

STRATEGY 2026-2030



Municipalities for
Sustainable Seas

Contents

01

Vision and Mission

03

Core principles

04

Our value
proposition

07

Paving a clear way
forward

09

Priority 1:
Marine litter

12

Priority 2:
Chemical pollution

15

Priority 3:
Maritime safety
and pollution

19

Priority 4:
Organisational
sustainability

21

Partnering for
impact

Foreword

In 1990 four municipalities from three countries joined efforts to address the issue of marine pollution. Recognizing their dependency on the resources provided by the sea, and deeply concerned about the negative impacts of marine pollution, Kommunernes Internationale Miljøorganisation (KIMO) was established with the objective to protect the North Sea against pollution and littering of all kinds.

A lot has happened since then. Marine pollution, whether it be caused by litter, discharge of chemicals or activities related to shipping, is now globally recognized as one of the most prominent threats to our seas, pressuring biodiversity and ecosystems as well as the coastal communities that depend on them.

During this time, KIMO has worked tirelessly to support and represent municipalities in preserving and enhancing their seas and coastal waters. Because even though our seas are interconnected and serve as a playing field for various types of both land and sea-based activities, it is most often coastal municipalities that are left with the burden to tackle immediate and long-term consequences to protect the health of both humans and marine ecosystems.

KIMO's founding municipalities were right to be concerned, and the fact that our network now encompasses more than eighty municipalities spanning across nine countries facing the North-East Atlantic, North Sea, Irish Sea and Baltic Sea is a testament to both the need for and added value of cross-border collaboration.

Reflecting on the past 35 years, KIMO has had many successes and driven action at both local, national, regional and international levels. As incumbent and incoming presidents we are proud of all that we have achieved but at the same time dreadfully aware that much work remains to be done.

We are therefore pleased to present KIMO's strategy for 2026-2030, detailing how we will focus our efforts to maximise impact for the benefit of the marine environment and coastal municipalities. With clear ambitions and targets, the strategy will serve as a framework for the coming five years and the development of annual action plans detailing concrete activities.

The strategy is the result of an iterative process among KIMO's members and is hence developed to address issues of key importance to coastal municipalities.



Trish Robertson
KIMO President
2023-2025



Preben Friis-Hauge
KIMO President
2025 onwards



Vision and Mission

Preserving oceans and coastal waters for future generations



Vision

We envisage a world where healthy seas and clean beaches contribute to thriving coastal communities.



Mission

To unite and represent local governments in preventing pollution and protecting, preserving and enhancing the seas and coastal waters of the North-East Atlantic, North Sea, Irish Sea and Baltic Sea.



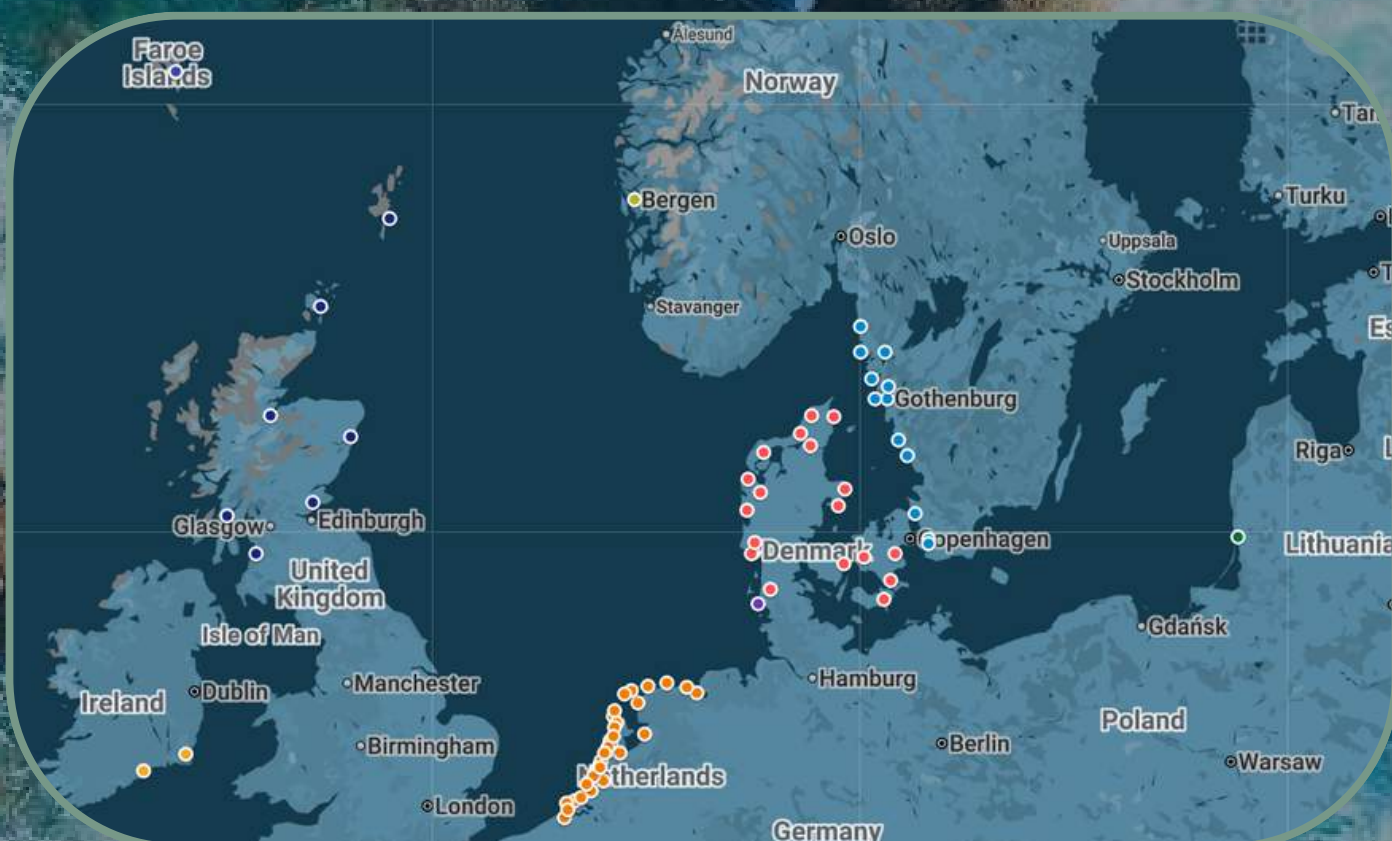
For the past 35 years KIMO has worked with municipalities across Europe to protect and enhance the marine environment. This wealth of experience gives KIMO a unique insight into the challenges faced by coastal communities and ensures that we work on issues that are important to our members.

Having a geographical focus on the North-East Atlantic, North Sea, Irish Sea and Baltic Sea KIMO welcomes all coastal municipalities facing these waters. Because of the interconnectedness of waterways, and hence the challenges faced, KIMO also welcomes riverine municipalities.



The KIMO Network

80 members in 9 countries



Our members work to find, implement and share positive solutions. We believe that through cooperation and collaboration, we can tackle the most pressing challenges facing the marine environment. Together, we are a powerful voice that influences decision makers at regional, national and international levels.

Core Principles

Responding to the need for a platform to unite, support and represent municipalities in their effort to protect and preserve their marine and coastal environments, KIMO has carved out a clear niche in national, regional and international marine protection. Our community of coastal municipalities is the foundation for everything we do.

KIMO is the only dedicated community for European coastal municipalities to share experiences, concerns and priorities across both national and regional levels. Based on these inputs we advocate for international transformation, partner with other key stakeholders and drive projects and activities that generate new knowledge.

Altogether our unique way of working can be summarised in five core principles that define KIMO's value proposition.



Our Value Proposition



Through the national networks KIMO influences government policy at national level, lobbying national politicians and parliamentarians directly. As part of this work members also achieve a strong voice in stakeholder consultations on national legislation.

At the international level, KIMO represents the interests of its members at the EU level through lobbying and participation in stakeholder consultations. KIMO is also an official Observer at OSPAR and HELCOM Regional Seas Conventions and uses this status to contribute to their work and shape policy development in the North-East Atlantic, North Sea, Irish Sea and Baltic Sea regions. At the global level KIMO use its network to lobby the International Maritime Organisation (IMO).



KIMO member municipalities are part of both a national and an international network of like-minded municipalities dedicated to enhancing the marine environment by addressing issues faced by coastal communities. To facilitate networking, knowledge-sharing and a forum for establishing a unified national voice, countries with more than five members are encouraged to establish a National Board and designate a Network Coordinator. This model is successfully applied in KIMO Sweden, KIMO Denmark, KIMO Netherlands & Belgium and KIMO UK.



KIMO undertakes projects and activities that increase knowledge, inform policy and demonstrate best practices – either on its own or in cooperation with other key stakeholders. Doing so establishes KIMO as more than a lobbying organisation, but also as a knowledge hub that gathers municipalities and stakeholders with a shared purpose. An added value of membership is thus also access to various information products, communication materials and events as well as project and funding opportunities.

What makes KIMO unique is its bottom-up approach with municipalities steering both KIMO's priorities and organisational development. This is represented in KIMO's governance structure where municipalities feed in directly through their national networks and has a vote in KIMO's supreme governing body, the Assembly of Delegates. Members are also represented per country in KIMO's International Board.

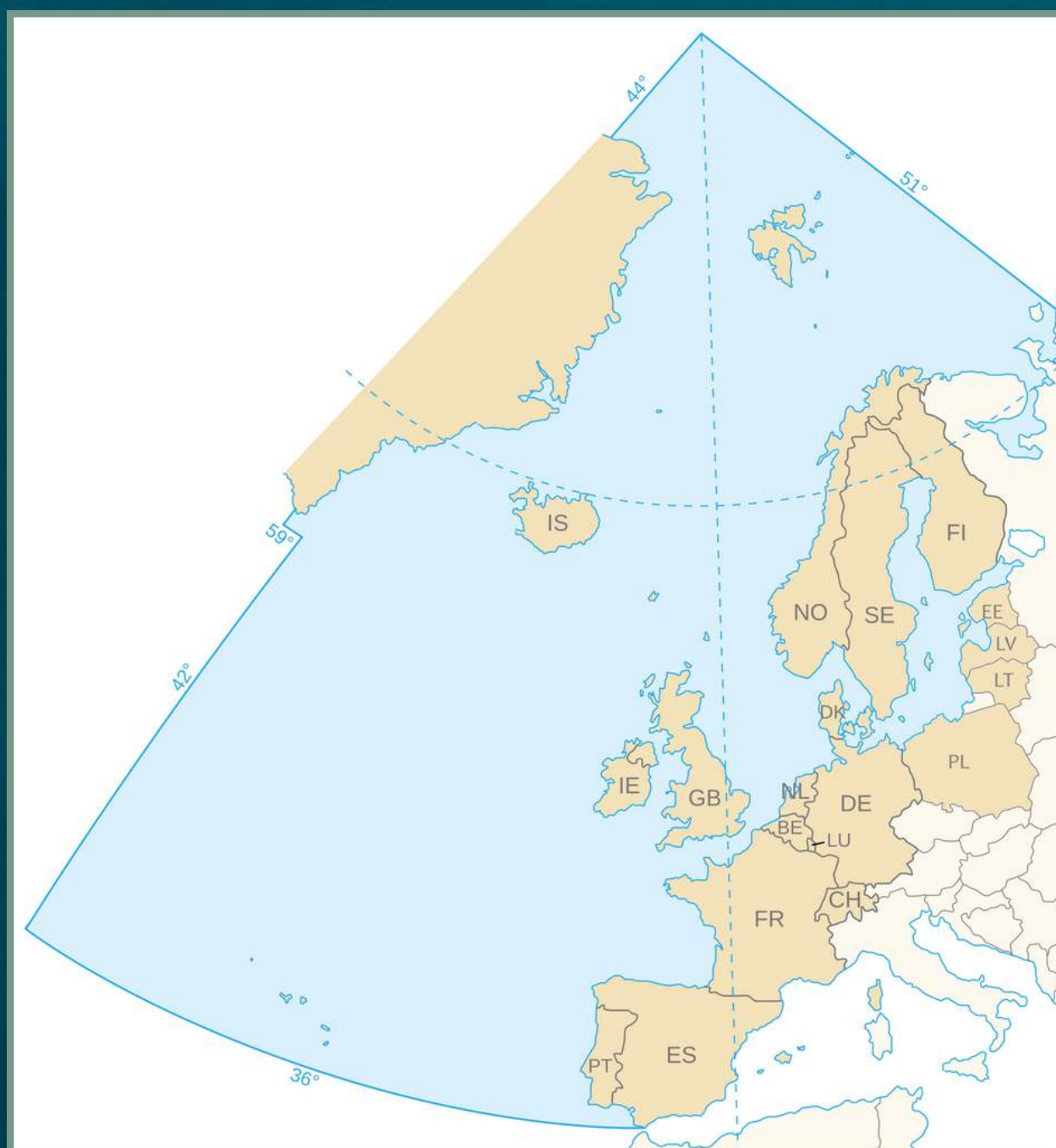


KIMO enters into partnerships with other key stakeholders to ensure synergy, advance our shared priorities, access funding opportunities and share best practices. For instance, we have a close collaboration with the North Sea Commission (NSC) on issues such as PFAS.



Having a geographical focus on the North-East Atlantic, North Sea, Irish Sea and Baltic Sea KIMO welcomes all coastal municipalities facing these waters.

Because of the interconnectedness of waterways, and the common challenges faced, KIMO also welcomes riverine municipalities.



KIMO's Geographical Focus Area

Paving a clear way forward

Since its establishment in 1990 KIMO has advanced a wide range of agendas. The more than 50 KIMO resolutions provide both an overview of the multitude of challenges that we have dealt with and serve as a testament to what we have achieved.

Although we are proud of all that we have achieved many challenges remain, and new ones appear, causing a significant burden for coastal municipalities.

With the ambition to pave a clear way forward and focus efforts to maximize impact from 2026-2030 KIMO will concentrate efforts on three thematic priorities. The identification of these priorities is the result of an inclusive process among KIMO's members, and thus represent challenges that are instrumental for coastal municipalities to resolve. Serving as the basis for KIMO to act and continue to develop as a well-functioning organisation a separate focus is dedicated to ensuring the sustainability of KIMO as an organisation.

Read on to learn about our ambitions and the actions that we will take to achieve them.



KIMO Strategic Priorities 2026-2030



1) Marine Litter

2) Chemical Pollution



3) Maritime Safety and Pollution

4) Organisational Sustainability



PRIORITY 1

MARINE LITTER

Marine litter means all human-made solid items that end up in the coastal or marine environment. Marine litter presents a global crisis to the marine environment and a significant challenge to coastal environments where municipalities are left with burden to remove litter that washes up on shore.

The sources of marine litter are many, but land-based sources are estimated to account for 80% of marine litter out of which 85% is plastic. The remaining 20% of marine litter originates from maritime activities which includes coastal tourism and recreation, fishing, aquaculture and shipping activities. Marine litter can reach coastal and marine environments directly, but most often, it is carried by rivers into the sea.

Entanglement or ingestion of marine litter has severe impacts on marine life and more than 900 different marine species are documented as negatively affected. The persistent nature of plastic means that it can last up to 500 years in the environment with severe negative consequences for marine life and human health via the food chain. This reflects that marine litter covers everything from large-scale Abandoned, Lost or otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG) to invisible nanoplastic particles.



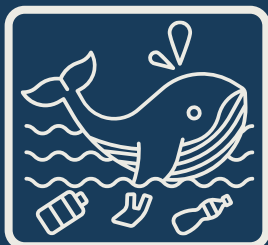
MISSION

Reduce and prevent marine litter by raising awareness about its negative impacts, lobbying for legislative change and implementing projects and activities to ensure that coastal communities have access to solutions that mitigate the threats posed by marine litter.

Preventing and reducing marine litter has been a key focus of KIMO since its inception and through our widespread advocacy efforts, engagement with key regional and international stakeholders as well as harbours and fishermen in the Fishing for Litter scheme we have built significant expertise. In the years to come we will continue to expand our expertise for the benefit of marine and coastal environments. Much remains to be done at both local, national, regional and international levels and with this strategy we lay the path for how KIMO will inform, influence and drive action on:

- Ocean litter
- Riverine litter
- Microplastics

Marine Litter: Actions and Targets



Ocean Litter	Riverine Litter	Microplastics
Action Advocate for the need to prevent and reduce ocean waste, including ALDFG and beach litter, and test and promote best practices and available tools to do so	Action Advocate for the need to prevent and reduce riverine litter, including sewage, and test and promote best practices and available tools to do so	Action Advocate for the need to prevent and reduce microplastics in the environment and promote best practices and available tools to do so
Targets Stakeholders at local, national, regional and international levels influenced to strengthen their efforts to prevent and mitigate ocean litter - Expand participation in the Fishing for Litter scheme - Funding for projects to identify/test solutions to prevent and mitigate ocean litter secured	Targets Stakeholders at local, national, regional and international levels influenced to strengthen their efforts to prevent and mitigate riverine litter - Funding to identify/test solutions to prevent and mitigate riverine litter secured	Targets Stakeholders at local, national, regional and international levels influenced to strengthen their efforts to prevent and mitigate microplastic litter



Fishing For Litter



In 2004 KIMO initiated the Fishing for Litter (FFL) project to tackle the problem of marine litter in partnership with fishers and the fishing industry. The idea is simple but effective. Fishers are provided with big bags so that the plastics, ghost gear and other litter they catch is brought ashore where it is collected and recycled or disposed on land. Doing so prevents the litter from floating around in the sea or from washing up on beaches.

All the fishers participating in the project are volunteers dedicated to contributing to the health of the marine environment. The initiative not only removes litter from the sea, it also raises awareness among fishers of the impact of marine litter and of the important role they play in preventing and mitigating it.

FFL started as a pilot project in the Netherlands but has since expanded to 11 countries across Europe and is recognized as a best practice by the European Commission, HELCOM and OSPAR which encourages Contracting Parties to adopt similar schemes.

In the UK more than 600 vessels and 70 harbors participate and have collected more than 3.000 tonnes of litter, and every year 140 vessels in 13 ports collect approx. 500 tonnes of litter in the Netherlands.

But it does not stop there. In FFL Netherlands the litter is also monitored to better understand the litter and its origin, and this data is brought to the attention of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment on an annual basis. Similarly, in FFL UK they are focusing on recycling of the litter gathered and have developed education packs for primary school children.

FFL is no longer just a project - it is a widespread initiative that continues to welcome new harbors and fishers.



PRIORITY 2

CHEMICAL POLLUTION

Some of the chemicals that end up in the sea as a result of land-based or sea-based human activities are hazardous for the marine, riverine and coastal environment. Such chemicals can disturb marine ecosystems, harm human health and have a negative impact on coastal communities that are most exposed. The types and sources of chemical pollution are many but cover all forms from air pollution to waste disposal and oil spill incidents.

Of particular concern to coastal and riverine municipalities is Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) as they are found everywhere in the marine environment but with limited knowledge about their sources, impacts on the marine ecosystem and coastal communities. Considering that available evidence suggests severe negative impacts, KIMO established a dedicated PFAS working group in 2024 and have issued shared statements with the North Sea Commission urging the European Commission to impose a ban on the entire group of PFAS compounds. A comprehensive ban is needed to protect people and the environment, and we believe that a comprehensive ban can be accomplished in a manner that is feasible for industry.

However, various other sources of chemical



MISSION

Reduce and prevent chemical pollution in the marine environment by lobbying for legislative change, initiating projects and activities that strengthen awareness of and knowledge about the negative impacts of hazardous substances to coastal communities and advising these communities on concrete ways to reduce and mitigate such impacts

pollution remain, and new sources will continue to appear. KIMO therefore has a strategic focus on increasing awareness of and knowledge about the negative impacts on hazardous substances, influencing policymakers to apply the precautionary principle to the use of chemicals where the effect is not sufficiently documented and to support legally binding mechanisms that enforce the “polluter pays” principle.

The implementation of stricter regulation on the discharge of paraffin wax is a success story serving as an excellent example of what we can achieve by pulling together.



Up until 2021 paraffin pollution presented a significant problem for coastal communities as oil tankers would routinely wash paraffin wax out to sea when cleaning their ships. Chunks of yellow paraffin wax would then end up on the shore with deadly impacts for sea birds and a significant burden for coastal municipalities which were left with the responsibility to ensure appropriate clean-up. KIMO made a decade long effort to raise the issue from the local level to the highest levels of decision making. Through lobbying national governments and bodies such as OSPAR and HELCOM, the case was finally supported by the countries cooperating through the regional seas conventions and taken up by the marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO). As a result, the international law of the sea (MARPOL) was amended.

With a particular focus on PFAS, this strategy lays the path for how KIMO will work to inform, influence and drive action on:



PFAS



Other hazardous substances

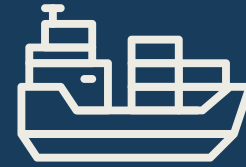


Chemical Pollution: Actions and Targets



PFAS	Other Hazardous Substances
Action Advocate a full ban on the use of all PFAS compounds in a manner that is feasible for industry and examine and convene knowledge on the effects of PFAS on marine and coastal environments	Action Advocate for increased knowledge about the effects of chemical pollution to the marine environment and the implementation of the "polluter pays" principle in internationally binding mechanisms
Targets International policymakers influenced to implement a comprehensive ban of all PFAS compounds - Increased knowledge about the impact of PFAS to marine and coastal environments - Advise members on how to tackle PFAS pollution	Targets Increased knowledge about the presence and impact of hazardous substances in coastal environments - Remaining countries within KIMO's network influenced to ratify the IMO convention on hazardous and noxious substances





MISSION

Increase maritime safety and reduce marine pollution by raising awareness of the burden presented to coastal communities from shipping-related pollution incidents and by lobbying for strengthened emergency response mechanisms, increased liability of shipowners and financial support to coastal communities.

PRIORITY 3

MARITIME SAFETY AND POLLUTION

The North-East Atlantic, including the North Sea and Irish Sea, and the Baltic Sea are all busy shipping areas playing an important role in global trade. However, considering the forces at play at sea shipping comes with an inherent safety risk for staff as well as the marine environment and coastal communities.

Over the years in particular the International Maritime Organization (IMO) has taken many measures to strengthen shipping safety. Nevertheless, every now and then incidents happen as a result of bad weather conditions, incompliance with existing regulations or other factors. But irrespective of the reason, loss of cargo, an oil spill or a stranding has severe consequences for marine ecosystems and often also coastal communities.

Since its inception KIMO has advocated for further strengthening of regulation to protect the marine environment and reduce the burden that coastal communities face when left with the responsibility to clean up from shipping incidents happening far beyond municipal jurisdiction,

An example occurred in January 2019 when a container ship lost 342 containers, and three million kilograms of cargo fell into the Wadden Sea Protected Area.

The containers included everything from toys to plastic pellets which floated onto beaches, especially in the Netherlands and Germany, requiring extensive clean-up efforts with significant costs for coastal municipalities. An examination of the event showed that the ship was allowed to sail under adverse conditions, and that the main cause for the loss of containers was the speed at which the ship was sailing in shallow water where it encountered a combination of hydrodynamic phenomena, including waves hitting the side.

This and several other incidents of lost containers, strandings and oil spills not only highlight the need for strengthened regulation to prevent shipping incidents from happening in the first place, but also the need to strengthen the availability of emergency towing vessels to avoid significant environmental damage. Furthermore, when pollution does happen, we must reduce the burden on coastal municipalities by increasing liability of shipowners and make sure that coastal municipalities are compensated for their efforts to clean-up.





With this strategy we lay the path for how KIMO will inform, influence and drive action on:



Lost containers



Safe shipping routes



Emergency towing vessels



Maritime safety and pollution: Actions and Targets



Lost containers	Safe shipping routes	Emergency Towing Vessels
Action Increase knowledge about the burdens that coastal municipalities face from lost containers and advocate for increased liability of shipowners and financial support to national and local governments to ensure clean-up	Action Advocate for the need to strengthen traffic regulation in extreme weather conditions to increase safety and avoid container losses and other causes for environmental damage	Action Advocate for increased coverage/availability of emergency towing vessels
Targets Policymakers influenced to: Adopt a convention that commits shipping companies to compensate national and local governments Strengthen regulation of, and the ability to respond to, cargo lost at sea Establish a fund that enable national and local governments to respond rapidly and properly to litter from container losses	Targets International policymakers influenced to strengthen regulation on shipping routes during extreme weather	Targets National policymakers within KIMO's network influenced to increase coverage/availability of emergency towing vessels



PRIORITY 4

ORGANISATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

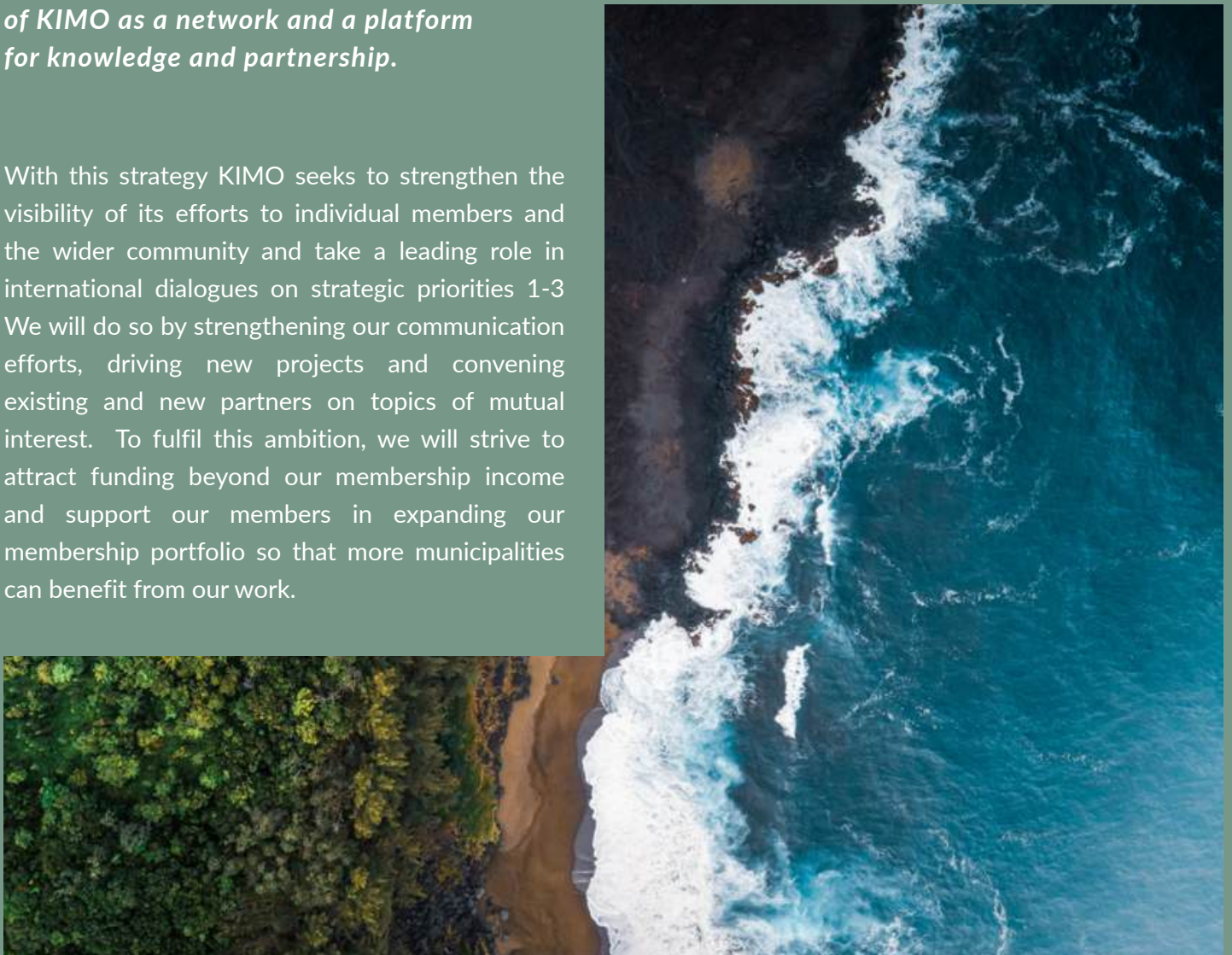
With 35 years of experience, KIMO already has a wealth of knowledge to build on in order to ensure that we deliver on the ambitions set forth in this strategy. While recognizing this, the current strategy has presented an opportunity to reflect on ways to further strengthen the sustainability of KIMO as a network and a platform for knowledge and partnership.

With this strategy KIMO seeks to strengthen the visibility of its efforts to individual members and the wider community and take a leading role in international dialogues on strategic priorities 1-3. We will do so by strengthening our communication efforts, driving new projects and convening existing and new partners on topics of mutual interest. To fulfil this ambition, we will strive to attract funding beyond our membership income and support our members in expanding our membership portfolio so that more municipalities can benefit from our work.



MISSION

Ensure that KIMO's network of coastal municipalities continue to grow and add value to its members and strengthen KIMO's position in the international marine protection landscape



Organisational sustainability: Actions and Targets



Membership	Partnership	Communication
Action Ensure that KIMO operates as a well-functioning and trustworthy organisation and strengthen collaboration with and support to country networks and individual members, including support to attract new members	Action Strengthen collaboration with existing partners, expand the partnership portfolio and secure external funding to initiate projects	Action Strengthen external communication and prioritise actions to generate and gather knowledge
Targets Members recognize the added value of their membership - Membership portfolio expanded	Targets Existing partnerships strengthened - New partnerships established - Increased amount of external funding secured	Targets Communication strategy 2025-2030 implemented



Partnering for Impact

KIMO cannot deliver on the ambitions set forth in this strategy on its own. With community and partnership deeply embedded in KIMO's model we depend on our network of dedicated municipalities and partners to inform, influence, share, catalyse and implement our actions at local, national, regional and international levels.

As part of KIMO's efforts to deliver on the strategic priorities set forth in this strategy, throughout the year KIMO grants its members access to various types of information sources, meetings and webinars that boost knowledge and inspire action. And we engage partners within the KIMO network in the projects that we initiate.

Therefore this strategy will be implemented in close collaboration with our networks and individual members.

Added value of a KIMO membership



- Strengthened influence at national and international levels
- Connecting and sharing knowledge with likeminded municipalities
- Access to various resources and funding opportunities
- Signaling a clear commitment to clean oceans



Join our network



KIMO offers three membership categories. While municipal members are those that KIMO was established to support and protect, close collaboration with Associate Members is essential to ensure synergy with efforts of other likeminded organisations and amplify our impact. Lastly, honouring the efforts and dedication of individuals within KIMO as an organisation is an important way for us to show our appreciation, provide an avenue for continued involvement and keep our “KIMO family” intact.

	Members	Associate Members	Honorary Members
Who?	Coastal or riverine municipalities	Organisations or stakeholders at national, regional or international levels who share KIMO's ambitions and priorities	Individuals who have made a significant contribution to KIMO as an organisation
Assembly of Delegates	Voting rights	May speak but not vote	May speak but not vote
Membership Benefits	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fee	Full fee according to population size	Reduced fee	No fee



© KIMO International, Stigsborg Brygge 105, 9400 Nørresundby, Denmark

All images used with permission under Canva's Content License Agreement

www.kimointernational.org