

# Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance

## Ministerial Breakfast meeting: Chair Summary

*Nairobi, 27 November 2018*

At the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in April 2018, 53 Commonwealth countries endorsed the Commonwealth Blue Charter. The Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance (CCOA), the Action Group to tackle plastic pollution in our ocean, was launched by the UK and Vanuatu. The CCOA operates within the framework of the Blue Charter, which sets the mandate, the clear level of ambition and the political will to drive the marine environmental agenda.

The first Ministerial meeting of the CCOA was attended by Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Canada, The Gambia, Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nauru, New Zealand, Saint Lucia, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Uganda, UK, Zambia and the Commonwealth Secretariat. The CCOA has built substantial momentum since it was launched at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting earlier this year and now boasts 23 members. A support package of up to £10m of UK Aid has been made available by the UK for ODA eligible CCOA members.

The UK announced the framework for the delivery of Technical Assistance Facility: leading experts in waste management and plastic pollution would be appointed to engage individually with eligible CCOA countries during early 2019, scoping their needs to deliver their political commitments made under the CCOA. A Knowledge Sharing Platform is being scoped to enable all members of the CCOA to benefit from knowledge expertise, not only from within the Commonwealth but around the world.

The Chair introduced Stephen Harris, Special Representative to the CCOA, seconded to the CCOA by New Zealand. Stephen will support CCOA countries by facilitating engagement between governments, industry and NGOs, and championing the CCOA to raise its profile around the world.

Attendees highlighted the importance of solving the issue of plastic pollution in the world's ocean, rivers and great lakes and on the need for waste prevention and downstream waste management to stem the flow of plastic pollution.

Attendees reported a diverse range of successful actions already in progress at the local, national and regional level. These included wide ranging bans and restrictions on single use plastic carrier bags and other types of single use plastic, the publication of national waste strategies and behaviour change campaigns. Opportunities to develop the Blue Economy were raised, noting the potential to develop the reuse and recycling of plastic, consistent with circular economy principles. Challenges were also noted, including the implementation of plastic bag bans, resistance to regulations on plastics from the manufacturing industry and how to reduce the amount of plastic entering the supply chain.

The challenges faced by Small Island Developing States were noted, highlighting their vulnerabilities and that they are predominantly recipients of plastic pollution from other

countries, which meant regional and global co-operation is especially important for solving their issues. Many of these island nations are showing global leadership, with bans on single-use plastics in progress, and working through regional forums to encourage neighbours in the region to follow suit. Sharing of best practices and scaling up of local successes will be encouraged via the Knowledge Sharing Platform.

The importance of the Blue Charter was emphasised, with many of those in attendance leading other Action Groups to collaboratively meet commitments for sustainable ocean development.

The CCOA members were encouraged to act as standard bearers for the rest of the world in the fight against plastic waste, showing what can be achieved where there is the will for change. The Chair also mentioned examples of practical action to be taken and suggested that attendees may wish to write to their national flag carriers to urge them to reduce the amount of single-use plastic used by airlines.

The Chair closed the meeting by thanking the room for attending, and to Nauru and Uganda for pledging to join the CCOA. The Chair highlighted that it was heartening to see how much collective effort has been made and if we fulfil this objective we can teach 20 years from now that it was our action which protected the ocean for generations to come.