



Council of the
European Union

Brussels, 17 April 2024
(OR. en)

8905/24

**POLMAR 11
POLGEN 75
CLIMA 168
COMAR 11
ENER 185
ENV 422
MAR 69
MARE 8
PECHE 146
RELEX 518
TRANS 203
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SUSTDEV 52**

OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: List of commitments presented by the European Union at the Our Ocean Conference (Greece, 15-17 April 2024)

Delegations will find in the Annex the list of commitments presented by the European Union at the Our Ocean Conference (OOC) (Greece, 15-17 April 2024) as approved by the Council (Foreign Affairs) on 19 February 2024.

List of commitments to be presented by the European Union at the 9th edition of the “Our Ocean Conference”
(Greece, 15-17 April 2024)

Sustainable Fisheries

1. The European Union commits EUR 1.9 billion under the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), to be used in the Member States’ Recovery and Resilience Plans (RRP), to support fourteen investments and one reform, committed by Cyprus, Greece, Poland, Portugal and Spain (2020-2026) in sustainable fisheries and aquaculture. This includes investments covering the construction of a collaborative infrastructure for marine aquaculture in Cyprus, innovative equipment solutions, research, transfer of know-how and training of human resources to modernising and diversifying aquaculture production in Greece, the construction and modernisation of local storage and distribution centres and support to SMEs and fishermen in agri-food processing to enhance the competitiveness and resilience of the agri-food and fisheries sector in Poland, projects aimed at innovation, process modernisation, carbon footprint reduction and the circular economy of fish industry and organisation in Portugal, and measures to boost the sustainability, research, innovation and digitalisation of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors and transformation and marketing of both activities in Spain.

2. The European Union will finance actions to support Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs), Regional Fisheries Bodies (RFBs) and relevant International Agreements in the Atlantic, Pacific, Indian, Arctic and Antarctic Oceans and the Mediterranean and Black Seas, through voluntary contributions under the European Maritime, Fisheries, and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) amounting to EUR 23.5 million during the period 2024-2025. The actions will include support to scientific research and data collection to underpin science-based management decisions in those organisations, support to improved monitoring of fishing activities and compliance with rules, the fight against IUU fishing, the undertaking of performance reviews and supporting the effective participation of developing Coastal States in the proceedings of these organisations.

3. The European Union commits EUR 1.5 million to support the Sixth Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA) Global Capacity Development Programme Support Project. It aims to strengthen the implementation of the FAO PSMA to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing and complementary instruments and tools to fight IUU fishing. Specifically, the Project will contribute to: i) a strengthened functioning of the PSMA and the running of the PSMA Global Information Exchange System (GIES); ii) increased capacities of developing States to implement the PSMA; iii) a strengthened implementation of complementary instruments and tools such as the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Transshipment (VG-TS), the FAO Global Capacity Development Portal (GCDDP) on IUU fishing, and the FAO Technical Guidelines for the estimation of IUU fishing.

4. The European Union commits EUR 20 million to support the global development of resilient and sustainable aquatic food product value chains to increase the availability and accessibility of nutritious and safe aquatic foods to vulnerable populations (2025-2030). To this end, support will be provided to improving global and local expertise on the inclusion of aquatic foods and fish by-products in the prevention and response to food and nutrition crises, and by improving awareness on the nutrition potential of new aquatic food products and the development of market acceptance.
5. Under the EU Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters, the European Union commits EUR 4 million through the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2024 to reduce the environmental impacts of fisheries on marine species and habitats through innovative solutions and enhanced knowledge to reduce and eliminate incidental catches of sensitive species and juvenile fish, reduce discard and improve effective mitigation measures.

Climate Change

6. The European Union announces a contribution of EUR 70 million in 2024 to strengthen marine environmental monitoring and forecasting, through its satellite-monitoring programme (Copernicus) and WEkEO service that allows the international research community to access through a one-stop-shop all products describing the past, present and future of the earth system together with online tools for environmental science on cloud computing facilities. In 2024, special emphasis will be put on continue integration of new satellite missions (e.g. Meteosat Third Generation, VIIRS-JPPS-2) and new in-situ platforms with delivery of improved products for the coastal zone.

7. The European Union will issue through its Copernicus marine service the annual Ocean State Report in September 2024 to assure continued best available and state-of-the-art ocean knowledge transmission as derived from Copernicus data, driven by science-based capacities. The objective is to provide a synopsis of the state of the ocean and marine environment over the past decades, and up to the target year. The Report will focus on the global ocean, and the European regional seas.
8. The European Union announces a contribution of EUR 4.99 million strengthening Copernicus marine services with the development of the FOCCUS Research and Development projects under the Horizon Europe programme and complementing the commitment on NECCTON project announced in Panama. FOCCUS (Forecasting and Observing the open-to-Coastal ocean for Copernicus UserS) will specifically address and enhance the coastal extension of Copernicus Marine to better serve coastal users and Member States, while NECCTON (New Copernicus Capability for Trophic Ocean Network) will inter link new models with new biological data in the Copernicus marine systems, thus building novel capacities to simulate high trophic levels of the food web, benthic habitats, pollutants, and deliver projections of climate change impacts on marine ecosystems.
9. The European Union announces a contribution of EUR 6.7 million, for the realisation of the Ocean Colour System Vicarious Calibration Infrastructure. This system represents the first concrete step to build a fully European calibration buoy, required for the calibration and validation of currently operational Sentinel-3 and Sentinel-2 missions and for future Copernicus expansion missions such as Chime. Ocean Colour instruments have become an essential source of data at global and regional scales for continuous monitoring, forecasting and alerting on the ocean biogeochemistry and the state of the ecosystems.

10. The European Union commits EUR 17 million under Horizon Europe (Work Programme 2023-2024) to support four research projects for advancing ocean models for seasonal to decadal and local to regional climate predictions, advancing essential biogeochemical ocean variables and strengthening the participation and empowerment of Arctic coastal, local, and indigenous communities in environmental decision-making.
11. The European Union commits EUR 5 million to improve cross-sectoral and cross-regional coordination and strategic steering of African Regional Centres of Excellence (RCoEs) to address Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) ocean related challenges and at increasing STI capacities of RCoEs in thematic areas related to these challenges (2024-2027).

Marine Protected Areas

12. The European Union commits EUR 1.36 million to support the work of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea related to the promotion of a better understanding of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement), including the strengthening of capacities of developing States towards becoming parties to the Agreement and implementing it.
13. The European Union announces that it invests further EUR 14 million in 2023-2024 to ensure open access to harmonise marine data and observation through EMODnet, the European Marine Observation and Data network. The new centralised EMODnet service, which is one of the pillars on the development of the EU Digital Twin Ocean, provides open access to pan-European data, in support of marine policy, research, innovation and the Blue Economy.

14. The European Union commits EUR 2.02 million for the project Supporting the Southern Mediterranean Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention in implementing the ecosystem approach to achieve Good Environmental Status (EcAp MED PLUS), from 2024 until 2027.
15. The European Union announces a EUR 11 million programme to strengthen ocean governance in the Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem (BCLME) (2024-2029). The objective of this programme is to (i) enhance the national and regional governance and integrated management of the BCLME's marine biodiversity and natural resources supporting sustainable livelihoods, and (ii) leverage financial resources for the sustainable management of key marine biodiversity areas.
16. Capitalising on ongoing EU support for mangrove protection and management in Suriname, the European Union commits EUR 3.06 million to support climate change adaptation and coastal protection by protecting and restoring the mangrove ecosystem in Suriname (2024-2028).
17. The European Union commits EUR 6.5 million to contribute to climate resilient socioeconomic development in the Maldives (2024-2028). The specific objectives are to (i) improve marine resource management and biodiversity protection in the Maldives' protected areas, (ii) improve waste management at island and atoll level including segregation, collection, and reduction of single-use plastics, and (iii) strengthen institutional coordination on green economic policies.

18. The European Union commits EUR 4 million to contribute to the preservation of marine ecosystems and the sustainable management of the French Southern and Antarctic Lands' natural resources ("MARIO action") (2025-2029). MARIO consists of (i) improving knowledge and monitoring of marine ecosystems, (ii) better characterising certain pressures on these ecosystems, and (iii) developing appropriate management measures.
19. Under the EU Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters, the European Union commits EUR 11.5 million through the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2024 to further develop the European Blue Parks. This includes supporting marine protected areas, mapping offshore habitats, providing scientific advice for establishing new MPAs as well assessing pressures in offshore areas and establishing necessary conservation measures. The funding brings the total EU funding for the European Blue Parks in 2021-24 to EUR 55 million.

Marine Pollution

20. The European Union commits EUR 980 million under the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), to be used in the Member States' Recovery and Resilience Plans (RRP), to support four investments and two reforms, committed by Cyprus, Finland, Greece, Italy and Spain (2020-2026) to fight against marine pollution. This includes investments covering the purchase of three detergent vessels in Cyprus to ensure a prompt and effective response to incidents from oil and general marine pollution, the treatment of arable land in Finland to reduce the discharge of nutrients from agriculture to the Baltic Sea, large-scale actions for the restoration and protection of the seabed and the marine habitats in Italy and the conservation of terrestrial and marine biodiversity in Spain. This also includes reforms to create a national spatial strategy in Greece for the marine environment and maritime spatial plans, and to update the biodiversity and natural heritage legislation in Spain to meet the objectives set out in the EU's Biodiversity Strategy for 2030.

21. The European Union commits to reduce pollution from land-based sources in the Mediterranean, in particular from stormwater management, agriculture management and aquaculture management, by fully implementing the three new regional plans adopted by COP23 of the Barcelona Convention (Slovenia, December 2023) addressing these sources of pollution, by the timelines set out in the respective plans.
22. The European Union commits EUR 1.1 million for the Marine Litter MED PLUS project with the Barcelona Convention (2024-2027), including pilot actions to prevent and reduce marine litter and contributing to sustainable cruise tourism in the Mediterranean Sea and to the implementation of the future global treaty against plastic pollution.
23. The European Union commits EUR 1.84 million for the implementation of UN Environment Assembly resolution 5/14 to end plastic pollution (2023-2026). This project contributes to the reduction of land-based sources of pollution in freshwater and the ocean, including marine litter by supporting the establishment and further work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee and associated consultative and intersessional activities towards the adoption of an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution by a diplomatic conference of plenipotentiaries.
24. The European Union also reiterates its commitment to work with relevant riparian States to create both sulphur and nitrogen oxides ECAs in all European Seas, including in the North East Atlantic, which is expected to be requested at the International Maritime Organisation in 2024, and in the framework of the Barcelona Convention, work is ongoing on the feasibility of introducing a Mediterranean Nox ECA in the Mediterranean as a whole which will be assessed and possibly agreed by the Contracting Parties in the timeframe 2024-2025.

25. Under the EU Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters, the European Union commits EUR 3.8 million of technical assistance to support up to 50 communities of ports, islands, fisheries communities, fishing vessels, and aquaculture producers to develop transition agendas for the better protection and restoration of the ocean.
26. Under the EU Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters, the European Union commits EUR 50 million through the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2024 for community-led actions for the restoration of the ocean and waters in the Atlantic-Arctic, Baltic and North Sea, Danube River, and Mediterranean Sea.
27. Under the EU Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters, the European Union commits EUR 4 million through the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2024 to support a coalition of waterfront cities, regions and islands across the EU and Associated countries, aiming to (i) protect and restore marine and freshwater ecosystems and biodiversity, (ii) prevent and eliminate pollution of the ocean, seas and waters, (iii) make the sustainable blue economy climate-neutral and circular, and (iv) strengthen resilience against extreme climate events, sea-level rise and floods.
28. Under the EU Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters, the European Union commits EUR 3 million through the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2024 to co-design and visualise futures of the EU in 2030 and 2050. The action will support the co-creation of narratives, and innovative visualisation tools such as maps, related to different scenarios of what the EU Member States' ocean, seas and water spaces could look like if innovative solutions to restore our ocean and waters were applied.

29. Under the EU Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters, the European Union commits EUR 14 million through the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2024 to further develop the European Digital Twin Ocean core public infrastructure, to scale-up the services, integrating and developing sector and domain specific applications, and ensuring interoperability with similar initiatives at European and global scale.
30. Under the EU Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters, the European Union commits EUR 2 million through the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2024 to build a marine citizen science data network of the future to valorise data coming from the ocean and increase societal engagement.
31. The European Union and France announce a contribution of EUR 98.26 million to depollute the Hann Bay in Dakar (Senegal) to sustainably improve the ecological state of the bay and the living conditions of the populations by financing collection and treatment as well as to restore the marine ecosystem of the bay (2025-2029). This is the second phase of a project that started in 2018.

Sustainable Blue Economy

32. The European Union commits EUR 130 million under the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), to be used in the Member States' Recovery and Resilience Plans (RRP), to support two investments, committed by Italy and Portugal (2020-2026) in sustainable blue economy. This includes investments in Research and Development projects in Italy in the area of climate neutral and productive blue economy and in the creation of a nationwide network of the blue economy innovation ecosystem in Portugal by financing blue economy clusters and education programmes in this policy area.

33. Under the European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (Work Programme 2024-2025), the European Union and Sweden commit EUR 7.5 million for the Blue Mediterranean Partnership to support the sustainable development of a blue economy in the Mediterranean region in line with the European Green Deal, the EU's Agenda for the Mediterranean, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) ministerial declaration on sustainable blue economy and the UfM blue economy Agenda.
34. Under the European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (Work Programme 2024-2025), the European Union announces a commitment of EUR 2 million to mitigate the threat to human health and safety, the environment and to the development of a sustainable blue economy posed by the presence of submerged munitions in the Baltic Sea.
35. The European Union announces a EUR 59 million programme to strengthen ocean governance in West Africa ("West Africa Sustainable Ocean Programme – WASOP") (2024-2030). This includes support to sustainable fisheries and the fight against IUU fishing, the development of a sustainable blue economy and the protection and conservation of marine biodiversity.
36. The European Union announces a contribution of EUR 10 million to support the development of a sustainable blue economy in Mauritania (2025-2031). It will focus on strengthening the sustainable, inclusive and climate-smart development of the blue economy through the implementation of national policies, particularly in the field of fisheries. The action aims to protect the biodiversity of Mauritanian waters by supporting sustainable management of fish stocks and preventing the destruction of the marine environment.

37. The European Union announces a contribution of EUR 35 million to support the development of a sustainable blue economy in Mozambique (2025-2030). It will focus on (i) promoting the increased investments in the sustainable blue economy, (ii) increasing sustainable fisheries and aquaculture value chains, and (iii) restoring and protecting marine and coastal ecosystems.
38. The European Union commits EUR 30 million to support the development of a sustainable blue economy in Angola (2025-2030). It will focus on (i) preserving and managing sustainably marine biological resources and ecosystems, (ii) improving inclusiveness and economic, social, and environmental sustainability of aquatic foods value chains, and (iii) improving marketability of aquatic food products on local, regional and international markets.
39. The European Union commits EUR 8 million to the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership (SBEP)'s first co-funded call 'The way forward: a thriving sustainable blue economy for a brighter future', combined with an EU contribution for management costs (Horizon Europe Work Programme budget 2022). This action aims to support nineteen projects, covering the SBEP priority areas of blue food and feed, Marine Spatial Planning, Digital Twin of the Ocean and Multiuse of offshore platforms. The EU's commitment is part of a co-funding with 21 different countries (Member States, Associated Countries and third countries) for a total of EUR 27 million for the project partners.

Maritime Security

40. The European Union announces a EUR 45 million programme to enhance maritime security and safety in the Western Indian Ocean and Gulf of Guinea regions in Africa (2025-2030). The Action will address the causes of insecurity at sea and contribute to the overall coordination among actors involved in the fight against crimes committed at sea. It will focus on (i) increasing the capacities and capabilities of national maritime law enforcement agencies and judicial bodies, (ii) strengthening the capacities of the maritime security architectures in the two regions (the Yaoundé Architecture in the GoG and the Regional Maritime Security Architecture in the WIO), and (iii) developing coordination and cooperation at intra-national and inter-regional level.
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