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***“The Green Paper on EU Maritime Policy”***

Ladies and gentlemen,

let me start by thanking you for inviting me to address you today. I am pleased to be here today presenting the European maritime policy and participating in this conference.

*“Joined by the Sea”*, is the title of the conference and it fits perfectly as main topic of the European Maritime Policy that is the subject of my presentation today.

With your collaboration I'm going to go through three questions trying to find out the possible answers to them: Why does Europe need a new Maritime Policy? How this new policy is being constructed? And what can the steps forward be?

**Why does Europe need a new Maritime Policy?**

Seas and oceans are important for Europe's economy, citizens, environment, history... They were important in the past and they will become more important in the future. Let me start this remarks recalling you some figures about the importance of the seas and oceans in our lives.

5% of Europe's GDP is generated by marine based industries and services. And that's without including raw materials, such as oil, gas or fish. 22 out of 27 member states are coastal and Europe's maritime regions account for over 40% of its GDP. Around 50% of the Europeans live close to the coast and more than 5 millions work in maritime related jobs.

The EU is a world leader in shipping - it has 40% of the world fleet - and in shipbuilding technology. 90% of the EU's external trade and over 40% of its internal trade is transported through the 1200 commercial ports along the almost 70.000 kms of European coastline. This coastline represents two thirds of the external borders of Europe.

Europe is at the forefront of developments in engineering shipping and equipment, offshore energy, including renewables, ports, aquaculture, submarine telecommunications, marine biotechnology and coastal tourism.

Coastal and marine tourism constitute Europe's biggest sea related industry. The direct turnover of marine tourism in Europe is estimated at € 72 billion in 2004. 63% European holiday makers choose the sea as their holiday destination.

Fisheries remains a major EU industry, and European developments in aquaculture promise a new domain of technological excellence and economic growth.

Our many links with the oceans and seas are an invaluable resource for Europe's continuing prosperity and quality of life - at a time when the EU has made a priority

out of boosting jobs and growth. But new pressures are posing serious threats. Our increasing technological capacity for exploiting the oceans and seas is accompanied by a steady reduction in marine biodiversity. Land-based and ship-borne pollution is inflicting damage on the marine environment. Europe's expertise is constantly under pressure from competition from abroad...

Just one of the most obvious challenges is to find ways to reduce marine and coastal pollution without stifling Europe's coastal development and its vital maritime traffic. Europe also has to find the correct balance of intervention to sustain its fishing sector while conserving fish stocks. It has to develop coastal and island tourism without destroying the underlying assets tourism is built on.

It has to ensure shipping can boost the security of supply for Europe's energy, without seeing an increase in oilspills or despoiling the coastline with poorly-planned terminals for liquid natural gas. It has to explore the potential for marine-related renewable energy sources without creating unjustified disruption to Europe's shipping or recreation. It has to find ways of maintaining a skilled maritime workforce and a high quality fleet in Europe, while ensuring it remains globally competitive.

And then there is climate change - a threat that could change life in much of Europe as well as around the world. The way we treat our seas and oceans has acquired a new significance in this context, since they are central both to the risks of rising sea levels and to the solutions, as the planet's most important regulator of climate. The oceans and seas are directly relevant to so many key European policies that an integrated approach will help European integration across the board. Only an integrated maritime policy can deliver this type of response.

This is why, last June, the European Commission launched the Green Paper on an EU Maritime Policy. It is an invitation to all Europeans to contribute to this new vision.

This isn't the first time the EU has taken action in the maritime sector. The Common Fisheries Policy, our Maritime Transport policy, and – more recently – the Thematic Strategy on the Protection and Conservation of the Marine Environment, bear witness to 30 years of activity.

But each activity has been viewed through the prism of a separate and compartmentalised policy. What we are aiming to build now is a policy that takes simultaneous account of the huge variety of interests with a maritime dimension.

### **How this new policy is being constructed?**

It is a major challenge for Europe, but a challenge that can be met. This will require a new degree of co-operation, of pooling of interests in the common good, of sharing responsibility. A new joined-up approach is needed, ensuring that maximum benefit is derived from the potential for mutual reinforcement between distinct policies.

The emerging EU maritime policy is a perfect example of how the European project is moving forward. The oceans and seas bound Europe, but they also bind it together. They can become important factors in a deeper form of European integration. Maritime policy could come to represent a sea change for Europe by bringing a truly integrated perspective to European policy formation.

There are no overarching references to the oceans in the EU Treaty, as it was only later that the importance of such an approach became clear. But although the EU

Treaty has only fragmentary references to the oceans and seas, it does allow for holistic policy making. Making the most of the Treaties as they stand has always been a challenge for European politics, and now we are doing this in a new way. Achieving the optimal balance will in some areas be easier by working together. However, the Green Paper clearly declares the need for subsidiarity within a future European maritime policy, because there are certain things that are best handled at a Member State level.

The way the Commission has moved towards developing this policy is itself a reflection of the Commission's commitment to new approaches. The European Commission announced in March 2005 that it would prepare a Green Paper, and it announced a one-year consultation period after its publication in June 2006. Such an unprecedented long period has made maritime policy the subject of a broad debate across Europe.

Almost one year after the adoption of the Commission's Green Paper on an EU Maritime Policy, we have every reason to conclude that launching a discussion on this subject was not only a good idea, but also a very necessary one.

With still one more month for consultation, we have already received more than 180 written contributions. Most of them are very encouraging submissions from stakeholders such as businesses, professional associations and trade unions, NGOs, regions and the marine scientific community. Over 200 events have been organised and others are still in the pipeline. Indeed, the desire of European stakeholders to participate in the debate is so strong that we sense that these contributions will continue well beyond June.

The work of other European institutions on this matter is also progressing apace. The Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee both adopted positive opinions on the Green Paper in February and April respectively. And the European Parliament has launched its own process to review the Green Paper, involving five different Committees. We expect their joint opinion in July.

Furthermore, the consultation has opened up the debate on EU maritime affairs to an unprecedented extent. It has prompted different interest groups to truly reflect on their activities and the way these are linked to others. This includes a number of Member States who are recognising the value of this initiative as it has encouraged them to articulate and coordinate their domestic positions on the different areas relating to the sea - from tourism to fisheries, shipbuilding to maritime financial services, environmental protection to shipping, marine science to aquaculture, and maritime heritage to immigration.

This process has to be maintained. In the coming months we want to keep open communication channels with the 'maritime public', and to ensure that there are appropriate mechanisms for interfaces to develop between stakeholders on the one hand, and regional, national and European authorities on the other.

### **What can the steps forward be?**

The consultation has already shed some interesting light on the way stakeholders want us to tackle the challenges facing us. Let me, therefore, tell you about some of these points that have been raised by stakeholders.

It is clear, for example, that they are determined to strengthen Europe's position as a successful and competitive actor in an increasingly integrated world economy. We know that the European Union aims to be a model of sustainable development, delivering a high quality of life for its citizens.

Stakeholders also recognise that if Europe's maritime sectors are to prosper, the environmental and social components of sustainable development must be secured. This can only be done by ensuring that our level of knowledge about the oceans is improved through research, science and technology. This is critical if we are to meet our goals of enhancing economic growth and the competitiveness of our maritime activities without prejudicing the preservation of their main resource-base, the marine environment itself.

An integrated approach could help ease the consequences of climate change, like rising sea levels and increased virulence and frequency of storms, by supporting continued investment and economic activity in coastal regions.

A co-ordinated approach, including increased use of structural funds, will ensure that global warming does not become an impediment to growth and job creation in coastal regions. Funds from the 7th Framework Research Programme to cross-cutting research into the impacts of global warming will make our knowledge deeper. It will provide more accurate forecast and comprehension on how acidification of the sea waters, rise of sea level and sea temperature will affect maritime ecosystems and activities.

Stakeholders have also called for more co-ordinated and long-term policy-making. Because of the high concentration of people in many European coastal areas the reconciliation of economic development with the coastal environment and with quality of life is especially urgent. Maritime activities are central to Europe's economy providing millions of jobs and generating billions of euros in goods and services annually. They can however also strain our natural resources. Without long-term planning, unchecked growth and development in coastal areas can permanently harm the coast and the marine environment that give rise to them in the first place.

Stakeholders have also indicated their preference to have decisions that will affect them taken at the most appropriate level of government. They have also signalled their preference for a stable and secure regulatory framework that is not subject to constant changes and upheaval.

Maritime safety is also an issue high on the agenda of stakeholders. It is not only about making rules; it is also about respecting and enforcing them. Wages and the quality of working conditions on our ships and vessels is another point of interest for the main part of the stakeholders. Thankfully, within the parameters of the 2006 ILO Consolidated Maritime Labour Convention, we now have an international mechanism for avoiding a race to the bottom.

Concern has been expressed at the need to attract, and retain, the young and skilled, in the maritime sector. Achieving quality in this sector, and thus improving its recruitment prospects, is about improvements in education and training. A new certificate of maritime excellence for European Maritime Academies will certainly help, equipping European graduates with additional skills, increasing job mobility and the prospect of a life-long career; and providing the industry with an enhanced ability to attract and retain highly qualified people.

Strengthened cooperation at international level is essential in these areas of safety, social conditions and environmental protection.

The strong interconnections between energy and maritime policies are also emerging clearly. We are all aware of the energy generation of offshore oil and gas and of the huge potential for carbon-free offshore renewables, including wind farms and wave energy. These are all opportunities that the Union should exploit as we seek to guarantee secure and stable supplies of energy for Europe.

Responsibility for policies and actions related to the seas are spread among international organisations, EU authorities, national governments and local authorities. If the aims of an integrated Maritime Policy are to be achieved, these different levels of government need to develop mechanisms to take each other into account, and to ensure that they all know how their actions fit into the wider picture.

Allow me to share some of our thoughts with you on three tools that need to be further developed, and for which European-level action would be both appropriate and necessary.

First, it has become clear that as economic activity on our coasts and seas intensifies, so does the potential for conflict of interests and uses between the various stakeholders.

There is no easy solution for this, but there appears to be wide consensus amongst those consulted that arbitration, offered by suitable spatial planning tools, could be the way forward. This means that we will have to think about the most suitable way for spatial planning not only to be made available as a tool, but that the necessary steps are taken for it to be applied as widely as possible in the interest of all concerned. In this context, sea mapping in its three dimensions, that is: the surface, the water column and the sea bed, will be an important task to undertake when the data are collated and the necessary preparatory elements are available.

The idea here is not to centralise: decision-making in this area should remain the prerogative of Member States. However at a European level one can ensure a generalised commitment to the objective and the development of common principles and guidelines.

A second tool that we need to develop urgently is the vast data set that we must base our work upon. The Thematic Marine Strategy will require environmental indicators which will need to be monitored and updated, just as spatial planning regimes also require sound socio-economic data.

A European Marine Observation and Data Network would bring together available data on the oceans from multiple sources. This could be compiled into a comprehensive data base that is made available to all who need it. It would be a considerable undertaking that would need to be developed over a period of time in line with a clear and coherent plan.

Again, we think there is a role for Europe to play in this.

The third tool that is already being developed concerns a number of practical initiatives in the context of maritime surveillance. For a majority of stakeholders, surveillance and monitoring are crucial activities that help guarantee safety, security and appropriate action in the event of maritime accidents, illegal migration,

terrorism, drug trafficking, and organised crime. Needless to say, the lack of physical boundaries on the seas makes it imperative that any systems in this area are compatible and interoperable. Action at a European level could facilitate this enormously.

Those are some of the guidelines that the stakeholders so far have pointed as suitable for the future maritime policy. Therefore, we are grateful to all stakeholders who have come forward, or who will be coming forward, for bringing issues that matter to them to our attention.

And this is precisely what we expect from you and your contribution that will be formally presented tomorrow at the end of these conferences. We are looking forward for it and we encourage you to take part in the discussions that will be held this afternoon in order to provide more proposals to be put in place in the future maritime policy for the EU.

Once the period of consultation comes to an end, we will carefully evaluate the contributions received. The formal feedback on the results of the consultation will be provided in two Communications from the Commission which are scheduled for adoption on 10 October 2007. These will be addressed to both the European Council and Parliament. One Communication will summarise the results of the consultation process and the other will outline our vision for a future maritime policy. It will also lay out the way forward in the form of an action plan, consisting of proposals that cut across different areas, helping us to fulfil one of our prime objectives: that of achieving joined-up policy-making. To this effect, a number of projects which are deliverable in the short term will also be identified.

I, on behalf of the Maritime Policy Task Force, invite you to contribute and help to the construction of this new European policy.

Thank you very much.