Written Statement

Delivered at the Ocean Conference co-hosted by the Government of Kenya

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Submitted by Haiti Cholera Research Funding Foundation Inc. USA (HCRFF)

Haiti Cholera Research Funding Foundation Inc. welcomes the forthcoming Ocean Conference, co-hosted by the Governments of Kenya and Portugal. This conference comes at a decisive time as the world is "*strengthening its efforts to mobilize, create and drive solutions to realize the 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030."*

The convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matters, or the London Dumping Convention came into force in 1975. It acknowledged through its regulatory framework that different materials will have significantly different impacts on the marine environment. Ocean disposal in U.S. waters has been under the regulation of the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act of 1972 (MPRSA) by means of a permit procedure prohibiting dumping of some materials and establishing criteria to authorize dumping of others, and to identify sites for disposal. The Clean Water Act also regulates discharges into the territorial sea and navigational waters of the United States. In the ten year period following passage of the MPRSA, dumping of industrial waste, construction debris, solid waste, and incineration of chemicals remained low, while dumping of sewage sludge saw a two-fold increase (Burroughs, 1988). Even though the amount of dredged sediment disposed in coastal waters remained constant, it was approximately greater in volume than the amount of sludge that was dumped.

Public apprehension about ocean dumping grew during the 1980s. It was sewage sludge dumped into the New York Bight that caused an apparent decline in water quality and health risks to bathers. Controversy also erupted concerning ocean incineration of chemical waste in the Gulf of Mexico. Congress enacted the Ocean Dumping Ban Act in 1988 prohibiting ocean dumping of sewage sludge and industrial chemicals. Sewage sludge now had to be incinerated, disposed of on land, or put to reusable alternatives that have their own set of environmental impacts, such as pollution of the marine environment via land runoff as well as atmospheric deposition.

Today, almost all of the material dumped into coastal and marine waters is bottom sediment removed by dredging (Figure 2). Under the Clean Water Act, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers issues permits for disposal of dredged material, based on guidelines set forth by the EPA. Protocols have been established to find out if dredged sediments are suitable for placement in the ocean or coastal environment. These protocols include an assessment derived from sediment characteristics, contaminant levels, the toxicity of contaminants present, plus the potential for contaminants to accumulate in the tissues of organisms (EPA, 1991). Considering all these criteria together, dredging may not be permitted at all or the dredged sediments may be

considered improper for overboard disposal. Placement in a landfill or confined disposal facility, or in a contained underwater disposal site will then required. It is estimated that between five to ten percent of the sediments dredged require management as contaminated sediments (NRC, 1997).

Although Federal laws governing dredged material disposal have so far eliminated the practice of discarding heavily contaminated harbor sediments in the marine environment, they have not done away with controversy. Despite the protections given by regulatory requirements and testing protocols, noteworthy controversies emanate from the overboard disposal of dredged sediments that are considered acceptably "clean." These controversies are connected to the physical impacts of dredged sediment placement including increased turbidity, siltation, burial of bottom organisms, and final changes in the quality of bottom habitat. Besides this, resource users along with the public plus environmental managers are concerned with contaminants in the dredged sediment being mobilized and made more bioavailable by overboard disposal. As a result, many ports have struggled to resolve the impasse in selecting and permitting alternatives for dredged sediment placement (Box 2). First of all, there is a dislike of placing wastes of any kind into the ocean and coastal waters, and secondly there are limits related to costs, limits in the viability of beneficial uses, and resistance to disposal alternatives outside of the marine environment.

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Boesch,D, et al *Marine Pollution in the United States*
https://www.iatp.org/sites/default/files/Marine_Pollution_in_the_United_States.htm