- E. Ocean Governance and Fisheries
- F. Sustainable Energy

Climate and Disaster Resilience ranks as one of the most serious and urgent imperatives for the Small Island Developing States and low-lying countries in the OECS. These countries are among the most vulnerable on our planet to the impacts of climate change. Rising sea levels, more intense hurricanes, warmer temperatures, ocean acidification, and prolonged droughts profoundly affect every pillar of sustainable development in these islands. Climate change and natural disasters devastate lives and livelihoods, destroy natural and built landscapes, damage important ecosystem services, and imperil economic stability and the sustainable development prospects of the countries. Climate-related disasters disproportionately impact poor and vulnerable populations, both in terms of economic cost and lives lost, which makes them particularly harmful to many populations and demographics in the OECS. Most of the OECS Member States are signatories to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the Paris Agreement, which amplifies the justification for a focus on climate change and disaster risk reduction by these countries. Additionally, at the regional level, the Member States have committed to the OECS Climate Strategy Action Plan and the Eastern Caribbean Community Resilience Enhancement Programme.

Biodiversity and Ecosystems suffer from a perception that they are addressed to a significant extent in the climate and disaster resilience agenda, and under the land and water thematic priority, because climate change and habitat destruction (a land management issue), together with invasive alien species, and pollution, present the biggest threats to biodiversity and ecosystems. However, biodiversity and ecosystem integrity are critical for ecosystem services such as pollination, soil fertility and nutrient cycling, water purification, natural pest control, climate regulation, coastal protection, and cultural and recreational services, which is why they merit focused and dedicated treatment and attention. Because the countries of the OECS are party to several biodiversity related conventions, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the Ramsar Convention, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), and at the regional level the OECS Biodiversity and Ecosystems Strategy, a focus on Biodiversity and Ecosystems also provides the countries with a regional framework to coordinate the discharge of their responsibilities to these MEAs.

Land and Water management is of paramount importance to the OECS. Many of the countries in the OECS are water stressed, with two of them, Antigua and Barbuda, and St. Kitts and Nevis, being classified as water scarce. Land resources are under serious pressure due to population growth and urbanization. Tourism and agriculture play very important roles in the socio-economic profiles of all

OECS countries, and sound land and water management are necessary for the viability of these sectors. Ironically, the practices in both these sectors often pose the greatest threats to land and water resource integrity. Sustainable land and water management is also essential for protecting biodiversity and ecosystem services, adapting to the impacts of climate change, and reducing the risks from natural disasters. Moreover, this thematic priority focuses attention on our international responsibilities under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and the Convention on Biological Diversity, and regional commitments under the Action Framework for Integrated Water Resource Management for the Caribbean Region, and the Regional Strategic Action Plan for Governance and Climate Resilience in the Water Sector in the Caribbean.

Chemicals, Pollution and Waste management is essential for OECS Member States for several reasons, among these being protection of human health, preservation of water quality, protecting the environment, supporting the viability of the important tourism, agriculture and fisheries sectors, mitigating the impacts of climate change, and discharging our obligations to multilateral environmental conventions like the Stockholm Convention, the Basel Convention, and the Cartagena Convention, including the Land-Based Sources (LBS) Protocol.

Ocean Governance and Fisheries is a very important thematic priority for the OECS. Its scope spans food security and livelihoods, marine biodiversity, climate change resilience, tourism and recreation, transboundary cooperation, and economic development. The countries of the OECS all have larger ocean spaces, through their exclusive economic zones (EEZs) than land areas. The recognition of the economic value of our ocean and waters has spurred the development of the Blue Economy as an important component of the sustainable development agenda of the OECS and the wider Caribbean area. This thematic area allows us to honour our obligations to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the Convention on Biological Diversity, the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, the Cartagena Convention, and the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) Protocol, and our commitments to action under the OECS Blue Economy Strategy and Action Plan, the OECS Marine Research Strategy, and the Eastern Caribbean Regional Ocean Policy (ECROP).

Sustainable Energy is an extremely important area for the OECS because the countries in the sub-region are reliant on fossil fuels for their energy needs in the electricity and transport sectors. This leads to a heavy dependence on imported oil and gas products, which in turn leaves them vulnerable to price volatility in the international oil market. This erodes the energy security of the countries. The recent upsurge in oil and gas prices has further exposed this vulnerability, and the increased energy prices are reducing the competitiveness of all the economic sectors. In addition to its impact on economic viability, pursuing a sustainable energy agenda allows the countries to play their part in climate change mitigation (although they are all negligible contributors to global greenhouse gas emissions), environmental protection and health benefits (by reducing pollution), job creation in new spheres of economic activity (green energy), and discharging our obligations to the Paris Agreement, the 2030 Development Agenda, the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and the OECS Sustainable Energy Framework.

All six strategic priorities identified in SGD 2040 are of critical importance to the Member States of the OECS. However, capacity and resource constraints at the national and regional levels make it impossible for the Commission and COM:ES to focus on addressing the plethora of issues that fall under these strategic priorities.

Therefore, there is a need for a further prioritization within these strategic priorities to identify the critical elements that deserve urgent attention from COM:ES for a regional approach and for strategic clarity to development partners and relevant stakeholders. However, should strategic opportunities develop that allow for pursuing important areas that are not identified below, these should be actively considered by COM:ES.

PRIORITY SETTING

Climate and Disaster Resilience

It is recommended that the COM:ES prioritize the following areas under this strategic priority:

- **Adaptation** – The impacts of climate change will become more severe on Caribbean SIDS as global temperatures increase. Adapting to these impacts in a timely and comprehensive manner will be a critical imperative for OECS Member States. Therefore, COM:ES should play a leading role in determining the critical interventions that must be made in this area and ensuring that the requisite resources are mobilized for these responses.
- **Loss and Damage** – Because of the critical importance of loss and damage (L&D) to the survivability of SIDS citizens and livelihoods, and the anticipated increasingly important role that L&D and financing for L&D will play in climate negotiations in the foreseeable future, COM:ES must play a leading role in providing inputs into the discussions at the international level and developing an evidence base of the effects of L&D in the respective Member States.
- **Climate Finance and Carbon Markets** – The resolution of Article 6 of the Paris Agreement was a major success point of COP27. Unfortunately, the operations of carbon markets and carbon trading mechanisms is not an area that has occupied the attention of OECS Member States. Given the potential for carbon markets to help unlock new forms of finance for climate responses in Member States, it is recommended that this be one of the foci of COM:ES. Additionally, unlocking large amounts of climate finance is critical if OECS Member States are to respond adequately to the rapidly unfolding impacts of climate change in respect of both adaptation and loss and damage. COM:ES must make this one of its priorities.
- **Low Carbon Development and Climate Mitigation** – If the developed countries are not able to significantly increase their ambition for greenhouse gas emissions reduction, the planet will warm to a level that will be catastrophic for Small Island Developing States. Many lives and livelihoods will be placed in serious peril. Therefore, COM:ES should prioritize advocacy and action to cause developed countries to embark on low carbon development pathways and to drastically reduce their greenhouse gas emissions in line with a 1.5°C pathway.

Biodiversity and Ecosystems

- **Access and Benefit Sharing** – The strategic use of their natural resources can bring significant benefits to OECS Member States. Prioritizing access and benefit sharing will allow Member States to ensure that the use of genetic resources and traditional knowledge will be done in a manner that benefits both the providers and the users of the resource.

- **Ecosystem Assessment, Valuation and Development** – There is a growing recognition of the importance of understanding, valuing, and developing ecosystem services to allow for better informed policy formulation, decision making and planning. This must be a priority for the work of COM:ES, particularly because the countries of the OECS, with their limited land masses, must routinely make decisions on trade-offs between resource management and infrastructure development. These decisions have traditionally been influenced by economic arguments. The accurate quantification of the value of ecosystems and ecosystem services will allow for more sustainable development planning and the development of the green-blue economy.
- **Invasive Alien Species** – Invasive alien species (IAS) pose a serious threat to biodiversity and ecosystem integrity in the Caribbean. The Member States of the OECS have had to deal with several invasive alien species over the last two decades, many of which have also negatively impacted livelihoods and food security. The sargassum seaweed is one such IAS that continues to have profound environmental, social, and economic consequences in every Member State. Consequently, this must be a priority for the work of COM:ES.
- **Ecosystem Restoration** – Maintaining or restoring ecosystem integrity is of critical importance to OECS Member States. This is necessary for coastal protection and fisheries, water resource management, biodiversity conservation and sustainable agriculture. Ecosystem-based adaptation can play an important role in increasing the resilience of Member States to the impacts of climate change, and must be pursued by OECS MS.

Land and Water

- **Integrated Water Resource Management** – Most Member States of the OECS face water scarcity challenges. Additionally, climate change is expected to result in greater variability in rainfall, with an increase in drought conditions in the Eastern Caribbean, as well as saline intrusion of groundwater sources from sea level rise, and greater risks of damage to water distribution infrastructure from more frequent flooding and more severe storms. Therefore, all sources of water, as well as the means of distributing that water, will be at risk from the impacts of climate change. Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) allows for the coherent development and management of water, land and other resources in a manner that contributes to economic development and social welfare, without compromising environmental sustainability. IWRM looks at the entire water cycle and helps to facilitate the optimal and equitable distribution of water, and the sustainable use of water resources. This must be a focus of COM:ES.
- **Sustainable Land Management, including Sustainable Agriculture** – Sustainable land management speaks to the use of land resources in a manner that meets the needs of present generations without compromising the long-term viability of ecosystems and the ability of future generations to use these resources to meet their own needs. Because of the small sizes of all OECS Member States, land is a very finite resource. Therefore, it is important that COM:ES address the myriad issues that surround the use and management of land in the Member States, paying particular attention to issues such as soil conservation and slope stability, biodiversity protection, water resource management, sustainable agriculture, and sustainable tourism.

Chemicals, Pollution and Waste

- **Circular Economy** – Because of their commitment to sustainable development, OECS Member States are seeking to transition their economic models from the current linear or take-make-dispose approach, to a circular or produce-consume-reuse-repair-recycle-upcycle paradigm. The development of a circular economy should also investigate opportunities to add value, such as with water reuse and waste-to-energy solutions. These initiatives should form part of a comprehensive regional waste management strategy. COM:ES must guide the evolution of this work.
- **Marine Pollution** – There is a need for coordination of the sub-regional approach to marine pollution, particularly from land-generated and ship-generated (including plastic) wastes. This can take the form of developing harmonized regulations, increasing public awareness and education, encouraging reuse and recycle approaches, enforcing regulations under the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), and providing strategic support to the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) and the United Nations Caribbean Environment Programme (CEP).

Ocean Governance and Fisheries

- **Marine Spatial Planning, including Maritime Boundary Delimitation** – Marine spatial planning (MSP) provides an architecture for the sustainable management of the marine spaces in the OECS. Critical to this is the issue of maritime boundary delimitation. Given the pursuit of blue economy activities / ambitions in all Member States, MSP is important for integrated ocean management, resolving conflicts among users of the marine space, and promoting ecosystem-based approaches to marine resource management. This makes this area an obvious priority for COM:ES.
- **Sustainable Fisheries Management** – The Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) is tasked with the responsibility for coordinating regional sustainable fisheries management. The fisheries sector is important for all OECS Member States because of its value to livelihoods, marine ecosystem integrity and the national economy. Therefore, COM:ES should provide strategic support to the work of the CRFM by facilitating stakeholder engagement and co-management, capacity building and technical support to Member States, policy alignment and harmonization, and data collection and management.
- **Marine Research** – Policy 6 of the Eastern Caribbean Regional Ocean Policy (ECROP) recognizes the importance of developing a clear marine research strategy that identifies key data requirements for decision-making, monitoring, and evaluation, and supports investment for new and emerging opportunities. The OECS Marine Research Strategy clearly identifies the approach that should be taken in this regard. Given the critical role that our marine space plays in food security, economic opportunity, tourism, livelihoods, energy security, biodiversity, and recreation, it is important that COM:ES stimulates the acquisition of new knowledge and the use of existing data in areas related to ocean governance.

Sustainable Energy

- **Affordability, Access, and Just Transitions** – Energy costs are high in all the Member States of the OECS because they all depend on imported fossil fuels for the generation of electricity and for transportation. Recognizing their vulnerability to volatility in the price of oil on global markets and the several factors, geopolitical and otherwise, that can trigger this volatility, the Member States have all embarked on sustainable energy programmes that involve the replacement of fossil fuels with renewable sources like solar, wind, geothermal and hydro, and the transition to electric vehicles. However, not everyone will benefit equally from this energy transition. There is a real possibility that the transition, if not properly and sensitively managed, can create a new class of energy-poor citizens. COM:ES must work in concert with the Council of Ministers on Energy and the Council of Ministers on Human and Social Development to ensure affordability, access and just transitions in the energy transition of the Member States.
- **Linkages to other Development Areas** – The goal of sustainable energy for all is connected to climate change mitigation, improved resilience to the impacts of climate change, green economy development and the creation of new jobs and new spheres of economic opportunity, increased competitiveness of existing economic sectors, sustainable tourism, poverty alleviation, reduced pollution, and better environmental protection. Therefore, while the Council of Ministers on Energy has oversight for accelerating the energy transition and ensuring energy security within the Member States and the region, COM:ES should retain responsibility for ensuring that the linkages between sustainable energy and other sectors are established and that synergies exist between the sustainable energy programme and efforts at the regional level in these sectors.

AGENDA SETTING FOR COM:ES

The papers that have been tabled at the nine previous COM:ES meetings have covered a wide range of subjects, under several broad thematic areas. These thematic areas are:

- i. Health and Nature
- ii. Growth Development Strategy for Environment
- iii. Sustainable Waste Management
- iv. Blue Economy
- v. Green Economy
- vi. Building Codes
- vii. Biodiversity and Ecosystems
- viii. Oceans Governance
- ix. Energy
- x. Climate Change
- xi. Water
- xii. Marine Resources
- xiii. Sustainable Land Management
- xiv. Sustainable Development
- xv. Disaster Risk Management
- xvi. Invasive Species
- xvii. Geographic Information Systems
- xviii. ESCAZU
- xix. Civil Society Engagement
- xx. Development Partners Springboard

There is overlap in many of these broad subject areas. It was noted that as the years elapsed, some of these headings were changed to reflect new terminology and priorities.

As previously stated, the Revised St. George's Declaration (SGD 2040) articulates six strategic priorities, namely:

- A. Climate and Disaster Resilience
- B. Biodiversity and Ecosystems
- C. Land and Water
- D. Chemicals, Pollution and Waste
- E. Ocean Governance and Fisheries
- F. Sustainable Energy

ARRANGEMENT OF THE WORK OF COM:ES

Therefore, it is recommended that the agenda and work of COM:ES henceforth should be organized around the six priority areas and key cross-cutting enabling actions articulated in SGD 2040. It must be clearly stated in the narrative that is presented in every paper tabled at COM:ES, how the work that is being reported on contributes to the achievement of the goals and objectives that have been outlined in SGD 2040.

SETTING THE AGENDA

Another important issue that must be addressed is the ownership of the COM:ES agenda by the ministers. The Rules of Procedure (ROP) for OECS Council of Ministers states (Rule 18):

There shall be a provisional Agenda for every ordinary and extraordinary meeting of the Council of Ministers, which may include:

- a) Items approved by the Council of Ministers at a previous meeting;
- b) Subject to Rule 19, items requested by any Member State;
- c) Items requested by the OECS Authority;
- d) Items submitted to the Council of Ministers and any of its subsidiary Organs or committees;
- e) Items which the Director-General or the OECS Commission considers fit to include.

Rule 19 of the ROP states that “where a Member States requests the inclusion of an item on the provisional agenda of an ordinary meeting or extraordinary meeting of the Council of Ministers, the Member States shall submit an explanatory memorandum on the item to the Director-General, in the case of an ordinary meeting, at least 14 days prior to the meeting and, in the case of an extraordinary meeting, at least 7 days prior to the meeting.” This rule goes on to indicate that notwithstanding the previous stipulation, “any Member State may submit an item, together with an explanatory memorandum on the subject for consideration at any meeting of the Council of Ministers, and the Council of Ministers may, by a simple majority vote, approve the inclusion of any such item as part of the Agenda”.

Therefore, the ROP make provision for engagement of Member States in the setting of the agenda for COM:ES. Over the preceding nine years, however, this facility has seldom been used by Member States. As a result, the agenda for COM:ES is derived primarily from the projects and initiatives being undertaken by the Commission, and reports from development partners on work being done in the OECS on matters that fall within the purview of COM:ES. This appears to have contributed to a static and somewhat predictable process at COM:ES.

The ideal scenario would be to have Member States more actively involved in setting the agenda for COM:ES. The ESD should encourage this by engaging with Member States at least three (3) months prior to the scheduled date for COM:ES to determine the issues that Member States would wish to have discussed at COM:ES.

Consideration may also be given to including a standing agenda item for reports from Member States on the main environmental sustainability issues that are occupying their attention at the domestic and

external level. This latter item, in addition to causing Member States to be more directly engaged in the deliberations of COM:ES, will facilitate the important flow of information from Member States to the OECS Commission.

A new agenda item should be a report by Member States on the discharge of their responsibilities to the multilateral environmental agreements to which their country is party. This report should be presented by Ministers at COM:ES so that they become aware of their country's discharge of its legal obligations to these MEAs. MEAs are very serious and important regional and international treaties and protocols to which our countries have committed. Unfortunately, however, many times, Member States do not engage fully with these MEAs and do not take advantage of the opportunities they provide. A standing agenda item on MEAs at COM:ES will bring the question of our responsibility to these agreements into sharp focus but will also facilitate the sharing of information among Member States on how they may be benefiting from the respective MEAs. The Commission should also consider assigning an officer the responsibility for tracking Member States engagements and progress with MEAs.

KEEPING MINISTERS ENGAGED

Although COM:ES meetings are held annually, the process should not suffer the same fate as Conferences of the Parties of the UNFCCC, where ministers engage with the process once a year, in a different location each year. A mechanism should be developed to keep Ministers of the Environment engaged with the priority environmental sustainability issues between COM:ES meetings.

Part III, Rule 9 of the ROP makes provision for the Council of Ministers "to establish special or standing committees as it considers necessary for the performance of its functions and may refer or assign to a committee any matter for consideration, inquiry or management by the Council of Ministers". This provision does not appear to have been used by COM:ES, which is unfortunate, because it allows COM:ES to establish and maintain oversight of critical matters that may require more deliberate attention. It is recommended that COM:ES strongly consider the establishment of standing committees in the following areas. The rationale for (a) has already been explained, while the rationale for (b) to (d) will become clearer as this paper progresses:

- a) MEA and Regional Strategy Progress Monitoring
- b) Stakeholder Engagement
- c) Information and Networking
- d) Mobilisation of Resources and Partnerships
- e) Cross-Sectoral Linkages

With respect to (e), the justification derives from the fact that there is a pressing need for engagement of COM:ES with other sectors on the all-encompassing question of sustainability. The work of the Environment Ministers cannot be effectively undertaken without dialogue, collaboration and support from (i) the education sector, to change knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and practices; (ii) the health sector, given the strong and very important nexus between the environment and health; (iii) the tourism, agriculture and fisheries sectors, to reinforce the need to inculcate sustainability into the economic sectors so that they either operate symbiotically with the environment, or at the very least, from a philosophy of 'do no harm'; (iv) the social services sector, in the light of the serious vulnerability of already vulnerable and disadvantaged communities to the impacts of climate change and natural disasters, and the pressures on the environment that are driven by poverty and a lack of resources; and (v) the finance sector because of the need to ensure adequate funding for environmental sustainability

programmes. Therefore, it is felt that the OECS Commission should provide a medium where, annually, the chair of COM:ES can meet jointly with the chairs of the other OECS Councils of Ministers, including the Economic Affairs Council (EAC), to discuss matters of mutual interest and particularly, to seek to ensure synergies in the sustainable development initiatives at the regional and national levels.

The Cross-Sectoral Linkages Committee should be chaired by the chair of COM:ES, while each of the other three standing committees should be chaired by a Minister other than the chair of COM:ES.

FOURTH INTERNATIONAL SIDS CONFERENCE

The Fourth International SIDS Conference is scheduled to take place in Antigua and Barbuda in May 2024. This is a very important meeting for SIDS as it brings international focus on the multiplicity of challenges being faced by SIDS and provides them with a forum to articulate a response to these challenges. It also presents a platform for SIDS to establish partnerships to help with capacity building and resource mobilization to advance their sustainable development agenda. Moreover, it allows SIDS to monitor and evaluate the progress that has been made in the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway, which was adopted in Samoa in 2014.

It is critically important that COM:ES is fully engaged in the process leading to the Fourth International SIDS Meeting to ensure that OECS Member States issues receive full and clear articulation in the outcome document. Therefore, it is recommended that COM:ES establishes an ad hoc committee, chaired by the current chair of COM:ES, to manage and guide the high-level engagement of OECS Ministers of Environment Sustainability with the preparatory meetings and the development of the outcome document.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

The COM:ES recognizes the importance of engaging with all stakeholders in the management of the natural resources of the region. This is why it commissioned the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) to develop a Stakeholder Engagement Strategy (SES). The goal of the SES is “to support a targeted and strategic approach to engagement of civil society and private sector in environmental governance and management in the OECS to support equitable, effective, and meaningful participation in decision-making at all levels.” The SES is underpinned by nine principles, namely (i) Inclusive, (ii) Equitable, (iii) Gender Sensitive and Responsive, (iv) Empowering, (v) Accountable and Transparent, (vi) Rights-Based, (vii) Process-Oriented, (viii) Consensus Driven, and (ix) Ownership Building.

The Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (otherwise known as the Escazú Agreement), highlights the importance of stakeholder engagement. The purpose of the Escazu Agreement is to ensure that people in Latin America and the Caribbean have access to information, can participate effectively in environmental decision-making, and have access to justice in environmental matters. The Agreement seeks to enhance transparency, public participation, and accountability in environmental governance. Given that Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines have all signed the Escazu Agreement, and that Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Guadeloupe, Martinique and Monserrat are bound by similar commitments as included in

the Aarhus Convention, as applicable to France and the United Kingdom, the need for COM:ES to constructively engage all relevant stakeholders in environmental governance and decision making assumes even greater importance.

A mechanism must be established for the bi-directional flow of information between COM:ES and the national and regional stakeholders who play an important role in environmental sustainability and governance. The SES suggests several modalities for this engagement, such as (i) setting up preparatory meetings to engage civil society and the private sector before annual COM:ES meetings, (ii) creating a registry of organisations to receive information, (iii) accrediting civil society and private sector organisations to the COM:ES, with observer status at meetings and limited ability to input at COM:ES meetings, and (iv) involving civil society and private sector representatives on standing technical committees or regional project advisory committees.

Critical to this process will be (i) the establishment of feedback mechanisms that will allow stakeholders to provide feedback on policies, plans, programmes and initiatives; (ii) clear communication channels that allow for the dissemination of information on the decisions of COM:ES that can be ventilated publicly; (iii) a sustained and coherent public education and awareness programme by the Commission to educate its stakeholders and the general public about the work being undertaken by the OECS and how this work translates into benefits for citizens at the ground level; and (iv) a deliberate and sincere effort to ensure inclusivity and equity in the engagements with stakeholders, so that everyone has access to the same levels of information.

PUBLIC SECTOR AGENCIES

The OECS Commission has long been confronted with the challenge of sub-optimal Member State ownership and commitment to some of the programmes that are being implemented by the various divisions of the Commission on behalf of the Member States. This problem has plagued the ESD for many years. As COM:ES looks forward to setting its policy and programmatic agenda to 2030, this is one of the challenges that must be addressed and resolved.

To assist this process, there should be thorough dialogue at the level of COM:ES on any new projects that will be submitted to development partners for funding, with a requirement for sign-off by COM:ES before the project can be sent to the potential donor. The justification that is presented to COM:ES should demonstrate how the project assists with the achievement of the goals and objectives of SGD 2040, aligns with the national policies and priorities, and addresses challenges that are being experienced at the Member State level. COM:ES Ministers must provide the commitment of their respective ministries to deploying the necessary resources at the national level to ensure the efficient implementation of the project.

If this is not already done, the narrative that is submitted to COM:ES should indicate the value and impact of the regional projects to the Member States, including any relevant feasibility studies, cost-benefit analyses and impact assessments that demonstrate the economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits of the project.

COM:ES should be used as a vehicle for honest conversations with Ministers about the performance of projects within their respective countries. This requires the establishment of robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to regularly track the progress of implementation of projects, and

communication at COM:ES on progress updates, milestones achieved, successes, challenges and failures at the Member State level.

The critical importance of this work on stakeholder engagement at the public sector, private sector and civil society levels to the COM:ES warrants the establishment of a standing committee on stakeholder engagement, chaired by a minister.

DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

As much as possible, COM:ES must set the agenda for engagements with development partners. At all times, these engagements must be on terms that are managed and informed by COM:ES. However, this will require clear agreement and articulation by COM:ES of the areas in which engagement is being sought and the goals and objectives of any interventions developed through such engagement. COM:ES should ensure coherence and synergies in the projects that are being undertaken at the national level with those being implemented at the regional level.

There must be a recognition that every Member State operates under serious human resource capacity constraints, particularly within the environment portfolio. This often militates against the efficient implementation of projects. While development partners are often reluctant to provide financial support for improving human resource capacity, there must be a frank dialogue with partners about the very real capacity constraints under which Member States operate and the need to address these constraints if projects are to have a realistic chance of success. These conversations should be elevated to the level of Ministers, who should make their case to the partners for domestic support.

LEVERAGING INFORMATION AND INNOVATION

ADDRESSING THE INFORMATION GAPS

There is a dearth of up-to-date, accurate information on environmental indicators in the OECS. These data gaps have hindered policy and decision making, constrained environmental management, prevented a full understanding of the myriad environmental challenges facing the region, and reduced the capacity for effective medium and long-term planning to reduce risks and improve resilience. Moreover, they have made monitoring and evaluation of the impacts of interventions difficult because of the lack of proper baseline data for comparisons. The COM:ES and the Commission cannot effectively plan and manage the environmental sustainability portfolio over the next decade without the requisite metrics to inform policies and decisions and to measure efficacy and impact.

COM:ES must make the establishment of robust data collection, information management and environmental monitoring systems a high priority. COM:ES should direct the Commission to develop a standardized set of environmental indicators that every Member State should routinely collect. This should be accompanied by clear guidelines on the data collection protocols, the types of data that should be collected, the nature of the data (quantitative and qualitative), and the quality assurance systems that will ensure the integrity of the data. A system should be put in place to facilitate data sharing and exchange across sectors and Member States, and to encourage collaboration among public sector agencies, private sector bodies, civil society organisations, academia, and regional institutions. The goal

should be to build a dynamic, robust OECS environmental information system.

Recognizing that evidence and information are effective only if they are readily available and being used, this initiative should seek to create data platforms that are user-friendly and accessible, in formats that provide different levels of analysis that can be useful to policy makers, researchers, students and members of the public. Because there is not yet a culture of evidence-based decision making within the OECS, some effort must be expended, starting at the level of the members of COM:ES and filtering down to the public, to raise awareness and to encourage the use of data. Where practicable, platforms should also be established to allow for the crowd sourcing of data from members of the public and CSOs. This will allow for a granularity of data collection that would not be possible through formal data collection channels. Naturally, there will be need for ground-truthing of the data collected from this method.

INNOVATION AND RESEARCH

The COM:ES appreciates the value of research and innovation, as evidenced by the tabling of a paper on the ‘Development of a Research Agenda, Strategy and Action Plan for Terrestrial and Marine Research in the OECS’ at COM:ES 9. Research and innovation will help Ministers and other policy makers gain a deeper understanding of the challenges to environmental sustainability in the region, the possible solutions to the challenges, and the novel approaches that may help in resolving some of the difficult situations facing policy makers. By investigating trends, examining the impacts of different variables, and exploring several potential outcomes, research helps governments better plan for uncertain futures, as is the case with the impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss, ecosystem degradation, and water insecurity.

The recommendations from COM:ES 9 for the preparation of a regional research agenda and implementation strategy for terrestrial, coastal, and marine resources should be urgently pursued, as well as the mandate that was given to the OECS Commission to seek to mobilize resources and technical support to assist Member States that are interested in developing national research agendas. As much as possible, the OECS Commission should seek to partner with academia and other existing research institutions, both within and outside the OECS region, to accelerate the conduct of applied research in the areas that are of critical importance to Member States.

COM:ES should also establish a platform to catalog and monitor innovative approaches to environmental management, sustainability and resilience building in the OECS. Where an innovation has broad applicability or demonstrates promise in addressing a challenge in one or several Member States, COM:ES should instruct the Commission to engage with the developer of the technology to explore modalities for its use or replication in the relevant sectors in other Member States. In all instances this should be done in a manner that protects the intellectual property of the developer.

This approach should also extend to the cataloging of indigenous and traditional knowledge in Member States relating to environmental management, sustainability, and climate resilience. In all our Member States there is a rich repository of information on local cultural practices that have proven successful in managing the natural environment and reducing risks to natural disasters. This information has significant value and must be harnessed, collated, and indexed.

MINISTERIAL LEADERSHIP

Ministers play a very important role in international negotiations. However, there are occasions when ministers have not engaged sufficiently in the international negotiating theatres that require their attention. This is not unexpected, given the large number of meetings that require the attention of ministers domestically, regionally, and internationally. Therefore, there may be merit and utility in COM:ES identifying two ministers who will share lead responsibility for each of the strategic priority areas and will follow more closely the regional and international meetings that pertain to these areas. The work of these ministers should be supported by a team comprising public officers from the Member States who cover these areas and the relevant technical leads within ESD. Under this arrangement, the lead ministers for climate change and disaster resilience, for example, would be expected to follow and be briefed throughout the year on all discussions and negotiations at the regional and international levels on climate and disaster resilience, and give priority to participating in meetings at the level of Conferences of the Parties and any other meetings where their presence would help bolster the position of the OECS region.

PEER-TO-PEER NETWORKING

Environment ministers from the OECS attend several regional and international meetings during the year on matters related to their portfolio. COM:ES should treat each of these meetings as an opportunity for Ministers to network on behalf of COM:ES. This can take the form of simple awareness raising and sensitization of the work of COM:ES within the meeting, particularly if this is a forum that has not traditionally engaged with COM:ES and the OECS Commission on matters of environmental sustainability. However, it can also consist of more involved lobbying for technical and financial support for the work of COM:ES, through the Commission and Member States. The Commission should keep track of all meetings that COM:ES members are likely to attend during the period between annual COM:ES meetings and prepare personalized briefing notes for the ministers who will be participating in these meetings. This will also serve to keep ministers meaningfully engaged in the work of COM:ES throughout the year.

COM:ES should also seek to establish formal networks with environmental ministers within the wider AOSIS community and in other developing countries that share similar challenges to the OECS. These peer-to-peer networks will facilitate new learnings, sharing of lessons learned and best practices, and valuable exchanges of experiences and information on the myriad issues that are of relevance to the work of the OECS Member States and the OECS Commission.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The work of COM:ES must be able to translate into behavioral changes at the household, community, and national levels. Otherwise, it will not cause the paradigm shift to sustainability that is so urgently needed in the region. The beneficiaries of the work that is overseen and directed by COM:ES – the citizens of the OECS Member States – must feel the impacts of the work. While the stakeholder engagement work is designed to help with this, there must also be an effective public education and awareness programme to support the work of COM:ES through the Commission.

Therefore, the agenda for COM:ES to 2030 must include a well thought-out and effective communications strategy that identifies the various target demographics or publics; articulates the

messages that will resonate with these various demographics; determines the communication platforms that will be used to disseminate the key messages; assigns responsibilities for creating the content that will be used, with the proviso that the content must be engaging and digestible; and identifies the credible influencers who will be used to ensure the messages get maximum exposure within the targeted demographics.

RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

The mobilization of resources for the regional Environmental Sustainability work has traditionally been the responsibility of the OECS Commission. However, the members of COM:ES represent an extremely valuable and influential group of advocates to promote the work of the OECS Commission in environmental sustainability to development partners and friendly governments, and to lobby for new resources in support of this work.

It is recognized that OECS Environment Ministers also have obligations to their national governments. Therefore, this expanded role on behalf of the OECS Commission and COM:ES should not interfere or conflict with their responsibilities to their national government. COM:ES Ministers are uniquely placed to be influential and persuasive communicators of the value and impacts of regional environmental programmes to existing and prospective development partners.

Any potential conflict can be very easily obviated by COM:ES agreeing on the areas that will be addressed through regional programming and those that will be tackled at the national levels. Some areas easily lend themselves to the former, namely, (i) ocean governance and fisheries, (ii) harmonization of legislation, (iii) issues that have transboundary application, (iv) conservation of migratory species of wild animals, (v) biodiversity and ecosystem preservation, (vi) tracking the progress of implementation of MEAs, (vii) development of regional project proposals for green and climate financing, (viii) establishment of an environmental information management system, and (ix) the development and management of a regional carbon market.

Mobilizing finance, particularly through new and innovative sustainable finance instruments, will be critical if the OECS Member States are to successfully address the serious environmental challenges they will encounter in the near future. The cost of adapting to the devastating impacts of climate change across all sectors and responding to the loss and damage from extreme weather events like hurricanes and droughts, and slow onset events like sea level rise and ocean acidification, will stretch government finances to breaking points in all Member States.

The myriad environmental challenges that are confronting Member States will worsen over the coming years. Global warming is set to increase to 2.6°C over pre-industrial levels with the current range of policies and emission reduction pledges by parties to the Paris Agreement. This will be catastrophic for OECS Member States. Countries that are already reeling under heavy debt burdens incurred from their responses to previous extreme weather events and the impacts of the COVID pandemic have very limited fiscal space within which they can operate, and insufficient capacity to respond to these impacts with the required vigor. Environment Ministers will need to understand the intricacies of climate and green finance and be prepared to work closely with their counterparts in the ministries of finance and ministries of economic development or planning if they are to provide the necessary technical support and advice that will ensure the correct policy responses.

Members of COM:ES will need to be educated on the operations of Green Bonds, Blue Bonds, Impact

Investment Funds, Public-Private Sector Partnerships, Carbon Markets and Carbon Offsetting, Debt-for-Nature Swaps, Green Funds and Environmental Trusts so that they may play an active and informed role in the negotiations and decisions on sustainable financing at the national and regional levels.

Given the serious capacity deficiencies at the Member State level for developing substantial, comprehensive proposals for submission to climate finance funding agencies, COM:ES may also want to consider the establishment of a regional unit to support Member States in the development of grant proposals and funding applications.

COM:ES should also consider using their annual meetings as a medium to engage new private sector and corporate partners to mobilize resources for environmental projects. The thrust of private sector companies towards adopting Environmental Social and Governance (ESG) standards should be capitalized on by COM:ES to initiate dialogue with these corporate entities to create new strategic partnerships to fund environmental sustainability programmes and initiatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the main recommendations for prioritizing and reorienting the work of the COM:ES.

Strategic Priority Setting

Climate and Disaster Resilience

- Adaptation
- Loss and Damage
- Climate Finance and Carbon Markets
- Low Carbon Development and Climate Mitigation

Biodiversity and Ecosystems

- Access and Benefit Sharing
- Ecosystem Assessment, Valuation and Development
- Invasive Alien Species
- Ecosystem Restoration

Land and Water

- Integrated Water Resource Management
- Sustainable Land Management, including Sustainable Agriculture

Chemicals, Pollution and Waste

- Circular Economy
- Marine Pollution, including Plastics

Ocean Governance and Fisheries

- Marine Spatial Planning, including Maritime Boundary Delimitation
- Sustainable Fisheries Management
- Marine Research

Sustainable Energy

- Affordability, Access, and Just Transitions
- Linkages to other Development Areas

Agenda Setting

- The agenda and work of COM:ES should be organized around the six priority areas articulated in SGD 2040.
- The ESD should engage with Member States prior to the scheduled date for COM:ES to determine the issues that Member States wish to have discussed at COM:ES.
- There should be a standing agenda item for reports from Member States on the main environmental sustainability issues that are occupying their attention.
- There should be a new agenda item for a report by Member States on MEAs.

Keeping Ministers Engaged

- COM:ES should establish five standing committees on the following areas:
 - a) MEA and Regional Strategies Progress Monitoring
 - b) Stakeholder Engagement
 - c) Information and Networking
 - d) Mobilisation of Resources and Partnerships
 - e) Cross-Sectoral Linkages

Fourth International SIDS Conference

- COM:ES should establish an ad hoc committee, chaired by the COM:ES chair, to guide and manage the high-level engagement of ministers with the process.

Stakeholder Engagement

- A mechanism should be established for the bi-directional flow of information between COM:ES and the national and regional stakeholders who play an important role in environmental sustainability and governance.

Public Sector Agencies

- There should be dialogue at the level of COM:ES on any new projects that will be submitted to development partners for funding.
- Development partners should be made to understand the capacity constraints under which Member States operate and encouraged to make financial provisions to address these constraints.
- COM:ES should be used as a vehicle for honest conversations with Ministers about the performance of projects within their respective ministries.

Development Partners

- COM:ES should set the agenda for engagements with development partners.

Leveraging Information and Innovation

- COM:ES should direct ESD to develop a standardized set of environmental indicators that every Member State should routinely collect. The goal is to build a dynamic, robust OECS environmental information system.
- The recommendations from COM:ES 9 for the preparation of a regional research agenda and implementation strategy for terrestrial, coastal, and marine resources should be urgently pursued.
- COM:ES should establish a platform to catalog and monitor innovative approaches to environmental management, sustainability and resilience building in the OECS.
- Indigenous and traditional knowledge in Member States relating to environmental management, sustainability, and climate resilience should be collated and cataloged.

Ministerial Leadership

- COM:ES should identify two ministers who will share lead responsibility for each of the strategic priority areas and will follow more closely the regional and international meetings that pertain to these areas. The work of each of these ministerial teams should be supported by a team of national and regional technical officers.

Peer-to-Peer Networking

- COM:ES should treat regional and international meetings during the year as an opportunity for Ministers to network on behalf of COM:ES. The ESD should keep track of all meetings that

COM:ES members are likely to attend during the period between annual COM:ES meetings and prepare personalized briefing notes for the ministers who will be participating in these meetings.

Communication Strategy

- The agenda for COM:ES to 2030 must be supported by a well thought-out and effective communications strategy.

Resource Mobilization

- Environment Ministers must be thoroughly briefed on the intricacies of sustainable financing so that they may play an active and informed role in the negotiations and decisions on sustainable financing at the national and regional levels.
- COM:ES should consider the establishment of a regional unit to support Member States in the development of grant proposals and funding applications.
- COM:ES should use their annual meetings as a medium to engage new private sector and corporate partners to mobilize new resources.

CONCLUSION

The OECS Council of Ministers with responsibility for environmental sustainability faces several serious challenges in its mission to address environmental issues and promote sustainable development. These challenges include limited human and financial resources, significant data gaps, poor inter-agency collaboration at the national and regional levels, inadequate infusion of environmental considerations into sectoral and national policies and plans, inadequate public awareness and sensitization of the scope and magnitude of the environmental challenges, and insufficient support at the Member State level for some regional initiatives. These systemic challenges amplify the very serious problems caused by the imperatives of climate change, biodiversity loss and ecosystem fragility, land and watershed degradation, increasing levels of waste and pollution, and crippling energy costs due to an over-reliance on fossil fuel imports. These issues are increasing the vulnerability of OECS Member States, which are already among the most vulnerable on the planet and are having a deleterious effect on the already vulnerable populations in these countries.

To overcome these challenges the Council must operate more strategically and effectively. COM:ES must prioritize stakeholder engagement, adopt a more evidence-based approach to its work, strengthen cooperation between the Council and other regional bodies, make more efficient use of scarce technical resources, mobilize significant levels of new sustainable financing, build capacity through training and knowledge sharing, embark on a sustained comprehensive public education programme, and lead the charge to integrate environmental considerations into sectoral and national policies and development plans. The Council must also look to forge partnerships with international organizations and global environmental initiatives. Ministers must be actively engaged with the work of the Council on a year-round basis, and not just at annual meetings of the COM:ES.

The urgency of the environmental sustainability challenges confronting the OECS Member States requires an equally urgent and focused reaction from the Council. How COM:ES responds during the next seven years will determine whether the region will be able to successfully navigate the serious environmental headwinds and embark on the type of transformational change that is required to ensure a sustainable and resilient future for all the citizens of the OECS.

As all OECS Member States embark on green-blue economy development agendas, transition to low-carbon economies, and seek to increase their resilience to the impacts of climate change, the COM:ES will have an increasingly pivotal role to play at the national and regional levels. The recommendations in this paper seek to position and reorient the COM:ES to allow it to discharge these obligations.

ROAD MAP 2023-2030

COM:ES 10

Endorsement of Road Map by COM:ES 10 (2023)

- a. COM:ES gives the ESD the mandate to proceed with the implementation of the Road Map.
- b. COM:ES establishes Standing Committees and assigns chairs to these committees.
- c. COM:ES establishes an ad hoc committee for the Fourth SIDS Meeting.

2023-2024

2. Commission develops and rolls out the public awareness plan (2023-2030).
3. COM:ES engages actively in the discussions and preparatory meetings for the Fourth SIDS Meeting and keeps track of the developments related to the articulation of the outcome document.
4. Commission and COM:ES commence the process of stakeholder engagement.
5. Commission embarks on a comprehensive search and collection of existing environmental data and research.
6. Review MEAs, International Commitments and Regional Strategies
 - a. Commission compiles an exhaustive list of all MEAs, international commitments and regional strategies, and identifies the priority thematic areas that align with these regional and international commitments.
7. Develop Action Plan
 - a. Commission develops a regional action plan for each priority area, taking cognizance of ongoing and planned interventions at the Member State level to avoid duplication and establish synergies.
 - b. Each action plan should speak to the 10 enabling actions identified in SGD 2040.
8. Implement Sustainable Financing programme (2023-2030)
 - a. Commission begins the process of educating ministers on sustainable finance instruments.
 - b. COM:ES begins to serve as advocates for the resource mobilization plan.
9. Establish peer-to-peer networks (2023-2030).
 - a. Ministers begin to engage in peer-to-peer networks.
10. Present the outputs of (2) to (8) at COM:ES 11 (2024)
 - a. Ministers play a more active role in COM:ES 11 agenda setting and reporting.

2024-2025

11. Undertake State of the Regional Environment Assessment
 - a. Commission conducts a comprehensive assessment of the state of the regional environmental sector, along the lines of the six thematic areas of SGD 40.
 - b. Commission identifies the data gaps that need filling.
 - c. Commission identifies the areas that lend themselves to further research.
12. Implementation and Monitoring (2024-2030)
 - a. Implement action plans.
 - b. Establish monitoring and evaluation systems.
 - c. Communicate regularly with Member States on results and challenges.
13. Capacity Building (2024-2030)
 - a. Commission commences a programme to build capacity in government agencies whose work is connected to or impacts environmental sustainability, CSOs, and private sector bodies that impact environmental sustainability.
 - b. Commission establishes a facility for the exchange of information among these agencies.
14. Establish and sustain the Regional Environmental Information System (2024-2030)

15. Present the results of (11) to (13) at COM:ES 12 (2025)
a. COM:ES holds its first engagement with prospective corporate partners at COM:ES 12.

2025-2030

16. Initiate a new programme of Research and Innovation
17. Continue the implementation of the Road Map.

2026

18. Commence the Mid-Term Review of the Road Map and mandatory 5-year review of SGD 2040
19. ESD presents the findings of the Review of the Roadmap and SGD 2040 at COM:ES 13 (2026)

2027-2028

20. Continue the implementation of the Road Map, including any adjustments recommended from the mid-term review.

2029

21. Commence the process for the publication of the second State of the Regional Environment Report.
22. Present the Second State of the Regional Environment Report to COM:ES 16.

2029-2030

23. Undertake an End of Roadmap Review
24. Present the End of Roadmap Review to COM:ES 17