



KIMO RESOLUTION 2/09

Presented by the Secretariat

Fishing for Litter

Background

Despite many programmes and initiatives and legislation to reduce marine litter it remains one of the most significant environmental problems yet to be addressed and affects the marine environment on a worldwide scale. Around 20,000 tonnes is dumped into the North Sea alone every year. Of that, 70% sinks to the sea bottom, 15% floats on the surface and 15% washes up on beaches. Currently only the proportion that washes ashore is targeted by cleanup and awareness campaigns.

Plastic, the predominate type of marine litter, can cause entanglement or be ingested by marine mammals and birds killing 100,000 and 1,000,000 respectively world wide each year. Studies as part of the Save the North Sea project showed that 96% of Fulmars in the North Sea had plastics in their stomachs and a recent study by Plymouth University has highlighted the abundance of microscopic plastic fragments in the marine environment.

KIMO has also shown the cost to the fishing industry of marine litter, which can be up to £30,000 per boat each year through contamination of catches, broken gear and fouled propellers. It is therefore essential that urgent action be taken to reduce what is currently a significant marine pollution problem.

The Concept

Fishing for Litter is one of the most innovative and successful concepts to tackle marine litter at sea. This imaginative yet simple initiative aims to reduce marine litter by involving one of the key stakeholders, the fishing industry. The initiative not only involves the direct removal of litter from the sea, but also raises awareness of the problem inside the industry as a whole.

The North Sea Directorate of the Dutch Government in co-operation with the Dutch Fisheries Association originally started the Fishing for Litter initiative in

March 2000 before it expanded by KIMO to Denmark, UK, Netherlands, Isle of Man and Sweden in 2004.

The initiative clears litter from the seabed by providing vessels with large (1m³) hardwearing bags to collect marine litter that accumulates in their nets as part of their normal fishing activity. Operational or galley waste generated on board, and hence the responsibility of the vessel, continues to go through the established harbour waste management system. Full bags are deposited on the quayside where the participating harbours monitor the waste before moving the bag to a dedicated skip for disposal. The project provides the bags and covered the waste costs and the fishermen and harbours volunteer their time.

KIMO believes that Fishing for Litter is one of the best practical measures that can be implemented, not only to reduce to the input of litter to the marine environment from the fishing industry, but also to remove existing litter from the marine environment.

The concept has been endorsed by European Environment Ministers at the Ministerial Meeting of the OSPAR Commission in the Bremen Statement 2003 and the Göteborg Declaration 2006.

Para 22. Ministers request competent authorities to investigate methods through EU Directive 2000/59/EC, or if this proves not to be possible, through fishing for litter initiatives, to enable the fishing industry to contribute more positively to reducing the amount of litter in the sea, especially litter which is hauled up with their nets. If this approach proves not to be feasible, Ministers request the competent authorities to develop financially supported fishing for litter initiatives for the landing of non-operational waste.

Therefore KIMO,

Urges

All European Governments to implement financially supported Fishing for Litter projects for all registered fishing harbours.

KIMO members:

Agree to submit this Resolution to all National Governments, the European Commission and other relevant organisations.