

Courtesy translation

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Berlin, 23 January 2025

Dear Commissioner Tzitzikostas,

Dear Commissioner Kadis,

Please accept our sincerest congratulations on your appointment. We wish you much strength, good fortune and of course every success in executing your new responsibilities.

There are huge amounts of unsafe ammunition in European and international coastal waters and oceans which were previously dumped in the context of wars and military

conflicts. This dumped underwater ammunition is not only increasingly an enormous environmental hazard, but also a risk to the safety and health of people who live and work close to these waters. In light of the ongoing decomposition of the ammunition casings, the contact of toxic and carcinogenic compounds that are typical of explosives with the marine environment is growing, and the sensitivity of the warheads to impact is continuously increasing. In addition, the negative economic impact of the ammunition dumped in the seas is becoming more and more apparent.

This negative economic impact applies in particular to shipping, fisheries and tourism, but also to the expansion of offshore wind energy and maritime infrastructure. Due to delays, the costs of projects are rising, and we are being stopped from attaining our climate targets within schedule.

The European Commission can play a key role here, especially together with the Baltic Sea countries concerned, in further drawing the international community's attention to this problem and intensifying the involvement of stakeholders from business. We need to raise greater awareness with the aim of jointly promoting technical solutions and their applications which enable us to identify, monitor and, if possible, recover and dispose of dumped ammunition in an environmentally friendly manner. Cooperation between the EU Member States, international organisations and the industries concerned is indispensable for a sustainable and safe technical solution and for the funding of this long-term, cross-generational task. The future EU Ocean Pact and the planned EU Maritime Industrial Strategy could play a major role in this context.

The German Federal Government is already funding research projects for the development of relevant technologies. In order to provide proof of the feasibility of recovering and disposing of dumped ammunition in the seas on an industrial scale, the Federal Government, led by the Federal Ministry for the Environment, has set up an immediate action programme for the recovery and disposal of ammunition previously dumped in German seas. This programme aims to develop for the first time worldwide an integrated system chain for the exploration, recovery, processing and disposal of ammunition, and the construction of a mobile floating industrial installation for the processing and disposal of dumped ammunition. Investment in modern technologies, and European and international cooperation are crucial to minimise environmental

damage and economic losses and at the same time to tap new potential for the sustainable use of the seas.

We therefore want to draw your attention to this topic. We have a responsibility both to make the seas safe for future generations and to remove the risks related to dumped ammunition.

Yours sincerely,

[Signed:]

Dr Robert Habeck

Federal Minister for Economic Affairs
and Climate Action

[Signed:]

Steffi Lemke

Federal Minister for the Environment,
Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and
Consumer Protection