Preparatory Meeting for the 2025 United Nations Oceans Conference
International Dialogues on Underwater Munitions (IDUM)
Terrance Patrick Long CD.
Chairperson

Rationale for the 2025 United Nations Oceans Conference Inclusion of Underwater Munitions

Underwater munitions present a significant environmental concern that poses risks to marine ecosystems and the successful implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14. While the public addresses plastics, governments must share the responsibility to remove toxic munitions from the seas that are having a major detrimental effect in real-time on the health and biodiversity of the oceans. The Preparatory Meeting for the 2025 United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 is an opportunity for governments to collectively address underwater munitions.

The first recorded dumping of chemical munitions occurred 1910's in the English Channel and continued by Countries as a cheap means of disposal up until the mid 1970's when governments began to understand the environmental catastrophe they were creating. 1992, the Helsinki Commission noted that some of the more commonly dumped munitions do pose threats to the photosynthesis of plankton and too the hatching rate of crustacean eggs. Warfare agents including arsenic, as well as viscous mustard gas can persist locally in the sediment of elevated concentrations for a long period of time.

1996 NATO scientific community sponsored an advanced research workshop on sea-dumped chemical munitions in Bellagio, Italy. A post-conference bulletin issued by organizers stated: Although the risk of sea-dumped munitions does not meet the eye, the corrosion of the shells and rounds which, were dumped five decades ago is progressing fast now. It is feared that major quantities of chemical agents will leak into the sea by 2005. Beyond the immediate impact of the further depletion of the world's endangered fish stocks, poisonous agents will enter the food chain via plankton.

1976, 1979, and 2015, devastating "mass-fish-kills" occurred in the Bay of Fundy, Canada. This ecological disaster led to a depletion of plankton in the bay, forcing the whales to depart for the Gulf of St. Lawrence, where tragically, 17 whales perished due to entanglement in nets and collisions with ships. The unusually high number of whale fatalities within a short timeframe raises concerns that chemical releases from documented munitions dump sites may have impacted the marine mammals' sensory abilities.

Left unchecked, underwater munitions include conventional weapons, chemical agents and unexploded ordnance have severe consequences for the marine environment. When munitions corrode or detonate underwater they release toxic substances and heavy metals into the water, contaminating the surrounding marine habitats. Marine life is particularly vulnerable to the presence of underwater munitions. Toxic chemicals from these munitions can bioaccumulate in fish and other marine species, leading to health issues and reproductive problems.

Additionally, the physical presence of munitions on the seafloor can alter habitats, damage and kill coral reefs, change the temperature and acidity of seawater and create barriers for marine organisms.

The explosive nature of some munitions poses a direct threat to sea life by causing immediate harm through shockwaves, fragmentation, habitat destruction and infusing of toxic chemicals into the seabed and water column. Marine mammals, fish, seabirds, and other species can be injured or killed by munition explosions, further impacting the biodiversity of the marine ecosystem.

Underwater munitions “must be” on the 2025 United Nations Conference for the successful implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14. Addressing the environmental impact of munitions on the marine ecosystem aligns with the conference's goal of conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development. The Preparatory Meeting presents an opportunity for stakeholders to raise awareness about the threats posed by underwater munitions, share best practices for remediation and explore innovative solutions to prevent further contamination of the oceans.

Underwater munitions represent a significant challenge to the health and sustainability of the marine ecosystem. The impact of these weapons on marine life underscores the urgent need for coordinated actions to address this environmental threat. We encourage stakeholders to adapt and support Ocean Action# 21356 for the Science and Technology Centre in Nova Scotia, Canada. The S&T Centre would further develop policy, science, technology, responses and dialogues with stakeholder to eradicate munitions from the seas.

By highlighting the issue of underwater munitions in the context of the Preparatory Meeting for the 2025 United Nations Conference on SDG 14, stakeholders can cooperate to protect the oceans and promote a sustainable future for our planet's marine environments.

1) International Science and Technology Advisory Board (ISTAB) on Underwater Munitions (UWM), The Hague, The Netherlands
2) Silvia Earle and Mission Blue
3) UC BERKELEY RICHARD B. GUMP SOUTH PACIFIC RESEARCH STATION - MOOREA, TAHITI - NEIL DAVIES
4) UC BERKELEY INSTITUTE FOR DATA SCIENCE - NEIL DAVIES
5) TETIAROA SOCIETY - STAN ROWLAND
6) THE BRANDO RESORT - RICHARD BAILEY
7) CLIMATE FOUNDATION - BRIAN VON HERZEN
8) E-OCEANS - CHRISTINE WARD PAGE
9) WALLACE J. NICHOLS
10) EXPONENT - PIOTR MONCARZ
11) EQE INTERNATIONAL CONSULTING - PETER YANEV

12) UNITED EARTH NETWORK - RICK LUKENS
13) ANTHROPOCENE INSTITUTE - BARBARA PAGE / CARL PAGE
14) AT ONE VENTURES - TOM CHI
15) SHARK STEWARDS - DAVID McGUIRE
16) OCEAN PRESERVATION SOCIETY - LOUIE PSIHOYOS
17) OUTLAW OCEAN - IAN URBINA
18) MARK MASSARA
19) ROB CAUGHLAN / SURFRIDER FOUNDATION
20) TAP INFINITE - KRISTINA MESSDAGHI
21) VERSES.AI - DAN MAPES
22) SUSTAINABLE OCEAN ALLIANCE - CRAIG DUDENHOFFER
23) INSTITUTE FOR GLOBAL FUTURES - JAMES CANTON
24) JAMES GOLLUB ASSOCIATES - JAMES GOLLUB
25) OCEAN RECOVERY ALLIANCE - DOUG WOODRING
26) THE CONSTRUCTION SITE - GEORGE OPADCHY
27) YOUR 2040 - DR. CHRIS LUEBKEMAN / ETH SWITZERLAND
28) ARUP
29) MASSIVE CHANGE NETWORK - BRUCE MAU
30) GOLDMAN ENVIRONMENTAL FUND
31) APPLIED OCEAN SOLUTIONS - CHRIS VERLINDEN
32) WALTER MUNK FOUNDATION FOR THE OCEANS - MARY MUNK
33) DOER MARINE - SYLVIA EARLE / LIZ TAYLOR
34) ADEDE Belgium
35) Ocean Bomb Hunters