

Elements for the intervention of

Mr Ramón Luis Valcárcel Siso

European Maritime Day

Plenary Session IV: Innovation at the Centre of the Integrated Maritime Policy

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Dear Chair,

Dear colleagues,

I am delighted to take part in this year's European Maritime Day, an event that is growing in importance with each year. The Committee of the Regions has over the years proved itself as one of the greatest supporters and most prolific contributors to the shaping of the European Union's Integrated Maritime Policy.

The CoR has always supported the European Commission in the view that an integrated maritime policy will help to solve problems relating among others, to globalisation, competitiveness and degradation of the marine environment. We consider that the overall objective of the EU maritime policy is to recognise and preserve the richness of Europe's seas and to design active measures to safeguard and protect the environmental, economic, biological and cultural wealth of the sea and thereby enhance their great potential. Moreover, we

believe that in order to achieve this objective, a holistic, cross-sectoral approach is needed, based on maritime spatial planning, if we are to address the increasingly intensive use of the sea and foster harmonious coexistence of conflicting interests in a limited, fragile space. It is precisely at this point that maritime policy can incarnate the ideas of the Europe 2020 strategy. In it, the European Commission makes the case for a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, with emphasis placed, among others, on the promotion of innovation, competitiveness and territorial cohesion. All of these need to be at the heart of a successful integrated maritime policy. I would therefore like to reiterate our call for an innovative governance tool, designed in a spirit of multi-level governance and compliance with subsidiarity within maritime policy.

It only follows naturally from this view, that we support the Commission's efforts to develop diversified approaches to tackle the different problems faced by our seas. We believe that policies should be adapted to the specificities of the various sea-basins or fisheries areas. Each sea basin and sea has its own particular combination of constraints and opportunities that require individually tailored responses whether it be in the Mediterranean, the Atlantic, the Baltic or the North Sea.

In support of this approach, we have recently, just over a month ago, adopted an opinion on the European Strategy for the Baltic Sea and are currently preparing an own-initiative opinion on A Strategy for the North Sea-Channel Area. We note that Baltic Sea Strategy is a pilot for a new kind of macro-regional cooperation, key elements of which are the involvement of players at different levels of government and coordinated action. Such action can be underpinned by the establishment of European Groupings on Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), which can be set up by regional authorities in order to facilitate it. Another key point is the fact that the successful implementation of the Strategy depends on the involvement of third countries in the region. For example, in the areas of environmental issues, transport, logistics and national security issues there is a need for cooperation which transcends the EU's external borders.

This last point is further emphasised in the forthcoming CoR opinion on Towards an Integrated Maritime Policy for better governance in the Mediterranean, which is to be adopted in June this year. Because of the unique characteristics of the Mediterranean, among which, the great portion of high seas, coupled with the presence of 22 coastal states, most of which are not EU members, this region, is in a clear need of innovative and simplified policy tools, which must involve local and regional authorities as well as third countries. Among our more concrete proposals is our support for the launch of a

project to test the application of Maritime Spatial Planning at the sub-regional level with a view to encourage concrete cross border practices by providing a detailed proposal within a reasonably short time. For the CoR MSP is regarded as an effective governance tool for applying ecosystem-based management, addressing inter-related impacts of maritime activities, conflicts between uses of spaces and the preservation of marine habitats

Moreover, we would like to specifically call on the European Commission to provide for programmes and measures for outermost regions and islands, particularly in such spheres of activity as the preservation of the fishing industry, through the sustainable management and exploitation of its reserves. This would involve measures aimed at renovating and modernising the fishing fleets of these areas and promoting actions in support of small-scale and coastal fishing. This may be facilitated by the setting up of a single simplified financial mechanism intended to bring together all maritime issues with a European Coastal and Island Fund framework.

Ladies and gentlemen, our seas represent an environment in which a wide variety of actors and interests correlate. Therefore, it is only logical that the strategic goals of the integrated maritime policy as well as the ways to achieve them be established in a most open way, involving all stakeholders. In this

respect, local and regional authorities have made and can continue to make an effective contribution. Some of them, such as Schleswig-Holstein and Brittany, have already been singled out by the Commission for particular praise for their own regional initiatives in the area. Of course, initiatives such as these can only be developed with the active participation of all interested parties and in particular the scientific community. The latter needs to be seriously underlined and further support needs to be granted to the development of scientific and technological breakthroughs in the field of marine research, thereby addressing present and potential future threats not least with regards to dwindling fish stocks. The need to strengthen clusters is also a strategic priority in the promotion of innovation. Here again EGTCs have an important role to play.

Moreover, further incentives need to be introduced to promote private research and development in a number of fields, such as sustainable fish farming, and the laying down of production protocols to which producers must adhere, in the conviction that fish constitutes a key basic foodstuff and in view of the fact that fish farming is a highly resource-intensive process. We are very glad to note that the Europe 2020 strategy acknowledges these needs and introduces a number of measures aimed at improving the conditions for private R&D.

In conclusion, I would like to point out once more that the development of a comprehensive integrated maritime policy addressing such a wide range of cross-cutting issues is an innovation in itself and we can only make it work if we proceed in a spirit of solidarity, cooperation and openness.

Thank you for your attention!