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МОРЕ /КСЧМ/

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PROTOCOL

From a meeting of Focus Group 4 of BISAC

23 November 2021

Topic: Marine waste:

Conclusions of the WG in 2019 and 2020, current status, mapping progress, joint actions of the Member States

On 23 November, 2021 the Bulgarian members of BISAC met in Pomorie Town, in Pomorie Grand Hotel, and the Romanian members of BISAC met in Bucharest, and a meeting of Focus Group 4 of BISAC was held via video link through ZOOM on the following topic: "Marine waste: Conclusions of the WG in 2019 and 2020, current status, mapping progress, joint actions of the Member States"

The meeting was attended by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Violin Raykov and via video link Mrs. Pinelipi Belecku from the EC, Mrs. Yordanka Chobanova from the EC, Mr. Alexandru Simionov from NARA Constanta

The meeting was opened by the President of BISAC - Dr. Yordan Gospodinov. Greetings to the participants and guests followed.

The next is presentation by Ms. Angelica Payu from NGO Mare Nostrum on the following topic: "The Silent Killer in the Black Sea". Marine waste is a global, cross-border problem that has its roots in unsustainable production and consumption patterns, poor solid waste management, lack of infrastructure, lack of adequate legal framework or poor enforcement, but also lack of financial resources. According to recent studies, each river that flows into the Black Sea carries between 6 and 50 pieces of waste per hour. According to the Marine Litter Watch application developed by the European Environment Agency, the Black Sea is the most polluted sea among regional seas in terms of marine litter on beaches - 652 pieces of litter per 100 m of beach. In 2021, 29,067 pieces of litter were registered on the Romanian coast - 2000 elements more than those registered in 2020.

In 2021 the non-governmental organization - Mare Nostrum has distributed 20 bags for waste collection on the board of ships, and at the same time, approximately 1000 kg of fishing devices have been removed by fishermen from Romanian waters of the Black Sea.

Discussions follow:

Mr. Yordan Gospodinov: In 2018 BISAC has started working on the topic of marine waste, with organizing a Round table, related to the topic, on 30 May the same year. Then the event was held without consumption in plastic items.

Mrs. Dimitrina Kostova: In Bulgaria there is also an initiative to clean the Black Sea by the fishermen themselves. For second year, a Bulgarian association is cleaning the sea from the waste, abandoned or broken fishing nets. The action is called: "The most valuable catch". The idea is to keep the sea clean and to keep the livelihood of fishermen. This project brings together the efforts of 52 ships in one valuable cause. Huge amounts of waste from different materials and size have been collected. The hope of the fishermen is to find a way to recycle them, and negotiations are currently underway with a Greek company to recycle the nets taken out of the sea, because in Bulgaria there is no such alternative. The ambition of the association is to attract more supporters for protecting the sea. During the first operation in the period from 31 October, 2020 to 15 April, 25 ships managed to collect and bring ashore over 7 tons of nets and plastic waste in total. The collected amount of nets is over 50 km in length. The association is seeking assistance from institutions to place containers for this type of waste in each fishing port, but they have problems with bureaucracy. For 2021, the "Most Valuable Catch" starts on 1 November and will last until 15 April, 2022. This initiative is not a one-off campaign, but the beginning of a long-term commitment.

Mr. Todor Georgiev: From 2013 until now, the National Association - "Bulgarian Black Sea Coast" (NABBSC) with its own funds and to this day implements a project to protect the cleanliness of the Bulgarian Black Sea coast. There is a huge problem with wild camping in Bulgaria. In summer there are thousands of campers, followed by tons of rubbish. NABBSC has mapped 22 camping sites. Unfortunately, the Bulgarian government prefers pollutants to environmental protection because no measures have been taken so far. Wild camping is not allowed in Europe.

Mr. Yordan Gospodinov: It is really important not only to protect the sea from pollution, but also to protect beaches and coastal areas. BISAC has also commented this topic at previous meetings dedicated to the pollution of the Black Sea.

Mr. Danko Penev: "Ro-Pescador" Association also collects waste from the sea at its own expense. But to leave the fishermen in Bulgaria and Romania to fight this problem alone, without the cooperation of the states and municipalities, is, to say it mildly – ridiculous; The tons of garbage removed from the sea by the association's ships are tons, but their disposal requires more funds, which are net loss for the fishermen. There are no places for disposing this waste in the ports, and if the municipalities send transport to collect it, it is paid extra.

Mr. Yordan Gospodinov: The state, represented by the municipalities, does not provide places for dumping or handing over the extracted marine waste. If the state does not fund the collection of marine litter, whatever initiatives there are, people will be discouraged in time.

Mrs. Mihaela Mirja: A joint project for waste collection between Bulgaria and Romania can be implemented. Organizations involved in this activity can promote their initiatives before BISAC. Also, much of the waste is not visible and people cannot realize its amount.

Mr. Daniel Buhai emphasized that a solution must be found to motivate fishermen to bring their waste to shore, rather than throwing it back into the sea. They are in such a position that they often prefer to throw the collected garbage into the sea, because they are met and sanctioned by local authorities on the shore. There is need for recommendation from BISAC to the local authorities to establish a service for collecting waste from fishing vessels. This recommendation should also include the identification of more specific funds for finding and collecting the so-called “phantom” networks. These lost nets continue acting as a trap for marine creatures for months.

Mr. Marian Payu: “Mare Nostrum” NGO has been working on the problem of lost networks and has been looking for ways to collect them for years. There is also a problem with their disposal as waste. There are also difficulties in trying to persuade the authorities to take actions. There should also be incentives for fishermen - for example, when they are not fishing, they have to be paid for the collection and disposal of marine litter.

Mr. Danko Penev: Another problem facing fishermen is the destruction and disposal of waste oils from engines, as well as bilge water. Although there is a European directive for the collection of these oils and bilge waters, it has no state support in Romania.

Mrs. Pinelopi Belecku: She would like to present important information that will make it easier for the members of BISAC to understand the benefits of collecting marine litter. The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund enable the collection of marine litter, thus encouraging associations to work with the authorities and participate in the preparation of the next operational program. For example, the Fund provides compensation to fishermen for passive collection of marine litter and construction of collection sites. Of course, there must be incentives for fishermen to collect marine litter. The EU is working not only at European level, but also at regional level, at the last session of BISAC all Black Sea countries agreed that abandoned fishing nets represent significant part of marine litter and decided to take measures to address this situation for fishing vessels that lose their facilities, to be able to restore them. All countries agreed to work together to build marine waste collection centers.

Mr. Yordan Gospodinov: In Bulgaria, the fishing associations have participated in the development of the fisheries program for the new programming period, giving their comments and opinions on a number of issues. The program is expected to be submitted to the EC for final approval in the first quarter of 2022 and to be launched immediately thereafter.

The meeting will be closed.

Minutes of the meeting: Mrs. Elena Peneva

President of BISAC: Mr. Yordan Gospodinov