

"Plenary full statement"

Intervention from the floor of the UN General Assembly during the Oceans Conference by Jack Moss, Executive Director, AquaFed

Thursday, 08 June 2017

President, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for giving me the floor.

AquaFed is the international federation that represents private operators of water and sanitation services throughout the world. We are partners of UN Water and founder members of the Global Business Alliance.

I want to highlight the dimension of **protecting the oceans from land based pollution**.

We all need to think of the movement of water, and what it contains, both good and bad, **from mountain top to ocean deep**.

Excellencies, Ministers, there is a great 'deal' to be had. You can get at least two for the price of one. Spend your money on dealing with freshwater pollution means you are protecting the oceans for free.

Both liquid and solid pollutants resulting from activities on land enter the oceans. Plastics are only part of the problem.

All states need policies and programmes that work on both **prevention** and **removal** of pollution in freshwater, because much of that pollution eventually ends up in the oceans.

Water operators work on pollution prevention and removal on behalf of public authorities and private clients. This is their routine work. In many places, it has a specific objective of protecting the oceans and the coastal environments.

These activities include:

- **Wastewater Management**
- **Storm-water management**
- **Solid waste management**
- **Materials recovery**

and

- **Collaboration with others** – Through R&D, Technical advice, and joint action with other stakeholders, they work to support better

understanding, behaviour change and to develop new solutions and techniques.

All of this helps and shows that **protection of the oceans from land based pollution is achievable**. However, globally, much more needs to be done.

Today's best estimates suggest that 90% of used water is discharged to the environment without any treatment. The environmental, social and economic damage that results must amount to trillions.

Service operators, whether public or private sector cannot achieve the results required on their own. Their technical and operational expertise must be supported with national and local **policies, investment and behaviour change**.

Political engagement must work on both prevention and cure of water pollution.

In the context of protecting the oceans, let us not forget **Diffuse pollution**. The UN Water advice to Member States on the necessity to deal with diffuse pollution did not make it to the final SDG agreement. The true scale and impact of diffuse pollution, mostly from agriculture, but also from urban run-off, is unknown and unmeasured. It is almost certainly the **biggest cause of ocean pollution**. This remains a **blind spot** that requires serious attention, to protect both the freshwater and the ocean environment.

Check against delivery