From start-up to scale-up: practical approaches to sargassum value chain

Global Gateway Forum 2025 Side Event

The 3rd EU-Caribbean Global Gateway Conference on Sargassum took place last 8th October in Brussels, as a Side Event of the Global Gateway Forum 2025.

The participation of high-level representatives from national, European and international institutions demonstrates the shared commitment.

- **170 attendees onsite**, highlighting: 45 from Caribbean and Latin America (including ministries, public scientific institutions and regional organisations); 31 from EU institutions; 35 from EU countries (including ministries, cooperation agencies, public universities); 15 from International organisations (including UN Agencies); 26 from private sector.
- **Streaming: 184 unique viewers/plays from 30 countries**, highlighting Belgium, France, United States, Italy, Spain, Netherlands, Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada and Barbados.

OUTCOMES

1. **Commitment:**

Turning 660.000 tonnes of sargassum into an economic opportunity

Joint commitment to collect 660,000 tn of sargassum by PM Mitchell, Commissioner Síkela,Minister James, Viceminister Samaniego and Viceminister Reyes

Grenada; 10,000 tn
Dominican Republic: 150,000 tn
Mexico: 500,000 tn

2. **Announcement:** by Commissioner Síkela:

   A 4th EU-Caribbean Global Gateway Conference on Sargassum to be hosted by Mexico in 2026

3. **Next Steps**:

   - **Institutional:** Reinforce regional coordination and implementation mechanisms.
   - **Collection, Contention and Valorisation:** Ensure follow-up on financing, innovation, and policy alignment to deal with losses amounting to millions.
   - **Partnerships to scale up:** Continue fostering inclusive partnerships that bring together governments, financial institutions, and the private sector.

SESSIONS´ KEY CONCLUSIONS

❖ **Opening and Session 1- Setting the Scene -Progress and Perspective**

- **EU role reaffirmed** as a "convenor" **and strategic partner**.
- **Commissioner Sikela acknowledges the commitment of Grenada's PM** to tackle sargassum from a preventive perspective.
- **PM Mitchell called** for **regional cooperation and harmonisation of standards** and response systems, as well as access to technology and data.
- Valorisation depends on market readiness. **The EU can** support **co-designing and funding scalable solutions**.
- Minister James referred to **Grenada National Action Plan** to process **10.000 t. of sargassum by 2026**.
- **Vice minister Reyes** shared that **by 2027, Dominican Republic hopes to manage 150.000 t.** To achieve this goal, there are priorities: strengthen science-based monitoring and early warning systems; consolidate a regulatory framework that guarantees responsible collection; promote a sustainable value chain with private and international cooperation.
- **Mexico's** enabling **policy and tax incentives**: **Vice minister Samaniego proposed** developing harmonized industrial standards and identifying potential partners **to declare a Circular Economy Park**), with the Mexican Navy fleet available for collection. **Mexico is committed to managing 500.000 tn.**

➔ Conclusions and Next Steps

- Encourage countries to **commit to national plans.**
- **Strengthen regional coordination** through existing platforms (CARICOM, OECS, ACS-AEC).
- Promote **science-based approaches** and harmonized standards.
- Support **innovative financial instruments and incentives** to attract the private sector.
- Explore **partnerships for Circular Economy** Parks and regional collection.

❖ Session 2: From Start-Up to Scale-Up – Accelerating Sargassum Solutions

Session 2.1. Monitoring, forecasting and collection

- Technology exists to mitigate and transform sargassum on a large scale.
- Mexico has provided legal framework for collection (including offshore).
- Satellite monitoring must be paired with local knowledge. Satellite-based forecasting (e.g., COPERNICUS) can improve deployment efficiency.

➔ Conclusions and Next Steps:

- Strengthen **forecasting** systems with **satellite data and local knowledge**.
- Encourage governments to **partner with private** initiatives.
- Promote regional **collaboration to share best practices and scale successful models.**
- **Prioritise** health and economic resilience of coastal communities.

Session 2.2: Processing and Valorisation

- Viable business needs scientific infrastructure and local testing capacity.
- Thinking from a Caribbean mindset domestic product secures investor confidence.
- Collecting and processing biomass would help achieve neutral or negative emissions. Sargassum would allow to generate carbon-neutral natural gas.

➔ Conclusions and Next Steps:

- Develop **regional standards for processing**.
- Foster **ecosystems of collaboration**.
- **Governments and donors to support blended finance** and innovation hubs.

❖ Session 3: Development of the Sargassum Value Chains

- Sargassum is an economic opportunity if tackled with coordination and innovation.
- Fiscal incentives and legal frameworks are key to attracting private investment.
- Team Europe committed to aligning financing instruments and boosting evidence-based policymaking.

➔ Conclusion and Next Steps:

- Strengthen regional coordination through existing instruments (e.g. OCTs, SARG'COOP).
- Move **from national to regional policy** frameworks.
- Prioritise research, data, and local capacity building to enable private engagement.

❖ Session 4: Strategic Partnerships: Leveraging Finance for Scale-Up and Way Forward

- Fragmentation and lack of regional coordination hinder progress.
- Sargassum is a symptom of broader systemic issues, that is why a whole-of-economy approach is needed.
- EIB and WB stress the importance of de-risking, regulatory reform, and local capacity building. Regulatory barriers and risk-averse local banks limit private engagement.
- ITC calls for value innovation and intellectual property as economic assets.
- EIB proposes funds via regional banks, with technical assistance.
- WB and IDB are aligned supporting regional coordination and public-private partnerships.

➔ Conclusions and next steps:

- Establish a **comprehensive regional coordination mechanism** to unite stakeholders.
- Translate **large-scale funding into accessible instruments** for MSMEs.
- **Invest in R&D and innovation** and reframe sargassum as a tourism and economic resilience issue.