

Media Workshop: Second Global Conference on Land-Ocean Connections

The Media Workshop organized on the sidelines of the Second Global Conference on Land-Ocean Connections (GLOC-2) sought to provide media professionals with relevant information, tools and data related to the effects of and possible solutions to marine pollution.

The workshop was organized by UNEP in coordination with the Jamaican Government. The UNEP Newsdesk and UNEP-GPA organized the workshop with the support of Winsome Christie, Director of Communications at the Ministry of Housing, Environment, Water and Local Government of the Government of Jamaica. The event was coordinated by Heidi Savelli (UNEP-GPA) and facilitated by Alejandro Laguna, Information Officer of UNEP's Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Following a selection process based on the applications received by UNEP, 13 media professionals working for print and electronic media, news agencies and television in 8 different countries were sponsored to participate.

Apart from providing relevant information related to marine pollution, the workshop was designed to allow journalists to engage in discussions with experts in different fields, and to hold interviews that could support their articles.

The media professionals attended the GLOC-2 Opening Ceremony, and immediately afterwards they were invited to a media briefing which was presided over by the Honourable Ian Hayles, Minister of State in the Ministry of Water, Land, Environment and Climate Change, who was accompanied by a number of high-level government officials and UNEP Programme Officer Christopher Corbin.

The media briefing was followed by a session with one-on-one interviews. The agenda then focused on three themed sessions with a wide array of experts. The session on "nutrients" was chaired by Anjan Datta, UNEP-GPA's Coordinator of the Global Partnership of Nutrient Management; the session on "wastewater" was chaired by Idrissa Doucure, from Water and Sanitation for Africa; finally, the session on marine litter was chaired by Heidi Savelli, UNEP-GPA Programme Officer.

The second day of the workshop started with a session on the value of ecosystems. Jerker Tamelander, head of the UNEP Coral Reef Unit, delivered a presentation on Coastal Ecosystems Services and Values, followed by a presentation by Loureen Jones-Smith, a marine expert from NEPA, who focused on different studies conducted in Jamaica, mainly on the services provided by coral reefs.

Field trip

The first stop of the field trip was a visit to the Montego Bay Marine Park. The visit was coordinated by Hugh Shim, Executive Director of the Montego Bay Marine Park Trust. After attending a presentation on the challenges and achievements of the Marine Park, the workshop participants took a tour in a glass-bottom boat in order to witness the effects of marine litter on some areas of the park.

The media professionals also had the opportunity to visit the Rose Hall wastewater treatment plant, where they interviewed Cynthia Scott, the manager of Rose Hall Development. This plant collects the sewage water of some hotels in Montego Bay, treats it, and later resells it to the same hotels so they can irrigate their golf courses. The Rose Hall plant can treat 1.25M gallons of sewage water per day.

One of the issues that triggered a significant discussion during the workshop was the possibility of using treated sewage water for agricultural purposes. During the workshop, the Permanent Secretary in the Jamaican Ministry of Agriculture, Donovan Stanberry, had announced that the ministry was planning to recycle treated effluent from the Soapberry Treatment Plant to irrigate sugar cane fields.

The field trip concluded with a brief visit to two tourist attractions: Dolphin Cove and the Dunn's River Falls.

The workshop came to an end that evening with a final session analyzing the outcome of the event. The journalists expressed their satisfaction with the dynamics of the workshop, because it allowed them to listen to a series of thematic presentations while allowing them to engage in enriching discussions with experts and recording many interviews that they could later use for their articles. They suggested the organization of further such workshops in the future.