

**Regional workshop and validation of the OECS Blue BioTrade
Action Plan for the queen conch value chain in the Eastern
Caribbean**

UNCTAD-OECS-CITES and EU event

26-27 May 2022

UNCTAD Welcoming Remarks

Delivered by David Vivas Eugui

Excellencies,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), it is a pleasure to welcome you to the **“Regional validation workshop of the OECS Blue BioTrade Action Plan for the queen conch value chain.** I am David Vivas, Legal Officer and Head of Oceans Economy and Fisheries Programme at UNCTAD.

Healthy marine biodiversity and ecosystems are the natural capital base for a sustainable ocean economy. The conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity and trade of oceans-based goods and services can provide countries valuable opportunities for economic development and the improvement of livelihoods. In 2018, UNCTAD estimated the value of tradable ocean-based goods and services globally at \$2.5 trillion, representing 3 per cent of global GDP.

UNCTAD, as part of the UN Secretariat has been helping developing countries since its creation to access the benefits of a globalised

economy **fairly and equitably** by providing analysis, technical assistance and building consensus within its strong 195 Member States. All by using trade, investment, technology, and finance as tools for inclusive and sustainable development.

UNCTAD's BioTrade Initiative was launched in 1996 to support the objectives of the biodiversity-related conventions namely the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Since then, the Initiative has developed a unique portfolio of global, regional, and country programmes as well as a network of partners and practitioners working in over 80 countries – expanding to the Eastern Caribbean in the form of Blue BioTrade since 2020.

But what is Blue BioTrade? Blue BioTrade is an approach to product or service sourcing from marine biodiversity which is commercialized in a way that respects **people, nature, and legal frameworks**. The revised 2020 BioTrade Principles and Criteria (P&C), developed by UNCTAD are guidelines for businesses, governments and civil society wishing to NOT ONLY support the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, but also the fair and equitable sharing of benefits through trade.

Phase one of the OECS Blue BioTrade project focuses on the iconic species **queen conch or “*lambi*” as it is known regionally**. Strongly linked to the region's rich gastronomic culture and economy, *lambi* is well-known for its delicious meat, valuable pearls, and other biological products of high value, **for which the global market is above \$74 million and growing every year**. Sadly, it is also subject to unsustainable harvesting and is now a CITES Appendix II-listed species. To ensure that its international trade does not further

threaten its survival, trade should now be regulated to ensure it is legal, traceable and sustainable.

Today's Regional Workshop is a milestone activity of the Blue BioTrade project (Phase 1) which aims to directly contribute to achieving key targets of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 14, 12 and 17, while also supporting the objectives of the OECS Development Strategy 2019-2028 and a post-COVID-19 recovery.

Today and tomorrow, we have **3 GOALS**:

- Present the **findings and cross-country lessons learned** over the life span of the UNCTAD-OECS and CITES Blue BioTrade project based on a regional queen conch stakeholder map and the three recently published country case studies.
- Put the state-of-the-art knowledge on the Eastern Caribbean queen conch value chain into action: A regional plan of action is expected to be presented and hopefully validated by all stakeholders at the workshop.
- Unveil prospects for a phase 2 of the Blue BioTrade project **setting the tone of making “sustainability” a factor of competitiveness and cooperation for the OECS**, not only on the fisheries sector but also in the hatchery, sea ranching, food processing, tourism, restaurant, ornaments, and handcraft sectors.

We are most grateful for the European Union for generously funding the pilot project and the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund for their generous support to the implementation phase (phase 2) of the project, which will provide options for sustainable

commercialization of **sea moss and sargassum** for food, fertilisers, and cosmetic by-products products.

We would like to also gratefully acknowledge the presence of **Dr. Didacus Jules, Director General of the OECS and the European Union** for the trust vested on the United Nations, in supporting sustainable use of marine biodiversity in the region.

We are also counting on the support of the UN Country Coordination Offices in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, and Grenada to the implementation of the regional Blue BioTrade plan of action to be agreed and launched on this occasion.

I am confident that under this fruitful cooperation, we will all arrive together **to a safe harbour where the queen conch and all other marine species are sourced with respect whilst also balancing the need to recognise and act on the needs of the small-scale coastal actors in the region.**

My friends, much is at stake for the queen conch, but also, much more can be gained. A gain for one is a gain for all.

Thanks to all of you for your support and participation.