

PRESS RELEASE

Caribbean Fisheries Forum hosts its 24th Regular Session ahead of Ministerial Meeting

Anguilla Hands Over Chair to Antigua and Barbuda



Across the Caribbean Community, approximately half-a-million people are employed in the fisheries and aquaculture sector, including 122,198 fishers, 4,926 aquaculture farmers, and 412,078 others who hold fisheries-dependent jobs across the value chain.

Belize City, Belize, 24 April 2026 (CRFM)—The Caribbean Fisheries Forum, comprised of 17 heads of fisheries authorities across the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), is convening its 24th Regular Meeting this week. The Forum, which provides technical guidance to the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), began its meeting on Thursday, 23 April 2026, with deliberations on the CRFM’s Seventh Biennial Work Plan (2026-2027), which sets the framework for the regional fisheries body to advance the development of fisheries and aquaculture across the region. Today’s agenda is focused on pressing regional and international developments, as well as the status and trends of the sector.

Dr. Marc Williams, Executive Director of the CRFM, said: *“The Caribbean Fisheries Forum provides the CRFM with a platform to discuss fish stocks, the blue economy, marine ecosystems, and fishing activities. Given the proximity of the Member States in the Caribbean and the transboundary nature of the fish stocks, cooperation is essential for the sustainable management of these stocks.”*

He added that, *“The Forum meeting provides a platform for the Member States to share data, examine common challenges such as illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, climate change, habitat degradation, and overfishing, and coordinate policies that protect resources while supporting livelihoods. Additionally, it reinforces partnerships among governments, fisherfolk organizations, researchers, and other nongovernmental*

organizations to foster trust, harmonize plans, improve enforcement, and attract funding for joint projects that benefit the CRFM Member States.”



Mr. Ian Horsford of Antigua and Barbuda elected to Chair Forum for 2026-2027

On Thursday, 24 April 2026, the Forum also held elections for a new Chair and Vice Chair, as well as members of the Executive Committee of the Forum and the Resource Mobilization Sub-committee. After the elections, Mr. Ian Horsford, Chief Fisheries Officer, Antigua and Barbuda, assumed the Chair, succeeding Mr. Remone Johnson of the Turks and Caicos Islands for the next year.

"In these times of geopolitical uncertainty, CRFM—through its various organs such as the Forum—remains a shining example of what can be achieved through multilateralism as we chart the way forward for the sustainable development of Caribbean fisheries and blue economy," Mr. Horsford said.

The two-day meeting, which concludes today, Friday, 24 April, addresses the sustainable management of fisheries and aquaculture, as well as cross-cutting dimensions related to climate change, adaptation, and innovation, including the strategic adoption of renewable energy options within seafood value chains. The Forum’s deliberations also encompass initiatives to combat IUU fishing and fisheries crime, as well as gender mainstreaming in fisheries.

Furthermore, the Forum is providing technical guidance on two new protocols under the Caribbean Community Common Fisheries Policy (CCCFP): a protocol on marine spatial planning and the other on aquatic foods traceability, which involves tracking seafood across the value chain. Deliberations extend to the World Trade Organization (WTO) Fisheries Subsidies Agreement, the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (the BBNJ Agreement), as well as the International Legally Binding Instrument on Plastic Pollution—all important legal instruments for the sector.

This week’s Forum meeting precedes the upcoming 20th Regular Meeting of the CRFM Ministerial Council, comprised of Ministers from the CRFM’s Member States.

###

PRESS CONTACT

NAME: Dr. Marc Williams, Executive Director
PHONE: 501-223-4443
E-mail: marc.williams@crfm.int

ABOUT THE CRFM:

The Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) was officially inaugurated on 27 March 2003 in Belize City, Belize, where it is headquartered, following the signing of the Agreement Establishing the CRFM on 4 February 2002. It is an inter-governmental organization whose mission is to promote and facilitate the responsible utilization of the region's fisheries and other aquatic resources for the economic and social benefits of the current and future population of the region.