

13 East 40th Street
New York, N.Y. 10016-0718



Tel. : (212) 481-6023
Fax : (212) 685-7316
e-mail: mission@cyprusun.org

**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable
Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and
marine resources for sustainable development
Partnership Dialogue: Addressing Marine Pollution
Monday, 5 June 2017**

**Statement delivered by the Minister of Agriculture, Rural Development and
Environment, H.E. Mr. Nicos Kouyialis**

Excellencies,
Ministers,
Distinguished Representatives, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Conference on the Oceans to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, could not be held at a more appropriate time. Although the need for protection of our Oceans and Seas has long been recognized, unfortunately international efforts for their protection have been disproportionately limited compared to their importance for the continuation of life on earth.

Pollution problems are more profound in enclosed or semi-enclosed seas which by nature are more sensitive to pollution problems. The Mediterranean is not only a semi-enclosed sea but is also geographically very important due to the fact that since ancient times, has been used as a trading route between Asia, the Middle East and Europe.

Its significance as a trading route has increased even more since oil from the Middle –East has commenced being tankered to Europe. The ever-increasing off-shore exploration for oil and gas in the recent years, especially in the eastern Mediterranean, has further increased the threats and probabilities for an accident, which could literally devastate the whole area with very significant environmental and economic consequences. Serious oil-spill accidents are extremely difficult to cope with and the technical and human resources of a single country may well prove inadequate.

Cyprus, being located at the south-easternmost corner of the Mediterranean from where most tankers from the Middle East head to Europe, having commenced test-drilling operations in its Continental shelf and its Exclusive Economic Zone,

and coupling these with the efforts of our neighboring countries with respect to hydrocarbon development, has taken the initiative to bring together Cyprus, Israel and Greece in order to cooperate through the adaptation of a Sub regional Contingency Plan (SCP) for preparedness and response to major marine pollution incidents.

It is my pleasure to highlight the fact that both countries have immediately responded positively and, therefore, a Sub regional Contingency Plan between Cyprus, Israel and Greece is under preparation with the support of the UNEP MAP System.

The above plan is expected to be completed by October 2017 and be signed by the three Ministers at the 20th Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to be held in December, 2017.

Furthermore, at a meeting between the Ministers of Egypt, Cyprus and Greece last week, the three Ministers acknowledging that the protection and conservation of Mediterranean Sea underpins sustainable development in the region, recognizing as well as the International commitments including, but not limited to SDGs, Barcelona Convention and the Paris Agreement, agreed on five priority areas for cooperation that shall contribute to the achievement of SDG 14.

These priority areas will focus on a) Preparedness & Response to major marine pollution incidents in the Mediterranean Sea; b) Combating coastal erosion and coastal zone management; c) Biological Diversity and Nature Protection; d) Waste management; e) Climate Change adaptation.

A list of long, medium and short term actions was adopted that focuses on exchange of expertise, know-how and best practices; study tours and business forums, encouragement of public-private partnership and preparation of trilateral project proposals to address the common environmental challenges facing the three countries in the five priority areas.

In addition to the above, Egypt and Cyprus, on a bilateral basis decided to adopt a Sub regional Contingency Plan (SCP) for preparedness and response to major marine pollution incidents. Therefore, in this context, we approached the Secretariat of the Barcelona Convention, which may support this initiative by mobilizing resources for next year.

Another serious problem faced especially by enclosed or semi-enclosed seas is eutrophication due to discharges from land based sources, especially by treated or untreated domestic sewage. In that respect, the policy of Cyprus since the early 1980s has been “no drop of water in the sea”.

Successive governments ever since have implemented this policy and all coastal towns and agglomerations have now sewerage systems and sewage treatment plants, utilizing the latest technology in the field. All sewage from these agglomerations is treated to a tertiary level, including nutrient removal, and 97%

of it is reused in agriculture via purposely designed and constructed irrigation networks. The remaining 3% is discharged in the sea through sea-outfalls constructed appropriately to minimize the effects on the marine environment. Construction work for the remaining irrigation systems so as to eliminate all sea-discharges is in progress and by the year 2020, no effluent shall be discharged in the sea.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The protection of our blue planet is a one-way road if we want to maintain life the way we know it. Cyprus, despite of being a small country, has taken initiatives to increase collaboration with its neighbours for the protection of the marine environment. We vow to continue our efforts for further strengthening our collaboration with our neighbours for the benefit of our peoples and for the protection and preservation of our sea.

Thank you very much for your attention.