

MEMBER STATES' CALLS ON OCEAN AND WATER FRONTS WELCOMED BUT ACTION MUST FOLLOW THROUGH

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Today the Environmental Council reconvened to discuss several key initiatives for the Ocean. Conclusions over the Water Resilience Strategy and the global Plastics Treaty were released, and views were exchanged on the Ocean Act, prompting a reaction from the environmental NGO Surfrider Foundation Europe.

Water Resilience Strategy: long on vision, short on substance

Today, Member States took a stance in support of a more water resilient-Europe. Surfrider Foundation Europe takes note of the Council's adoption of its conclusions on the EU Water Resilience Strategy and welcomes the emphasis placed on the effective implementation of existing legislation. Yet, we remain cautious about the overall approach adopted by EU institutions to address the water crisis.

Water resilience has been defined as a key priority since the beginning of the new EU mandate. With [recent official reports](#) highlighting the deteriorating state of aquatic ecosystems and the need to urgently scale up EU efforts to achieve good environmental status, Surfrider Europe commends this initiative and prompts decision-makers to act swiftly to curb water pollution at source. to curb water pollution at source.

However, the official release of the EU Water Resilience Strategy last June raised serious concerns and disappointment given its lack of concrete measures to effectively tackle pollution and improve water quality in Europe. Today's conclusions offer little reassurance. We regret to hear, once again, timid and restrained interventions regarding the Strategy. Despite few interventions recalling the need to phase out forever chemicals and ensure a systematic implementation of a source-to-sea approach, these voices sounded more like the exception rather than the rule.

Lucille Labayle, Water Quality and Health Policy Officer says:

"There is a clear mismatch between the severity of the crisis we are facing and the response provided by the EU. While we heard several times the words "call to action" today, we are yet to see concrete measures to prevent water pollution at source, rather than focusing on remediating its effects. We urge policymakers to

take bold steps to ensure effective a toxic-free and water-resilient Europe now and for future generations.”

Welcomed support to the Ocean Pact and a revised Marine Directive but without talking implementation

Surfrider Europe welcomes the support expressed by all Member States for the Ocean Pact, which Surfrider, [together with our partners from the Blue NGOs](#), called for ahead of last year's EU elections. It is reassuring to see alignment and acknowledgement of the magnitude of the crisis facing the ocean.

Among the priorities highlighted by Member States is the need to address pollution — particularly land-based sources, ranging from plastics to chemicals — as well as the impacts of climate change. Most Member States also emphasized the importance of ensuring coherence between land and marine policies, including the Nature Restoration Regulation, the Birds and Habitats Directives, the Water Framework Directive, Maritime Spatial Planning, and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

Their support for a source-to-sea approach holds significant potential to improve the state of our ocean, provided it is accompanied by binding targets and the full implementation of existing legislation.

Surfrider Europe also echoes the calls from many to secure adequate funding for the implementation of the Ocean Pact and for the restoration and protection of marine ecosystems in the next EU budget — something that cannot be taken for granted at this stage.

While we welcome calls to reduce administrative burdens, as outlined by many Member States in their interventions, we remain concerned that such efforts may come at the expense of our collective commitment to achieving a healthy ocean — an urgent priority. We therefore echo the interventions that made clear the need to strengthen, not weaken, our efforts. In that perspective, Member States will need to increase their implementation efforts. While all expressed support for the revision of the Marine Directive, [their failure to fulfill their current obligations](#) was notably absent from this exchange of views. The MSFD revision will only succeed if it is backed by strong political will to implement it.

EU leadership on plastics falling short without strong action at home

“We welcome Member States’ call for a global plastics treaty and their leadership on the international stage, working alongside other countries that share their high level of ambition. We now hope to see this same determination reflected in EU internal policies and legislation” said Lucie Padovani, Marine Litter lobbying officer at Surfrider Europe.

As they negotiate key files such as the Circular Economy Act and the Bioeconomy Strategy, Surfrider Europe calls on Member States to remember their own call to reduce the production of single-use plastics - and, more broadly, of single-use items in general - as a truly circular economy is essential to ensuring the EU's resource sovereignty and achievement of the Zero Pollution Action Plan targets.

Surfrider Europe also urges Member States to fully enforce existing environmental legislation, including the Single-Use Plastics Directive, the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation, and the newly adopted Pellets Regulation. Leading by example at home would be the most powerful way to demonstrate the need - and the potential - of a global legally binding instrument.

We remain available to journalists for any information or interview requests.

About Surfrider Foundation Europe

Surfrider Foundation Europe, an NGO created in 1990, works to protect the oceans, the coastline, the waves and their users. For 30 years, with a team of experts and 50 volunteer branches in 12 European countries, the association has been working with stakeholders (citizens, private and public sectors) on several major issues: aquatic waste, coastal development, climate change, water quality and user health. Find out more about the association at <https://surfrider.eu/> or via this [vidéo](#)

CONTACT :

Lionel Cheylus | Medias Relations Manager | + 33 6 08 10 58 02 | lcheylyus@surfrider.eu



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www.surfrider.eu



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