



Healthy Oceans – Productive Ecosystems: A European conference for the marine environment 3-4 March 2014 – Charlemagne Building

CONFERENCE REPORT

INTRODUCTION OF THE CONFERENCE

The HOPE conference (Healthy Oceans – Productive Ecosystems) brought together over 450 participants, including representatives from Member States, the Regional Sea Conventions, academia, industry, NGOs and other stakeholders working together to enhance the quality of the European marine environment. In particular, the conference provided them with the opportunity to discuss progress at the halfway point between the adoption of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) in 2008 and its stated goal of achieving “Good Environmental Status” (GES) in Europe’s seas and oceans¹ by 2020. In particular, it was also a forum to take stock of the Commission’s recent report on the first round of implementation of the Marine Directive.² It also provided participants to share ideas in short “[speed-pitches](#)”, demonstrating to other participants their contribution to the protection of the marine environment and to the sustainable use of European seas and ocean. At the close of the conference, a “[Declaration of HOPE](#)” was issued outlining the main findings and priorities underlined during the two-day conference.

OPENING SESSION

José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, addressed the participants including 15 EU environment ministers with a [short welcoming video](#) message in which he stressed the need to act collectively if we are to deliver on our international and EU-level commitments to protect the marine environment.

European Commissioner for Environment, **Janez Potočnik**, then [opened the conference](#), highlighting a number of marine pressures from overfishing and seafloor damage to pollution from hazardous substances, nutrients and marine litter, and calling for greater regional cooperation in order to improve the health of Europe’s waters. The Commissioner also proposed a draft “Declaration of HOPE” to participants, which urges action to deliver Good Environmental Status by 2020.

Klaus Töpfer, Executive Director of the Institute of Advanced Sustainability Studies, and former Executive Director of UNEP, delivered the [keynote address](#) in which he outlined Europe’s wider responsibility for the protection of the world’s global commons. In particular, Mr Töpfer highlighted the important role played by the Regional Sea Conventions (RSCs) in marine conservation, emphasising the growing body of good practices at regional and national level on which further action must be based. Actions should be guided by well-defined sustainability targets, backed up by solid, quantifiable indicators. Finally, he pointed out that the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) was adopted just as Europe was entering a dramatic economic crisis in 2008. The Blue Growth agenda is developed against this backdrop, and as Europe works to grow its Blue economy, it must do so with Good Environmental Status (GES) as a precondition.

Yannis Maniatis, the Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Change of Greece and President of the Environment Council of the EU then opened a “quick-fire” round of ministerial interventions, highlighting the need for integrated and coherent action if we are to ensure a productive marine environment. In their interventions, **Environment Ministers** from a number of EU Member States shared their views, stressing a number of key points:

- The Blue economy is potentially worth up to €600 billion and could employ up to 7 million Europeans by 2020. However, sustainable Blue Growth can only be built on a marine environment which is healthy and properly protected;
- The Regional Sea Conventions are a strong pillar for marine conservation and for better coordination among Member States as well as with third countries;
- It is important to integrate implementation of the MSFD with other EU policy areas including the Common Fisheries Policy, the Common Agricultural Policy, freshwater and biodiversity policy in order to ensure coherent and cost-effective marine protection.

THE “WAKE-UP CALL” AND THE STATE OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT

As illustrated in the EEA publication ‘[Marine Messages](#)’ of February 2014, current use of Europe’s seas is not sustainable. It requires urgent action and protection of the seas and ocean should be at the top of EU agenda.

- Only 10% of the assessments of marine habitats and 3% of the assessments of marine species protected under Natura 2000 are considered favourable.

¹ The term “Europe’s seas and oceans” is used to encompass the four regional sea basins which EU Member States share with their neighbours.

² COM(2014) 97: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/marine/eu-coast-and-marine-policy/implementation/reports_en.htm

- 39% of fish stocks in the North East Atlantic Ocean and 88% in the Mediterranean and Black Seas are overfished, threatening their future reproductive capacity.
- 40% of the EU population lives within 50km from the sea. Almost 40% of the EU GDP is generated in maritime regions.

Speakers at the “Wake-up call” and the “State of the Marine Environment” panels focused on the significant pressures which Europe’s seas and oceans face and the challenge of awakening citizens to this reality. With only six years until the target date of achieving Good Environmental Status under the MSFD, there is an urgency for Member States to act decisively and to work together if the threats to the marine environment are to be overcome. Action cannot wait until the beginning of the next MSFD implementation cycle; we must start immediately, as Member States set out their programmes of measures to achieve GES by 2020.

Nevertheless, the Marine Directive is broader than simply the 2020 deadline. A vision beyond 2020 is necessary, with a better understanding of ecosystem resilience, natural capital and system limits, to establish an integrated management approach that also engages and involves citizens. The MSFD needs to send a powerful message to the general public, which can be spread through the European marine constituency, including policy-makers, the private sector and civil society, the research and education worlds.

Economic actors should also be closely involved in this process to ensure better integration of the objectives of Blue Growth and the objectives of the MSFD. The new framework on Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) is an important step in this direction. Industry, research and policy should work together to make effective use of the data and information collected and to close knowledge gaps.

Two initiatives were presented that enable citizens to understand the state of the marine environment and to act to improve it: the [Ocean Health Index](#) is a method for assessing the condition of marine ecosystems according to 10 human goals, representing the key ecological, social, and economic benefits that a healthy ocean provides. The EEA’s [Marine LitterWatch](#) is a mobile application aimed at facilitating data collection on marine litter.

Speakers of the Wake-up Call panel: [Hans Bruyninckx](#) of the European Environment Agency, [Paul Rose](#) of the Royal Geographical Society, [Paul Holthus](#) of the World Oceans Council and [Ann Dom](#) of Seas At Risk.

Speakers of the State of the Environment Panel: [Laurence Mee](#), Director, Scottish Association of Marine Science, [Steven Katona](#), Managing Director, Ocean Health Index, and [Tony Long](#), Director (European Policy Office), World Wildlife Fund.

PARALLEL SESSIONS – THE HUMAN PRESSURES

Participants then divided into parallel sessions for focussed discussions on the variety of human pressures on the marine environment, and drawing on the Commission’s recent MSFD implementation report. Following this, moderators provided [feedback](#), summarising the findings and recommendations highlighted in each parallel session.

In the **Biodiversity, fisheries & aquaculture** session, the challenges faced by Europe’s marine biodiversity were discussed, in particular with regard to the devastating state of European fish stocks. The recently reformed Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) should be implemented in a way that harnesses synergies with other policies (e.g. MSFD, Natura 2000, Biodiversity Strategy), and involving the civil society in the implementation and enforcement of these policies.

- ✓ The benefits of *better fisheries management* were highlighted, as demonstrated by improving trends for certain (Atlantic) stocks, following the introduction of long-term management plans.
- ✓ *Data collection and scientific advice* should be better integrated across disciplines and sectors to satisfy end-user needs and to better communicate to wider audiences.
- ✓ At present, only 5.9% of the EU marine waters are protected, mostly in coastal waters. Strong actions are needed to reach the target of the Convention on Biological Diversity to, by 2020, conserve at least 10% of coastal and marine areas through *Marine Protected Areas* and other effective area-based conservation measures³.

Speakers: [Ernesto Penas Lado](#), Director (Policy Development & Coordination), DG MARE, [Anne Christine Brusendorff](#), General Secretary, International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), [Uta Bellion](#), Director (European Marine Programme), PEW Charitable Trust, [Ulrike Rodust](#), MEP (DE, S&D). **Moderator:** [Pia Bucella](#), Director (Natural Capital), DG Environment.

The **Disturbance** session focused on the impacts of marine litter and underwater noise.

Key facts presented by speakers include:

- Up to 80% of marine litter comes from inland sources;
- As many as 250 marine species are under threat from marine litter;

³ Target 11 of the Convention on Biological Diversity aims that “By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water areas and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscape and seascape.

- The impacts of underwater noise can range from temporary displacement, to permanent physical damage or even death through e.g. beaching. Unlike most other disturbances, underwater noise ceases as soon as the source stops.

The discussions highlighted that our understanding of the two issues should still improve. However, there is no need for further scientific evidence to acknowledge both the severity of impacts of disturbance on the marine environment and the urgent need for political action.

- ✓ With regards to marine litter, *waste management on land* is a crucial area for action, while smarter design to facilitate the reuse and recycling of material, otherwise being discarded, will help the move towards a circular economy.
- ✓ Concerning underwater noise, management could be inspired by existing models and include thresholds set at international levels with *potential for quotas/emissions trading scheme* on the model of the EU ETS. Noise emissions from shipping and underwater energy exploration in particular must be addressed as well as the prevention of new sources of noise pollution.

Speakers: [Richard Thompson](#), Plymouth University, [Antidia Citores](#), Surfrider Foundation, [Mark Tasker](#), Joint Nature Conservation Committee (UK), and [Kriton Arsenis](#), MEP (EL, S&D). **Moderator:** [Maria Betti](#), Director (Institute for Environment and Sustainability), Joint Research Centre.

The **Eutrophication/Pollutants** session presented the current state of knowledge and the main threats from coastal eutrophication – a complex problem (as a result of multiple pressures, and linked with climate change). As in the session on marine litter and noise, it was acknowledged that there is now enough knowledge to take action.

- ✓ Despite the drive from the EU institutions on ambitious *water and marine policy* for many years, a comparable level of ambition across EU sea basins is still needed, bridging the gap between politics, administrations, scientists, industry, NGOs and the public.
- ✓ The *assessment systems* of the regional seas should be more coherent and links to the Water Framework Directive, possibly with regional specificities, should be strengthened.
- ✓ An *integrated nutrient management* (joined-up Programmes of Measures under the MSFD, WFD, Nitrates, Urban Wastewater and other Directives) should be developed, looking also at other policies, e.g. “Blueing” of the CAP.

Speakers: [Jacob Carstensen](#), Aarhus University, [Bo Gustafsson](#), Director, Baltic Nest Institute, Sweden, [Emma Gileva](#), Black Sea NGO Network, Bulgaria, and [Richard Seeber](#), MEP (DE, EPP). **Moderator:** [Marianne Wenning](#), Director (Quality of Life, Water & Air), DG Environment.

FINANCING MARINE PROTECTION

Day 2 of the Conference started with a session on the financing of marine protection. The session provided an overview of the financial instruments available to promote marine protection. It highlighted examples of projects that have brought benefits to the marine environment in the past and promoted possibilities for new forms of cooperation in the future.

As a key message, the panel stressed that significant funding for marine research and for support to the implementation of the MSFD is available:

LIFE

- Funding under the new LIFE instrument for the period 2014-2020 amounts to €3.4 billion. LIFE is dedicated to **fostering innovative initiatives with a view to developing knowledge, networks of experts and experiences**. Priorities set out for LIFE projects for the upcoming years give a prominent position to marine issues (sustainability, reducing pressures from economic activity, marine litter, microbial contaminants, synergies between specialised coastal management and maritime spatial planning). The new LIFE programme also introduces **“integrated projects”**, larger-scale initiatives which focus on ensuring cross-sectoral support for the implementation of projects and policies.

EMFF

- The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund amounts to €6.5 billion. It supports the **implementation of the reformed Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), and the Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP)**, including its environmental pillar, the MSFD. It promotes sustainable and resource efficient fisheries and aquaculture activities, by supporting, *inter alia* the achievement of fishing at or below Maximum Sustainable Yield, improved conservation measures including for Natura 2000 sites, better control and enforcement, improved data collection measures and an enhanced marine knowledge base.

Horizon 2020

- The €80 billion allocated to Horizon 2020 reflects the EU's commitment to **new research and innovation as a way of addressing emerging challenges**. Fostering Blue Growth in a way that ensures the protection of the marine environment has been defined as one of the main "societal challenges" to be addressed under the Programme. Better understanding and protection of the oceans is increasingly highlighted as a key component of a number of other cross-cutting challenges such as climate change and food security. In an overarching way, H2020 aims to increase international collaboration, improve alignment of research agendas and develop joint programming initiatives.

Regional Funds

- Regional Funds of €340 billion will be made available between in the period 2014-2020. The new period will see greater coordination, with DG REGIO's European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund being programmed jointly alongside the European Social Fund, European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the EMFF. The overarching strategy of this funding framework is **to meet the Europe 2020 goals to foster smart, sustainable and inclusive growth**. This will be promoted, including in the maritime environment, through European Territorial Cooperation, as well as macro-regional strategies (e.g. for the Baltic Sea, and the new Adriatic-Ionian Strategy).

Speakers: Angelo Salsi, Head of Unit (Life – Nature), DG Environment, Haitze Siemers, Head of Unit (Maritime Policy Baltic and North Sea), DG Maritime Affairs & Fisheries, John Bell, Director (Bioeconomy), DG Research & Innovation, Charlina Vitcheva, Director (Inclusive Growth, Urban and Territorial Development and Northern Europe), DG Regional Policy, and Pierre Karleskind, Vice President of the Region of Brittany.

PARALLEL SESSIONS – THE NEXT STEPS: MONITORING AND MEASURES

On Day 2, discussions in parallel sessions took place in two rounds: one round focused on the issue of monitoring and gaps in knowledge, while the second round focused on the Programme of Measures and coherence within and across marine regions. After the presentations and discussions, participants returned to the plenary room where moderators provided [feedback](#), summarising the findings and recommendations of each parallel session.

Round 1 Parallel Sessions:

The session on **Common indicators** focused on their development and implementation, both within the context of the implementation of the MSFD, and for reporting purposes within the Regional Sea Conventions.

- ✓ Indicators and limit values from relevant EU instruments (MSFD, WFD, Habitats Directive) should be *better integrated within the EU framework* to improve our understanding and assessment of good and poor environmental status.
- ✓ The *role of the Regional Sea Conventions* is key to defining common indicators and monitoring, compatible with MSFD implementation. Cross-regional cooperation has an important role to play (e.g. Baltic2Black, OSPAR/HELCOM etc.) together with the involvement of third countries.
- ✓ To progress on this issue, it is important to *address gaps and current limitations* (e.g. the limited coherence between MSFD and WFD indicators), in order to create more integrated and operational indicators.

Speakers : [Angel Borja](#), Coordinator, DEVOTES project, [Ulla Li Zweifel](#), HELCOM, [Gyorgi Gurban](#), Barcelona Convention (UNEP/MAP) Secretariat, and [Fritz Holzwarth](#), Senior marine policy expert, former German Marine Director. **Moderator:** [Gheorghe Constantin](#), Marine Director, Romania.

The session on **Shared resources for monitoring** focused on the challenge of developing joint monitoring tools, in particular, in light of the obligation for Member States to present their monitoring programmes under the MSFD later this year.

- ✓ The Commission's Article 12 report has demonstrated the need for a *coordinated, consistent, coherent and comparable monitoring* within marine regions, which can only take place through improved regional cooperation on monitoring.
- ✓ It is also important to ensure that the quality of the monitoring programmes is not affected by *imprecise definitions of Good Environmental Status*.
- ✓ The problem does not necessarily stem from a lack of funding/resources but rather from the *ineffective use of the data collected by different actors*. Data should be more systematically shared with different end-users.

Speakers: [Lisette Enserink](#), Project Coordinator, "Towards a Joint Monitoring Programme for the North Sea and the Celtic Sea", [Beate Gminder](#), Head of Unit (Maritime policy Mediterranean & Black Sea), DG MARE, and [Giovanni Bidoglio](#), Head of Water Resources Unit, Joint Research Centre. **Moderator:** [Eeva-Liisa Poutanen](#), Marine Director, Finland.

The **Gaps in marine knowledge** session examined and discussed the issues arising from current gaps in our understanding of the marine environment. Those were exemplified by the need to have more clarity on what the MSFD descriptors mean, giving greater priority to threats, making links to measures and to ecosystem services and improving the regional scale approaches of governance.

- ✓ The first steps to filling the gaps in marine knowledge can come from *coordinated actions* such as aligning timetables and assessment methodologies across marine regions, a more systematic use of joint regional reports and of the information reported under other EU instruments (e.g. WFD, Habitats Directive) and an improved science-policy interface.
- ✓ Policymakers should make better use of the most recent knowledge and information and should abandon scenarios based on business as usual strategies. There is *enough information and knowledge to act to improve the protection of the seas*. Policymakers and the research community speak different "languages" and often have different priorities, but there are tools, such as research projects and data collection exercises, to overcome these challenge.

Speakers: [Rudy Herman](#), Management Board Member, JPI Oceans, [Leonie Robinson](#), University of Liverpool, and [Giordano Giorgi](#), Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA). **Moderator:** [Marina Argyrou](#), Marine Director, Cyprus.

Round 2 Parallel Sessions:

The session on **Programme of Measures** took stock of the development of the Member States' Programmes of Measures (PoM) taking into account relevant existing measures and the urgency to prioritise measures and cooperate to undertake joint actions.

- ✓ The best way to move forward on the PoM will be to *refine GES and targets definitions*, developed through improved regional cooperation, and thus be able to implement more effective measures.
- ✓ It will also involve *reviewing existing policies from a marine perspective* (e.g. developing new criteria, methodologies, etc.) with a particular focus on the WFD.

- ✓ Measures should be as *cost-effective* as possible.
- ✓ The link with *Maritime Spatial Planning* should be reinforced, while Marine Protected Areas should be extended as a tool to protect ecosystem services.

Speakers: [Xavier Pastor](#), Senior Vice President & Executive Director, Oceana, [Olivier Laroussinie](#), Director of French Agency for Marine Protected Areas, and [Dominic Pattinson](#), Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, UK. **Moderator:** Andrzej Jagusiewicz, Marine Director, Poland.

Challenges encountered in **ensuring coherence within and between marine regions** include differences in GDP (national capacity between and across sea basins) as well as and the different use made by Member States of RSC output. A more integrated regional approach is expected to deliver better protection of the marine environment in a more cost-effective way.

- ✓ It makes sense to work at the *regional and subregional levels* for ecosystem-based management.
- ✓ The RSCs are a major source of information and science, they *provide common language and help coordination*, including with third countries. Exchange of information and best practices should increase.
- ✓ Particular topics where coordination is needed include *marine litter* (OSPAR-HELCOM action plans, Barcelona Convention) and *eutrophication*, also involving third countries (Barcelona to Black Sea, to Baltic, to Bosphorus).
- ✓ The pivotal role of the *Member States which have waters in several marine regions* should be highlighted.

Speakers: [Darius Campbell](#), Executive Secretary, OSPAR Commission, [Gunnar Noren](#), Executive Secretary, Coalition Clean Baltic, [Pablo Saavedra](#), Director General for the Sustainability of the Coast & Sea, Ministry for Agriculture, Food and the Environment, Spain, [Mehmet Emin Birpinar](#), Deputy Undersecretary, Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation, Turkey. **Moderator:** Heike Imhoff, German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature.

THE ECONOMICS OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT

The panel on **the economics of the marine environment** discussed the business case for investing in marine protection.

The global initiative **The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB)** raised the question of how to value one ecosystem service against another. It has developed a typology to characterise and compartmentalise specific marine services in order to consider all marine components and not only those that are exploited. There are very few primary valuation points for marine ecosystems but there is clearly enough information to advocate their protection.

A practical example is offered by the BalticSTERN Research Network, with partners in all nine countries around the Baltic Sea, which has investigated costs and benefits of mitigating **eutrophication in the Baltic Sea**. People place a high value on having a healthy Baltic Sea, being ready to spend about 4 billion Euros annually for its protection. BalticSTERN estimates that there would be a total welfare gain of about 1.5 billion Euros each year if the Baltic Sea Action Plan is implemented. The **economic impacts of Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas** showed that MPAs provide net benefits to local communities of up to €3.5 million in certain areas. In these projects, benefits are much higher than costs when the longer-term economic and ecological perspectives are considered.

Speakers: [Siv Ericsson](#), Head of Secretariat, BalticSTERN, [Hugues Ravenel](#), Director, Plan Bleu, and [Salman Hussain](#), Coordinator, The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB).

THE INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE: IMPLEMENTING THE OCEANS CHAPTER OF RIO+20

Many of the priorities that have been identified in the Rio+20 outcome document for oceans require a strong scientific underpinning. Rio+20 recognised ocean acidification as a major issue to be researched. The rate of change of acidification may be greater than at any other time in the last million years. Another essential outcome from the discussions in Rio+20 is the enhancement of communication between scientists, policy makers and stakeholders.

The Rio+20 Summit identified three major focus areas for the protection of the marine environment:

- ✓ *Pollution*, highlighting in particular the risks of long-term pollutants from diffuse sources and marine litter
- ✓ *Fisheries*, covering a wide range of challenges such as stock assessment, overfishing, discards and by-catches
- ✓ *Science & technology*, promoting an improved science-policy interface

The discussion between panellists and participants highlighted that the EU could do more to support North-South cooperation driving fundamental improvements, which could have a major impact on the marine environment (e.g. improved sewage treatment, better waste management, ensuring compliance and monitoring). The UN-Oceans initiative, as a coordination and integration mechanism, plays an important role in strengthening and promoting coordination and coherence of the United Nations' activities related to ocean and coastal areas. The development of a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on oceans and seas has significant potential for building the political momentum required for the changes necessary.

Speakers: Jackie Alder, Coordinator, Freshwater and Coastal Ecosystem Branch, UNEP, [Julian Barbière](#), Programme Specialist, Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, UNESCO, and [Rani Amir](#), Director, Marine and Coastal Environment Division, Ministry of Environmental Protection, Israel.

CONCLUDING PANEL: LESSONS LEARNT

Karl Falkenberg (Director-General, DG Environment) and Lowri Evans (Director-General DG Maritime Affairs & Fisheries) presented the lessons learnt on the issues discussed during the conference. Their key messages included:

- ✓ Good Environmental Status must be achieved in all marine regions in order to underpin sustainable economic development. As this is not yet the case, environment and maritime policy must work closely together to find common solutions. The new Directive on Maritime Spatial Planning is a crucial first step in this direction.
- ✓ Other policies dealing with land-based economic activities, such as agriculture, should be integrated into this process, as many problems in the marine environment result from actions taken on land.
- ✓ Better communication is an essential aspect of this common effort. In order to achieve better science-based policy making, research projects and research outcomes should be better integrated, organised and communicated.
- ✓ The “regional sea approach” is a good one, but several Member States still think about their “national waters” first and foremost. This needs to change.
- ✓ It is crucial to listen to citizen’s views on the protection of our seas and oceans. In particular, civil society and the private sector should play an essential role, e.g. as highlighted in the recent successful reform of the Common Fisheries Policy. There is strong support from the public for more action on marine environmental protection.

Karl Falkenberg closed the session presenting the final "[Declaration of HOPE](#)" to delegates, outlining the actions necessary to provide better protection of the marine environment and urging political leaders to deliver on the commitment to achieve “Good Environmental Status” for Europe’s seas and oceans by 2020.

DECLARATION OF HOPE

The Declaration of HOPE**The participants at the HOPE (Healthy Oceans – Productive Ecosystems) marine conference, recognising that:**

- *The Rio+20 declaration, "The future we want", stresses the main global challenges facing our oceans;*
- *A healthy ocean delivers a range of benefits now and in the future, providing a basis for the sustainable development of ocean-related economic activities;*
- *Much remains to be learnt about the marine environment, our collective scientific understanding needs to increase, and be shared widely with the public, to enhance ocean literacy;*
- *Europe's seas and oceans are under significant pressure and must be safeguarded for their intrinsic value and to ensure the health of their ecosystems including for human benefit;*
- *The Marine Strategy Framework Directive, along with the EU Biodiversity Strategy and nature legislation, addresses the pressures on the marine environment and requires an ecosystem-based approach to the management of human activities, with a view to achieving "Good Environmental Status" of our seas and oceans by 2020;*
- *Regional Sea Conventions and other relevant international organisations play an essential role in supporting this goal, thereby protecting the seas and oceans that EU Member States share between them and with third countries.*

Call for urgent action to better protect the European marine environment and in particular:

- *to take the lead in implementing the Rio+20 conference chapter on oceans through the UN post-2015 framework, including through considering a Sustainable Development Goal on Oceans and supporting the UNCLOS implementing agreement on biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction;*
- *to restore our fish stocks to healthy levels through the coherent implementation of the new Common Fisheries Policy and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive;*
- *to increase the national and EU research budgets which are devoted to understanding the oceans and their role in supporting life on the planet;*
- *to halt marine biodiversity loss and meet the targets set by the EU Biodiversity Strategy to measurably improve the conservation status of vulnerable marine habitats and species by 2020, and by the Convention on Biological Diversity to conserve at least 10% of coastal and marine areas by 2020 through effectively and equitably managed ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas, including under the Natura 2000 network;*
- *to limit the effects of climate change on oceans, in particular acidification;*
- *to halt and reverse the impacts of eutrophication of large swathes of our seas, including through reducing nutrient-inflow from diverse sources, such as unsustainable agricultural practices;*
- *to address all other sources of marine pollution and combat them, in particular the increasing amounts of marine litter, including through the implementation of regional actions plans, and the setting of ambitious targets; to ensure the sustainable development of economic activities affecting the marine environment at sea and on land, with the private sector taking appropriate responsibility;*
- *to phase out environmentally harmful subsidies;*
- *to create a common framework for maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal management;*
- *to involve the public in ocean protection and better communicate our goals.*

Stress the need to work closer together to protect the marine environment, to achieve greater coordination and cost-effectiveness within and between marine regions and to improve the governance of the seas, in particular through the Regional Sea Conventions and effective implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and other relevant EU environmental legislation.

Urge political leaders to turn words into action and encourage all stakeholders, including the private sector, to take the measures necessary to deliver "Good Environmental Status" for Europe's seas and oceans by 2020.

4 March 2014, Brussels