

Panel Discussion

Mission Clean Oceans

How can science and innovation tackle ocean pollution?

17.02.2020, 16:00-18:00

European Parliament Brussels – Room ASP 3HI

Welcome Addresses

Mr **Tonino PICULA**, MEP and President of the SEArica intergroup, welcomed the participants. He opened this event emphasising the importance of marine and maritime issues in the future of the EU and beyond in key sectors: climate change, food security and sustainability, and economic growth.

Mr **Thorsten KIEFER**, Executive Director, JPI Oceans, followed and underlined that clean oceans are one of the top priorities in the agenda of JPI Oceans.

Mr **Luc BAS**, Director of IUCN European Regional Office, ended these welcome addresses drawing attention towards IUCN's recent Marine Plastic Footprint report, calculating a yearly plastic leakage into the ocean of 12 million tons, consisting predominantly of microplastics.

Setting the Scene

Mrs **Sigi GRUBER**, Head of the Healthy Mission Oceans and Seas Unit, DG Research and Innovation, European Commission, presented the EU vision regarding the fight against ocean pollution. She highlighted the EU aims to achieve clean oceans and seas over the decade and climate neutrality by 2050. She encouraged joint actions under the framework of Horizon 2020, the European Green Deal and the Mission Healthy Oceans, Seas, Coastal and Inland Waters.

Keynote

Mrs **Marcella HANSCH**, Founder and CEO of [Pacific Garbage Screening](#), presented her innovative project aiming at battling plastics pollution of the ocean by “closing the tap” from rivers, one of the main inputs of marine plastic pollution. From a final thesis to a working initiative, this non-profit organisation aims at implementing innovative technologies for plastic collection and recycling. In parallel to the presentation of her project, she also stressed the importance of cooperation between all actors and highlighted the necessity of educating next generations in order to make it a viable project.

Panel Discussion

During this kick-off panel discussion moderated by Mrs **Gesine MEIßNER**, former MEP and former Chair of SEArica, all panellists presented their work relating to ocean pollution and highlighted the main needs and stakes of their sector towards clean waters.

Two of the panellists especially called for more cooperation in research and projects.

Mrs **Fazilet CINARALP**, Secretary General, European Tyre & Rubber Manufacturers Association, emphasised the commitment of ETRMA and the tyre industry to find solutions to tyre-related ocean pollution. However, she stressed the complexity of the issue for the tyre industry to find a solution matching security standards and environmental-friendly evolutions. To answer these challenges, she highlighted the need for inter-sectoral partnerships for more analytical members and research in the tyre industry.

Mr **Janaka DE SILVA**, representing the IUCN and the Plastic Waste-Free Island Project, encouraged more cooperation between all stakeholders, and especially building ownership and trust with businesses. He also mentioned the need for increased transfer of knowledge among the nations worldwide. Mr De Silva also called for a better understanding of the civil society to know what it can accept, and thus stressed the responsibility to provide alternative solutions in order to create adapted behavioural change. Among the proposed solutions, he mentioned local ownership, funding of local initiatives, and circular economy concepts.

Several panellists highlighted the impact of other pollutants than plastics and stressed the complexity of plastic material.

Mrs **Mimmi THRONE-HOLST**, Research Manager at SINTEFR involved in [JPI Oceans' PLASTOX project](#), explained how plastic toxicity varies depending on multiple factors: type of plastics, size, shape, and in particular added chemicals, which will need different solutions. She presented how the PLASTOX project made a detailed assessment of these additives, their effects on marine organisms, and their role as a possible vector for other pollutants. She highlighted the need to consider cumulative risks of plastic from environmental stressors.

Mr **Adam LILLICRAP**, from the Norwegian Institute for Water Research and Coordinator of the JPI Oceans Knowledge Hub on New Pollutants, particularly emphasised the need to focus on other pollutants which are currently less popular than micro-plastics. Like Mrs Throne-Holst, he stressed the toxicity of chemicals pollutants. He also mentioned the difficulty of predicting the effect of alternate materials without sound eco-toxicological testing.

Mrs **Antidia CITORES**, Spokeswoman for Surfrider Foundation Europe and Member of the Mission Board Healthy Oceans, called for an ecological transition of the shipping sector, underlining the hundreds of containers lost at sea every year, dropping chemicals, plastics, pellets and more into the sea. She also called for a better involvement of citizens and volunteers and on the need to raise awareness more actively.

Questions and Answers

Mrs **Gesine MEIßNER**, Moderator of the Questions and Answers session, asked panellists their ultimate wish for a better fight against oceans pollution.

Mr **Adam LILLICRAP** called for a better awareness of the population regarding other chemicals which cause bigger problems than plastics alone.

Mrs **Marcella HANSCH** wished for more citizens' involvement.

Mrs **Mimmi THRONE-HOLST** and Mrs **Fazilet CINARALP** asked for more cooperation and engagement of all parties.

Mrs **Antidia CITORES** wished for a future where citizens would not think about pollution and plastics when they would be diving into the sea.

Overall, there was a clear consensus on the fact that active research was a top priority, but also that cooperation, technical innovation and social engagement were important pillars towards more efficient actions.

Conclusions

Mrs **Catherine CHABAUD**, MEP and Vice-Chair for Climate and Governance, thanked all participants for their strong involvement and concluded the event by highlighting the need for a cooperative perspective, and for the recognition of the ocean as a common good of humanity.

This document is based on JPI Oceans's news article, available [here on JPI Ocean's website](#).