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NOTE

From: Presidency
To: Delegations

Subject: Declaration of the European Ministers responsible for the Integrated
Maritime Policy on Blue Growth

Delegations will find herewith the Declaration of the European Ministers responsible for the Integrated Maritime Policy on Blue Growth (Valletta Declaration), as agreed by the Friends of the Presidency Group on Integrated Maritime Policy.

**Declaration of the European Ministers responsible for the Integrated Maritime Policy
on Blue Growth**

Valletta Declaration

We, Ministers responsible for the Integrated Maritime Policy of the European Union Member States, under the chairmanship of Emanuel Mallia, Minister for Competitiveness and Digital, Maritime and Services Economy, and in the presence of Karmenu Vella, Member of the European Commission responsible for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, on the occasion of the Informal Ministerial Meeting in Valletta Malta, on 20 April 2017, have agreed to the following:

1. SUPPORT the blue economy concept as a marine-and maritime based economy which is well-managed, sustainable and aims at reconciling ocean-related sustainable economic growth with improved livelihoods and social equity for current and future generations and the strengthening of transparent, reliable and more secure food systems, based on the conservation of marine ecosystems and biodiversity and on the sustainable use of resources. RECOMMEND further work within the Blue Growth Strategy to make the value of healthy and productive oceans for the blue economy more visible.
2. ACKNOWLEDGE that progress has been made to promote sustainable Blue Growth and employment opportunities since the adoption of the EU Blue Growth Strategy in 2012, in identifying measures and actions in sectors with high potential for sustainable Blue Growth and job creation and contributing to regional development especially in the EU coastal areas, outermost regions, and islands; REAFFIRM the momentum attained in order to achieve objectives outlined in the Limassol Declaration on a Marine and Maritime Agenda for growth and jobs¹ as a substantial component of the Europe 2020 Strategy. ACKNOWLEDGE the role and contributions made by all marine and maritime actors and stakeholders, including industry, scientists and civil society, across the EU, in achieving such objectives, and encourage their further work towards reducing their footprint across the globe.

¹ Declaration of the European Ministers responsible for the Integrated Maritime Policy and the European Commission on a Marine and Maritime Agenda for growth and jobs adopted on 7 October 2012.

3. RECALL the essential role of oceans for life on earth, sustainable development, employment and innovation; STRESS the increasing pressures facing oceans which threaten marine ecosystems resilience and their contribution to climate change mitigation and adaptation. REAFFIRM that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out and which is of strategic importance as the basis for national, regional and global action and cooperation in the marine and maritime sector. WELCOME the Joint Communication on International Ocean Governance by the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European Commission and the Council Conclusions on 'International ocean governance: an agenda for the future of our oceans', adopted on 3 April 2017, to ensure that oceans are safe, secure, conserved and sustainably used and managed.
4. RECOGNISE that Blue Growth has allowed notable improvements around European sea and sub-sea basins through a mix of innovative industry sector strategies providing a focus on enabling actions, notably research, data, skills, ecosystem-based maritime spatial planning, cross sectorial security initiatives and financing to underpin the conditions for innovation and development in the blue economy. EMPHASIZE the need to continue efforts to improve sustainable investments and jobs, maintaining a safe and secure maritime space, a healthy marine environment and a better governance of the sea.
5. WELCOME the continuous role played by national and regional governments, local authorities and stakeholders within existing sea and sub-sea basins and macro-regional strategies², as well as initiatives and progress in other sea and sub-sea basins³, notably, among others, the ongoing work on the Western Mediterranean Sea Basin Initiative, which could be foreseen as an initiative to pave the way for a wider sea basin strategy in the Mediterranean, taking into account the UfM Declaration on Blue Economy⁴.

² Such as in the Atlantic, the Baltic Sea and the Adriatic and Ionian Seas

³ Like the Mediterranean, Black and North Seas

⁴ Declaration of the Union for the Mediterranean on Blue Economy adopted on 17 November 2015

6. SUPPORT initiatives to equip the blue economy workforce with relevant skills and qualifications including, where necessary, closing the skills gap in the long term through strengthened cooperation between industry and education. CALL upon the need to exploit the full potential of the relevant skills available which drive knowledge, innovation and competitiveness and provide the basis for high productivity and sustained competitiveness and growth. RECALL that higher level and broader sets of skills and qualifications are increasingly required across the blue economy. PROMOTE cooperation and exchange of best practices to improve the quality of education and URGE the social partners to actively participate in identifying and developing common initiatives to make qualifications more comparable and to promote the positive image of the marine and maritime sectors.
7. REAFFIRM the need to bring education and industry closer in ensuring relevant training and job opportunities, in promoting labour mobility and transferability of skills in the blue economy. SUPPORT actions to enhance marine and maritime attractiveness for maritime workers, and a social level playing field by promoting and enforcing international standards, the relevant international conventions and the relevant agreements between social partners. STRESS the need to continue promoting the participation of women in the various sectors of Blue Growth by fostering the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation.
8. SUPPORT innovative initiatives in maintaining the safety, security and the environmental protection of our seas and oceans and recall the importance of healthy seas for sustainable Blue Growth. RECOMMEND that further work focuses on support to new technologies and sectors that have not yet used their cross-over potential by contributing to the maritime economy with know-how and expertise. EMPHASISE that the future direction of the Blue Growth Strategy should acknowledge the potential and importance of all relevant sectors of the blue economy crucial for value and jobs like ocean energy, aquaculture, maritime, coastal and nautical tourism, shipping, port-related activities, dredging, coastal and marine construction, marine technology, blue biotechnology, fisheries and food processing among others.

9. ENCOURAGE initiatives that promote the circular economy within the blue economy based on clean technologies and best available practices. PROMOTE resource efficiency and renewable energies, and REAFFIRM the value of marine ecosystem services, as a driver for Blue Growth and for sustainable development.
10. SUPPORT further efforts to enhance marine and maritime research to ensure sustainable development and to work towards more effective and applied marine knowledge through relevant platforms such as EMODnet and more coherent European ocean observation.
11. CALL on the EU and its Member States to continue to support the sustainable development of the European marine and maritime economy in the context of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2014-2020 and without prejudice to any future discussions. ENCOURAGE more efficient combination and synergies between funding instruments, better targeting of funds, facilitate transnational funding and investments and use of suitable investment platforms, for instance in research and innovation. RECALL the importance of research and innovation to meet the objectives of the Blue Growth Strategy and look towards the BLUEMED Initiative as one example.
12. CALL on the EU and its Member States to identify potential gaps and challenges, mainly those posed by climate change and insularity, to ensure that the outermost, peripheral, coastal and island regions are offered adequate growth opportunities and benefit from all the relevant funding streams without prejudice to any future discussions. Innovative actions in those regions should respond to those challenges and inefficiencies by facilitating access to markets and services such as e-health, water adequacy, energy efficiency, promotion of circular economy, as well as research to increase the knowledge base on relevant strengths and weaknesses, including on coastal erosion, desertification and ocean acidification.
13. STRENGTHEN trade and business cooperation to maintain and develop further the EU's position in global Blue Growth value chains and continue providing jobs, supported in particular by cooperation with science, governments and civil society, and the completion of the EU internal market for blue economy sectors such as short sea shipping.

14. REAFFIRM that the EU and its Member States continue to take a leading role in developing sustainable and innovative solutions for the blue economy to maximise business and leverage more industry investment. WELCOME the historic and ambitious outcome reached in December 2015 in Paris, where the world adopted the first truly global and legally-binding agreement with the aim to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, in the context of sustainable development, including by holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C. SUPPORT capacity building, including initiatives, research and investment for Blue Growth that enables to promote the decarbonisation of the blue economy sectors and their benefits.
15. ENCOURAGE initiatives at both national and regional levels so that those who are eligible to access funding (particularly SMEs) take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the European funding instruments.
16. CALL upon the need to make best use of suitable investment vehicles to close the gap between research development and the market uptake, notably for European high potential but risky ventures.
17. ENCOURAGE the development of Public Private Partnerships and similar platforms with the aim to allocate capital from EIB/EFSD to address financing needs for Blue Growth and invest into the creation of viable business activities that focus on the sustainability agenda.
18. SUPPORT the investment environment by making administrative processes more efficient, for example through cross-border planning or the streamlining of permitting procedures for large projects.
19. PROMOTE the importance of digitalisation considering the enormous potential for optimizing technical and operational aspects of the marine and maritime sector, including administrative simplification. CALL FOR the need to make better use of available data and information by promoting information sharing and its benefits, such as avoiding duplication of efforts and reducing administrative burdens, and making use of existing instruments and tools for data collection and sharing amongst EU Member States.

20. RECOGNISING that nautical tourism has a great potential for jobs and growth, including for remote regions with otherwise limited economic activities, RECALL that nautical tourism faces a number of challenges which affect its further development, such as lack of innovation and diversification, increased worldwide competition, volatility of demand and seasonality, mismatch of skills and qualifications and growing environmental pressures. PROMOTE the mobility of workers within the nautical tourism sector.
21. ENCOURAGE the inclusion of marine and maritime activities in the national and regional smart specialisation strategies and their development, taking account of relevant sea-basin, sub-sea basin initiatives and macro-regional strategies as appropriate.
22. RECALL the added value of regional cooperation in all European sea and sub-sea basins as a mean to promote dialogue and cooperation between the coastal States concerned, including with non-EU countries in line with EU development policy and the setting up of common priorities for the sustainable development of the blue economy.
23. ENCOURAGE the implementation of the EU Maritime Security Strategy and key actions such as the promotion of maritime situational awareness and the integration of maritime surveillance, enhanced co-operation between civil and military authorities, and co-operation on coastguard functions, in line with the established legal framework. SUPPORT the consistent use and further development of all relevant existing EU and international instruments and operational solutions to facilitate cross-sectoral cooperation, such as the Common Information Sharing Environment (CISE) and other integrated maritime systems and services to enhance EU and Member States information sharing.

24. CONSIDER that the EU and its Member States should step up efforts to protect the oceans and seas from adverse consequences and impacts of climate change, and ensure that, within the marine waters of the Member States of the EU, their cumulative impacts, including the pressure from human activities is kept within levels compatible with the achievement of good environmental status by 2020 as outlined in the Marine Strategy⁵, inter alia through Maritime Spatial Planning⁶. CALL for further integrating Blue Growth into the discussions on the implementation of SDG 14 taking account of the interdependency of the three economic, social and environmental dimensions of the Agenda 2030. In this context, UNDERLINE the importance of protecting, restoring and maintaining the resilience of marine ecosystems as this can ensure that they are better placed to overcome the challenges posed by climate change while themselves contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation.
25. CALL upon the Council to endorse this declaration as a substantial component of the Unions priorities for Jobs, Growth and Investment and the forthcoming Presidencies, in close cooperation with other EU Institutions, to take appropriate initiatives and set milestones, taking this declaration as a basis, to further develop and implement the 2012 EU Blue Growth Strategy.
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⁵ Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy (Marine Strategy Framework Directive)

⁶ Directive 2014/89/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning