



DG MARE

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UN Ocean Conference
Interactive dialogue 8- Leveraging interlinkages between SDG 14 and other Goals towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda

Speaking points

- It is my pleasure to participate in this Dialogue that addresses a fundamental topic in the overall implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
- I would also like to convey Commissioner Sinkevicius' apologies for not being with you today.
- The European Union has a holistic approach to sustainable development. SDGs lie at the heart of our policymaking on internal and external action across all sectors.
- In the case of SDG 14, it is integrated in the **EU Green Deal**, our growth strategy to transform the EU into a fair, inclusive and prosperous society, with a modern, knowledge-driven, resource-efficient and competitive economy where there are no net emissions of greenhouse gases in 2050, the EU's natural capital is protected, conserved and enhanced, and the health and well-being of citizens protected.
- The panellists gave a bright illustration of the interlinkages within SDG 14 as well as with other Goals and how they could be addressed to minimise trade-offs and maximise synergies for the benefit of the 2030 Agenda implementation.
- Two years ago, we mapped and assessed the EU policy tools in the field of SDG 14 and other ocean-related 2030 Agenda targets. We identified 44 ocean-related targets (other than the SDG 14 targets). Of those, 32 were upstream targets (meaning that these targets will have an impact on SDG 14 when achieved) and 21 were downstream targets (meaning they are impacted by the achievement of SDG 14). 9 were both upstream and downstream.
- I do not have the intention to go into the details of this work. But it shows that interlinkages are **manifold and complex**.
- If you allow me, I would like to comment three interlinkages on which the EU has put much emphasis and heavily invested with very concrete actions.

- The first one is about **SDG 14 and SDG 6 – clean water and sanitation**. Fresh and marine waters are inextricably linked. This was highlighted in the High Level Symposium on Water at the beginning of this inspirational week. The management of fresh and marine waters should be coordinated in order to ensure a well-functioning hydrological cycle. This requires bringing all relevant stakeholders working on integrated water and coastal zone management together.
- Implementing Integrated Water Resources Management (as per SDG target 6.5) at national and transboundary levels, has positive effects on sustainable freshwater management and use. It also helps prevent marine and coastal pollution and protect marine biodiversity, including some species migrating within or between freshwater and oceans and seas. Wetlands protect water quality by tapping sediments and retaining excess nutrients, carbon and other pollutants, demonstrating a direct linkage between wetland and ocean health.
- Let's take the example of pollution - there are actions in six other SDGs, in particular SDG 6, 8, 9, 11, 12 and 15, that have a direct and positive impact on reducing it, mainly through the reduction of waste and litter produced on land. Circular economy and sustainable consumption and production are essential tools therefore to reduce marine pollution. I will come back to it in a minute.
- To address the complex links between SDG 6 and SDG 14 as well as other SDGs in an effective way, proper governance is important at all levels. Regional Agreements and Conventions like the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes at global level or the work of River Basin Management Organisations and Regional Seas Conventions, help to ensure cross-sectoral policy coherence in the management of water and oceans and seas.
- The EU and its Member States recognise the link between oceans and fresh water. They are actively involved in combating marine pollution, with some of the most ambitious domestic standards. In this context, we are committed to the establishment of an internationally legally binding instrument on plastic pollution by the end of 2024.
- This week's Conference and next year's UN Water Conference offer unique opportunities to raise awareness on the connection between fresh and sea waters, and give an additional impetus for catalysing action to timely implement the water-related 2030 Agenda.
- The second example I wanted to bring to your attention is about **SDG 14 and SDG 12 – responsible consumption and production**. Solutions exist. For example, within the EU, we are promoting a circular economy (a policy in which innovation is key) and we have limited the use of single-use plastics. It took us time to design and implement these policies. But today it is clear to everyone that no step back is possible. These initiatives are an integral part of the daily lives of millions of Europeans.

- At EU level, we are also supporting sustainable consumption and production in the seafood value chain through, for example, science-based quotas and the use of selective fishing gear. Prevention of by-catch and post-harvest loss also contributes to the conservation of fish stocks, marine life and ecosystems.
- My last and third example will be about **SDG 14 and SDG 13 – climate action**-. The climate and ocean nexus is an integral part of the EU climate change action and a key component of our ambition to become a climate-neutral continent by 2050. It is a very good example to contextualise interactions into action-oriented discussions. This is why, ahead of the Conference, the EU has tabled 7 voluntary commitments about ocean and climate. These commitments are about using satellite based earth observation programme for monitoring climate change, nature-based solutions for climate resilience, designing the next generation of satellites for ocean forecasting, or the financing of research on the cumulative impacts of stressors, including climate change and acidification, on coastal and marine biodiversity, ecosystems and their services. Research and innovation are central to implement these commitments. We have allocated millions of EUR to them, with some focus on the Arctic and the polar regions.
- We need to address these interlinkages. Not only this is common sense. But this is also what is required under international law as reflected in the UNCLOS: ocean management must be approached in a holistic manner.
- This is the only way to proceed if we are serious about ensuring healthy, productive and resilient oceans for the benefit of current and future generations.
- To conclude, let me convey my appreciation to Bulgaria and Antigua and Barbuda for their excellent chairing of this Dialogue. My appreciation also goes to the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs that did a tremendous work to prepare this session.
- I thank you for your attention.