



# Challenges and opportunities in addressing the spread of Sargassum across the Tropical Atlantic Ocean

Online Event, 2 June 2021  
4 - 6 pm UTC/ 6 – 8 pm CEST

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*Official side event of the  
All-Atlantic 2021 Conference*



**Side Event:** Challenges and Opportunities in the spread of Sargassum across the tropical Atlantic Ocean in the spread of Sargassum across the tropical Atlantic Ocean. Co-organised by EU4OceanObs, GEO Blue Planet, the Atlantic International Research (AIR) Centre and UNEP-Cartagena convention, this is a side event to the All-Atlantic 2021 Conference, which will take place from 2 – 4 June 2021.

***Once confined to the Sargasso Sea, Sargassum is now present across the Atlantic Ocean. Sargassum inundations harm marine ecosystems and disrupt recreation and fishing, costing local communities millions of dollars. This side event addresses challenges, solutions, and opportunities behind the spread of Sargassum across the Tropical Atlantic. The event also introduces the Sargassum Information hub (<https://sargassumhub.org/>) and the UNEP – Cartagena Convention White Paper on Sargassum.***

Challenges will be addressed by presenting the state-of-the-art research on the spread mechanisms, various impacts and the present capacity of monitoring and forecasting systems. Showcasing solution strategies and creating space for discussion will promote collaboration between scientists, engineers and stakeholders. This event will catalyse linkages, actions and coordination of stakeholders and scientists addressing challenges and enhancing opportunities in the spread of Sargassum in countries across the Atlantic Ocean.

## Website and registration pages

Event Webpage: <https://www.eu4oceanobs.eu/all-atlantic-2021/sargassumsideevent/>

Registration: [https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_I-cNM7ZTS-ssfjrdZIA](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_I-cNM7ZTS-ssfjrdZIA)

## Who should attend?

Policy makers, research communities, academic institution representatives, industry representatives, innovation clusters, and projects related to blue economy from countries around the Atlantic.

## Organisers

- GEO Blue Planet/EU4OceanObs (A. Hasson)
- GEO Blue Planet (E. Smail)
- IOCARIBE (C. Toro)
- AtlantOS (I. Sousa-Pinto, A-C. Zinkann, S. Ketelhake)
- AIRCenter (J. Moutinho)
- SPAW-CAR (C. Caumette)
- UNEP Cartagena Convention (I. Lopez)



# Context

Once confined to the Sargasso Sea, thousands of tons of Sargassum now make their way to beaches in the Caribbean, East Americas, and West Africa. Sargassum is a genus of large brown algae, with two species in the Atlantic found in free-floating mats, held afloat by gas-filled bladders. These rafts serve as a critical habitat for threatened loggerhead sea turtles and as a nursery shelter for a variety of commercially important fishes such as mahi-mahi, jacks, and amberjacks. In 2011, floating Sargassum began to impact coastal communities around the tropical Atlantic Ocean. Washed up Sargassum rots, attracts flies, deters tourists and causes respiratory problems due to release of hydrogen sulphide and ammonia. **Floating mats and mounds near beaches harm marine ecosystems and disrupt recreation, tourism and fishing, costing local communities millions of dollars.**

On-going research efforts and developments are led to understand the mechanisms behind its basin-wide spread, its impact on both marine life and local communities as well as providing solutions for mitigation and beyond. **This is a social, economic, and ecological challenge that requires a multi-disciplinary approach.** In this context, the Sargassum hub (<https://sargassumhub.org/>) launched in 2020 serves as a single-entry point to access information and tools for the monitoring and management of sargassum blooms for all stakeholders from scientists to local fishermen. The **Sargassum Hub is developed by the GEO Blue Planet Initiative**, in collaboration with IOCARIBE of IOC-UNESCO, AtlantOS, the Atlantic International Research (AIR) Center and other partners.

The side event will also be the opportunity for **UNEP Cartagena Convention** to launch their white paper compiling **background information for a strategic status update and critical situational analysis** that informs and elicits feedback from key regional stakeholders. It focuses on influxes in the Caribbean, with reference to other impacted regions as appropriate.

**This side event will address challenges, solutions and opportunities behind the spread of Sargassum across the Tropical Atlantic.** Challenges will be addressed by presenting the state-of-the-art research on the spread mechanisms, various impacts and the present capacity of monitoring and forecasting. Showcasing solution strategies and creating space for discussion and collaboration between scientists, engineers and stakeholders will provide insight into the opportunities.

[Register for event](#)



# Final Agenda

16:00-16:05 UTC Welcome Speech Dr. Audrey Hasson (GEO Blue Planet)

## Session 1: Challenges – State of the art

16:05-16:15 UTC General background on Sargassum Prof. Hazel Oxenford (CERMES, Barbados)

16:15-16:20 UTC Monitoring and forecasting Sargassum Dr. J. Jouanno (IRD, France)

16:20-16:25 UTC Sargassum and marine Life Dr. Brigitta van Tussenbroek (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico)

16:25-16:35 UTC Sargassum impacts on society Dr Shelly-Ann Cox (CERMES, Barbados)

5' Break

## Session 2: Solutions – Towards informed mitigation

16:40-16:50 UTC Cartagena Convention white paper launch Ileana Lopez (UNEP)

16:50-16:55 UTC Sargassum Hub Dr. Emily Smail (GEO Blue Planet)

16:55-17:00 UTC Local to regional solutions Lydia Barfleur (Région Guadeloupe, France)

17:00-17:05 UTC Sargassum as a resource tbc

17:05-17:10 UTC Sargassum mitigation for the tourism industry Jake Kheel (Fundación Grupo Puntacana)

10' Break

## Session 3: Opportunities – Discussion panel with experts and stakeholders

17:20-17:30 UTC Introduction Cesar Toro (IOCARIBE)

17:30-18:00 UTC Panel discussion

- Dr Shelly-Ann Cox (CERMES, Barbados)
- Mika Odido (IOC Africa)
- Dr. Emily Smail (GEO Blue Planet)
- Prof. Kwasi Appeaning Addo (University of Ghana)
- Ana María Núñez (UNDP)
- Ileana Lopez (UNEP Cartagena Convention)
- Prof. Jacques Abe (UNEP Abidjan Convention)
- John Hanus (European Commission)