

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We know today how much damage pollution is causing to the oceans, marine life and the threat it is to food security, be they nutrients, contaminants and marine litter, air pollution, the introduction of non-indigenous species and energy input such as underwater noise.

The EU has a legal framework to address cumulative impacts of human activities on the marine environment. It requires European Union Member States to draw up marine strategies to achieve Good Environmental Status of the marine waters by 2020. It is the strongest partnership there can be to deliver this commitment, bounding together 28 countries by law. It also calls for a regional approach to addressing these issues, where we work closely with other countries sharing responsibility with us for the Mediterranean, the Baltic and Black seas, and the North-east Atlantic.

Looking at the biggest pressures on our seas:

The EU recognised the damage caused by eutrophication years ago and has in place legal instruments requiring river basin management and to reduce nutrient overloads from agriculture and waste water.

To address the issue of pollution at its source and transform the economy towards a sustainable one, the EU adopted a Circular Economy Action Plan.

These are strong commitments, to which we add, at this conference, our commitment to accelerate progress to target 14.1 by 2020 and to establish a quantities reduction headline target by specifying what "significant reduction" means. We will also launch a comprehensive answer to the problems caused by leakage of plastic, including micro plastics environment with a proposal for an EU Plastic Strategy. We will continue providing financial support also for clean-up activities that complement the prevention measures.

We commit to invest this year over €35 million in research and innovation improving understanding of relationship between oceans and human health, sea food safety and removal and re-use of marine litter.

We also recognise the negative impacts of sea-based sources of pollution, such as fishing gear and ship-generated waste. Implementation of our existing laws aiming at reducing the discharges of ship generated waste and cargo residues is an important contribution in addressing those sources..

We are also firmly committed to remain a reliable and forward looking partner in our global efforts to succeed. The European Union spent over €120 million between 2007 and 2014 and more than €600m were further earmarked until 2020 for infrastructure projects related to waste and waste water management as well as sanitation throughout the world.¹

We will fully work with our international partners by implementing both UNCLOS and the Multilateral Environmental Agreements such as the Basel, Minamata and Stockholm Conventions, by cooperating regionally in addressing both land-based and sea-based sources of pollution. The EU is particularly committed to regional cooperation and strengthening engagement of Regional Seas

¹ Based on figures used in G7 workshop end 2015, currently verifying with DEVCO if updated figures are possible to obtain before Monday intervention time]

Conventions with their work on both land-based and sea-based sources of pollution and marine litter action plans and other relevant regional and sectoral organisations. We are fully engaged in the assessment of the effectiveness of relevant international, regional and sub-regional governance strategies and approaches to combat marine plastic litter and microplastics and committed to take up their outcomes at the UN Environment Assembly in December.

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We reiterate our strong commitment to reduce all sources of pollution and to prevent and significantly reduce marine litter. With the solid and comprehensive EU-wide framework, we are determined speed up the move towards a circular economy which ultimately is the only way to seriously tackle the problem of marine pollution. We already work in strong partnership with many, and today, once again, we firmly commit to cooperate with all willing partners.

In this quest I wish us all Fair Winds and Following Seas!