



10 frequently asked questions on the **SPAW Protocol**

1. What is the SPAW Protocol?

The SPAW Protocol is one of the three Protocols of the Cartagena Convention that was adopted in 1983. Signed in Kingston, Jamaica, on 18 January 1990, and entered into force on 18 June 2000, the SPAW Protocol follows an ecosystem approach and supplies a unique legal framework for the conservation of the region's biodiversity. The SPAW protocol is also recognised as an important tool for reaching international agreement objectives on biodiversity such as the Convention on Biological Diversity or the Ramsar Convention.

2. What is the Cartagena Convention?

Sustainable management of sea and coastal resources and the protection of critical habitats through concerted regional cooperation, is vital for Caribbean populations. Having acknowledged this, the Caribbean nations adopted in 1983 the Cartagena Convention (Convention for the protection and development of marine environment in the Wider Caribbean Region), the only legally binding regional agreement on the environment. Twenty five countries have ratified the Convention. To date the Convention focuses on issues such as land-based sources of pollution, dumping of wastes at sea, pollution from ships, biodiversity protection, and airborne pollution. The Cartagena Convention is supported by three technical protocols developed to further implement it: **Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife, SPAW (1990)**, Land-Based pollutions, LBS (1999), and Oil Spills (1983).

3. What are the main objectives of the SPAW protocol?

The SPAW protocol aims to:

- Protect, preserve and sustainably manage areas of particular ecological value such as coral reefs and mangroves, and promote their value to ecological health and economic well-being.
- Protect endangered and critical species: undertake conservation measures to protect threatened and endangered species of plants and animals, as well as measures to prevent species from becoming threatened or endangered to ensure recovery and restoration.

4. How many Governments have ratified the SPAW Protocol?

The SPAW protocol was adopted as international law on 18 June 2000.

To date, it has been ratified by 18 countries: the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Colombia, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, France (Guadeloupe, Guyane, Martinique, Saint-Barthélemy, Saint-Martin), Grenada, Guyana, Honduras, the Netherlands (Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, Saba, Sint-Eustachius, Sint Maarten), Nicaragua, Panama, Saint-Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States (States following Gulf of Mexico, U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto-Rico), Venezuela. Others countries are on the cusp of ratifying it in the near future.

5. How does the SPAW Protocol work?

The actions developed in support to the SPAW protocol are implemented within the framework of biannual programmes of work, prepared in liaison with the signatory countries, reviewed by SPAW's scientific and technical advisory committee, and formally voted during SPAW Party conferences that take place every two years. These programmes of work aim to define step-by-step priority actions on which SPAW Parties wish to focus, within each country as well as in regional cooperation and coordination, in order to progressively reach the Protocol's sought-after objectives and to ensure the proper application of its measures.

6. What are some of the main obligations following ratification?

According to the terms of the protocol and in accordance with their own laws and regulations, the Parties must take every measure to protect, preserve and sustainably manage the areas that need protecting and endangered animal and plant species on their territories. Regarding species these obligations are based on three annexes:

Annex I includes threatened or endangered plant species for which any form of destruction or disruption (picking, gathering, uprooting, cutting, possession, trade, etc) must be banned in order to guarantee their protection and if need be their recovery.

Annex II lists threatened or endangered animal species for which, again, any form of destruction or disruption (capture, possession, killing, trade, etc) must be banned for their protection and recovery.

Annex III, finally, includes a list of animal and plant species for which special measures must be taken to ensure their protection and recovery whilst authorising and regulating the use of these species.

Countries can also submit Protected Areas to be listed under the SPAW Protocol.

There are no direct financial obligations for the Parties. Governments contribute on a voluntary basis to CEP regardless of their status within the Convention and its Protocols.

7. How can countries get assistance to implement the obligations of the SPAW Protocol?

UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme (CEP) as the Secretariat to the Cartagena Convention and all of its protocols provides countries with guidance and scientific/technical information and expertise for meeting the Protocol's obligations. In liaison with the SPAW-RAC it also assists countries in developing new projects and activities and sourcing funding for their implementation.

By joining SPAW, countries receive support in their efforts towards:

- Protected Areas
- Technical assistance
- Working in partnerships
- Conservation education
- Public awareness
- Sustainable management of species
- Species (Legal protection and restauration plan, sustainable management)

8. What are the main benefits for countries from ratification?

The SPAW Programme activities will:

- Provide direct assistance for the management of coastal and marine resources.
- Provide opportunities for partnerships and coordination on technical assistance, research, education and capacity building on coastal and marine resource initiatives.
- Access fundings from donors, CEP projects and other relevant initiatives.
- Offer technical assistance and expertise through the SPAW Regional Activity Center (RAC), established in 2000 in Guadeloupe for the implementation of SPAW activities at the request of the parties.

9. How does a country ratify/accede to the SPAW Protocol?

- The Ministry of Foreign and External Affairs obtains a certified copy of the SPAW Protocol from the Government of Colombia, which is the Depository for the SPAW Protocol, for internal review.
- Once reviewed and approved through national process, the Ministry of Foreign or External Affairs should deposit the instrument of accession with the Government of Colombia as Depository.

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10. Which partners are involved in the SPAW Protocol?

Many partners and stakeholders are involved in the implementation of the SPAW programme: United Nation Environment Programme (UNEP) with its Caribbean Environmental Programme (CEP), the SPAW-RAC, networks like CaMPAM, GCFI, WIDECAS, SCSCB, etc. Some groups of Experts on Protected Areas, Marine Mammals, Species, etc also help implement the SPAW programme.

For more information on the SPAW Protocol:



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