

G7 Civil Dialogue 20.04.2015

Report Thematic Session „Oceans“

Inputs: Francisco Mari, Monica Verbeek, Heike Vesper

Government participation: Heike Imhoff (FME), Brigitte Schwadorf-Ruckdeschel (FMEE)

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The NGO contributors summarized their positions in a **joint document** (“Healthy oceans are our future”) that expresses the position of their organizations (Seas at Risk, WWF, Brot für die Welt, fair oceans). It is attached to this report.

Heike Vesper reported on **UNCLOS** (Convention on the Law of the Sea) and SDGs. UNCLOS, which regulates the use of the High Sea beyond national jurisdiction boundaries, needs a new implementation agreement. The G7 should support a UN resolution to negotiate such an agreement. It should aim for better protection of marine resources and include regulations for the use of marine genetic resources. Also, G7 countries should advocate a strong post 2015 sustainable development framework that includes ambitious targets on marine protection and fisheries. These should not fall short of the targets proposed by the UN Overall Working Group.

Monica Verbeek reported on marine pollution (**litter**). Although the G7 countries are not among the top-ten marine litterers their role is crucial. The problem of marine litter is closely connected to the question of waste-management and waste-reduction, including unsustainable structures and practices like high obsolescence, planned obsolescence, irreparable machines, unnecessary packaging etc. The input of marine-hazardous litter cannot be addressed if the production of materials harmful to the environment is not tackled, especially the production of plastic. In the sea, plastic is ground down to micro-plastic that kills marine organisms. Micro-plastic is also directly produced as a component of many items like toothpaste and cosmetics, which should be stopped. G7 countries could demonstrate that the necessary changes can be made with ecologic and economic benefit and should commit themselves to a 50%-reduction-goal by 2025.

Francisco Mari reported on **deep-sea mining**. Deep-sea mining is being prepared under 2 different circumstances: In the High Sea, where it is subject to the regulations by the ISA (International Seabed Authority) set up by UNCLOS, and in the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), where it is completely free from any international regulations and regulations at the moment. This implies the risk of double standards. Pacific NGOs like Pang (Pacific Network on Globalization) worry that their countries are used as a testing ground for a new technology of which the ecological, social and economic impacts are widely unknown so far. Facing possibly hazardous risks, the question should be raised “do we need it?” G7 countries should instead commit to investment in circular economy and resource-efficiency and stand up for a binding set of regulations (for the High Sea and the EEZs likewise) which ensures that no deep-sea mining is authorized unless high ecological and social standards are met.

Brigitte Schwadorf-Ruckdeschel underlined the problem that the USA have not ratified UNCLOS. It would be a step forward if the G7 communication includes a commitment to support ISA and press for high and liable standards. So far, there is no way to commit exploitative activities in the EEZs to any international regulation.

Heike Imhoff pointed out that marine protection was a priority for the German presidency. The 3 themes, however, fall under the authority of 3 different ministries: Foreign Affairs (UNCLOS), Economic Affairs and Energy (deep-sea mining), Environment (litter). The activities of the German presidency will not end with the Elmau summit but continue until the beginning of the Japanese presidency. Civil society will be involved by at least one follow-up meeting to the informal workshop on expert level that already took place. There have been no special meetings with the private sector on the G7 preparation.

Contributions from the **discussion**:

- Deep-sea exploitation contradicts EU commitments on circular economy and resource efficiency.
- Statements on marine protection in the Elmau communication are expected to be rather vague.
- Potentially harmful marine activities can, in lack of viable scientific assessments, mostly only be restricted on base of the precautionary principle, which is a weak base when it comes to juridical arguments.
- There is a joint paper by the scientific community of G7 countries addressing the issues of antibiotic resistance, neglected and poverty-related diseases and the future of the oceans. (see www.leopoldina.org)
- It is not very likely that marine protection will be a priority under the Japanese presidency.

Christoph Spehr