

NEWS



A virtual workshop to strengthen cooperation to protect the marine environment, and to prevent marine disasters

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Overfishing, resource depletion and pollution are some of the problems facing the marine environment in coastal cities and regions. In the context of global climate change, the social and economic development of these coastal areas is also under threat from the increased risk of marine disasters. This problem is critical, especially considering that **around 680 million people live in low-lying coastal zones**—a number that is expected to increase to a billion by 2050 ^[1].

In this regard, cities and regions around the world are already actively strengthening cooperation to protect the marine environment, jointly discussing new ideas, measures and ways to prevent and reduce marine disasters. To continue advancing along these lines, the Fuzhou Municipal People's Government and Minjiang

University, with the support of Metropolis and the 21st Century Maritime Cooperation Committee, organised a virtual workshop on marine ecology, conservation and disaster risk reduction, held from 31 August to 2 September.

During the event, a number of talks were held on marine ecological protection, sustainable development of the marine industry, adequate protection and development of marine resources, and prevention and reduction of marine disasters, in order to improve the attendees' understanding of Fuzhou's work and research in related areas.

"These cities have the responsibility to work together to find solutions for a better environment and for the sustainability of our oceans and seas", Octavi de la Varga

In the opening session, Octavi de la Varga, the Metropolis Secretary General, explained that most big cities and metropolises are in coastal locations. Indeed, 50 members of Metropolis are coastal cities, and as De la Varga said, "..., therefore, these cities have the responsibility to work together to find solutions for a better environment and for the sustainability of our oceans and seas".

"I know that cities and metropolitan areas do not have all the powers and competences to change the game, but of course they can introduce certain regulations and **work with other levels of government to find better solutions and guarantee a future for our seas and oceans, at the same time that we guarantee the future of our cities and metropolises**", De la Varga added.

"A single city or region's effort cannot effectively improve the degradation of marine ecological environments, nor prevent or mitigate marine disasters", Du Weiguang

"A single city or region's effort cannot effectively improve the degradation of marine ecological environments, nor prevent or mitigate marine disasters. [...] **Only by working together can we strengthen the awareness of green development and work towards the steady growth of marine ecological conservation**", noted Du Weiguang from Fuzhou City.

Especially in the aftermath of the pandemic: "We should be more active in building consensus and taking measures to curb the deteriorating marine environment, developing marine resources in a scientific way, maintaining the reproduction capacity of the ocean, and jointly promoting marine ecological protection and disaster management", added Du Weiguang.

De la Varga also pointed out that it represents an opportunity, because the world's future lies in the seas and oceans. **50% of our food in the coming years will be taken from the seas and oceans**, which will also provide a large part of our energy and resources.

In addition, a panel discussion was held in which participants had the opportunity to **share the experiences of their own cities in the field of marine ecological protection and disaster prevention**, and to learn from the good practices of others.

For instance, Pola Hasudungan Pardede, Deputy for Economic Development for the Government of Bandar, took the opportunity to explain **Bandar**'s marine and fisheries potential and the government support offering to fishing activities, in a city that has a population density of around 8,316 people/km² and, based on marine fishing data, **3,932 people working in the fisheries sector**.

The panel also included Wu Xiaojie, Executive Deputy Secretary General of the 21st Century Maritime Cooperation Committee, in Fuzhou, and Agnès Charlotte Bickart, Senior Manager for Institutional Relations & Asia Portfolio at Metropolis who stated that: "The role of this Committee is to build up an effective dialogue and linkage mechanism, and to **serve as a platform to share ideas and practices on maritime cooperation for cities and local governments in the Asia-Pacific, and the world**".

The three-day workshop involved three Metropolis members: Bandar, Hangzhou and Fuzhou, as well members of UCLG ASPAC.

[1] <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/oceans/>