

Remarks of Jacqueline Alder, Coordinator, FMEB/UNEP

At ***International Conference on Prevention and Management of Marine Litter in European Seas***

April 12, 2013

Mr. Chair; Honourable Ministers; distinguished panelists and participants; ladies and gentlemen:

UNEP is very honored to be given the opportunity to be a part of this final session of the conference and for the opportunity to actively participate. Over the past three days, my colleagues and I have listened intently, actively participated and learned significantly from the presentations, experts and discussions here in Berlin. As we conclude this meeting and consider the Way Forward and the "Message from Berlin", we can only be encouraged that Europe is leading the way globally in addressing the problems of marine litter. It is also heartening to see leadership from countries within the European Union.

Marine litter has been an area of focus for UNEP through the UNEP Global Initiative on Marine Litter, involving the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans and the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA). The 2009 report 'Marine Litter: A Global Challenge' was the first attempt ever to take a world-wide stock of marine litter levels across 12 different regions. Our work has been catalytic in moving the marine litter issue to regional and national forums such as this one. Seeing such energy at this conference has reiterated the value of the work we support.

Under the GPA, land-based marine litter has been highlighted as one of the priority source categories of focus for the 2012-2016 POW. The Third Intergovernmental Review of the GPA in 2012 recommended the establishment of a Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML), which UNEP is developing in collaboration with relevant partners including some of you here today.

The GPML, facilitated by UNEP/GPA is a concrete international partnership which aims to: improve the legal, policy and regulatory environments for managing marine litter; progress materials use efficiency; support recycling efforts; and tackle the pollution problem at source.

The GPML is guided by the Honolulu Strategy, which UNEP sees as a relevant framework that can be adopted and used by member countries and organizations. And it was reassuring to see many people here are also using the strategy for guidance in the development of regional action plans.

We have made the case that marine litter is a problem that needs to be addressed. We now need to move to action and UNEP is very interested in the priority actions outlined in the Berlin message. The priority actions are very much in line with what UNEP sees as priorities as well. However,

There are 3 priority actions I would like to comment on:

Priority 2 - the Green Economy - it is nice to see it included as an action but I would encourage you to campaign marine litter as a resource with value and embed tackling marine litter in the wider green economy policies and development plans at national and regional levels. The reason I say this is by integrating into broader systems provides greater opportunities to capitalize on actions and incentives that may emerge in developing a national green economy approach, as well as opportunities to raise awareness on marine issues in key Ministries such as Finance and Planning.

Priority 6 - The development of Regional Action Plans - and for UNEP this also connects to priority 7 - UNEP's Regional Seas Programme encompasses 18 Regional seas conventions and Action Plans covering much of the world - North America and the Southwest Atlantic are not included. Within the Regional seas network we communicate and facilitate interactions between the coordinators and so I can only further emphasize using the Regional Seas as platforms for collective and harmonized action. And I also want to add that the European Regional Seas can also be platforms to share your lessons learned, technologies and good work with much of the rest of the world.

For example there is a twinning arrangement between OSPAR and the Abidjan Convention which covers West Africa, and although that area of the world has many least developed countries it has not escaped marine litter as an issue. At their last conference of the Parties in December 2012, many Ministers and Permanent Secretaries asked about what could be done about this issue.

Priority 3 - probably links to the point I want to make, and that is to encourage any work on data collection but more importantly to assessment and indicators be looked at in the context of the World Ocean Assessment and where possible the methodologies and indicators be harmonized.

This will avoid the added cost of reporting twice for two different indicators, allow for comparing results across large geographic areas, and for UNEP the most important reason is in capacity building. If Europe can find a methodology that is also used for the WOA then the efforts to disseminate it in Europe can be easily transferred to other areas of the world - saving money as well as adding value to Europe's efforts.

The conference and Berlin Message emphasize that there is still a need for concrete actions, greater awareness-raising and wider participation of stakeholders in this global endeavor. And you may be wondering how UNEP as a global agency can connect to this conference. In response to this, UNEP, as part of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter, aims to facilitate an on-line forum/network to enable the global marine debris community to monitor progress on implementing the Honolulu Strategy and share information, lessons learned, and tools.

The 18 Regional Seas are among the main programmes of the United Nations that fulfill an important role in implementing the international agenda on marine and coastal issues. Through the UNEP-hosted Regional Seas Programmes, establishment and development of pilot regional activities in regions that are most affected have been developed This includes:

- o Compilation of best practices in dealing with marine litter in fisheries, aquaculture and shipping by NOWPAP Members (China, Japan, Korea and Russia)
- o Preparation of a Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management for the Mediterranean
- o for the Caribbean Regional Action Plan for Marine Litter we supported development of marine litter educational and awareness materials with a focus on impacts to habitat and wildlife, a Marine Litter Activity Guide and online Interactive Game on Marine Litter for Children

UNEP is also hosting a Global Partnership on Waste Management (through DTIE/IETC), and will work with different partners including international agencies, governments, industry and civil society organizations to develop and implement relevant projects to ensure that marine debris issues, goals, and strategies are tied to global efforts to reduce and manage waste.

UNEP has noted progress being made through the various stakeholders including NGOs, governments, research institutions and by industry, to tackle the presence and impacts of marine debris including plastics on the marine environment, although this action has been primarily at the national level. We believe that more needs to be done at the regional and global level. UNEP therefore:

- a. Encourages industry to lead in the redesign of plastics incorporated into the production of goods and packaging so they are safer and less harmful to the environment; and
- b. Urges adoption of the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) concept by everyone.

Recognising that between 500 billion and a trillion plastic bags are consumed worldwide each year, and that less than 1 percent of the bags are recycled because it costs more to recycle a bag than to produce a new one, UNEP encourages responsible use, reuse, recycling and finally recovery of plastics for their (energy) value. We feel that new technologies for turning plastic into diesel and other fuels look promising for reducing the amounts of plastic that are unlikely to be recycled. If plastic is treated as a valuable resource, rather than as a waste product, many opportunities to create a secondary value for the material after its first intended use will provide economic incentives for collection and reprocessing.

UNEP wishes to support capacity building to apply new and innovative technologies for recycling and for turning plastic into energy, for plastics, which cannot be or are unlikely to be recycled. UNEP also invites collaboration in development and implementation of relevant research and high-impact, practical demonstration projects, through the GPML, which could address, inter alia, micro-plastics.

In closing I would again like to thank the Government of Germany and the European Commission for inviting UNEP to this very productive conference and thank the participants for their ideas and exchanges, and We at UNEP look forward to many if not all of you in joining the GPML and we will reach out to you in the coming weeks for your membership and therefore please do not let our email go to your SPAM folder!