

'A plastic-free Mediterranean Sea in the making'

*Mediterranean Members of Parliament and key stakeholders discuss
the state of play and realistic steps forward*

21.11.2018, 16:30-19:00

European Parliament Brussels

ASP5G1



Summary Report



INTERGROUP SEAS, RIVERS, ISLANDS AND COASTAL AREAS



BACKGROUND

Most Mediterranean countries, on both shores, are at a moment when Parliaments are deciding on measures to curb the use of single use plastics and mainly plastic bags. Are the most informed decisions being made? What should the next steps be?

The root causes of marine litter in the Mediterranean are the same as anywhere else in the world: a complex combination of production and consumption patterns, irresponsible behavior of individuals and economic sectors, lack of policy and legislative frameworks, weak solid waste management practices, misconceptions related to possible solutions, fragmented understanding of the problem due to the lack of fit-for-purpose data.

Large amounts of plastic waste leak into the marine environment from sources on land and at sea, generating significant environmental and economic damage. They are estimated to account for over 80% of marine litter. Single-use plastic items are a major component of the plastic leakage and are among the items most commonly found on beaches, representing some 50% of the marine litter found.

Being one of the most affected seas by marine litter worldwide, Mediterranean decision makers are gradually reacting. Understanding and knowledge of the problem has been substantially enhanced in the past few years, with several studies shedding light on the amounts, distribution, sources and impacts. As a result, bold moves are taking shape on the EU side driven by the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and measures and pilot actions are advancing in the non-EU countries under the Regional Plan for Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean of the Barcelona Convention.



INTERGROUP SEAS, RIVERS, ISLANDS AND COASTAL AREAS



On the 21st of November the Seas, Rivers, Islands and Coastal Areas Intergroup (Searica) met with MIO-ECSDE and the informal Circle of Mediterranean Parliamentarians for Sustainable Development (COMPSUD) at the European Parliament in Brussels. This was a unique occasion where Members of the European Parliament and Members of Parliament of non-EU countries came together with marine litter experts, environmental NGOs, journalists and other key stakeholders to explore the next steps in achieving a litter-free Mediterranean Sea. The event was attended by some 65 participants from 20 or so countries.

Ms. Gesine Meissner, MEP and President of Searica in her opening remarks said: *'For a long time we have known that plastic in the ocean is a problem; we know the causes of it and its deleterious effects on the marine environment. With the Plastics Strategy and its approach to phase out or ban certain plastic products, the EU has set a benchmark against plastic pollution. A lot is happening already at this crucial moment. We need to leave the plastics age behind and rethink the future of plastics towards plastics-free oceans and seas.'*



INTERGROUP SEAS, RIVERS, ISLANDS AND COASTAL AREAS



The setting of the event was framed by the MIO-ECSDE Marine Litter expert, Dr. Thomais Vlachogianni, who provided a comprehensive overview of the certainties and uncertainties related to marine litter and plastic pollution and in particular as prerequisites for better decision making.



The chairman of COMPSUD, Professor and member of the Moroccan Parliament, Mr. Moh Rejdali laid out the challenges on the South shores of the Mediterranean and stressed that one of the most urgent actions needed in a country such as Morocco is to enforce the existing legal frameworks and invest in capacity building and education.



INTERGROUP SEAS, RIVERS, ISLANDS AND COASTAL AREAS



Mr. Gaetano Leone, UN Environment MAP Coordinator, presented the promising measures and lessons learned from the implementation of the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean and highlighted: “We have enough science to take action against plastic pollution! We don’t want to be remembered as those who messed up but as those who found solutions!”

In the second part of the meeting, Mr. Michail Papadoyannakis, Directorate General for the Environment, and Prof. Michael Scoullou, Chairman of MIO-ECSDE provided the frameworks and prerequisites for ‘doing things right’ when it comes to efficiently addressing the issue at hand. Mr. Papadoyannakis welcomed the increase of public attention and the proliferation of related initiatives. However, he stressed the need for these to be channelled and focused to areas where effective measures are possible and urgently needed. He also provided an overview of the EU’s comprehensive policy framework and substantial financial support (within and outside the EU) and reaffirmed the EU’s unfailing commitment for improvement of international governance at all levels and the provision of a comprehensive response to the threat of plastic litter, including microplastics.



INTERGROUP SEAS, RIVERS, ISLANDS AND COASTAL AREAS



Mr. Bernard Merx co-founder of WasteFreeOceans, Ms Silvia Freni Sterrantino of the European Plastics Converters, Ms Elvira Morote from the Fishery Producers Organization of Almeria and Mr. Bart Vandewaetere, from Nestlé Europe, Middle East & North Africa, provided the private sector's perspective on the challenge of tackling the marine litter problem, while Ms Francoise Bonnet from ACR+ the provided the viewpoint of the local authorities.

Closing the meeting, the MIO-ECSDE Chairman Michael Scoullas said: "The commitment of everyone is admirable, and although inconsistencies are around the table reconciliation is promising. MPs need to inform their parliaments in order for stronger and yet pragmatic measures against plastic pollution to take concrete shape in the Mediterranean."

This meeting was organized by Searica and MIO-ECSDE, with the financial support of the LIFE+ operating grant for NGOs. MIO-ECSDE organizes on an annual basis dialogues between Parliamentarians, NGOs, journalists and other stakeholders on current environmental problems. Joining forces is the fundamental premise for the promotion of sustainable development in conditions of peace and cooperation among all countries and peoples of the Mediterranean region.



AGENDA

16:30 - 16:45 Welcome remarks

Ms Gesine MEISSNER, MEP, President of the European Parliament Intergroup Seas, Rivers, Islands and Coastal Areas (Searica)

16:45 - 17:10 Outlining the marine litter challenge in the Mediterranean

Mapping certainties and uncertainties: a prerequisite for better decision-making

Dr. Thomie VLACHOGIANNI, Marine Litter expert, MIO-ECSDE

Keeping litter on land

Prof. Moh REJDALI, Chairman of COMPSUD, Member of the Moroccan Parliament

Promising measures and lessons learned from the implementation of the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean

Mr. Gaetano LEONE, UN Environment MAP Coordinator

Putting the plastics challenge at the heart of EuroMed policy and actions

Mr. Miguel García-Herrera Roobaert, Deputy Secretary General, Water and Environment, Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat (video message)

17:10 - 18:00 Panel Discussion

Doing the right thing and doing it right: where are the difficulties?

Introduced and moderated by Mr. Davor SKRLEC, MEP, Member of the Intergroup

Mr. Michail PAPADOYANNAKIS, Directorate General for the Environment, European Commission

Prof. Michael SCOULLOS, MIO-ECSDE Chairman, Representative of the European Parliament to the EEA Management Board (1993-2018)

Ms Myriam BOUJBEL, Member of the Tunisian Parliament

Mr Bernhard MERCKX, Founder Waste Free Oceans

Ms Silvia FRENI STERRANTINO, EU Regulatory Affairs Manager, European Plastics Converters



INTERGROUP SEAS, RIVERS, ISLANDS AND COASTAL AREAS



18:00 - 18:50 Panel Discussion

What are the next steps forward?

Introduced and moderated by Mrs. Michela GIUFFRIDA, MEP, Vice-President of the Intergroup on Social Issues

Ms Françoise BONNET, Association of Cities and Regions for Sustainable Resource Management

Mr. Fouad MAKHZOUMI, Member of the Lebanese Parliament

Mr. Bart VANDEWAETERE, Head of Corporate Communications and Government Relations, Nestlé Europe, Middle East & North Africa

Ms Elvira MOROTE, Project Manager, Fishery Producers Organization of Almeria

18:50 - 19:00 Conclusions



SPEAKERS PROFILE

Dr. Thomais VLACHOGIANNI, Marine Litter expert, MIO-ECSDE: Thomais Vlachogianni (BSc, MSc, PhD) is an environmental chemist and ecotoxicologist, specialized in oxidative stress mediated toxicity induced by environmental pollutants. Her 15-years work experience in environmental research and management stretches over vast areas including assessment of marine litter amounts, composition, sources and impacts. Since 2008, she has been working at MIO-ECSDE as a Programme/Policy Officer, and has been involved in several transboundary projects addressing the whole management cycle of marine litter. Has led within the framework of the Interreg Med ACT4LITTER, the SWIM-H2020 SM & H2020 CB/MEP, the FP7 MARLISCO and the IPA-Adriatic DeFishGear projects several marine litter activities. She is an active member of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) Good Environmental Status (GES) Technical Subgroup on Marine Litter; the UNEP/MAP Experts Group on the application of the Ecosystem Approach in the Mediterranean and the Correspondence Group on Monitoring, Pollution and Litter (CORMON). Currently she is leading the studying and capitalization work packages of the Interreg Med PlasticBusters MPAs project.

Prof. Moh REJDALI, Chairman of COMPSUD, Member of the Moroccan Parliament: Prof. Moh REJDALI is a member of the house of representatives of Morocco, the mayor of Temara and the current chairman of the Circle of Mediterranean Parliamentarians for Sustainable Development (COMPSUD). He is university professor at l' Institut Agronomique et Vétérinaire Hassan II of Rabat (1980) and as international expert in environment, he has represented Morocco and Africa in several international conventions and initiatives and has written hundreds of articles and dozens of books on agriculture and environment.

Mr. Gaetano LEONE, UN Environment MAP Coordinator: Gaetano Leone graduated in Political Sciences in Italy and specialized in International Relations. He has a strong and diverse experience of political and inter-organizational affairs, inter-governmental processes, leadership and management, and partnerships, especially in the field of sustainable development. After three years in the private sector, in 1988 he joined UNDP in Uganda and has since covered UN assignments of increasing responsibility in several African and European countries and in the USA. Gaetano has moved across 9 duty stations, has worked for 4 agencies (UNDP, Unicef, UN-Habitat and UN Environment) and has been hosted at the World Bank and WMO. He was Deputy Secretary of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) during the process leading to the approval of the Fifth Assessment Report. Since June 2014, Gaetano is the Coordinator of the United Nations Mediterranean Action Plan-Barcelona Convention Secretariat, based in Athens, Greece. Currently and until January 2019, he is also appointed as Acting Director, Europe Office of UN Environment.



Mr. Miguel García-Herraiz Roobaert, Deputy Secretary General, Water and Environment, Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat (video message): Miguel García-Herraiz is the Deputy Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean in charge of Water and Environment since July 2016. He is a Spanish career diplomat who has served the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the past twenty years, holding positions as Deputy Director General for International Affairs of Terrorism and Disarmament, and, lately, as Counsellor in charge of the relations between the European Union and Southern Mediterranean countries in the Permanent Mission of Spain to the European Union. Mr. García-Herraiz has a wide experience in negotiations and has been involved in the drafting of all recent UfM Ministerial declarations as well the revision of the European Neighbourhood Policy prior to his appointment as Deputy Secretary General of the UfM.

Mr. Michail PAPADOYANNAKIS, Directorate General for the Environment, European Commission: Michail Papadoyannakis is a senior expert in the Directorate General for Environment of the European Commission: he deals with marine environment issues, focusing on cooperation in the marine regions around Europe and, since more than four years, on marine litter. He has experienced and welcomes the impressive surge in interest and public attention for the plastic pollution of the oceans; at the same time he believes that there can be no true or lasting solution without prevention or without consideration of the needs and characteristics of our seas and coasts, of the natural heritage that they represent, and of the life they host.

Prof. Michael SCOULLOS, MIO-ECSDE Chairman, Representative of the European Parliament to the EEA Management Board (1993-2018): Michael J. Scoulllos (Prof. Emeritus, University of Athens) is an Environmental/Water Chemist (MSc, DSc) and Oceanographer (PhD) and has worked extensively on different aspects of fresh and marine water. In his forty-year career, he has combined advanced scientific research and academic teaching with active participation in drafting and piloting environmental and water related policies, while stimulating and coordinating team work of different stakeholders, under various international, regional and national and cooperation schemes. From 1992-2018 he represented, as an expert, the European Parliament on the Management Board and the Executive Bureau of the European Environmental Agency, the lead knowledge hub of the EU on environmental and water issues. He is founder and Chairman (1991 - today), of the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE), which is the major environmental NGO platform of the Mediterranean region and Secretary General of the Circle of Mediterranean Parliamentarian for Sustainable Development (COMPSUD) that steadily work on water challenges. He has also worked and published on water diplomacy and education for sustainable development. Since 2016 he is Team Leader of the EU-Funded SWIM-H2020 Support Mechanism, a regional project dedicated largely on sustainable water resources management in eight Mediterranean countries. As Chairman (2005 – today) of the Global Water Partnership-Mediterranean (GWP-Med) he has strategically led and facilitated a series of regional water cooperation mechanisms, processes and projects.



INTERGROUP SEAS, RIVERS, ISLANDS AND COASTAL AREAS



Ms Myriam BOUJBEL, Member of the Tunisian Parliament: Ms Boujbel is a Member of the Tunisian Parliament representing Nabeul since 2014. She is the head of the Regional Agriculture Commission and a member of the Finance and Anti-Corruption Committees. Hon. Boujbel has a long-standing passion for the environment and a keen interest in ecology and sustainable development. She participates as orator in civil society activities covering employment, youth, environment and sustainable development. She also participates in local and regional commissions related to planning and budget, water and agriculture.

Mr Bernhard MERCKX, Founder Waste Free Oceans: Mr. Bernhard MERCKX is an entrepreneur and an internationally renowned recycling expert. He is Co-Founder of the Waste Free Oceans Foundation, an initiative that aims to reduce the global impact of marine litter, by mobilising fisheries, recyclers, manufacturers and policy makers. During his career, Bernard held senior management positions in the plastics converting and plastics recycling industry. He still is active member of several Boards and international expert groups. Since 2011, he is Honorary President of Plastics Recyclers Europe. In 2011, he established Green Wave Plastics, a Dutch consultancy company, assisting associations and companies in the plastics and rubber industry value chain to find pragmatic solutions for improved sustainability.

Ms Silvia FRENI STERRANTINO, EU Regulatory Affairs Manager, European Plastics Converters: Silvia Freni Sterrantino is the EU Regulatory Affairs Manager at European Plastics Converters. Before joining EuPC, she worked as an attorney in leading European law firms and in the Directorate-General for Competition of the European Commission. Admitted to the Italian Bar Association as qualified attorney, she studied law at the universities of Siena, Cambridge and London, where she earned a LL.M. in Competition Law & IP at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

Ms Françoise BONNET, Association of Cities and Regions for Sustainable Resource Management: Françoise BONNET is Secretary General of ACR+. She is specialised in legal and economic instruments linked to waste/resource policy. In addition to the day-to-day management of the team, Françoise is in charge of the EPR Club project and the activities in the MENA region, in particular as a waste expert for the SWIM H2020 project. Françoise holds a degree in law, complemented by a diploma in European law from the College of Europe and in specialised studies in environmental law from the Brussels University. She has a thorough knowledge of European waste/resource legislation and policies, as well as broad experience in project management and waste planning. During her professional life, she has worked not only for public authorities such as Brussels Region Administration, the UN or the European Commission, but also for private companies. Thanks to this, she is familiar with local administration systems and North-South cooperation with the countries in the Mediterranean region.



INTERGROUP SEAS, RIVERS, ISLANDS AND COASTAL AREAS



Mr. Fouad MAKHZOUMI, Member of the Lebanese Parliament: Mr. Makhzoumi, with a chemical engineering background, started his career in the world of business in Saudi Arabia, where he played a strategic role in developing one of the largest private industrial groups of companies. Mr. Makhzoumi is the Executive Chairman of Future Pipe Industries Group since 2003 and he is also currently its Chief Executive Officer. He has also been the Executive Chairman of Future Group Holdings since 1982. He is a member of the Honorary Council of the International Desalination Association (IDA), a member of the Circle of Mediterranean Parliamentarians for Sustainable Development (COMPSUD), a member of the Foreign Affairs and Emigrants Parliamentary Committee and a member of the Public Works, Transportation, Energy and Water Resources Parliamentary Committee, to count a few. In 1997, he founded the Makhzoumi Foundation, a private Lebanese non-profit organization that contributes through its vocational training, health care and micro-credit programs, to Lebanese civil society development.

Ms Elvira MOROTE, Project Manager, Fishery Producers Organization of Almeria: Ms Elvira Morote developed her Ph.D at the Institute of Sea Science (CSIC, Barcelona). She is currently the project manager of the Fisheries Producer Organization of Almeria, South Spain, where she carries out projects linked to science (discards, marine litter.), out-reach and dissemination, etc. All with the direct involvement of the fisheries sector. She has worked with NGOs on Fisheries and Marine Ecology and has authored scientific publications on the ecology of commercial fish species in the NW Mediterranean.



INTERGROUP SEAS, RIVERS, ISLANDS AND COASTAL AREAS



For more than twenty five years joining forces &
building bridges in the Euro-Mediterranean area

Mediterranean Information Office
for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development
The Mediterranean NGO Federation

