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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Council
Subject:	Updated strategy for the maritime sector at the European level - <i>Information from the German, Dutch, Danish and Spanish delegations</i>

Delegations will find attached an information note from the German, Dutch, Danish and Spanish delegations on an “updated strategy for the maritime sector at the European level” with a view to the meeting of the Competitiveness Council on 7 March 2024.

Request by the German, Dutch, Danish and Spanish delegations for an AOB agenda item for the Competitiveness Council on 7 March 2024

Information by the German, Dutch, Danish and Spanish delegations on the need to discuss and reflect on an updated strategy for the maritime sector at the European level.

The maritime industry constitutes a highly strategic sector for European economic prosperity and resilience, and is essential to the implementation of the EU's political ambitions. Shipyards and maritime equipment decisively contribute to the European economy: innovative and technologically advanced ships and maritime technologies are both used for commercial applications and Blue Economy activities.

The Commission's last strategy for the maritime sector LeaderSHIP 2020 was adopted in 2013 and has not been updated in more than 10 years. Thus, there is a need to adapt the strategy to the new realities with the geopolitical shifts we experienced the last years as well as to the needs of the green and digital transition.

The development of the new maritime industry is necessary to ensure our sovereignty in the current global context. The navy ships, patrol vessels, coastguard ships, as well as the naval equipment represent strategic assets for both border protection and defence. They play a major role in protecting Europe's trade lanes. Hence, the EU maritime and shipbuilding strategy should be well aligned with the expected European Defence Industrial Strategy.

The maritime sector is responsible for 3% of global greenhouse and urgently needs to be decarbonised. The implementation of the adopted Fit for 55 package will be key to achieve the transition of the maritime industry. Therefore, to stand at the forefront of European climate goals towards neutrality, the sector will have to overcome many challenges.

Europe has become heavily dependent on Asian producers for the supply of critical maritime equipment. Asian shipyards benefit from significant government support and specific policies tailored to the needs of the sector. Whilst this distorts competition for EU shipyards, it also threatens Europe's industrial sovereignty and capacity to tap into the full potential of the Blue Economy, including offshore renewable energy production, that Europe critically needs to accelerate its energy transition.

Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark and Spain intend to:

- call on the Commission to publish **a new maritime strategy** which would encompass all the dimensions of the sector's competitiveness, namely green and digital transition, labour skills and enforcement of EU law and thus contribute to EU's strategic sovereignty.
- call on the Presidency to consider the specific needs of the maritime industry in its forthcoming **draft Council conclusions on industrial policy**.