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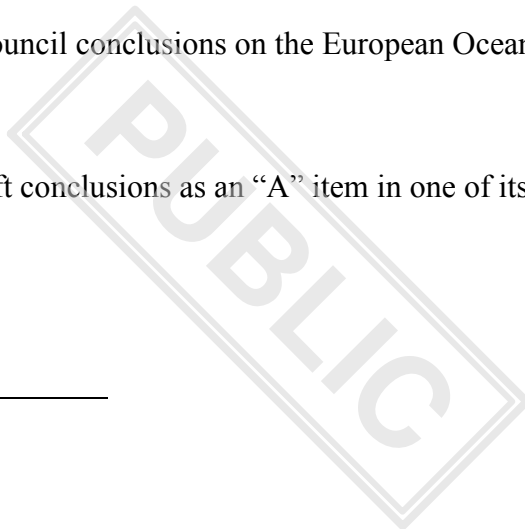
From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Permanent Representatives Committee/Council

Subject: Council conclusions on the European Ocean Pact
- Approval

1. On 5 June 2025, the Commission presented a communication on the “European Ocean Pact” (9876/25). After a first exchange of views on 11 July 2025 in the Working Party on Maritime Issues – Integrated Maritime Policy, the Presidency prepared a set of draft Council conclusions on the European Ocean Pact of 17 July 2025.
2. The draft conclusions were examined by the Working Party on Maritime Issues – Integrated Maritime Policy on 24 July, 19 September, 16 October and 14 November 2025.
3. An agreement in principle has been reached on the draft text at working party level.

4. The Permanent Representatives Committee is therefore invited to:

- confirm agreement on the text of the draft Council conclusions on the European Ocean Pact as set out in the Annex to this note; and
- recommend that the Council approve the draft conclusions as an “A” item in one of its forthcoming meetings.



Draft Council conclusions on the European Ocean Pact

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

RECALLING:

- the Council conclusions on Oceans and Seas of 19 November 2019
- the Council conclusions on Biodiversity – the need for urgent action of 23 October 2020
- the Council conclusions on a sustainable blue economy: health, knowledge, prosperity, social equity of 26 May 2021
- the Council conclusions on the EU’s new aquaculture strategic guidelines of 18 July 2022
- the Council conclusions on International Ocean Governance for safe, secure, clean, healthy and sustainably managed oceans and seas of 13 December 2022
- the Council conclusions on the Revised EU Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS) and its Action Plan of 24 October 2023
- the European Council conclusions of 20 March 2025
- the Council conclusions on COP30 of 21 October 2025
- the Council conclusions on European Water Resilience Strategy of 21 October 2025

1. WELCOMES the Communication from the Commission on the European Ocean Pact of 5 June 2025, and presentation thereof by the Commission at the Third UN Ocean Conference striving to promote the EU and its Member States' leading role in ocean governance, as an overarching strategic initiative to strengthen the EU's ocean governance and ensure the long-term health, sustainability and resilience of marine waters under the sovereignty and jurisdiction of Member States, which derives from international law, in particular United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS); and STRESSES the importance of a coherent and integrated EU framework for ocean policies that delivers on environmental, social and economic goals, does not include unnecessary complex regulation that stands in the way for innovations and possibilities to adapt to changing conditions, coherence and effective coordination between existing policies and legal frameworks, and fosters cooperation between Member States and regions; UNDERLINES that the Ocean Pact should act as a strategic and guiding framework, whose implementation should respect Member States' competences and national contexts;

I. A STRENGTHENED GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

2. WELCOMES the Commission's intention to propose an "Ocean Act", and REAFFIRMS the central role of Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) as the key strategic instrument to integrate and coordinate diverse maritime activities with environmental protection and conservation, applying an ecosystem-based approach, and serving as a tool to integrate and operationalise the objectives of the Ocean Pact; CALLS for reinforced cross-border cooperation and regional seas cooperation, in particular through Regional Sea Conventions and sea-basin strategies, strengthening coordination and cross-sectoral cooperation at national level with specific attention to the Baltic Sea, the North Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, the Black Sea, the Atlantic and the Arctic, recognising the importance of cooperation also in other sea basins where appropriate; STRESSES that Member States retain responsibility and competence for spatial planning within their marine waters, and that subsidiarity should be fully respected; INVITES the Commission and Member States to make best use of existing EU financial instruments to support regional cooperation on MSP implementation; NOTES that the Commission intends to propose a revision of the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive (MSPD) and of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD); UNDERLINES that such revisions should aim at enhancing coherence and simplification, in particular by streamlining the MSFD cycles to facilitate coordinated implementation by Member States, while fully respecting subsidiarity and Member States' competences;

3. WELCOMES the Commission's intention to strengthen the governance framework through the Ocean Pact, and UNDERLINES the importance of improved integration, coordination and better alignment of the MSPD, the MSFD, the Nature Restoration Regulation, the Habitats Directive¹ and Birds Directive², and the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), as well as other relevant EU marine and maritime policies, in line with international law, in particular UNCLOS; UNDERLINES that such integration should also take into account land-based pressures, and the importance of applying a source-to-sea approach in line with the provisions of the Water Framework Directive; EMPHASISES that it should further consider relevant coastal resilience aspects, as well as coherence with other international instruments, and also reflect the specific situation of the EU's Outermost Regions (ORs); STRESSES the need to reduce administrative burdens and complexity for Member States, citizens and companies, and to avoid duplication of reporting requirements;
4. TAKES note of the elements related to the European Ocean Pact in the European Commission's proposal for the next Multiannual Financial Framework; and STRESSES the importance of ensuring adequate support for the implementation of the Ocean Pact, through the effective use of existing EU financial instruments and by mobilizing private investment;

¹ 92/43/EEC

² 2009/147/EC

II. INTEGRATED APPROACH FOR OCEAN HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

5. REMAINS deeply alarmed by the global emergency facing the ocean; EMPHASISES that protecting and restoring ocean health, which is the foundation of any use of its resources, should remain one of the core future efforts under the Ocean Pact; UNDERLINES that the marine environment faces escalating threats from pollution, overexploitation of resources, impacts from human activities in our seas, and climate change; thus jeopardising livelihoods, cultural heritage and the economic well-being of coastal communities, biodiversity and the central role of marine ecosystems in achieving the 1.5°C temperature goal;
6. UNDERLINES the essential relevance of a holistic approach to ocean governance to protect, conserve, restore and sustainably use and manage the ocean and its ecosystems, seas and marine resources and to act decisively and urgently, scaling up action in order to accelerate implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), including target 2 and 3 and the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 with regard to effectively protecting at least 30 % of our ocean, including EU Member States' target to have at least one third of protected areas – representing 10 % of Member States' sea area – to be strictly protected by 2030, all targets of SDG 14 and other interlinked ocean-related targets of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as the full and effective implementation of the Agreement under UNCLOS on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement), globally and by the European Union and its Member States; EMPHASISES that a coherent network of ecologically representative, well-connected and effectively managed Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), as well as with other Area Based Management Tools and Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures, play a crucial role in protecting and restoring biodiversity, ecosystems and food webs, supporting coastal communities and fishers by helping rebuild and conserve marine life, in line with relevant EU instruments;

7. **ACKNOWLEDGES** that loss of marine biodiversity is driven by human activities and its consequences including climate change; **UNDERLINES** that there is a strong link between ocean governance and the objectives of the CFP; and **EMPHASISES** the importance of the evaluation and revision of the CFP regulation, taking into account its environmental, social and economic impacts; **STRESSES** the urgency of reversing marine biodiversity loss and achieving Good Environmental Status of the marine environment for all Member States' marine waters through a science-based, ecosystem-based and cumulative-impact-informed approach; and **WELCOMES** the planned revision of the MSFD with a view to clarifying its objectives including improved integration of climate change; and **URGES** particular attention to accelerating progress towards the full achievement of its environmental objectives and to ensure simplification of implementation and reduction of administrative burdens – particularly in reporting and data management – without compromising the Directive's objective and the protection and restoration of the marine environment and the sustainable management of marine resources; and **ACKNOWLEDGES** the need for integration between MSFD and EU environmental, agricultural and fisheries frameworks; and also **URGES** for improved coherence between the MSFD and the MSPD while applying an ecosystem based approach;

8. STRESSES that an ocean governance framework should be grounded in the following key principles: the precautionary principle; a source-to-sea approach that addresses pollution at every stage of the water cycle, from inland sources to the open ocean; a science-based approach to policy-making that integrates the best available knowledge and monitoring data; an ecosystem-based approach that recognises healthy marine ecosystems as a prerequisite and basis for the sustainable use of the sea and the complex interdependencies within marine environments and prioritises holistic, integrated management; and the polluter pays principle;

III. BOOSTING THE SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY TOWARDS GREATER COMPETITIVENESS

9. HIGHLIGHTS that the Ocean Pact should encourage and foster a sustainable blue economy with a focus on digitalisation and regenerative innovation in line with EU climate neutrality and nature restoration objectives through decarbonisation and scaling up research, innovation and investment;

10. RECALLING the importance of Europe's maritime industry, shipbuilding, maritime transport and maritime routes, for the EU's competitiveness, strategic autonomy, and security in a more competitive world; and ACKNOWLEDGING the expertise of European shipping, shipyards and technology providers; CALLS for a comprehensive industrial maritime strategy to enhance the competitiveness of European maritime industries, focusing on decarbonisation, digitalisation, innovation, smart specialisation, investment in research, decent jobs, skills development, improved access to risk capital for maritime European start-ups and SMEs, and partnerships to lead in the transition to sustainable practices and greater competitiveness; EMPHASISES the importance of enhancing the attractiveness of marine and maritime professions without prejudice to international rules as applicable; and REMAINS committed to promote global measures for shipping at the International Maritime Organization and the International Labour Organization to ensure a global level playing field;
11. RECOGNISING the strategic role of European ports in global trade and military mobility; HIGHLIGHTING their potential as centres for decarbonisation, circularity and innovation; CALLS for a new EU ports strategy to convert ports into hubs of economic, social, and environmental sustainability, promoting infrastructure for civil and military purposes, and strengthening energy and industrial clusters that support the green transition and enhance overall competitiveness;

12. RECOGNISING the crucial role of fisheries and aquaculture for the EU's food supply and security and the livelihood of involved communities; HIGHLIGHTS the need for improvements of the competitiveness and resilience of European fisheries and aquaculture producers, including supporting the modernisation and decarbonisation of the fishing fleet, which should come hand in hand with a transformation towards more sustainable fisheries and aquaculture and a simpler legal framework;

IV. PROTECTING AND EMPOWERING COASTAL COMMUNITIES AND ISLANDS

13. UNDERLINES that resilient coastal communities and a healthy ocean are inherently connected; EMPHASISES that the sociocultural and economic viability of coastal and island communities and the sustainability of maritime activities depend on healthy, well-functioning ocean and seas, and on a sustainable management of human activities as well as support for adaptation to the impact of climate change, such as sea level rise, coastal erosion and increased extreme weather events; UNDERLINES the need to prevent or minimise pressures on our ocean and seas, including climate change and all types of pollution and support diversified economic sectors depending on the sustainable blue economy, which should be upmost priorities for the European Ocean Pact; WELCOMES in this regard increased support to the adaptation efforts of coastal and island communities as part of the Communication on Islands and Coastal Communities announced by the Commission; STRESSES that coordination between regional, national and local levels should be enhanced and included in decision making processes, and stresses the importance of applying an ecosystem-based approach; and UNDERLINES that sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, and maritime transport play an essential part in the global food supply, and play together with tourism, offshore energy among other sectors an important role in coastal communities' economy;

14. HIGHLIGHTS the importance of the upcoming European strategy on sustainable tourism that should support coastal and island destinations in improving their coordination, shared governance and monitoring frameworks as well as their ability to adapt to new challenges ensuring that tourism development aligns with broader environmental sustainability goals;
15. RECALLS the importance of ensuring specific attention and appropriate support to the EU's ORs and associated overseas countries and territories, which are of genuine strategic and economic importance for the EU, to break down their insularity and meet their social, economic, ecological, energy and food needs;

V. THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF OCEAN RESEARCH, KNOWLEDGE, LITERACY AND SKILLS FOR BLUE INNOVATION

16. WELCOMES the Ocean Observation Initiative; STRESSES that robust ocean knowledge, standardized marine data, and enhanced data collection and monitoring are essential for effective ocean governance, safety of navigation, adaptation to climate change and sustainable use of marine resources; CALLS for strengthened data management frameworks, enhanced cross-sectorial and cross-border cooperation in ocean research, including on pressures on the ocean and monitoring thereof, knowledge sharing and in training, including upskilling and reskilling for marine related workforces; and EMPHASISES the importance of acting on ocean knowledge, capitalising on existing tools on ocean data governance, including at the level of Regional Sea Conventions and strengthening the link between science and policy, including through the development of the European Digital Twin of the Ocean;

17. RECALLS the importance of supporting research, innovation and open data in order to better understand, protect and restore the ocean and seas, their state, dynamics and ecosystems, thereby being able to act transformatively and carry out blue innovation; STRESSES the importance of strengthening ocean literacy as well as citizen and youth engagement in policymaking;

VI. MARITIME SECURITY AND DEFENCE AS AN UNDERLYING CONDITION

18. RECALLS the EU Maritime Security Strategy as the general enabling framework through which the EU and its Member States take action to safeguard their interests at sea, and to protect their citizens, values and economy through EU level or national policies, while promoting international rules and full compliance with international law, in particular UNCLOS;
19. RECALLS that the EU and its Member States are strengthening their role as a global maritime security provider in line with the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and other instruments contributing to the safety and security of ships and seafarers and maintaining global supply chains in regions such as the Red Sea, the Gulf of Guinea, the Horn of Africa and the Black Sea;

20. **UNDERLINES** the risks to the EU and its Member States, and others dependent on the world's seas and ocean posed by sub-standard vessels and the "shadow fleet", including threats to the marine environment, maritime safety and security, critical infrastructure and international maritime law and standards; **HIGHLIGHTS** that the shadow fleet undermines the longstanding international regulation of shipping which has been introduced to preserve the transport by seas and waterways all around the globe, including in the Arctic, the Atlantic Ocean and the Black, North, Baltic and Mediterranean Seas; **CALLS** on the Member States, the Commission and the High Representative to facilitate targeted and coordinated responses to the threats posed by the shadow fleet, within the scope of their respective responsibilities;
21. **STRESSES** the importance of continued EU bolstering of its naval operations under the CSDP focusing on maritime situational awareness, including through the information sharing systems developed by the European Maritime Safety Agency; **STRESSES** further the urgent need to enhance the resilience of the EU and its Member States' critical maritime infrastructure, both at the surface and underwater, including submarine cables and pipelines, as well as to increase efforts to tackle cybersecurity issues and other hybrid threats in the maritime domain at EU, regional and national level in this regard; **UNDERLINES** that unexploded ordnance (UXO), including chemical munitions, pose a risk to marine ecosystems and infrastructure and **ENCOURAGES** international cooperation to address these challenges effectively; **WELCOMES** the Commission's plan to develop a coordinated UXO removal strategy;

22. WELCOMES the Joint Communication on the Action Plan on Cable Security and CALLS on the Member States to take urgent and effective measures, and to cooperate with each other, the Commission, the High Representative and other relevant actors, such as NATO, in full respect of the agreed guiding principles of transparency, reciprocity and inclusiveness as well as the decision-making autonomy of the EU and NATO, and without prejudice to the specific character of the security and defence policy of certain Member States and while taking into account the security and defence interests of all Member States; HIGHLIGHTS the role of relevant national authorities performing coast guard functions and other relevant tasks crucial for contributing to maritime security; UNDERLINES the importance of enhancing cross-sectoral information sharing in the maritime domain at EU, regional and national level;

VII. INTERNATIONAL OCEAN GOVERNANCE AND REINFORCED OCEAN DIPLOMACY

23. REAFFIRMS that, as expressed in Resolution UN A/RES/79/144 of 12 December 2024, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the ocean and seas must be carried out; REITERATES that international engagement through strong rule-based multilateralism is crucial to achieving meaningful results in improving international ocean governance;

24. RECALLS Resolution UN A/RES/61/295 of 13 September 2007 adopting the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; ACKNOWLEDGES the important role that Indigenous Peoples have as holders of indigenous knowledge of marine ecosystems; REMAINS committed when taking action for conservation and sustainable use, to support and promote the participation and cooperation with as well as involvement of Indigenous Peoples and local communities;
25. REMAINS committed to international engagement in global efforts to protect the ocean and seas, liaise with international partners and Regional Fisheries Management Organisations as well as Regional Sea Conventions and their Action Plans and Strategies and Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPA) to address global challenges such as marine pollution, depletion of fish stocks and loss of marine biodiversity, including efficient controls and inspections, sharing best practices, harmonising standards, ensuring a balanced management of fish stocks, and promoting synergies for the achievement of SDG 14 and the ocean-related targets of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and international agreements on ocean conservation; RECOGNISES the unique and fragile Arctic marine environment and remains committed to supporting the Arctic Council in its work of the protection of the marine environment;

26. REAFFIRMS the EU zero-tolerance position to illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing; SUPPORTS in this regard IUU dialogues with non-EU countries and the EU carding system; CALLS for strengthened international and multilateral cooperation and ensuring transparency in fishing vessel ownership structures; CALLS for a new strategic and ambitious approach to the EU's external action concerning global fisheries governance and the sustainable management of the ocean and its marine resources, including with a new generation of SFPA;
27. WELCOMES the forthcoming entry into force of the BBNJ Agreement; UNDERLINES its commitment to encourage and support further ratification and full and effective implementation of the BBNJ Agreement;
28. WELCOMES the success and outcomes of the Third UN Ocean Conference, as well as the UN Resolution A/RES/79/314 of 30 June 2025 endorsing the Declaration "Our ocean, our future: united for urgent action" adopted by the Conference, which calls for ambitious action to protect, conserve, sustainably use and restore the ocean and its ecosystems; CALLS for its full implementation and UNDERLINES the list of voluntary commitments submitted by the EU and its Member States in this respect; SUPPORTS the "Nice wake up call for an ambitious plastics treaty" launched at the Third UN Ocean Conference and CALLS for continued negotiations and outreach to develop and adopt an international legally binding agreement to end plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, through a full-life-cycle approach;

29. SUPPORTS the important work done by EU Members States in the framework of the International Seabed Authority (ISA) to establish a sound regulatory regime on potential future deep sea-mining that is based on the precautionary principle as well as on the highest environmental standards and sufficient scientific knowledge, in order to ensure that such activity would not cause harmful effects to the marine environment in the Area, as defined by UNCLOS;
30. WELCOMES the intentions set out in the European Ocean Pact to strengthen international ocean governance and the means and objectives of the EU's strategic ocean diplomacy.
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