



Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Tran Hong Ha speaks at the conference. (Credit: VNA)

NDO – Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Tran Hong Ha has confirmed that to date, the sea environment in four central provinces from Ha Tinh to Thua Thien-Hue is safe.

The ministry in co-ordination with the Vietnam Academy of Science and Technology, the provincial People's Committee of Quang Tri, and relevant ministries, agencies and localities, organised a conference to assess the results of marine environment in the four central provinces of Ha Tinh, Quang Binh, Quang Tri and Thua Thien-Hue, which suffered mass fish deaths in April. Along with the ministry, deputy prime ministers, the ministry mobilised a team of experts and scientists from ministries, agencies, organisations, universities and localities to join the monitoring and evaluation to determine the extent of environmental pollution in waters of the four central provinces.

The involved units with the presence of local representatives have implemented their assigned tasks seriously to ensure compliance with requirements of processes and methods stipulated in Vietnam's regulations, and in line with international standards.

The evaluation programme on the quality of seawater, sediments and ecology during April-May in eight provinces from Thanh Hoa to Quang Nam has been carried out with the purpose to inform the community and determine the cause of the incident.



Officer from Quang Binh province takes a seawater sample for testing. (Credit: VNA)

Subsequently, the programme evaluating the extent of environmental pollution has been in progress since June on the waters in four provinces from Ha Tinh to Thua Thien-Hue. The results have been adopted in the appraisal by the board established by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE) with the participation of experts and scientists in the fields of the marine environment, marine biology, hydrology, oceanography, geochemistry and representatives from relevant ministries and agencies, with critical opinions from domestic and foreign experts.

Accordingly, the assessment of sea water quality based on analysing 1,080 samples (in May), 331 samples (in June) and 68 samples (in August), comparing with Vietnam's regulations, shows that contents of iron, phenol and cyanide in the seawater, considered the major cause of environmental incident, are mostly within allowable limits.

The results of analysing 3,156 samples collected from plankton, coral, fish, sea plants, algae and seaweed, along with underwater photos and video clips, show that the ecological system and marine resources in affected areas have shown positive signs of recovery with reductions in the content of pollutants.

Based on the results, Professor, Dr. Mai Trong Nhuan, head of the research team, concluded that typical parameters on the marine environment and marine sediments in the majority of areas are within the limits prescribed by Vietnam's standards, meeting requirements for safe beaches, water sports, aquaculture and aquatic conservation.

In addition, data from the Ministry of Health's surveillance from April 28 to August 8 shows that level of contaminants in seafood has decreased over time.

In the near future, the Ministry of Health will co-operate with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to monitor fishing in safe waters announced by the MoNRE.



German Professor Schocder speaks at the conference. (Credit: VNA)

The MoNRE will also continue to closely monitor waste discharged by Formosa Ha Tinh as well as other industrial projects, production, business and service establishments in coastal areas, build a hi-tech database on supervising and warnings on sea environment pollution while mobilising public involvement in the effort.

A large number of dead fish along the coast were first discovered in Ky Anh town, Ha Tinh province on April 6, and then spread to Quang Binh, Quang Tri and Thua Thien-Hue provinces.

It is estimated that some 15 tonnes of natural fish and 2 tonnes of farmed fish died in Ha Tinh province. Meanwhile in Thua Thien-Hue, some 30 tonnes of natural fish died and were washed up on beaches.

In late June, Formosa Ha Tinh accepted responsibility for the mass fish deaths. The pollution damaged about 400 ha of coral and affected over 260,000 people who earn their living by working in sea-related activities.

The company pledged to provide compensation of over VND11.5 trillion (US\$500 million), which will be used to support local fishermen in changing their jobs and restoring the polluted maritime environment. It also vowed to deal with shortcomings and limitations in waste and wastewater treatment.

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