

Conference

## International Ocean Governance

### *An agenda for the future of our oceans*

30 January 2017, 15.00-17.00

European Parliament – Room ASP5G1

Ms **Gesine MEISSNER**, MEP, President of the Intergroup, referred to the conference the intergroup organised in the discussion phase, showing the support of the Intergroup to the work of the European Commission (EC) in this regard. She regretted that although there is a Directorate General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries in the EC, the European Parliament (EP) is missing a MARE Committee to echo the increasing importance of sea-related activities.

Mr **Karmenu VELLA**, Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, EC, thanked the Intergroup for its work. He presented the key issues addressed by the Joint Communication. His full speech can be found [here](#).

Mr **José Inácio FARIA**, MEP, Member of the Intergroup, is the EP *Rapporteur* for the ENVI Committee on Ocean Governance. He regretted that we know less about the oceans than we know about the surface of the moon. He stressed how crucial the oceans are for our livelihood and future. He called on the EU to be far more ambitious to protect our oceans.

Mr **Tonino PICULA**, MEP, Vice-President of the Intergroup, stated that our seas and oceans are not only of local importance: our ports are the gates to global trade, securing many jobs beyond the maritime economy itself. The EU is in excellent position to promote international governance thanks to the Common Fisheries Policy, the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive and its marine research excellence. He stressed that we cannot make the same mistakes at sea that we made on land. Our industry cannot suffer from higher standards, we have to work worldwide to promote EU standards based on the best available scientific knowledge. He concluded that we need a global approach

Mrs **Sofia RIBEIRO**, Vice-President of the Intergroup, moderated the session. She explained that the ocean is a part of being Azorean and of our identity and recalled that to fulfil the Joint Communication on International Ocean Governance it is necessary to improve the current knowledge about the oceans, to reduce anthropogenic pressures and increase the sustainable exploitation of the resources, as well as to improve and strengthen the ocean governance framework. In this context, the involvement and commitment of the EU is crucial for building a solid and dynamic framework on international ocean governance, by promoting collaborative work with several partners and stakeholders in order to ensure the success of this initiative.

Mr **Alexander MÜLLER**, Think Tank TMG, explained that we have to use the current opportunity in a strategic way. He suggested 4 lines of action where the EU can have a strong impact:

1. Implementing the agreement on the protection of biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction under UNCLOS. Europe has played a leading role and needs to facilitate the conclusion of the process. The International framework has changed. There are several key questions still pending such as who is going to lead the process? or which country could change its position?
2. Global architecture has changed. It generated a need to develop a registry of all commitments with regard to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 14;
3. He suggested establishing regional partnerships when there is a will to share best practices. He also pointed out the need to go beyond SGD14 as we have to look at the cross-cutting dimension of maritime protection and governance;
4. Establishing a thematic review on oceans at global level. Many of the SDG14's targets have to be achieved by 2020. The maritime community has to make significant progress in this regard, or it would prove that we are not able to implement the SGDs.

Mrs **Geneviève PONS-DELADRIÈRE**, WWF, presented his organisation's position on ocean conservation challenges. Her presentation can be found [here](#). She stressed 3 main points:

1. She welcomed the EU taking a leading role in international ocean governance and championing the implementation of SDG14;
2. The EU has the legislative tools to create the conditions for a sustainable blue economy, however more needs to be done to achieve the Good Environmental Status in our seas by 2020;
3. 2017 is the year of opportunities for EU decision-makers and stakeholders if the series of international high-profile conferences is fully exploited.

Mr **Luis MENEZES PINHEIRO**, University of Aveiro, stated that we cannot use or protect what we don't know. His presentation can be found [here](#). He regretted the pressure on the science community to deliver results. Fundamental science is crucial. There is a need for a long-term vision. We don't have a high-resolution map of the sea bed. This lack makes it complicated to identify the ecosystems. He called for data sharing. We need to use the UN to reach the different states. The International Ocean Discovery Program addresses the major issues. There is also a need to promote international cooperation to defragmented marine data bases. In addition, training programmes are needed.

As a conclusion to this session, Mrs **Ribeiro** stressed the importance of Prof. Pinheiro's statement on the importance of fundamental science in the process.

Mr **Ricardo SERRÃO SANTOS**, Vice-President of the Intergroup, moderated the discussion with speakers and participating experts. He noted that we are losing a generation of champion defenders of the seas and oceans, referencing to the very recent losses of Mário Soares, President the Independent World Commission of the Oceans in 1998, and to Mário Ruivo, who has been Vi-chair of IOC-UNESCO and has been involved in UNCLOS in the late 70's and 80's. Therefore, he said, there is a need to bridge the vision of future oceans with prominent leadership. Europe should take the motivation and the vision. UNCLOS, the Law of the Sea, is a major monument praising ocean sustainability and heritage in the name of peace and sharing. Mr Ricardo Serrão Santos, addressing Commissionaire Vella refereed to the visionary role of Maltese ambassador Arvid Pardo on the wonderful law. Although some key challenges we are facing today were not clearly identified back in the days of its creation, it is the case of biodiversity, namely deep-sea biodiversity, genetic marine resources, global change, sea level rise or ocean acidification.

The international arrangements we have with regard to fisheries are, slowly, on their good way. There have been significant improvements over the past year that brings hope and paves the way for other challenges ahead. The contributions concerning improving World Ocean Governance have to be take with strong motivation. The future of our planet depends on the healthy state of our oceans and seas.

Mr **Rui BETTENCOURT**, Secretary of the Presidency for External Affairs, Government of the Azores, congratulated the Commissioner for the great work that has been done. He stated that the greatest challenge to achieve a successful international ocean governance is in aligning the great variety of actors involved in all the sectorial policies impacting our oceans.

Mr **Julian BARBIÈRE**, Head, Marine Policy and Regional Coordination Section, Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO, stressed the importance of collaboration between UN bodies and the EC. It is of utmost importance that science is at the core of decision-making in maritime affairs. Also, coordination among global partners is crucial. It can be facilitated by working at regional level. He stressed that a fair review of the SDGs demands data, yet, out of the 10 targets, only 2 are routinely monitored. This situation requires capacity building, and ocean literacy is key to reach the SDGs.

Mr **Niall McDONOUGH**, Executive Secretary, European Marine Board, made a couple of points:

1. He agreed with Mr Müller's statement on the importance and role of scientists in the process and joined Mr Pinheiro and Mrs Ribeiro to emphasise the role of fundamental research;
2. He highlighted the importance of ocean observation and data by referring to an initiative in partnership with EuroGOOS to develop an EU Ocean Observing System. We need to have a better-coordinated European effort to collect marine data.

Mr **Jan-Stefan FRITZ**, Head of Brussels Office, KDM, stated that this communication is extremely important because it is a joint communication that brought together different bodies of the EC. Many of the issues tackled are complex, but we should also look at what products can be visible to the public eye. He stressed 2 points:

1. On data and information, we need something similar to EMODnet but on a global level with a European lead;
2. On communication to the public, he suggested to draw a map which could become an exhibition piece for museums. This map would be designed as a product of Europe's vision of International Ocean Governance.

Mrs **Ann DOM**, Deputy Director, Seas At Risk, regretted that the Commissioner won't be able to announce that the EU achieved the Good Environmental Status in its seas in June in New York. She pointed out that showing results would generate a strong leadership. There is a direct link between the Ocean SDG and other SDGs such as the Consumption SDG for instance. On this basis, the development of potentially harmful activities such as deep-sea mining could be prevented to preserve our seas and future generations.

Mrs **Katherine ANGELL-HANSEN**, JPI Oceans, called on the EU to work on the science policy mechanism. There is a demand for educated people that is still to be filled.

A representative from IASS Posdam identified 2 major challenges/opportunities:

- Using the 2030 agenda to reach better integration between maritime sectors,
- Integrating with sectors lying outside the maritime arena.

Mr **Ulf BJORNHOLM**, UN Environment, explained that the UNEP provides some of the backbones to international ocean governance with the Regional Sea Conventions.

Mrs **Maria DELIGIANNI**, ECSA, referred to the ambition to develop discussions with the UN on areas beyond national jurisdiction, on Maritime Protected Areas. She insisted that such discussions have to take place at the International Maritime Organisation. An EU stakeholders' forum would be a good initiative. It is important not to duplicate discussions that are already taking place in existing international forums.

Mr **Christophe TYTGAT**, SeaEurope, added the need to strengthen cooperation between governments, the importance also to cooperate with industry as the EU technology and maritime equipment industries play a key role in ensuring a safe, environmentally-friendly development of maritime activities. They need clear support from the EU.

Mrs **Emma LAPERLA**, Malta Permanent Representation, expressed the intention of the Maltese Presidency to put the oceans high on the agenda. Malta will be looking at the role of Member States with regard to International Ocean Governance.

Mr **Karmenu VELLA** stated that there is no longer a need for more debate, but for actions and commitment. He stressed the need to work closely with the UN, as the EU cannot do anything on its own in this regard. There is still time to start taking preventative actions. The UN is the relevant body to act, backed by the EU.

Our seas and oceans have huge economic potential. However, with these economic opportunities there are also environmental responsibilities, this is whole idea behind the blue economy.

Referring to the previous speeches from the experts, the Commissioner explained that:

- Developing a registry of commitment is something very important. Up to this day there have been 3 Our Ocean Conferences, time has now come to review the progress of the commitments;
- Blue Partnerships and exchange of best practices are important. In the EU, there is the Integrated Maritime Policy, the Common Fisheries Policy, Maritime Spatial Planning, the fight against IUU.
- Different regions are walking at different speeds, regional cooperation schemes have to bring some corrections to fit to the local specificities;
- Focus should be on preventing rather than managing the damages by following the same approach as for the circular economy;
- There is a lot of research in Europe, but it suffers from a lack of sharing of data. We need relevant, recent and shared data;
- Education is a complex challenge. The EU needs to have all stakeholders at all levels on board;
- The EC is looking forward to the June Conference in New York. However, he stressed that SDGs are not a menu. We need to be careful not to address only SGD14 but to deal with it in an integrated manner as the oceans link many SDGs;
- Fundamental research is crucial;
- The idea of a map is interesting to illustrate the importance of our seas and oceans. A map based on the maritime territory would show the importance of the Azores for instance.
- The EC is working to find solutions to extend the European Fund for Strategic Investments to blue sustainable projects. The Commission and the European Investment Bank are considering the feasibility of developing a specific platform for that.

He concluded saying that the past discussions pointed to many challenges, now is the time to come up with solutions, to implement.