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COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

An Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union

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An Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The seas are Europe's lifeblood. Europe's maritime spaces and its coasts are central to its well-being and prosperity – they are Europe's trade routes, climate regulator, sources of food, energy and resources, and a favoured site for its citizens' residence and recreation.

Our interactions with the sea are more intense, more varied, and create more value for Europe than ever before. Yet the strain is showing. We are at a crossroads in our relationship with the oceans.

On the one hand technology and know-how allow us to extract ever more value from the sea, and more and more people flow to Europe's coasts to benefit from that value. On the other hand, the cumulated effect of all this activity is leading to conflicts of use and to the deterioration of the marine environment that everything else depends on.

Europe must respond to this challenge; in a context of rapid globalisation and climate change the urgency is great.

The European Commission has recognised this, and launched a comprehensive consultation and analysis of how Europe relates to the sea[1]. It has triggered a massive response from stakeholders that reveals clearly the enormous potential of the seas, and the scale of the challenge if we are to realise that potential sustainably. It has also provided a wealth of ideas as to how Europe can rise to meet this challenge.

Building on this valuable input the Commission proposes an Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union, based on the clear recognition that all matters relating to Europe's oceans and seas are interlinked, and that sea-related policies must develop in a joined-up way if we are to reap the desired results.

This integrated, inter-sectoral approach was strongly endorsed by all stakeholders. Applying it will require reinforced cooperation and effective coordination of all sea-related policies at the different decision-making levels.

An Integrated Maritime Policy will enhance Europe's capacity to face the challenges of globalisation and competitiveness, climate change, degradation of the marine environment, maritime safety and security, and energy security and sustainability. It must be based on excellence in marine research, technology and innovation, and will be anchored in the Lisbon agenda for jobs and growth, and the Gothenburg agenda for sustainability.

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[1]   See Report on the Consultation process - COM(2007) 574. See also: Green Paper on *A Future Maritime Policy for the Union: a European Vision of the Oceans and Seas* - COM(2006) 275.

An EU Integrated Maritime Policy will:

- **Change the way we make policy and take decisions** – at every level compartmentalised policy development and decision-making are no longer adequate. Interactions must be understood and taken into account; common tools developed; synergies identified and exploited; and conflicts avoided or resolved.

- **Develop and deliver a programme of work** – action under the different sectoral policies must develop in a coherent policy framework. The Action Plan accompanying this communication gives a clear idea of the variety and magnitude of the work ahead. The following projects are of particular importance :

    – A European Maritime Transport Space without barriers

    – A European Strategy for Marine Research

    – National integrated maritime policies to be developed by Member States

    – An European network for maritime surveillance

    – A Roadmap towards maritime spatial planning by Member States

    – A Strategy to mitigate the effects of Climate Change on coastal regions

    – Reduction of CO_2 emissions and pollution by shipping

    – Elimination of pirate fishing and destructive high seas bottom trawling

    – An European network of maritime clusters

    – A review of EU labour law exemptions for the shipping and fishing sectors

This Communication lays the foundation for the governance framework and cross-sectoral tools necessary for an EU Integrated Maritime Policy and sets out the main actions that the Commission will pursue during the course of this mandate. These actions will be guided by the principles of subsidiarity and competitiveness, the ecosystem approach, and stakeholder participation.

2.   CONTEXT

Europe has a 70 000 km coastline along two oceans and four seas: the Atlantic and Arctic Oceans, the Baltic, the North Sea, the Mediterranean, and the Black Sea. The EU's maritime regions account for some 40% of its GDP and population.

Europe's well-being is therefore inextricably linked with the sea. Shipbuilding and shipping, ports and fisheries remain key maritime activities, but offshore energy (including oil, gas and renewables), and coastal and maritime tourism also generate massive revenues. Sea-ports and shipping allow Europe to benefit from the rapid growth of international trade and to play a leading role in the global economy, while the exploitation of mineral resources, aquaculture, blue biotech and emerging sub-sea technologies represent increasingly important business

opportunities. Equally significant are the recreational, aesthetic and cultural uses we make of the seas and the ecosystem services they provide.

Ensuring that use of the marine environment is genuinely sustainable is a prerequisite for these industries to be competitive. The growing vulnerability of coastal areas, increasingly crowded coastal waters, the key role of the oceans in the climate system and the continuous deterioration of the marine environment all call for a stronger focus on our oceans and seas.

Ocean sustainability is today widely recognised as a major global challenge, intimately connected with climate change.

Increasing competition for marine space and the cumulative impact of human activities on marine ecosystems render the current fragmented decision-making in maritime affairs inadequate, and demand a more collaborative and integrated approach. For too long policies on, for instance, maritime transport, fisheries, energy, surveillance and policing of the seas, tourism, the marine environment, and marine research have developed on separate tracks, at times leading to inefficiencies, incoherencies and conflicts of use.

Based on this recognition, the Commission's vision is for an integrated maritime policy that covers all aspects of our relationship with the oceans and seas. This innovative and holistic approach will provide a coherent policy framework that will allow for the optimal development of all sea-related activities in a sustainable manner.

3. A GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK AND TOOLS FOR A MARITIME POLICY

An Integrated Maritime Policy requires a governance framework that applies the integrated approach at every level, as well as horizontal and cross-cutting policy tools. It will also require a sound financial basis, taking into account the results of preparatory actions.

3.1. Applying the Integrated Approach to Maritime Governance

The Commission has set up a maritime policy function, with the task of analysing maritime affairs and the policies affecting them, coordinating between sectoral policies, ensuring that interactions between them are taken into account, and piloting the development of cross-cutting policy tools. It has also started bringing together EU agencies with maritime-related functions, with a view to ensuring their collective contribution to the development of the maritime policy.

Better regulation principles will guide the Commission policy-making on maritime issues from an early stage: identification of major maritime-related initiatives in the annual planning and programming instruments, consultation of civil society and interested parties, impact assessments and inter-service working groups will help to ensure that the Commission is able to design and deliver genuinely integrated proposals.

Other EU institutions and actors are invited to examine how best to apply the integrated approach to maritime policy affairs in a systematic way. Certain Member States have started developing co-ordination mechanisms in their maritime policy-making. All stakeholders should participate in the governance process and are invited to continue to bring to the Commission's attention any EU legislation that in their view is counterproductive in achieving the aims of an Integrated Maritime Policy.

- **The Commission will:**

  - **invite Member States to draw up national integrated maritime policies, working closely with stakeholders, in particular the coastal regions;**

  - **propose in 2008 a set of guidelines for these national integrated maritime policies and report annually on EU and Member States' actions in this regard from 2009;**

  - **organise a stakeholder consultation structure, feeding into further development of the maritime policy and allowing exchange of best practices.**

3.2. Tools for Integrated policy-making

An integrated governance framework for maritime affairs requires horizontal planning tools that cut across sea-related sectoral policies and support joined up policy making. The following three are of major importance: maritime surveillance which is critical for the safe and secure use of marine space; maritime spatial planning which is a key planning tool for sustainable decision-making; and a comprehensive and accessible source of data and information.

3.2.1. A European network for maritime surveillance

Maritime surveillance is of the highest importance in ensuring the safe use of the sea and in securing Europe's maritime borders. The improvement and optimisation of maritime surveillance activities, and interoperability at the European level, are important for Europe to meet the challenges and threats relating to safety of navigation, marine pollution, law enforcement, and overall security.

Surveillance activities are carried out by Member States but most of the activities and threats that they address are transnational in nature. Within most Member States surveillance activities concerning fisheries, the environment, policing of the seas or immigration fall under the responsibility of several different enforcement agencies operating independently from each other. This often results in sub-optimal use of scarce resources.

The Commission, therefore, advocates the need for a higher degree of coordination on maritime surveillance through deeper cooperation within and among the Member States' coastguards and other appropriate agencies.

The gradual achievement of an integrated network of vessel tracking and e-navigation systems for European coastal waters and the high seas, including satellite monitoring and long range identification and tracking (LRIT), would also provide an invaluable tool to public agencies.

- **The Commission will:**

  - **promote improved cooperation between Member States' Coastguards and appropriate agencies;**

- **take steps towards a more interoperable surveillance system to bring together existing monitoring and tracking systems used for maritime safety and security, protection of the marine environment, fisheries control, control of external borders and other law enforcement activities.**

3.2.2. Maritime Spatial Planning and Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)

Existing planning frameworks have a largely terrestrial focus and often do not address how coastal development may affect the sea and vice-versa. We must address the challenges that emerge from the growing competing uses of the sea, ranging from maritime transport, fishing, aquaculture, leisure activities, off-shore energy production and other forms of sea bed exploitation.

Maritime spatial planning is therefore a fundamental tool for the sustainable development of marine areas and coastal regions, and for the restoration of Europe's seas to environmental health.

Following an EU Recommendation[2], Member States have begun to use ICZM to regulate the spatial deployment of economic activities and to set up spatial planning systems for Europe's coastal waters. Both these instruments contribute to meeting the commitments deriving from the Thematic Strategy for the Protection of the Marine Environment[3] and provide operators with improved predictability for their planning of future investments. A system for exchange of best practice among authorities engaged in maritime spatial planning and ICZM will be set up.

Decision-making competence in this area lies with the Member States. What is needed at European level is a commitment to common principles and guidelines to facilitate the process in a flexible manner and to ensure that regional marine ecosystems that transcend national maritime boundaries are respected.

- **The Commission will:**

  - **develop a roadmap in 2008 to facilitate the development of maritime spatial planning by Member States.**

3.2.3. Data and Information

Availability and easy access to a wide range of natural and human-activity data on the oceans is the basis for strategic decision-making on maritime policy. Given the vast quantity of data collected and stored all over Europe for a wide variety of purposes, the establishment of an appropriate marine data and information infrastructure is of utmost importance.

This data should be compiled in a comprehensive and compatible system, and made accessible as a tool for better governance, expansion of value-added services and sustainable

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[2] Recommendation 2002/413/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2002 concerning the implementation of Integrated Coastal Zone Management in Europe.

[3] See Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a Framework for Community Action in the field of Marine Environmental Policy (Marine Strategy Directive) - COM(2005) 505.

maritime development. This is a considerable undertaking with many dimensions, and will need to be developed according to a clear and coherent plan over a period of years.

- **The Commission will:**

    - **take steps in 2008 towards a European Marine Observation and Data Network[4], and promote the multi-dimensional mapping of Member States' waters, in order to improve access to high quality data.**

4.   ACTION AREAS FOR AN EU INTEGRATED MARITIME POLICY

An EU Integrated Maritime Policy will focus its action primarily in the following five areas:

4.1.   Maximising the Sustainable Use of the Oceans and Seas

The first goal of an EU Integrated Maritime Policy is to create optimal conditions for the sustainable use of the oceans and seas, enabling the growth of maritime sectors and coastal regions.

In many Member States, the recent growth of the maritime economy has been higher than that of the overall economy, in particular in regions active in maritime logistics. Container movement has grown considerably since 2000 and is expected to triple by 2020. Regions active in other strong growth markets, such as marine equipment, off-shore wind energy, recreational boating and cruise shipping, will also continue to benefit from this growth. The potential for European industries to develop cutting-edge maritime products that can lead in world markets is also considerable, given Europe's considerable expertise in marine technology.

But much potential remains untapped. An updated strategic vision for the development of competitive, safe and secure shipping, ports and related sectors is essential if we are to achieve sustainable growth of sea-related activities while ensuring that maritime activities develop in a way that does not threaten marine ecosystem health.

Shipping is vital for Europe's international and domestic trade and remains the backbone of the maritime cluster. However, this industry will only continue to prosper if the Union keeps working to establish a high level of maritime safety and security, helping to safeguard human lives and the environment while promoting an international level playing field.

Although shipping is a preoccupying source of air pollution and CO_2 emissions, it remains considerably more energy efficient than road transport. For this reason, and because of the need to reduce trucks from Europe's congested roads, an Integrated Maritime Policy strongly favours the promotion of safe and secure shipping. Current EU programmes (TEN-T and MARCO POLO) will continue to support the creation of the Motorways of the Sea/Short Sea Shipping Networks. The future development of TEN should also take full account of the increasing uses of the seas in the energy field.

Nevertheless, shipping remains at a disadvantage compared to other means of transport. Other transport modes benefit from more public investment. Furthermore, a vessel travelling

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[4]   Building *inter alia* on the GMES initiative.

between two EU ports is subject to more complex and time-consuming procedures than a truck would be, because a real internal market for maritime transport in Europe does not yet exist. In order to unlock the full potential of Europe's shipping industry this disadvantage of maritime transport compared with the other modes must be eliminated through the simplification of administrative and customs formalities for intra-EU maritime services.

- **With a view to improving the efficiency of maritime transport in Europe and ensuring its long term competitiveness, the Commission will:**

    - **propose a European Maritime Transport Space without barriers;**

    - **prepare a comprehensive maritime transport strategy for 2008-2018.**

European seaports are another essential link in the logistics chain that the European economy depends on. They are centres of economic activity that play a key role in determining the quality of their surrounding urban and natural environments.

Globalisation means that we are witnessing an unprecedented growth of international trade. Given that 90% of Europe's external trade and close to 40% of its internal trade passes through its ports, it is not difficult to understand the great challenge that Europe's ports face if they are to deal with increasing demand. Their capacity development must mirror the growth of Europe's domestic and international trade and occur in a way that is compatible with related EU policy objectives, in particular its environmental and competitiveness goals.

- **The Commission will:**

    - **propose a new ports policy, taking account of the multiple roles of ports and the wider context of European logistics;**

    - **make proposals to reduce the levels of air pollution from ships in ports, namely by removing tax disadvantages for shore side electricity;**

    - **issue guidelines on the application of the relevant Community environmental legislation to port development.**

Europe's maritime logistics chain also requires cutting edge *shipbuilding, repair and marine equipment industries* and the European Union will build on successful initiatives[5] to promote the development of these industries and in particular the small and medium companies.

More investment in marine research and technology will be instrumental to pursue economic growth without further aggravating environmental degradation. This investment will also create new opportunities. Environmental-led technologies which allow maritime activities to prosper while preserving the marine environment will keep European business ahead of the curve as global standards rise and new and promising industries develop, such as blue biotech, offshore-renewable energies, underwater technology and equipment and marine aquaculture.

Technology also allows Europe to benefit from the full potential of the sea as a source of oil and gas[6] as well as renewable energies, and as an enabler of energy transportation,

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[5] Such as the Waterborne Platform and LeaderShip 2015.

diversifying energy transport routes and thus reinforcing security of supply. Europe's energy situation indicates that the scope for synergy between its energy and maritime policies will increase[7]. In this regard, the Commission's Communication of January 2007[8] on an Energy Strategy for Europe acknowledged the need to develop further the use of the oceans and seas to promote EU energy goals.

Business integration and competitiveness in the maritime sector are greatly enhanced by the formation of *multi-sectoral clusters*[9]. These clusters are instrumental to maintain the maritime know-how of Europe and will occupy therefore a central position in the Maritime Policy. Public/private cooperation on centres of maritime excellence also provides a good framework for the interactions between different industries and sectors to be fully understood and planned for.

- **The Commission will encourage the formation of multi-sectoral clusters and regional centres of maritime excellence, and promote a European network of maritime clusters.**

The Commission's aim is also to increase the number and quality of *maritime jobs* for European citizens. The decline in seagoing employment is worrying and needs to be reversed, as seafarers' experience is key also for shore-based jobs.

Improved staffing policies and working conditions (including health and safety), supported by a concerted effort by all maritime stakeholders and an efficient regulatory framework taking into account its global context, are necessary if Europeans are to be attracted to the sector. The Commission fully supports the social dialogue on the integration of the ILO Convention on maritime labour standards into Community law. The Commission will also promote the design of a system providing Europeans with better and wider career prospects in the maritime cluster. This will include broadening the scope of maritime studies and enhancing the skills and qualifications for the maritime professions.

- **The Commission will:**

  - **reassess, in close cooperation with social partners, the exclusions affecting maritime sectors in EU labour legislation[10];**

  - **promote a Certificate of Maritime Excellence.**

Despite past efforts, increased economic activity on Europe's coasts and seas has been associated with deterioration of the *quality of the marine environment*. The Commission has already proposed an EU Marine Strategy including a proposed Directive[11] to halt and reverse

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[6]   According to OGP 40% of the oil and 60% of the gas currently consumed in Europe are drilled offshore.

[7]   See Commission Staff Working Document entitled "Energy policy and maritime policy: ensuring a better fit".

[8]   Communication from the Commission to the European Council and the European Parliament: an Energy Policy for Europe - COM(2007) 1.

[9]   See Staff Working Document annexed to this Communication.

[10]   Communication on Reassessing the regulatory social framework for more and better seafaring jobs in the EU - COM (2007) 591.

[11]   COM(2005) 504 and COM(2005) 505.

this trend and to provide a framework for Community action to achieve good environmental status of the marine environment in a context of sustainable development.

The challenge is compounded by the severe impact that climate change is likely to have in coastal regions. Carbon storage under the seabed is an innovative activity which has great potential for mitigating climate change. The EU must remain at the cutting edge of this technology, providing a coherent policy framework to fully realise this potential.

To this end the objectives of EU environmental legislation, in particular the Habitats Directive[12] and the proposed Marine Strategy Directive, must be reached. The Community acquis on maritime safety and prevention of pollution caused by ships is also relevant in this respect. The swift adoption of the proposals contained in the 3rd Maritime Package will make a major contribution to this acquis.

- **The Commission will:**

  - **launch pilot actions to reduce the impact of and adapt to climate change in coastal zones;**

  - **support actively international efforts to diminish air pollution caused by ships and make proposals at European level in the absence of progress in such efforts;**

  - **support actively international efforts to diminish greenhouse gas emissions from ships, and, in the absence of progress in such efforts, consider possible options for EU measures in this regard;**

  - **taking duly into account the ongoing work at international level, make proposals for dismantling obsolete ships in an efficient, safe and environmentally sustainable manner.**

Fisheries management must take more into account the welfare of coastal communities, the marine environment and the interaction of fishing with other activities. The recovery of fish stocks will be energetically pursued, requiring sound scientific information and reinforcement of the shift to multi-annual planning. The Commission will take action to ensure that the Common Fisheries Policy reflects the ecosystem-based approach of the Strategy for the Marine Environment, and will work to eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing in its waters and on the high seas.

Managing fish stocks at Maximum Sustainable Yields will provide a better future for the European fishing community and ensure its contribution to Europe's food security; this should be achieved by 2015 in line with international commitments.

The improvement of on-the-job safety of fishermen must also be addressed in the wider context of maritime working conditions and social policy, and fishermen's experience and knowledge of the sea should be harnessed on behalf of society as a whole.

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[12]   Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora.

The growth of aquaculture to satisfy increasing global seafood demand should be achieved within a regulatory framework that encourages entrepreneurship and innovation and ensures compliance with high environmental and public health standards.

- **The Commission will:**

  - **take firm action towards the elimination of discards[13] and of destructive fishing practices such as high seas bottom trawling in sensitive habitats[14];**

  - **take firm action to eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fisheries[15];**

  - **promote the development of an environmentally safe aquaculture industry in Europe.**

4.2.   Building a knowledge and innovation base for the maritime policy

Marine science, technology and research are crucial for the sustainable development of sea-based activities.

By helping us to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the impact of human activities on marine systems, scientific research and technology provide the key to decoupling the development of sea based activities from environmental degradation.

Strengthening the interdisciplinary approach to marine science can help us better understand the interactions between maritime activities, and will therefore be an indispensable component of an integrated maritime policy. It is also crucial if we are to predict and mitigate as far as possible the effects of climate change.

Marine and maritime research is expensive: inefficiencies cannot be afforded. For the best use to be made of Europe's resources a clear strategy needs to be drawn up that will link political and research priorities, address cross-sectoral challenges, maximise synergies between Member State and Community efforts, avoid duplication and improve dialogue between interested actors. Europe also needs to explore how research can better contribute to innovation and how to transform more efficiently knowledge and skills into industrial products and services.

The development of the Marine Observation and Data Network[16] will be an important tool for this strategy.

- **The Commission will:**

  - **present a comprehensive European Strategy for Marine and Maritime Research in 2008;**

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[13]   Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: A policy to reduce unwanted by-catches and eliminate discards in European fisheries - COM(2007) 136.

[14]   Communication and proposal for Regulation due 17 October.

[15]   Communication and proposal for Regulation due 17 October.

[16]   See Section 3.2.3.

- **launch joint cross-cutting calls under the 7th Research Framework Programme to promote an integrated approach and improve understanding of maritime affairs;**

- **support research to predict, mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change on maritime activities, the marine environment, coastal zones and islands;**

- **support the creation of a European marine science partnership for a concerted dialogue between the scientific community, the industry and policy makers.**

4.3. Delivering the Highest Quality of Life in Coastal Regions

Population growth in *coastal regions and islands* has been double the EU average over the last decade. Coastal communities are also the destination of the majority of tourists in Europe, making the need to reconcile economic development, environmental sustainability and quality of life particularly acute in these regions.

Regional authorities and coastal communities have an important role to play in the regulation of coastal and maritime activities. The Committee of the Regions, coastal regions and their networks are thus key partners in the development of an EU Integrated Maritime Policy.

Due to their ports and their maritime industries, these regions have strategic importance for Europe as a whole. They produce important services to the hinterland and act as a base for the policing of sea borders and coastal waters. The resulting demands on infrastructure are considerable and need to be taken into account in the allocation of Community resources. Coastal regions are also particularly affected by climate change, and risk management may have dramatic impact on their budgets and economies.

The sea is determinant for coastal and maritime tourism, which has been a major catalyst for economic development in coastal areas of Europe. The Commission will work more actively with stakeholders in developing a sustainable tourism policy that takes coastal and maritime tourism into account.

Sources of funding are available, but stakeholders feel that they have insufficient access to information. The Commission will work to optimise support for maritime projects in coastal regions and islands, under the range of Community financing instruments available.

The need for improved socioeconomic data on the maritime sectors and coastal regions is also clear as difficulties in obtaining this information are limiting the ability of regional stakeholders to develop rational, long-term plans and investments.

Interregional collaboration is also essential to the development of Europe's coastal regions, taking into account their diversity and specificities. The Commission accordingly, will make full use of the Territorial Cooperation Programme to support inter-regional maritime development.

Outermost regions and islands suffer from considerable economic disadvantages but have a high potential in maritime activities and marine research. Their large maritime areas provide ecosystem services of considerable interest to the Union. The Commission will promote,

within the framework of the recent Communication on the EU's Outermost Regions, both the development of their maritime potential and their cooperation with regional neighbours.

- **The Commission will:**

    - **promote, within the forthcoming tourism initiative,, coastal and maritime tourism;**

    - **prepare a data-base on Community funding available for maritime projects and coastal regions, and will develop by 2009 a database on socioeconomic data for maritime sectors and coastal regions;**

    - **propose a Community Disaster Prevention Strategy highlighting the risks to which coastal regions are exposed;**

    - **promote the development of the maritime potential of Outermost regions and islands.**

4.4.   Promoting Europe's Leadership in International Maritime Affairs

The EU will work towards more efficient international governance of maritime affairs and effective enforcement of international maritime law, urging Member states to ratify the relevant instruments. It will promote coordination of European interests in key international fora.

Access to international markets for Europe's maritime industries and services, sustainable scientific and commercial exploitation of the deep seas, protection of global marine biodiversity, improvement of maritime safety and security, working conditions, reduced ship pollution and the fight against illegal activities in international waters will be the external priorities for the Union's Integrated Maritime Policy.

Attention will also be given to the geopolitical implications of climate change. In this context, the Commission will present in 2008 a report on strategic issues relating to the Arctic Ocean.

Maritime affairs will be a regular topic in discussions with the EU's partners that have already taken steps towards an integrated maritime approach, such as Australia, Canada, Japan, Norway and the US, as well as with other partners such as Brazil, China, India and Russia.

The EU will also develop shared responsibility over the seas it shares with its closest neighbours. In particular, it will make proposals for increased co-operation in managing the Mediterranean and the Black Seas. It will promote cooperation on maritime affairs under the Northern Dimension of its external relations' policy and will bring maritime affairs into the EU's agenda of cooperation with developing states, including small island developing states. In this context it will support maritime policy and law of the sea capacity building in developing countries.

The Commission will propose an Implementing Agreement of UNCLOS[17] on marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction and work towards successful conclusion of international negotiations on Marine Protected Areas on the high seas.

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[17] United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

- **The Commission will:**

  - **promote cooperation under the Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policies, and the Northern Dimension to cover maritime policy issues and management of shared seas;**

  - **propose a strategy for the external projection of the Union's Maritime Policy through a structured dialogue with major partners.**

4.5. Raising the Visibility of Maritime Europe

Stakeholders have clearly expressed the view that the process of developing an EU Maritime Policy has been useful in raising public awareness of the value of the maritime economy and heritage, and is creating a sense of common purpose and identity between stakeholders.

An Integrated Maritime Policy should seek to raise the visibility of Maritime Europe, and improve the image of maritime activities and the seafaring professions.

It should also promote Europe's maritime heritage, supporting maritime communities, including port-cities and traditional fisheries communities, their artefacts and traditional skills, and promoting links between them that enhance their knowledge and visibility.

- **The Commission will:**

  - **launch a European Atlas of the Seas as an educational tool and as a means of highlighting our common maritime heritage;**

  - **propose the celebration of an annual European Maritime Day as from 2008, raising the visibility of maritime affairs and promoting links between maritime heritage organisations, museums and aquaria.**

5. CONCLUSION

The European Council of June 2007 has welcomed the wide debate that has taken place in Europe on the future Maritime Policy. Heads of State and Governments invited the Commission to come forward with a European Action Plan to be presented in October. Taking into account the principle of subsidiarity, this Action Plan aims at exploring the full potential of sea-based economic activity in an environmentally sustainable manner.

Through this Communication and the attached Action Plan the Commission responds to this request by the European Council, taking account of the opinions expressed by the other European Institutions, Member States' governments, Parliaments and a large number of stakeholders[18].

The Commission invites the European Council, the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament, as well the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the

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[18] See for details Conclusions from the Consultation on a European Maritime Policy - COM(2007) 574, 10.10.2007.

Regions, national and regional authorities and other stakeholders to respond proactively to this policy.