

International ocean governance: an agenda for the future of our oceans in the context of the 2030 SDGs

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The European Parliament adopted by 558 votes to 25, with 83 abstentions, a resolution on international ocean governance: an agenda for the future of our oceans in the context of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The environmental health of the oceans is under significant threat and at risk of being irreversibly damaged unless targeted and coordinated efforts are undertaken by the world community.

Current pressures on the marine environment include damage to habitats and ecosystems, persistent hazardous substances in sediments and waterbodies, degradation of coral barrier reefs, invasive species, pollution and nutrient enrichment and maritime traffic, as well as exploitation of raw materials and overexploitation of marine species, acidification, and warming of waters induced by climate change.

Parliament welcomed the joint communication on international ocean governance and the actions proposed, which highlight the EUs commitment to achieving the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and seas and marine resources as identified in SDG 14 of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Reiterating the strong maritime dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly for Goal 14, Parliament called on the Commission to:

- put forward legislative proposals where appropriate, and work with Member States in order to improve cooperation in areas such as ocean research;
- follow up the joint communication on ocean governance by publishing a progress report on the measures reviewed and a precise timetable for future measures;
- promote international action to monitor the impact of the warming of the oceans, rising sea levels and acidification of water;
- propose initiatives to the Council to develop ocean partnerships with key international partners to promote the goal of better global governance;
- promote equal conditions on the labour market in the field of the sea by establishing a harmonised social framework for maritime activities in Community waters;
- support the stepping-up of international initiatives to combat trafficking in human beings by maritime routes;
- support an international moratorium on commercial deep-sea mining exploitation licences until such time as the effects of deep-sea mining on the marine environment, biodiversity and human activities at sea have been studied and researched sufficiently and all possible risks are understood;
- help set up pilot projects to collect marine litter through beach clean-ups and fishing for litter campaigns, and to provide financial support to fishermen in Europe for the collection of marine litter;
- propose new legislation to address microplastic pollution in all its forms, and specifically by banning microplastic ingredients in all personal care products and by ensuring that all businesses that handle plastic production pellets implement proper protocols for minimising pellet leakage;
- consider introducing a Europe-wide system of deposits on non-reusable drinks containers, on the German model;
- support international efforts to protect marine biodiversity, in particular in the framework of the ongoing negotiations for a new legally binding instrument for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction;
- continue the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in all regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs) and other relevant fora;
- propose measures to reduce nitrogen oxide emissions from the existing fleet, including an impact assessment on the possible introduction of a nitrogen oxide a system of funds to obtain considerable, rapid and effective reductions.

Member States are urged to:

- make further efforts for the timely implementation of the [Marine Strategy Framework Directive](#) in order to achieve good environmental status for marine waters for 2020;
- swiftly implement the Framework Directive establishing a framework for [maritime spatial planning](#) and integrated coastal management, in order to permit the full and harmonious development of the various maritime activities;
- increase the number of marine protected areas in compliance with SDG 14 to ensure the preservation of at least 10% of marine and coastal areas;
- support innovative technological and financial initiatives addressing ocean and sea pollution, so as to promote efficient recovery systems for waste from shipping, in particular plastic waste, in ports and harbours, to raise awareness within the shipping sector of the consequences of disposing of plastic waste in the sea, and to overcome the major obstacles existing to the implementation of MARPOL;
- respect their duty under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) to protect and conserve the marine environment and its living resources and their duty to prevent and control marine pollution.