



PRÉFECTURE
DE SAINT-BARTHÉLEMY
ET SAINT-MARTIN

Liberté
Égalité
Fraternité



Anse Marcel Beach, Saint-Martin
december the 12th of 2023

« The Assizes have been, by general consensus, a true success. The prolonged and high-level presence of local executives attests to this fact. A friendly atmosphere and a spirit of dialogue and exchange were able to flourish within it.

We have managed to initiate a dynamic of sharing and cooperation that will now need to be sustained.

The subject is essential for the future of our two islands, for their resilience, and it is in events of this nature that our missions truly come to fruition.»

Vincent Berton
Deputy Prefect to the State Representative
in the Territories of Saint-Barthélemy and Saint-Martin.



From left to right: Xavier Lédée, President of the Collectivity of Saint-Barthélemy; Camille Pélage, 5th Vice-President of the Guadeloupe Region; Julia Crouch, Governor of Anguilla; Vincent Berton, Prefect of Saint-Barthélemy and Saint-Martin; Silveria Jacobs, Prime Minister of Sint Maarten; Louis Mussington, President of the Collectivity of Saint-Martin.

Welcome speech by Louis Mussington, President of the Collectivity of Saint-Martin.

Today marks a historic moment. In the past, our exchanges were merely local. What is remarkable and deserving of our applause today is this organization, this decision to bring together all stakeholders, all political decision-makers of the Caribbean in this place, to tell them that it is time to take the bull by

the horns, that it is time to work together.

Some of us are part of the European Union, others are not, but we share this common future: fishing. We share the ocean, this tremendous asset for developing fishing and taking care of biodiversity. Today, we must exchange ideas, we must meet the expectations of the fishermen. They must be at the heart of the system. Fishermen, you must work together.

Presentation of the day by Vincent Berton.

These Fisheries Assizes, bringing together public authorities, marine environment experts, representatives of natural areas, and fishermen, constitute a first in the recent history of our region.

I would like to pay tribute to the fishermen of Saint-Barthélemy who initiated this event, and to Patrick Bernié who organized it with the support of the Prefecture's services.

France does not claim leadership on the issue of fishing in the Northern Caribbean.

It simply aims to contribute to sharing reflections and developing

cooperation and initiatives among us.

I would like to share with you a triple observation and an ambition.

Fishing in our region is a heritage upon which the soul of the Caribbean rests. Initially, fishing was the only means of livelihood for populations. Today, the resource is fragile. It is threatened by climate change (+3° by 2050), by increasingly shorter rainy seasons, and by increasingly intense cyclonic phenomena.

Our islands experience contrasting situations. For Saint-Martin and Saint-Barthélemy, local fishing is not enough to meet demand, and fish are brought from 7000 km away, which is unreasonable environmentally

and climatically. Fishing areas are significant for some islands, cramped for others.

Therefore, we have real complementarities to find.

During this day, authorities will discuss the cultural and economic heritage that fishing represents. The question of sustainable resource management and biodiversity preservation will be addressed from the perspective of presenting good practices by the islands. Finally, the afternoon will be devoted to working workshops focused on structuring dialogue between fishermen and exploring avenues for improving cooperation.

The objective today is to take a «first step».

The fishing industry, a shared cultural and economic heritage: the perspective of authorities (excerpts)

**Mrs Silveria Jacobs,
Prime Minister of Sint-
Maarten**

The encouragement of sustainable practices is essential to ensure the prosperity of our ecosystems and our fishing industry. They align perfectly with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: enabling a more prosperous and equitable future for our environment and waters; ensuring the well-being of marine ecosystems while ensuring a more sustainable economy.

The fisheries of Sint Maarten, like those of our neighbors, have a rich maritime history, particularly in the towns of Great Bay and Simpson Bay, which have not only made a remarkable contribution to our people but also continue to be an essential part of our cultural identity and economy,

manifested through scuba diving, deep-sea fishing, and the sale of fresh catches by fishermen at the Simpson Bay Fish Market.

The challenges facing our fishermen include unsustainable fishing and overfishing, coral bleaching, warming waters, sargassum threats to our existence, and other environmental impacts weighing on our resources. This situation is exacerbated by unsustainable construction practices within our communities.

We constantly talk about economic development; we are a small island based on tourism, and every time someone presents a new project, we want to encourage this economic development. But I believe we need to stop, take a pause, and evaluate.

That's why I am very proud of the CORENA project, presented by

the Nature Foundation at the showroom. We have applauded the fishermen, but I also want to congratulate these non-profit organizations, which have been doing this work for decades, without recognition, like small voices in the darkness, and are often seen as outsiders who care more about our ecosystems than we do ourselves.

The CORENA project encourages accountability by ensuring that we engage with our local fishermen on better practices for marine life and that we collectively reflect on sensitive issues for our communities and culture.

We would also like to continue strengthening the capacities of our local communities through education, and this is what the Nature Foundation does. Going into our schools because if we don't start in schools, we won't

reach adults, and this has a huge impact. We need to find creative ways to engage our students, their parents, and thus reach the entire community. We will then continue to encourage broader collaboration with the stakeholders present here today. And anyone who wants to join us.

As I just told the press, we are small island developing states. We are very vulnerable. Although we are not the source of emissions causing climate change, we are on the front line and we bear the consequences.

In addition to the fact that hurricanes will affect us, climate change will have a certain impact on the economy and humanity. So, I would like us to continue to collaborate and not stop at these conferences but to continue to grow because funding exists, but it aims to achieve hundreds of billions of investments and our

capacity cannot support them on a small scale. So it is imperative that we act now: the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals have only seven years of life left, but we are lagging behind, just like the rest of the world. I therefore implore all inhabitants of the region, at least, to ensure that the blue economy is sustainable and that we do what we can so that our citizens can survive.

**Mrs Julia Crouch,
Governor of Anguilla.**

The question of fishing and natural resources was one of the first subjects that the Prime Minister discussed with me when I was appointed governor this summer, even before I arrived in Anguilla. And it is a topic that, as I stroll around Anguilla, go to the beach, dine in restaurants, and meet fishermen, I know is very important to all the residents of Anguilla.

As has been mentioned before, this is

not surprising because our common geography, our common resources are fragile, and if we truly want to address the challenges we face regarding stock reduction and climate change, we must be ready to face these challenges.

It is therefore evident that collaboration is the way forward. I know that fishing has sometimes been a controversial subject among the islands. I am convinced that we need to talk to each other, meet to overcome difficulties, and find solutions.

And it is precisely this goal that we all want to achieve in the wake of these Assizes. In my areas of responsibility around security, I have already met with the prefect and we have had positive conversations about ensuring the safety of fishermen and the legal and sustainable management of the marine environment.

I would also like to highlight that many experts are participating

in today's event. For our part, we have Cathy Wallace from the Fisheries Department as well as the Anguilla National Trust to address environmental issues. I know I will learn a great deal during this day. The program is fantastic, so allow me to conclude by thanking everyone who has come today to work together in a spirit of cooperation, for the benefit of all our citizens and our environment. I wish this conference great success today. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Xavier Lédée,
President of the Collectivity of Saint-Barthélemy.**

Fishermen and fishing are closely intertwined with the history and culture of Saint-Barthélemy. That is why the Collectivity has taken on the environmental competence, which allows it to take proactive action, particularly in terms of aggregating scientific data to better understand the environmental and economic issues im-

pacting the sector. The various frameworks in place within the islands make cooperation challenging to implement (whether or not they belong to the European Union, fuel prices, among others). However, it is essential to engage in a reflection involving those who have the resource, those who are the fishermen, those who have needs. We must share our experiences, our initiatives, our projects. Let's work together.

**Mr. Louis Mussington,
President of the Collectivity of Saint-Martin:**

We must make every effort to preserve resources while ensuring the development of the fishing industry in our territories because our fishermen must be able to meet our needs. This is not the case today; too many products are imported. This demands collective reflection to overcome the difficulties related to the integration of some within the European Union, but also to encourage

the improvement of equipment. A harmonious development of the sector is possible. The European Commissioner has confirmed to me that funds exist to support fishermen in terms of blue economy.

Regarding local fishermen, it is important that they can continue to fish in the waters of Anguilla, and Anguilla fishermen have always expressed a desire to sell their fish in our local market where there seems to be a larger market. We must arrange this so that there are no conflicts but a harmonious approach between the two islands. This is a matter we will have to address in the afternoon discussions with a sense of urgency and understanding that we must cooperate in the best interests of the territories.

I also briefly want to mention that outside the political sphere, there are competent men and women who, through various associations and entities, contribute significant-

ly to the defense or protection of marine life in our country; we have an exhibit at the entrance. Nature is part of us, and when we destroy it, we destroy ourselves. Those who take the initiative to protect sharks and marine life, nature, and the environment deserve our applause because it is clear that climate change is a major problem that is destroying what God has created, and our response as responsible individuals and citizens of the universe must be to protect what others are desperately trying to destroy. This must be a collective effort; NGOs as well as governments, to the extent they can, must act to preserve the natural resources of the territories.

Mr. Vincent Berton, Deputy Prefect of Saint-Barthélemy and Saint-Martin.

It is important to exchange views at the level of the Anguilla Plateau on climate change, not only in terms of fishing but

also in agriculture. Sargassum is also a major subject of cooperation that impacts fishing, fishery resources, and has implications for public health. Their proliferation will increase in the coming years. France is working extensively on the subject, particularly in terms of biomass valorization.

The issue of fish importation within the European zone is also crucial. We must allow, in particular, Anguilla and Saint Kitts to trade with us. Let's engage in discussions on this point. European funds should be able to finance actions for all the islands of the Plateau. Let's develop programs.

Mobilizing to preserve resources and promote biodiversity: a shared challenge.

The impact of coastal erosion on marine fauna: twenty years of data collection. Jasmin Ruan, marine biologist, Department of Marine Resources, Anguilla.

The coast, especially our beaches, contributes in many ways to our respective islands, by facilitating revenue generation, supporting biodiversity, protecting inland areas, and providing a recreational space for residents.

Numerous factors can affect the dynamics of our beaches, including coastal development, coral degradation, and sand extraction. In 1992, Anguilla identified the importance of beach management and can boast the longest data collection project of the Fisheries and Marine Resources Unit (FMRU), the Beach Monitoring Programme. As part of this program, 19 beaches on the main island of Anguilla and its offshore cays are monitored quarterly (4 times a year); beach width and elevation changes are measured using an abney level, measuring tape, and a flag pole. This data collection allows the FMRU to better manage beaches by understanding trends, identifying patterns,

and making potential forecasts. This information is then used to advise coastal development and plan preventive measures against coastal erosion. Since 2014, the FMRU has identified that 5 out of 14 mainland beaches are accreting at a slow rate, while 9 out of 14 are eroding, some at a relatively high rate.

Given that the department's beach monitoring technique is outdated, the FMRU is working with CEFAS, funded by the Blue Belt programme, to update its monitoring techniques, incorporating GPS, sediment transport, and drone video into the programme, in the hope of increasing accuracy, reducing human errors, and increasing efficiency.

Everyone can contribute to beach protection: coral reef management, sustainable fishing, preservation of coastal vegetation, enforcement of legislation,

and education.

Our beaches constitute our second line of defense after coral reefs and help prevent storm surges. They provide habitat for many species, and sea turtles use these same beaches for nesting. Coastal erosion threatens the ecosystem and leads to a decrease in marine populations whose impact is felt well beyond the island of Anguilla.

[Slideshow No. 1- Beach Monitoring in Anguilla](#)

Project CORENA, towards a spatial, sustainable, and resilient management of the marine and coastal environment of Sint Maarten. Sabine Brismeur, Gaia Picaluga, Laetitia Mathon, Nature Foundation.

The collection and multifactorial analysis of data allowing for the proposal of action plans regarding responsible development of marine and coas-

tal territories, as well as raising awareness among younger generations, constitute one of the challenges of the CORENA project: Coastal Resilience Needs Assessment.

Diaporama N°2 - Towards sustainable and resilient area-based management of the marine and coastal environment of Sint-Maarten

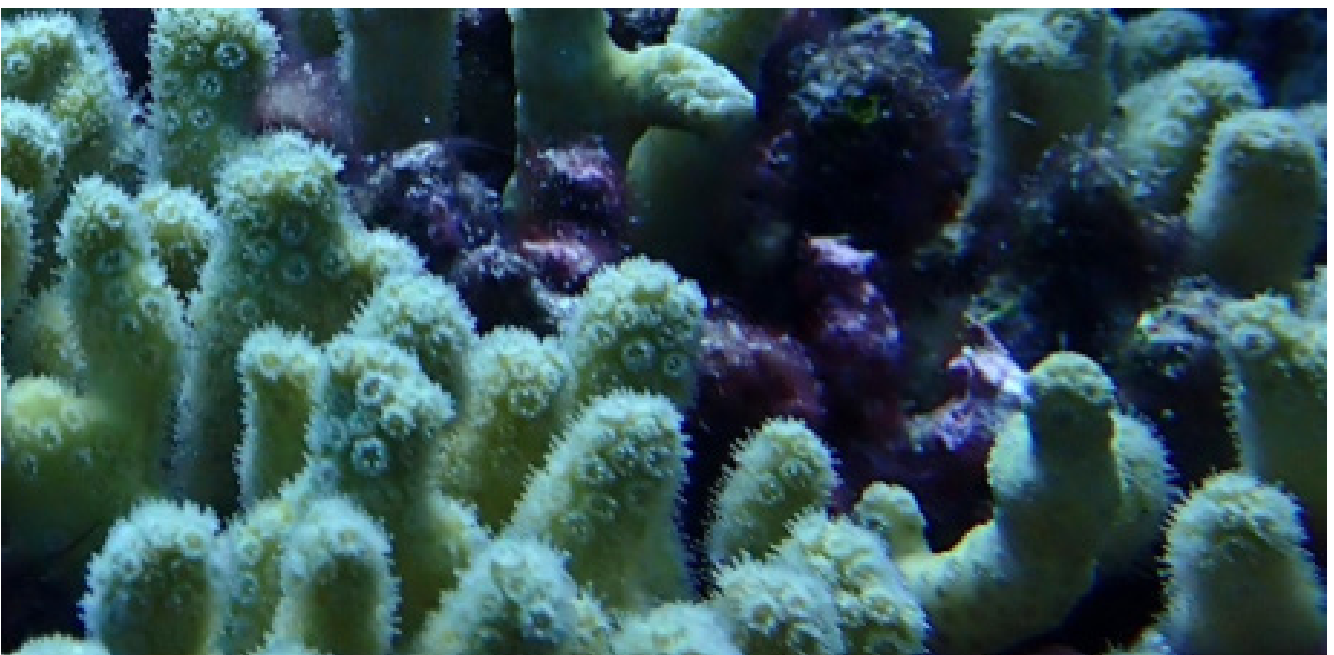
Shared stocks and interconnection of islands regarding ichthyological populations: Julien Chali-four, scientific manager of the National Nature Reserve of Saint-Martin.

The shallow coastal waters of the Caribbean host ichthyological populations comprised of a large number of species, but represented by a low number of individuals and therefore a lower biomass compared to temperate or cold marine zones. The balance of coastal ecosystems (coral



reefs, seagrass beds, and mangroves) relies on complex food chains where each link plays an important role in preserving resources and maintaining ecosystem services essential to local societies. Groupers are apex predators whose conservation status is particularly concerning globally. This long-lived fish, sought after for the delicacy of its flesh, is vulnerable due to its long lifespan, late maturity, phased hermaphroditism, and gregarious reproductive behavior.

As part of the Life BIODIV'OM program led by the LPO, 5 local contributors from 5 French Overseas Territories have received European funding to improve the conservation of sensitive species. The AGRNSM has chosen to focus its intervention on 2 species of fish: the giant grouper and the Nassau grouper. To achieve this, the project team works until 2025 to characterize the presence of these species at different life stages (arrival of post-larvae, juveniles, adults)



through the mobilization of CAREs, Bio-huts, ichthyologist divers, as well as all users.

The objective is to improve the sustainable management of this emblematic resource, taking into account its local uses and co-constructing solutions with the main stakeholders of the territory. However, the conservation of this species cannot stop at the local level due to its larval dispersal on a large scale. Therefore, the AGRNSM invites neighboring islands to contribute to this effort by sharing local knowledge capitalized through the support of Europe and France.

Diaporama n°3 - Banc d'Anguille Shared Stocks : Groupers

The fishing of burgos, *Cittarium picca*, in the nature reserve: Sébastien Gréaux, Director of the Territorial Agency for the Environment of Saint-Barthélemy.

In Saint-Barthélemy, the nature reserve has the particularity of allowing fishing of certain species in certain areas. The burgos (*Cittarium picca*) is one of the species that can be fished in certain zones by professionals. However, the teams of the nature reserve wanted to ensure the sustainability of the exploitation of this resource.

Thus, between 2004 and 2007, two scientific studies were conducted and led to the same conclusions: the fishing regulations for this species did not guarantee sustainable exploitation of this resource. Gradually, the quantities caught in the reserve decreased, as did the number of vessels practicing this fishing. In 2015, the Territorial Council of



Saint-Barthélemy approved the first fishing regulations in Saint-Barthélemy.

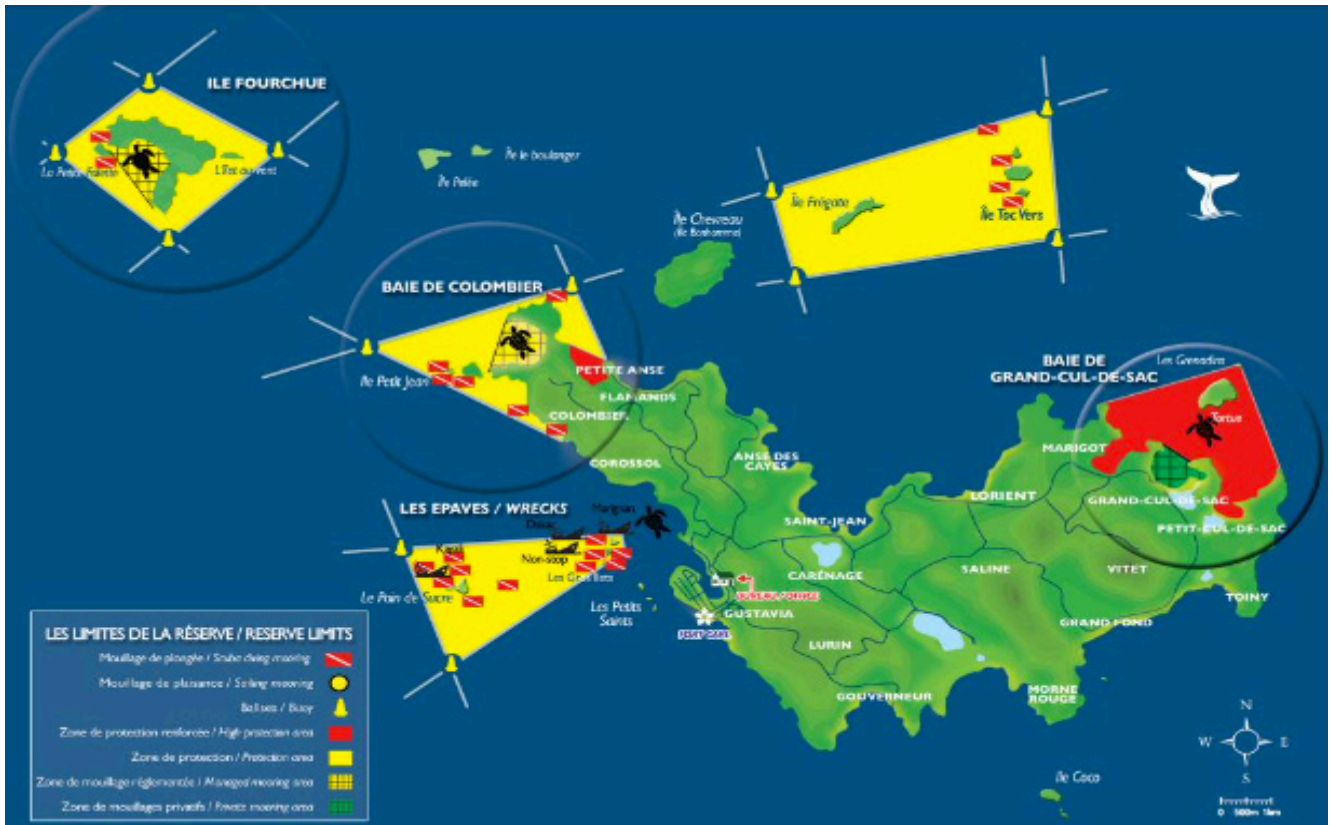
This regulation incorporated some of the recommendations made in these two studies, including increasing the minimum size of capture and implementing a fishing period to prevent extraction during the reproductive period. Gradually, following the implementation of this regulation, the fishing yields of professionals gradually increased again, and the total quantities harvested reached the same level as before the regulation came into effect, even though fishing is now prohibited for 7 months of the year.

Slideshow No. 4 - From Scientific Studies to Sustainable Exploitation of a Resource / Example of Burgos

The workshops

Towards an Expanded Inter-Island Cooperation, Fabienne Monmarson, Rapporteur.

The trade of seafood products is a major issue for the economic



development of our islands. However, the regulations that govern this activity are diverse and often poorly understood. Edouard Weber, Director of the Sea for Guadeloupe, outlines its contours.

shing zones to seafood trade—(as President Lédée expressed) should be initiated.

of maritime area for France, 66,000 km² for the Dutch part (Sint Maarten, Saba, Sint Eustatius).

The inequality of fishing zones was highlighted: 5000 km²

In this regard, Saba proposed the creation of a free trading zone.

Slideshow No. 5 - How to Improve Trade Between the Islands ?

Conclusion of the Working Group :

During the debate, several axes of cooperation were identified. Cooperation throughout the entire process—from fi-



In a context of diverse regulatory standards, the Prefect proposed organizing a working group tasked with proposing a balanced framework for each party.

Allowing fishermen to earn a dignified living from their work, protecting consumers, ensuring the processing/commercialization of fish products, harmonizing safety standards, managing resources harmoniously, and combating illegal fish sales were among the aspects discussed during the exchanges.

The Vice-President of the Regional Council of Guadeloupe proposed supporting the training of fishermen from all islands of the Anguilla Plateau through the proposed Maritime School project.

Strengthening the relations between fishing professionals, Patrick Bernié, rapporteur



Also, the fishing delegations from Saint-Martin, Saint-Barthélemy, and





Anguilla met in a workshop aimed at establishing dialogue, listing negotiation topics, and setting a meeting agenda. The fishing representatives from these three islands were well represented (8 participants for Anguilla, as well as for the Saint-Martin/Saint-Barthélemy delegation).

The discussions, led by Mathieu Leguern, Deputy Director of the Sea in Guadeloupe, were frank and direct, starting with an explanation session. Each party presented its grievances: fishing in Anguillian waters for the Anguillians, appropriation of fish aggregation devices for the fishermen of Saint-Barthélemy and Saint-Martin.

All parties acknowledged that tensions were affecting the relational climate. The desire to open up dialogue pathways eventually prevailed.

References to common traditions and the balance found by the el-

ders were decisive. «Our old agreements are no longer adapted: new constraints are imposed on us. We are the new generation; we must open new paths.» The normalization of French fishing in Anguillian waters, with the reciprocal use of common fish aggregation devices, is the essential subject of the desired negotiations.

The fishermen approved Mathieu Leguern's proposal to organize a series of meetings between a restricted delegation from each island. A WhatsApp group is to be formed.

Next Fisheries Conference

Madam Governor of Anguilla, Julia Crouch, informed the audience that her island is considering hosting the next Fisheries Conference in 2024.



Conclusion of the day by Vincent Berton

Thank you all. Throughout this day, we have shared all observations regarding resources, the impact of climate change, and environmental degradation. We have

exchanged experiences and research findings.

We have noted differences among us, particularly concerning fishing zones, markets, and regulations. Therefore, we have many topics on the table and a shared inte-

rest in working on them together. This is what I propose we do over the coming year.

We will share with you the documents that have been presented during the day. In this way, we will have a common basis for reflection.

An ode to the fishermen, by Sonia Fleming

PÊCHEUR !

Raconte-moi la pénible pêche d'autrefois,
 Les levers matinaux du pêcheur Saint-Martinois
 Par temps ensoleillés pluvieux ou froid
 Pour ramener du poisson frais sous son toit.



Raconte-moi !
La fragile petite embarcation en bois,
sur laquelle, ta vie, tu risquais,
Pour pouvoir nous nourrir.

Raconte-moi !
Ton courage, tes courbatures, tes souffrances
Ton corps endolori pétri de sable,
de soleil et d'eau salée.

Raconte-moi, l'odeur tenace de l'océan,
Sur ta vieille chemise à carreaux.
la solitude du grand large ,
Ta rude bataille, sur une mer déchâinée et sans cœur.
Le travail douloureux de tes muscles fatigués
Sur les longues rames écaillées.

Raconte-moi !
L'inquiétude de la femme Saint-Martinoise,
Scrutant chaque jour, avidement l'horizon,
Dans l'espoir d'apercevoir, la petite barque colorée et aimée,
Revenir saine et sauve à « Galisbay ».

Poésie de Sonia FLEMING
Assises de la pêche

12/12/2023 Autour des Assises:

The showroom

The showroom provided an opportunity for nature reserves to showcase their actions. Inaugurated at the beginning of the day by officials, it sparked the interest of participants and served as a platform for numerous exchanges.



Focus on the One Shark project, presented at the showroom :

The One Shark project is an initiative funded by the prefecture of Saint-Barthélemy and Saint-Martin aimed at raising awareness, communicating, and conducting research on Caribbean tiger sharks. It seeks to better understand this shark species, promote their conservation, and develop shark risk management strategies to secure access to the sea and promote blue economy locally.

The project will implement a regional cooperation strategy among all marine professionals to develop an



observation and data collection network to support scientific research facilitating risk management on a large scale.

Unlike the «classic» strategy, which has not proven effective, implemented in La Réunion and New Caledonia, which consists of regulation fishing campaigns based on the «density-dependence» hypothesis.

Our strategy involves implementing non-lethal fishing and developing a strategy based on Individual Shark Genetic Profiling to identify the «problem individual» (PI) that killed a swimmer in Saint-Martin and nearly killed the swimmer in Saint-Kitts 1 month later, 85 km from the site of the first bite.

In this context of potential effectiveness, the proposed project appears as a major and indispensable asset to provide crucial additional information by allowing for the assessment of the tiger shark population size and obtain-

ing information on their behavioral ecology (movements, residency times, etc.). This information will not only facilitate the recapture of the PI but also quantify the financial cost of such an approach, which depends directly on the factors mentioned above. This project thus appears as a more eco-responsible approach, exportable from the government's point of view, to other French overseas territories, or even abroad.







Assises
de la
Pêche