



2022 United Nations Ocean Conference Side Event

[Addressing Marine Pollution in the Atlantic Ocean: The role of interregional cooperation and EU leverages]

[28 June 2022, 13:15 – 14.45, Lisbon at Tivoli Oriente Hotel]

Organized by: [Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe, Atlantic Strategy (Pillar IV)]

Background on the event (one paragraph)

Based on the content of [the pledge for a clean Atlantic Ocean](#) signed by the 14 Atlantic regional authorities members of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe, panelists from the European Commission, the EU Atlantic Strategy, the European Parliament, representatives of the CleanAtlantic project and the audience came together to discuss the potential of interregional cooperation and the opportunities of EU initiatives to address marine pollution in the Atlantic.

Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)

- **State-of-the-art of marine litter in the Atlantic.** Based on the [CleanAtlantic project](#) outcomes, participants were presented an overview of the current challenges about marine litter in the Atlantic and the multiple tools developed by the project (case studies, monitoring tools, maps of hotspots, databases, technical reports, awareness raising material and more) to tackle the issue from a multi-sectorial and multi-disciplinary approach. A specific focus on the situation of Madeira Island was also highlighted.
- **The Atlantic regional authorities' ambitions and role to tackle marine litter.** Presented by António M. Cunha, President of Norte Region and Chair of the Atlantic Arc Commission Ocean Pollution Working Group, the pledge in favour of a Clean Atlantic Ocean is listing a series of commitments and ambitions of the regions' to tackle marine litter through a joint approach. These commitments were presented, and further discussion on the essential role of regions to develop and implement measures has been underlined during the discussions, acknowledging their best knowledge of their territories.
- **Access and use of EU funding.** Participants got the opportunity to discuss Horizon Europe opportunities with regard to the EU Mission: Restore our Ocean and Waters, BlueInvest Fund, and the European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF).

- **EU Policy on Ocean Pollution.** In the presence of one representative of the European Commission, one member of the European Parliament and one representative of the EU Atlantic Strategy, participants got the opportunity to discuss the perspective of the different EU actors on current policy and EU initiatives tackling Marine Pollution, in light of the EU Green Deal, Fit for 55 package and single-use plastic directive.
- **The legacy of EU projects.** Discussions about means to ensure a sustainable legacy of EU projects, notably on marine litter, were held with the participants to ensure that tools, studies and data across projects can serve the cause in the future.

Key recommendations for action (5 - 6 bullet points)

- **Flagship projects for the Atlantic.** In order to tackle the ocean pollution challenges effectively with a strong, large-scale and long-lasting approach, the potential of flagship projects has been raised in the discussions, enabling to gather key actors to join their forces with common goals and framework.
- **Recognition of the role of regions and more cooperation opportunities for regions.** Through the pledge, regions wish to guide policy change through multi-stakeholder engagement across all economic sectors and groups of society, regarding the prevention and reduction of ocean pollution in the Atlantic. Participants underlined the need to support the development of actions and collaborative initiatives addressed to improve prevention, detection, monitoring, follow up and removal of marine litter at an Atlantic level, as exemplified by the CleanAtlantic project. Regions were identified as essential stakeholders to make the [Mission Ocean Charter](#) effective and alive.
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- **Projects on circular economy on ocean pollution.** The necessity to include the business sector (e.g waste management companies) and work on circular economy has been underlined in the discussions, which also echoes the call of the regions to dedicate a significant percentage of EU Cohesion policy funds and regional funds for the development of circular economy strategies, nature conservation and restoration initiatives for the protection of the Atlantic Ocean mentioned in the pledge.
- **Simplification of access to funding the fight against ocean pollution.** Potential administrative overburden and recommendations to concentrate on existing resources have been raised to make optimal use and access to EU funding
- **Support innovation.** Innovation to tackle marine litter has been addressed as a priority for efficient solutions, from observation to creation of new material.

Voluntary Commitments (one paragraph)

The pledge in favour of a Clean Atlantic Ocean has been submitted as a UN Voluntary Commitment. Through these key messages, the AAC regions aim to contribute to inspire action and guide policy change through multi-stakeholder engagement across all economic sectors and groups of society, regarding the prevention and reduction of ocean pollution, and thus contribute to the implementation of SDG 14.