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European Union

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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	9th Our Ocean Conference (Athens, Greece, 16-17 April 2024) - Information from the Greek delegation

Delegations will find in the Annex an information note from the Greek delegation on the above subject, to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the Council (Environment) meeting on 16 October 2023.

9th Our Ocean Conference (Athens, Greece, 16-17 April 2024)**- Information from the Greek delegation -**

Greece will host the 9th Our Ocean Conference in Athens on 16 and 17 April. The Our Ocean Youth Leadership Summit will be held at the same venue the day before, on 15 April.

The oceans are the foundation of our lives. They provide food, regulate our climate, and generate most of the oxygen we breathe. They also serve much of the world's economy, supporting sectors from tourism and fisheries to international shipping. Therefore “ocean health contributes to the overall health of our planet”.

The 9th Our Ocean Conference will be an event for all governments, businesses, civil society and research institutions to commit to actions for the sustainability of the oceans so that it can continue to provide for the needs of future generations.

Within the six Areas of Action of the Our Ocean Conference (Marine Protected Areas, sustainable blue economy including offshore windfarms, climate change, maritime security, sustainable fisheries, marine pollution) the Greek Government is seeking to accelerate action for a clean and healthy ocean, where protection and sustainable use go hand in hand.

The 9th Our Ocean Conference will seek to highlight important aspects for ensuring the sustainable management and conservation of the seas and oceans and their resources, by emphasizing issues such as:

- (a) Sustainable tourism in coastal areas and islands including adapting tourism to climate change
- (b) Green shipping
- (c) Reduction of marine plastic and microplastic pollution.

An additional priority area will be:

- (d) Green transition in the Mediterranean, a sea connecting three continents, as a horizontal element across the six Areas of Action of Our Ocean Conference.

The 9th Our Ocean Conference aims to keep ocean issues at the top of the global political agenda and is expected to contribute to the upcoming ocean-related high-level events at the UN such as the High-Level Preparatory Event of the 3rd UN Ocean Conference (UNOC) to be held in Costa Rica in June 2024 and the 3rd UNOC itself to be held in Nice, France, in June 2025, in order to further support transformative action for the protection and sustainable management of seas and oceans, globally, in support of SDG 14 (life below water).

The extensive mobilisation of all related stakeholders, from governments to civil society organisations and the private sector, which the Our Ocean Conferences aim for, mainly through the submission of Voluntary Commitments, is expected to be a catalyst for identifying innovative solutions and supporting ocean science and funding, which will constitute key outcomes of the 3rd UNOC.

As the submission of Voluntary Commitments is one of the key tools and outcomes of the Our Ocean Conference, it is crucial for the EU to confirm its strong engagement and pioneering role for international ocean governance by announcing new Commitments in all six Areas of Action of the Conference.
