

Statement by the Regular Process for Interactive Dialogue 1: Addressing marine pollution.

Distinguished delegates, as we start determining the focus of the next assessments of the third cycle of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects, I speak to you today as a member of the Group of Experts, the group that leads the coordination and delivery of the World Ocean Assessments.

The Regular Process is the only global mechanism, accountable to the United Nations General Assembly, that regularly reviews the environmental, economic and social aspects of the world's ocean and thereby provides a comprehensive assessment of the current and foreseeable state of the marine environment. The major findings of the first two UN World Ocean Assessments produced by the Regular Process, identify that while some progress has been made in managing some sources of pollution, such as persistent organic pollutants, mercury and radioactive substances, overall pollution from various marine industries and agriculture on land, along with the lack of appropriate treatment of urban wastes continues to increase as human populations continue to grow and human use of the marine environment increases. Marine pollution, as a consequence, is increasingly having negative impacts on biodiversity, food security and food safety.

Marine litter, where plastics, ranging from macro to nano size, are representative of more than 80% of the overall composition, is a global pollution problem, and have been recorded in more than 1400 marine species to date. They also have the potential to exacerbate other threats to the marine environment because plastics can be a vector of pollutants and non-indigenous species. Despite their widespread distribution and impacts, the input of solid waste including marine litter globally is largely unquantified and the impacts of micro- and nano-plastics both on the marine environment and humans is unknown.

Although a better control of the release of nitrogen and phosphorous is reducing inputs into some water bodies, anthropogenic inputs of nitrogen and phosphorous continue to rise and leading to an increase of eutrophication and to the number of hypoxic zones.

Inputs of novel hazardous substances, such as pharmaceuticals, personal care products and nanomaterials that wastewater treatment plants are unable to remove, are increasing across the ocean. Because these chemicals are so novel, the scale of their impact on marine organisms is unknown.

In addition to solid wastes, chemical and marine litter inputs into the ocean, and anthropogenic noise from many sources is impacting the ocean. With increasing use of the ocean there is a need to monitor the many inputs of noise in the ocean, identify their sources and reduce the multiple and accumulating impacts on the marine environment.

The development of cleaner and quieter technologies and cheaper wastewater production technologies are a priority if marine pollution and the associated impacts it is having on the marine environment are to be addressed.

The third cycle of the Regular Process (2021-2025) has set out the following priority activities:

(i) support for and interaction with other ocean-related intergovernmental processes, including through the delivery of brief, synoptic documents that highlight policy-relevant information from the second World Ocean Assessment, so as to further bridge the science-policy divide; (ii) assessment(s) of the marine environment, including socio-economic aspects to deliver comprehensive information on the marine environment relevant to decision making; and (iii) delivery of a capacity-building programme to develop the capacities of States in strengthening the ocean science-policy interface at the national, regional and global levels.

The Regular Process is beginning a series of regional workshops in July that will occur through to the end of 2022 that have the aim of identifying key priorities for the next assessment(s) to be conducted during the third cycle and building capacity on ocean governance and the science policy interface.

Participation is key in this process, as we strive to have a balanced array of voices across geographic regions, disciplines and perspectives.

Therefore, we strongly encourage widespread engagement including by qualified female and early career candidates to apply to participate in the workshops and contribute to the development of the assessment(s) of the third cycle.

We extend this invitation to all delegates to ensure that the World Ocean Assessment(s) produced under the third cycle deliver key information on marine pollution and the actions needed for addressing into decision making, and that the Regular Process continues to contribute to global action in strengthening the science-policy interface in supporting delivery of Sustainable Development Goal 14, its associated targets, and the other goals of the 2030 Agenda.

Thank you.