



Regional Ocean Governance: Building on cooperation & partnerships for a coherent implementation of SDG14+

Event Summary Report

Wednesday 3 April 2019 – European Parliament



A valuable development in international oceans' governance is the growing recognition of the essential role of regional co-operation in ensuring ocean sustainability. Oceans and seas cover more than 70% of the Earth's surface, regulate our climate, and supply 50% of the oxygen we breathe. They provide ecosystem services that are essential to sustainable development, including food security and sustainable livelihoods. However, climate change, unsustainable exploitation of resources, pollution, as well as illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU) endanger marine life and people whose life critically depends on them. Various international processes highlighted the importance of a more holistic approach to collaboration for healthy, productive and resilient oceans.

The panel included:

- **Ricardo Serrão Santos**, MEP
- **Alain Cadec**, MEP
- **José Inácio Faria**, MEP
- **Dr. Susan Gardner**, Director Ecosystems Division, UN Environment
- **Veronica Manfredi**, DG ENV Director Dir C Quality of Life
- **Anders Jessen**, Acting Director International Ocean Governance and Sustainable Fisheries, DG MARE, European Commission
- **Christine Haffner-Sifakis**, UN Environment
- **Veronika Juch**, FAO
- **Despina Symons**, Co-Ordinator of IUCN/Fisheries Expert Group

In his opening remarks, the co-chair of the event, **MEP Ricardo Serrão Santos**, spoke about the shared concern on cooperation within ocean issues. Regional cooperation and regional governance on these issues are crucial for the future. One area, that is of utmost importance and would still require much work and improvement, is the Mediterranean region, as **Mr. Serrão Santos** highlighted during the event.

The keynote speech of the evening was given by **Dr. Susan Gardner**, on behalf of UN Environment. At the United Nations Environment Assembly on 11-15 March 2019, a number of marine related resolutions (including marine litter and prevention of land-based sources of pollution) were adopted and the new UN Environment Oceans Strategy was presented, and some important outcomes of this, relevant to ocean governance, were shared during our EP Intergroup event. The Strategy rests on four main objectives, namely, to create a knowledge base to inform effective policies reducing



human impacts on oceans, to build circularity in economies, to support policies that are integrated, and to encourage innovated financing. The vision for the strategy is to ensure “Healthy and climate-resilient marine and coastal ecosystems that underpin human well-being and benefits for present and future generations”. The ecosystems approach is very much at the heart of governance of our oceans with all human activities affect the entire ecosystems across land and ocean. Dr. Gardner also highlighted the need for standardized data to indicate progress. This does not mean that there is a lack of progress, but it needs to be documented. Dr. Susan Gardner further touched upon the importance of cooperation where she particularly underlined her gratitude for the sustained support from DG ENV and DG MARE on advancing the oceans agenda. For the implementation of the UNEA resolutions and UN Environment oceans strategy, UN Environment is looking forward to continued partnerships and strengthened collaboration with EC, Member States and key stakeholders. In conclusion she mentioned the importance to build on cross-sectoral dialogue such as in the Mediterranean and strengthen the capacity of regional ocean governance mechanisms, both regional seas, or fisheries bodies.

Veronika Juch, from the FAO Liaison office in Brussels, illustrated how regional bodies and cross-sectoral dialogue can contribute to healthy, productive and resilient oceans. In this regard, **Veronika Juch provided concrete examples of the** successful collaboration between the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) and UN Environment / Mediterranean Action Plan. These examples highlight how regional cooperation can advance the implementation of ecosystem approaches, foster conservation efforts, lead to joint criteria for specifically protected areas and address the challenges of pollution and marine litter. This regional cooperation between a regional fisheries management organisation (RFMO) and a regional sea convention (RSC) can serve as concrete practical example of regional ocean governance based on an integrated approach in order to accelerate progress towards SDG14 and other related SDGS.

Veronica Manfredi, from DG ENV, Director of Dir. C - Quality of Life, stressed the importance of keeping our oceans clean, healthy and productive. The 2008 Marine Strategy Framework Directive was highlighted as an important framework for a holistic approach to oceans and seas in the EU, where the goal was to achieve a good environmental status for the seas and oceans. One of the challenges is identifying what “good” means for a specific marine region. **Veronica Manfredi** argued that EU MS are going in the right direction, even though additional efforts are needed to achieve the target of a good environmental status. In relation to the AICHI Biodiversity Target 11, the EU was showcased as a good example for meeting the target and for setting up marine protected areas. Marine litter is another success story presented by **Veronica Manfredi**. It showed that “when we want, we can”, referencing to the newly adopted Single-use plastic directive in the EU. The public led the way on that legislation, and showed that they support EU action within this area.

Anders Jessen, Acting Director on International Ocean Governance and Sustainable Fisheries within DG MARE, European Commission, underlined 2020 as an important milestone in the delivery of SDG14, highlighting the second UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon. **Anders Jessen** further addressed the importance of regional ocean governance as a key component for ensuring oceans are healthy, safe, secure and marine resources sustainably managed. A few examples were brought up to demonstrate the regional approach as a central element in the EU's ocean policies and the progress made under the International Ocean Governance Agenda in promoting regional fisheries management and strengthening regional cooperation. He concluded with highlighting the Marine Region Forum the EU is organizing jointly with Germany later this year to promote integrated regional models for ocean



governance and advance regional cooperation for the conservation and sustainable use of marine ecosystems and resources.

MEP Alain Cadec, who co-chaired the event, mentioned the challenge of regional ocean governance, as there are risks within all the areas of the environment, the society and the economy. The European Parliament was encouraged to take its responsibility within ocean governance, where there is capacity to do this, as well as an ambitious framework. **Alain Cadec** further highlighted two good practices from the EU. Firstly, the Common Fisheries Policy, where the maritime space was argued to be one of the most regulated areas of the world. The second example was the newly adopted plastics' legislation, which was introduced as an example of a horizontal approach. To continue to develop, the EU cannot act alone, but needs a strong partnership with the United Nations. **Alain Cadec** urged the importance of the matter and highlighted that preserving the future means preserving the future of our children and grandchildren. The most important key word of the presentation was to do it *together*.

As the Co-Ordinator of IUCN/FEG (Fisheries Expert Group), **Despina Symons** [presented](#) the Sustainable Ocean Initiative of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD/SOI) on Global Dialogue between Regional Fisheries Bodies and Regional Seas Organizations of which FEG is a partner. However, before doing so, she gave a brief description of the multi-disciplinary Fisheries Expert Group (FEG) and its collaboration with the CBD in particular on the implementation of Aichi targets 6 and 11, as well as SDG 14. Focusing on the interface between fisheries management and marine biodiversity conservation, FEG key objectives are to inform policy and facilitate scientific discussions. Supporting the implementation of Moving on to the example of SOI, **Despina Symons** explained that the first meeting of the initiative had been held in 2006 in Seoul Korea, bringing together for the first time 18 RSOs and 15 RFMOs and its resound success resulted in establishing this as a biannual regular event. The second meeting was equally held in Korea in 2018 and a third one is fixed for April 2020. Some significant contributions, that the SOI Global Dialogue has managed to push forward, are sharing experiences and identifying new opportunities for collaboration and the roadmaps to enhance cross-sectoral cooperation, which are also going to have a common long-term vision, major milestones, as well as short-term priorities.

MEP José Inácio Faria talked about the importance of growing with a plan, since our existence is dependent on the oceans. In Portugal, the sea has been depleted which can be seen through the fact that fishermen now take home less and less fish. One important aspect of this, is the lack of education on new tools, that could help with this issue. **José Inácio Faria** also discussed the lack of inter-collaborative steps taken so far, which need to be improved. The importance of the issue of healthy oceans was highlighted, as they are our largest ecosystem, and a very fragile environment. Our security, economy and survival all require healthy oceans, making it a very important issue. To achieve this, **José Inácio Faria** argued for the importance of the EU being in the lead of this issue and moving forward towards global and cross-sectoral collaborations and solutions.

During the Q&A session with the audience, the panelists were asked how they see the role of global certification schemes for fisheries, since more than 60% of EU consumption is sourced outside of the EU. **Anders Jessen** argued that certification schemes have an important role to play. **Veronica Manfredi** agreed with this and moreover stated that it is in no one's interest to overfish, meaning that we all have to work with the environmental, social and economic aspects in mind. **Alain Cadec** also brought up the importance of the European Commission being able to give out yellow and red



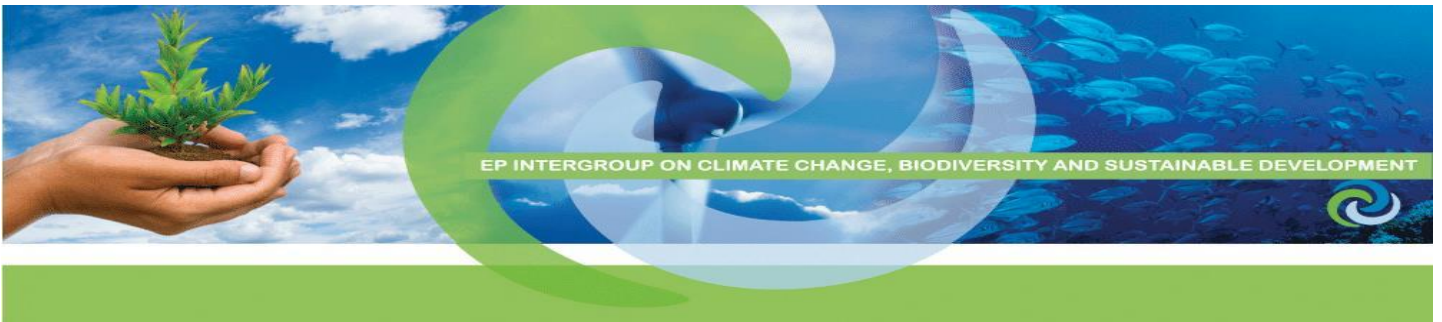
cards for countries, which do not comply with EU fisheries agreements. In an ideal world, all countries would comply with these regulations, but the EU does not have agreements with all countries, mentioning China and Taiwan as examples. **Mr. Cadec** argued that the African countries that the EU does have agreements with, have sustainable fisheries, while countries such as China fish along the same coasts but do so in an unsustainable way. **Christine Haffner-Sifakis** on behalf of UN Environment brought up the importance of sustainable finance, and mentioned the noteworthy initiatives by the European Investment Bank (EIB) on their work for sustainable oceans and the blue economy. In particular, the Clean Oceans Initiative was mentioned, while more information is available [here](#).

Another question from the audience was regarding any additional requirement towards 100% sustainable fisheries in Europe. **Dr. Susan Gardner** discussed the need for data collection and monitoring progress through reporting, something that should be consistent between countries. Data should be measured in the same way in all countries and it also has to be communicated in a clear way. One example that **Dr. Gardner** brought up was the importance of creating clear quantitative values in ecosystem services. **Veronica Manfredi** agreed with **Dr. Gardner**, but also expressed her belief in better enforcement of the current legislation. Illegal fishing is an issue that has to be taken seriously, and an example of what can be done in this area is more training and explanations of the rules, since fishing is a very diverse community where it is important that everyone has the same understanding of the situation. **José Inácio Faria** argued for more literacy, meaning that citizens' understanding of what is at stake has to be increased. Gradually, more and more people understand the seriousness of the issue though, and that is important in order to change consumer behavior; we need to consume less plastic for example and instead use alternative materials. **Anders Jessen** also addressed dividing the question into one question about internal action and one about external action. Externally, it is important that we export our best practices abroad. The usage of yellow cards as a way to get countries to comply with EU requirements was talked about in positive terms. **Mr. Jessen** highlighted Thailand as an example of a country, whose yellow card has been removed because it has successfully changed its practices. Being a very important country for fisheries, this shows what impact the EU can have at the international level.

Last but not least, an audience member brought up the importance of small island development in the Caribbean, when it comes to regional ocean governance, where there is a lot of action despite very small resources. **Dr. Susan Gardner** agreed that there are indeed a lot of success stories in the Caribbean. Moreover, many of the global problems, such as the issue of land-based pollution, have their bases in regional action.

Within her closing remarks, **Christine Haffner-Sifakis** thanked the organizers, the audience and the panelists for the enriching conversation. Good practices and important partnerships, such as those across sectors between regional seas and fisheries bodies, the Sustainable Oceans Initiative (SOI), show that there is a strong foundation to build on. **Mr. Serrão Santos** further expressed how important these events are, as the Intergroup allows for interaction between different perspectives, and that the presence of the European Commission during the event had been especially important.

All meeting documents can be found [here](#).



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