

"World Aquariums #ReadyToChange to #BeatPlasticPollution?"

○Nadia Ounais¹

1. INSTITUT OCEANOGRAPHIQUE

In 2017, the European Commission, with the support of the Oceanographic Museum of Monaco, the European Union of Aquarium Curators and the World Association of Zoos & Aquariums, built a coalition of 150 aquariums from 38 countries to raise awareness about marine litter and promote the Our Ocean 2017 conference hosted by the European Union (Malta, 5-6 October 2017).

The campaign was officially launched by the EU Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Karmenu Vella in Monaco on 27 July 2017, in the presence of H.S.H. Prince Albert II, the Head of the United Nations Environment Programme Erik Solheim, and the WAZA CEO Doug Cress.

The "World Aquariums against marine litter" were engaged in various activities: many displayed a tank full of marine litter to shock their visitors, others organized beach cleans, broadcasted movies, created artistic pieces with litter etc.

All aquariums disseminated the main messages on all communication channels, notably on social media. All these activities, in particular the press releases prepared by most aquariums, resulted in hundreds of articles, television and radio programmes.

Following this success, the European Commission and UNEP, together with five international partners, will announce a commitment at the Our Ocean 2018 conference, to transform the 2017 campaign into a permanent action with the focus on plastic pollution.

In addition to long lasting communication actions, the coalition will call on all aquariums to change their procurement policies, for example in canteens and shops, to eliminate all single use plastic items. Aquariums will also be encouraged to ally with all potential partners and multipliers to maximize impact by promoting best practices in behavioral change on a local, regional, national and global scale.

Material will be available for all participating aquariums, based among others on the EU campaign "#ReadyToChange" and on the #CleanSeas campaign by UNEP.