

REPORT

Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 14 in the face of Climate change

Hosted by

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(Greens/EFA)

Organized by WWF

March 3rd 2020 16:00 – 18:00, WWF European Policy Office, Brussels

(This event was relocated following the measures taken by the European Parliament to quarantine its activities in the context of the Covid-19 outbreak, cancelling 100 events)

Five years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, WWF has developed an [analytical report](#) on the EU’s progress to achieve the ten targets of SDG14. The event focused on the successful bottom-up approach of Atlantic fishers to protect their activity and the solutions for ecosystem-based approach in Marine Spatial Planning.

Introductory word from MEP Catherine Chabaud

Ms. Chabaud opened the discussion by thanking WWF for agreeing to host the meeting on such short notice. She shared her experience in Guinea-Bissau, where she had recently traveled to learn more from EU's fisheries partnership. To her, this experience demonstrated a clear interlinkage between all SDGs. Fisheries, health, food security, climate and pollution are linked.

She stressed the need of a systemic approach, to which WWF's report is key. She called for more cooperation between all DG's, including DG DEVCO and SANTE, as well as for more coherence in the fight against harmful subsidies.

She concluded by urging for the implementation of new approaches that place individual and collective responsibility above freedom and ownership of the ocean.

Keynote from Dr. R. Serrão Santos, Minister of the Sea, Portugal

Dr. Serrão Santos opened his speech by saying that until not so long ago, the ocean had been an opaque asset on the safety of the planet. Nowadays, society recognizes that the ocean is losing its strength but the problems go far beyond what meets the eye. Acidification, deoxygenation, marine heatwaves.... He explained that all these issues are less visible than plastics and yet more important and difficult to tackle. He added that this was not new, and that scientific advice had not been transformed into governance and action. He explained that SDG 14 cannot be dissociated from SDG1, SDG2, SDG3, SDG12 and SDG13. SDG 1 and 2, on poverty and hunger, were already targets in the Millennium Development Goals of 1990. Some progress might have been made, but we are far from ending poverty and hunger. Dr. Serrão Santos quoted Indira Gandhi: *"how can we speak to those who live in villages and in slums about keeping the ocean, the rivers and the air clean, when their own lives are contaminated at the source"*. To him, it is impossible to end ecological crisis while extreme poverty exist.

SDG14 aims to unite all stakeholders around action. Achieving SDG 14 strongly depends on progress under the other goals. However SDG 14 is ranked as last for importance and second last for implementation. The UN call for action "Our Ocean, our future" challenges us to go further and to take urgent action. He stressed the need for good governance based on solid science and societal acceptance. We need to train science to inform good politics and involve society.

Portugal is truly engaged on the decade on ocean science for sustainable development, he stressed that science was meant to be at service of sustainability. Yet, some parts of the world have cutting edge technology for science and innovation while others lack basic knowledge.

Dr. Anne Cecile Dragon, marine and fisheries policy officer at WWF

Dr. A-C Dragon presented the SDG14 scorecard report evaluating the state of achievement of SDG14 targets and promoting good practices.

She explained that there is still a lack of data to measure SDG 14 implementation. However, there is one number to keep in mind: 38%. This number represents percentage of SDG targets that can only be achieved if SDG 14 is achieved. Out of the SDG 14 targets that are due by 2020, 3 have not been achieved, with the last target only partly achieved. The remaining 6 targets due by 2030 are either out of track, or there is not enough data for them to be evaluated.

2 targets interact with other EU commitments:

Target 14.2 Protect and Restore ecosystems: WWF calls EU Member states to ensure that the priority is the conservation of biodiversity and marine species. Implementing effective management of Marine Protected Areas should be amongst priorities.

Target 14.6 End subsidies contributing to overfishing: WWF urges the EU to make sure negotiations maintain the EU ban on subsidies increasing capacity, particularly the renewal of the fleet.

Keynote from M. Bernard Friess, Acting Director General, DG MARE

M. Friess opened his statement by saying that EU institution's action was probably arriving too late. The fight against climate change is the defining task of our society, and the EC has tried to provide a response through the EU Green Deal. However, we do not know if it will be enough to reverse the tendency. The Climate Law aims at neutrality by 2050. According to him we must not go to 2050, the moment is now. If we wait we will lose the battle. His message was the following: we must be goal minded but focus on what we can do today and now.

He then gave 3 SDG 14 targets on which action can be taken today:

On targets 14.2 and 14.4: the EU has a CFP, and it yielded good results in the Atlantic and in Northern Europe. The Mediterranean, the Black sea and overseas still need common efforts. Do we have the right tools? Yes and No. The European Parliament's role is crucial when adopting technical regulations to make progress. The EU has lost the ability to impulse measure, and it relies on Member States to take initiative.

On target 14.6: He called for an ambitious agreement, because the EU will not be credible internationally if it accepts capacity enhancing subsidies. The EU we will not influence WTO if this happens. He stressed that we must not lose sight of the big picture, and that technical aspects have big implications

On target 14.3: If we really want to help the ocean, we have to cut CO₂ emissions.

Panel debate

*Questions to the panel from moderator Dr. Sam Burgess, Head, Marine Policy
WWF European Policy Office*

On the twin crisis of biodiversity and climate: How do we balance policy and investments to ensure the SDG 14 agenda while mitigating biodiversity crisis?

Celia Rodriguez, Atlantic seafood producer answered that we need more political will and that human kind should be at the forefront of the fight, because our survival depends on it. She added that unfortunately nowadays economic sustainability is more important than social

and environmental sustainability. Policy makers should strive for implementation of existing European rules, communities must change their consumption patterns, vary their diets. She concluded by giving the responsibility of instigating change to the EU, as it is the first seafood importer in the world.

Mr. B. Friess added that we should think less in terms of investing in sustainable businesses and rather make businesses more sustainable. Sustainably managed fisheries have done better in terms of income than if they were overfishing. Complying with sustainable standards might be difficult, but once achieved the situation is better.

How can we move from the political rhetoric in international conferences and see political action?

Mr. B. Friess: through compliance and implementation at EU or at international level.

How is the EP going to ensure that the EU will continue to be a leader in environmental protection and action in the biodiversity and climate crisis?

MEP Grace O’Sullivan answered that this new European Commission was a new opportunity. The MEPs have to press as much as they can to make sure to see results. Many directives are good and just need enforcing.

MEP Catherine Chabaud explained that she witnessed the creation of MPAs in France. She is convinced that MPAs should be co-managed and be a governance tool that brings all actors around the table, including economic actors. Dialogue must be held around scientific data. She also talked about the need to give management tools: if nature were to be given a price, Guinea-Bissau would be a very rich country. Why sign fishing agreements when local populations want to export their fish? We go fishing in their waters without a systemic approach, and we should take all the value chain into account. She concluded by reminding the audience that we must engage all citizens, even those countries who do not have a maritime border.

On coherence and Marine Spatial Planning, how can the perspective on co-management deliver effective ecosystem approach?

Leonard Mizzi, Head of Food Security Unit at DG DevCo believes that by getting on the ground, directly connecting and better tracking the value chain of seafood consumed by Europeans, we’ll better see the EU’s progress on its promises. He called for EU leadership to make sure that all the processes in the Green Deal lead to coherent policies. He also stressed the need to move beyond conferences and start on the ground approaches, the need to show how we connect value chains, and the importance of a citizens approach to improve sustainability. He also spoke about the need to work with UNEP and FAO, as they are custodians of resources. To conclude, he highlighted the need for a roadmap across

institutions and mobilizing resources so the EU can show true leadership in the next 8 and 12 months.

Dr. Georg Nehls, Expert on conservation measures, marine renewable energies and marine spatial planning explained that it is important to extend beyond Marine Spatial Planning, to other activities like fisheries outside defined areas, where co-management is not in sight. Some types of fisheries are not regulated by the habitats directive. Mussel fisheries need a proper assessment. They are not regulated under the same jurisdiction (shell fish industry). According to him it is difficult to change but it must change. So co-management of activities needs to bring everyone on the same level.

Closing remarks by MEP Grace O’Sullivan

MEP O’Sullivan summarized the discussion. We have spoken of ocean acidification, overfishing, biodiversity decline, it is time for action! She said that the real need as MEP is to scrutinize the ambition coming from the European Commission and make sure we have the just transition. She advised not to push out to 2030, the framework is there but we need all stakeholders at the table.

“Let’s hope than in 30 years we will not need to be around the table anymore”.
(MEP Grace O’Sullivan)