

Remarks Jacob Duer, CEO of the Alliance to End Plastic Waste

At the 21st Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention) and its Protocols

High-Level Panel Session 2: PROPULSION

Naples, Italy, December 2019—Thank you Xenia I. Loizidou, Ambassador for the Coast for 2019, for your kind introduction.

Excellencies, Ministers and Ambassadors

Distinguished delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

And of course thank you too to the UN Environment Programme Mediterranean Action Plan Coordinator.

I refer here to my dear friend Gaetano Leone for his invitation for me to address COP21 of the Barcelona Convention in this beautiful Italian city of Naples.

Importance of Conventions/Multilateralism

Having worked for UNEP for 17 years, I appreciate the critical importance of the multilateral system at both the regional and the global level.

Given the enormous challenges the world and its citizens are facing—**from** climate change and the loss of species **to** the urgency to lift people out of poverty—the institutions and treaties that underpin the United Nations are more needed and more relevant today than they perhaps have ever been.

But the times we are living through **require** and **request** that it is not **only** nation states, and nation states cooperating through instruments such as this important Regional Seas convention, who must rise to these **challenges**.

Today we need **all hands-on deck**—and that means sub-national governments and the private sector contributing by playing a unique and critical, catalytic, role.

In early October I had to the pleasure to join the industry-led and CEO driven Alliance to End Plastic Waste as its Chief Executive Officer.

In just 10 months, the membership of the Alliance has grown to 42 companies who have committed US\$1 billion to begin the journey to help end plastic waste in the environment thereby contributing to plastic-free rivers, seas and oceans. Over the coming years we know we need to leverage a great deal more and the target of the Alliance is to raise USD 1.5 billion over the next five years through an enhanced membership.

Globally Asia's Rivers Big Source of Plastics

Studies from renowned research institutes¹ estimate that ten rivers in the world are the source of 90 per cent of the plastic leaking into our oceans.

The rivers have two common traits—a generally high population living in the surrounding region. In some cases that amounts to hundreds of millions of people.

And perhaps more importantly, a total and unacceptable lack of adequate waste management systems and infrastructure.

Most of these rivers are in Asia, one reason why the Alliance has now chosen its headquarters in Singapore in the heart of the Asian region.

Island of Bali Emblematic of Global Problem

Just before coming here to Italy, I had the chance to visit one of our first projects at Jembrana on the island of Bali.

Here I saw at first hand not only the volumes of plastic waste being generated in a relatively small, urban, community but the cost to the communities due to the lack of waste management and recycling infrastructure.

It is a story being repeated around the globe including in the Mediterranean region. No one wants an environment, rivers, seas or oceans full of waste.

Wildlife, fisheries and other precious biodiversity being harmed and in many cases the impacts on tourism in coastal regions is significant.

Plastic Waste—An Economic Loss

But according to one estimate the plastic that enters the environment today and every day is estimated at **80 to 120 billion** USD annually.

In other words, we are wasting money that could be spent on other crucial areas like schools, skills training, innovation or renewable energy if only we could better value plastic waste as a resource rather than trash.

In Jembrana in Bali, we are walking the talk. Through the project that the Alliance is sponsoring we will be building the much-needed waste disposal systems and infrastructure in response to the 13,000 tonnes of waste leaking into the environment and coastal waters annually.

- The aim is to dramatically improve waste collection, bring collection services for the first time to households, create permanent local jobs in the waste management industry, and clean up areas littered with plastic pollution.

If it works, we can help fast-forward, scale-up and replicate similar ideas elsewhere.

¹ Helmholtz Center for Environmental Research

One of the river systems identified in research and that carries significant plastic waste is the **Nile**. As part of addressing plastic waste in the Mediterranean we must also address the Nile.

Welcome Proposals Including from the Med Region

As CEO of the Alliance, I welcome proposals from all regions of the world where we can make a difference and where we can work with creative partners to stem, and help end, plastic waste in the environment.

Med-Based Entrepreneurs and Plug and Play

To be successful the private sector must push and be the source for innovation and the private sector must be so in partnership with universities and research centres. And innovation goes beyond technical innovation. We must also see innovation in government policy and in the area of finance where new kinds of instruments, like green bonds, are starting to be deployed.

This is all rapidly emerging as the world begins to address the scourge of unmanaged plastic waste.

It is happening under your Convention too.

I was pleased to learn that the MAP Sustainable Consumption and Production Regional Activity Centre, is co-implementing the EU-funded *SwitchMed* project.

It aims to boost the circular economy by supporting social and eco innovations in the Mediterranean. A similar approach that the Alliance is taking to its work.

Among the Alliance's 12 new initiatives is a partnership with Plug and Play where we will establish the "End Plastic Waste Innovation Platform".

It will create an accelerator program focused on the plastics value chain to identify new companies with different, inspiring, innovations to address plastic waste in the environment.

Plug and Play will run two programs over the next few years with sessions in three hub locations: Silicon Valley, Paris, and Singapore. We will have a big launch of the programme in Singapore in mid- 2020.

And at the end of these sessions, the Alliance and its members will have the opportunity to invest in start-ups deemed ripe for success.

I hope that the entrepreneurs involved in SwitchMed will submit ideas to the Plastic Waste Innovation Platform and become some its first beneficiaries.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Ending Plastic Waste—Engine of the Green Economy

Plastic waste in our seas and oceans has become a high priority for governments and for citizens.

It has **also** become a high priority for a progressive private sector. The Alliance is an expression of industry's determination to be at the core of the solution.

In doing so we and you, together, can turn a major problem into a major opportunity for a more sustainable future and play our part in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

And in doing so, we can generate new kinds of wealth where there was once waste, new kinds of decent, green jobs and new kinds of products and processes that tread far more lightly on our world and our daily lives.

Thank you.