

Key Messages from Partnership Dialogue 1: Addressing Marine Pollution

In addressing the commitment taken by SDG 14.1, participants shared the sense of urgency to act in addressing all forms of marine pollution by 2025. During the dialogue we heard about the problems caused by different forms of marine pollution, especially marine litter, including micro-plastics, and nutrient pollution. We also heard of the risks posed by other and new forms of pollution, including abandoned fishing gear, underwater noise, and pollution from ships. In addition to marine litter and microplastics, these act as multiple stressors on the health of our ocean.

However, there is momentum for action and change, that momentum is now. We are very encouraged by the many examples of good practices that are being put in place and by the voluntary commitments that have been announced. Countries and stakeholders shared a wide range of concrete examples of action being taken to combat marine litter and microplastics in particular, and many countries shared solutions from national efforts and action plans. We also heard examples innovative technology and solutions.

Many speakers stressed the importance of prevention, whether by capacity building and technology transfer waste management to prevent plastic waste and pollutants from entering the waterways, or through education and communication to foster behavioral change. Many recognized the complex trans-boundary nature of the marine pollution problem, which involves a wide array of social, economic drivers, deeply rooted in our

consumption and production patterns. Marine debris is, in the words of one Co-Chair, a “slow-motion catastrophe” if it is not addressed properly.

Partnerships between governments, private sector and civil society across multiple dimensions, and collaboration across borders, are critical crafting effective responses to marine pollution.

Many highlighted the important role of policy responses to plastics waste and microplastics citing examples such as fees levied on plastics, banning single use plastic, banning micro-beads in cosmetics and personal care products. The link between excess application of fertilizer and nutrient pollution in the oceans was pointed out.

Some Participants pointed out the need for enforcement and effective implementation of existing legislation, policies as well as agreements and conventions dealing with marine pollutions. Speakers also referred to the assessment of international and regional governance strategies and approaches to combat marine litter to be presented to the third United Nations Environment Assembly in December and the need for stronger international commitment to combat marine litter.” There is a need to further harmonize methods and standards to monitor marine litter and microplastics in order to monitor our progress towards reaching target 14.1

It was mentioned that several Regional Seas Programmes have developed action plans that include monitoring and management of marine debris and other forms of pollution from shipping and fisheries activities. In the regional context, mention was also made of leakage from shipwrecks, nuclear waste, and World War II relics.

The SDGs are indivisible and interlinked. The dialogue highlighted the interlinkages between SDG14.1 and many of the other SDGs, and the multiple benefits in reaching the SDG 14 for other goals and targets. For instance, as one of the panelists noted, reduction in the excess application of fertilizers is good for air quality, as well as terrestrial and marine waters. Another panelist pointed out that same holds for marine litter and microplastics. There were calls for further strengthening of scientific research, data collection, and information sharing in the area of marine pollution to more effectively guide decision-making. Delegations also highlighted the need for capacity building, technical support, and resource mobilization.

In closing, the dialogue underlined the urgency to act at national, regional and global level, together among the stakeholders. The good news is that the problem of marine littering can be solved! Many delegations shared workable solutions and commitments for the way forward and one co-chair quoted Elvis Presley in his closing remarks “A little less conversation, a little more action please”.