

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends of our ocean,

As much as we all share the atmosphere, we all share the ocean.

We're all in this together, and we all need to cooperate! We are all in the same canoe, as some friends from the Pacific say.

I'm delighted to be here today at this year's Our Ocean, truly a key initiative for saving our oceans and seas, announcing several brand new Swedish commitments that will help Swedish seas recover, but also all seas – Our Ocean.

Sweden and Fiji initiated and led the very first UN Ocean Conference this June. The Conference adopted an ambitious political declaration and has generated over 1 400 voluntary commitments. The commitments made at the UN Conference are adding to and complementing to the many forceful commitments generated by the Our Ocean conferences.

Friends,

Back in 1972, at the first UN Conference on the environment in Stockholm, pollution of the seas was recognised as a threat to development. It's easy, and sad, to see that we've learned little during the last 45 years.

Litter, micro plastics and hazardous substances in oceans and seas are spreading at a catastrophic pace. 8 million tonnes of plastic is dumped in the ocean every year. We find micro plastic in the Arctic, in the Antarctica, in zoo-plankton and in tap water. In order to prevent this approaching disaster for human development and health alike, we need strong efforts on local, national, regional and global levels.

This is a satellite image of southern Sweden and parts of the Baltic Sea. The green swirls in the water are cyanobacterial bloom. The

sensitive environment of the Baltic Sea is suffering from eutrophication, pollution and long-time overfishing, which has resulted in severe algae blooms and dead seabed. This must change. **I am proud to announce that Sweden is committing to a very ambitious national plan this autumn. For 2018, we will invest approximately 55 million euros, and in total 199 million euros the next three years, to combat marine pollution within three main areas:**

- Removal of hazardous substances, such as old industrial emissions of dioxins and PCBs stored in sediments and leakage from ship wrecks recognized as acute environmental hazards but also, for example, increased through efforts to reduce the amount of pharmaceuticals residues in marine environments.
- Combat eutrophication by, among other things, measures to reduce the load of phosphorus in coastal bays, restoration of wetlands, as well as development of blue catch crops. .
- Responsible plastic management by, for example, focusing in cleaning of beaches and development of new, alternative materials.

Friends,

Apart from our pollution-preventing commitments we're also using this year's Our Ocean to announce several other commitments.

**We commit to invest more than 6.3 million euros in 2018, and 19 million euros in total the next three years, to protect marine areas and its biodiversity.** Sweden has, with its 13.6 percent Marine Protected Areas, exceeded the 10 percent international target. A

large part of these 13.6 percent is set off to protect this small toothed whale called Porpoise. However, we need to increase the efforts to establish an ecologically representative, well connected and effectively managed network of protected areas in Swedish waters.

To save our oceans we must live up to the Paris Agreement and cut emissions. Our goal is make Sweden the first fossil-free welfare nation, with zero net emissions of greenhouse gases, by 2045.

Here, the transport sector is key. By taking freight off the roads to the sea, the emission per transported ton is decreased and transport becomes safer. **In an “Eco Bonus” initiative, Sweden now commits to allocate 5.2 million euros annually, for at least three years, to support less harmful shipping with the aim of shifting freight from land to sea.** This initiative is in line with our Integrated Maritime Strategy for the sustainable use of marine and coastal resources. The strategy, launched in 2015, was a landmark for our blue economy.

Shipping in the Baltic Sea and the North Sea, which includes all Swedish waters, is undergoing dramatic improvement efforts in reducing environmental impact – both in terms of emissions to air and sea. The “Eco Bonus” initiative also provides an opportunity for shipping to cover additional costs for improving their environmental performance.

Friends,

At the same time, we commit to international efforts against pollution and unsustainable fisheries through our international development agency Sida.

Just as with climate change, pollution and general deterioration of marine environments hits the poorest and most vulnerable the hardest.

**We're contributing with 3.8 million euros to IUCN for 2017-2020 to enable key stakeholders in Africa and the Asia Pacific region to contain and reduce marine plastic pollution.**

**We also commit with 10.5 million euros to The Pacific-European Union Marine Partnership Programme.** We all recognize marine resources as the backbone of Pacific development.

This initiative focuses on sustainable fisheries and is carried out with the European Commission and Pacific partners.

Friends,

To conclude, Sweden sees Our Ocean as a crucial opportunity to build upon the current strong global momentum we're fortunate to have on ocean issues.

Our meeting here in Malta serves as a great reminder of the urgency to save our oceans, as well as a complement to the revitalised UN-processes that have now been initiated.

I thank you!