

Keskiviikko 7.6.2017 klo 15:00 - 18:00

General Assembly Hall, UNHQ

5th Plenary Meeting, address by Ms. Hannele Pokka

Thank you Mr/Ms President

Your excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to have this opportunity to take part in the Ocean Conference. We have gathered here to put forward our best efforts to save the oceans and our planet.

I want to inform you that Finland has registered voluntary commitments on nutrient recycling to prevent losses of nutrients to the sea and establishing a national marine data and information portal. We have also joined to voluntary commitments of other parties on maritime cooperation in the Baltic Sea, strengthening of implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan, securing a knowledge basis for Arctic Marine Protected Area Network and banning of microbeads in cosmetics.

Oceans and climate are closely connected. We call for urgent actions to mitigate climate change and implement the Paris Agreement. It is even more important now that we stick to the agreed goals.

We live on an increasingly crowded planet. The great number of humans has an impact on the condition of our seas and oceans. United Nations' Agenda2030 sets objectives and goals for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and UNCLOS is the legal framework for all activities. Today's linear economies must be turned into circular economies where virgin materials are used sparingly and recycling and reuse are norms. Circular economy is a solution for creating new jobs and saving the planet. Energy systems need to be transformed. Environmental costs of economic activities need to be accounted for.

When it comes to SDG14, reduction of pollution to the sea is of particular importance to us. The Baltic is a case example of a sea area that has degraded over the years from too much of human impact. Nevertheless, the situation in the Baltic Sea has improved thanks to cooperation between the states that surround the sea. Baltic Marine Environment Commission, HELCOM, is a well-functioning platform for solving common problems of our shared sea.

Signs of improvement in the state of the sea are already visible in some parts of the sea. We have been able to cut loads of phosphorus and nitrogen to the sea. This has been achieved by joint measures and commonly agreed nutrient load reduction targets allocated to each state. My

government has established a program that aims at closing the loop for nitrogen and phosphorus nutrients affecting the Baltic Sea. This programme receives government funding worth 34 million euro in 2016-2018. Closing the loop means that there will no longer be losses of valuable nutrients to the sea. At sea, we have actively promoted green shipping.

My home country Finland celebrates its 100 year anniversary this year. It is a country highly committed to Agenda2030. Society is engaged to the implementation plan of Agenda2030 and already about 650 voluntary actions have been registered as commitments in Finland. The government has adopted a national implementation plan.

We should not forget the integral relationship between SDG 14 and SDG 6 on water and sanitation. Both are lacking in implementation, both in terms of political guidance as well as coordination within the UN. While we welcome the Ocean Conference bringing much needed attention to Save Our Ocean, we should also strengthen the implementation of water and sanitation related goals and targets.

Finland holds the chairmanship of the Arctic Council in 2017-2019. The Arctic Council is an intergovernmental forum promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States, and Arctic indigenous peoples. The Arctic is warming twice as rapidly as the globe as a whole. Impacts in the Arctic will resonate all over the world. Changes in the Arctic also affect weather patterns outside of the Arctic. The melting Arctic glaciers are projected to increase the rate of global sea-level rise. The estimated global costs of the melting Arctic are tens of trillions dollars. If we lose the Arctic, the whole world will suffer. This calls for urgency of measures to achieve targets of the Paris Climate Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals. At the moment, 5 % of the Arctic Ocean is protected. We need to do more and we can do more.