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Union Pour la Méditerranée
DOC. DE SÉANCE N° :16/15
EN DATE DU : 17.03.2015
ORIGINE : UfM Co-presidency

Revised Concept Note for convening a Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Blue Economy

After discussions at the Seniors Official Meeting in Barcelona in December 2014, the Union for the Mediterranean Co-presidencies, the European Commission and the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean have jointly prepared this document.

1. Background

Healthy seas and oceans are drivers for national economies and hold great potential for innovation and sustainable growth. An increasing number of countries around the world are recognising the added value of marine protection and maritime activities and are moving towards a more structured approach and systematic collaboration on maritime affairs.

The Blue Economy refers to established and emerging marine and maritime activities such as maritime transport and port operations, shipbuilding and ship repair, fisheries, aquaculture, maritime and coastal tourism, off-shore wind, tidal and wave energy, marine biotechnology, marine protection and environmental monitoring, etc.

An integrated approach to maritime affairs and to the development of a sustainable Blue Economy allows:

- to take account of the inter-connectedness of industries, human activities and the ecosystems centred on the sea. Whether the issue is shipping and ports, wind energy, marine protection and research, fishing or tourism, a decision in one area can affect the others. For instance, an off-shore wind farm may disrupt shipping, which in turn will affect ports but may have a positive effect on marine biodiversity;
- to save time and money by encouraging authorities to share knowledge and data across policy fields and to cooperate rather than work separately on different aspects of the same problem;
- to look into how the ocean can deliver human necessities such as food and energy in a way that is sustainable, limits negative and cumulative impacts on the marine ecosystems and can also be a source of eco-innovation;
- to build up close cooperation between decision-makers in the different maritime economic sectors at all levels of government – national maritime authorities, regional and local authorities, and international authorities;

Economic activities at sea are built on the international framework for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and their resources, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Moreover, the Barcelona Convention has an essential role to play in the governance of the Mediterranean basin by promoting a holistic ecosystem approach to sea management.

In recent years efforts have intensified to strengthen marine and maritime co-operation in the Mediterranean Sea basin, to explore the potential for a sustainable blue economy and to reap the benefits from the maritime economy whilst safeguarding ocean health via:

- Regional dialogue and exchange of best practices on an integrated approach to maritime affairs across the Mediterranean sea-basin both at regional and national levels, via a dedicated Working Group on Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP) in the Mediterranean and through the four-year project on Integrated Maritime Policy in the Mediterranean (IMP-MED) which ended in November 2014¹. This process has included all Union for the Mediterranean partners, the European Commission, and regional actors such as the Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat, the United Nations Environment Programme/Mediterranean Action Plan for the Barcelona Convention, the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, the European Investment Bank and the Arab League. The IMP-MED project has provided opportunities to the southern partners to elaborate a cross-sectorial vision and engagement through the establishment of a network of IMP national focal points, the gradual and voluntary (based on country interest and demand) development of an integrated maritime approach at the national level, the setting-up of national maritime governance schemes in a number of countries and the preparation of National IMP Work Plans.
- Implementing the Barcelona Convention, its seven protocols and several Action Plans, and working together with United Nations Environment Programme/Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP) on implementing the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (currently under revision), Action Plan for Marine Litter and carrying forward the regional work programme (and related projects) including implementation of the ecosystem approach to the management of human activities in the Mediterranean, with the ultimate objective to achieve a Good Environmental Status (GES).
- Implementing the Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Change, with particular reference to:
 - the Phase II of the H2020 Initiative for a cleaner Mediterranean as the leading element of the Union for the Mediterranean flagship De-pollution of the Mediterranean Sea Initiative, for which the UfM partners reaffirm “*the continued relevance of its four components and the three sectors targeted (waste water, solid waste and industrial emissions), accounting for 80% of the overall pollution of the Mediterranean Sea and “agree to strengthen its pollution prevention dimension and to pay attention to emerging and related issues, such as hazardous waste and marine litter”*”²;
 - “*the opportunities offered by Sustainable Consumption and Production for green, low-emission and blue growth in the context of sustainable development in the region*”³;
 - “*the application of the cross-cutting policy tools available under Integrated Maritime Policy, such as marine spatial planning, to integrate environment and climate change concerns into relevant horizontal policies*”⁴;

¹ A European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument - South funded project on IMP (extended to Western Balkans and Turkey), to be followed by a new European Neighbourhood Instrument project in the second half of 2015.

² Quoting from the May 2014 UfM Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Change

³ Quoting from the May 2014 UfM Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Change

⁴ Quoting from the May 2014 UfM Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Change

- Implementing the Memorandum of Understanding between United Nations Environment Programme/Mediterranean Action Plan and the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean;
- A number of governmental or institutional organisations and/ or co-operation frameworks and initiatives which are active in the Mediterranean Sea basin (see annex I) all of which have enhanced collaboration but could benefit from further linking-up.
- Reinforcing cooperation and coordination through sea basin approaches, by adopting the new EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian region (including both EU and non-EU members) and its action plan that constitute a good example to promote maritime coordination and cooperation in a sub-region of the Mediterranean.
- The implementation of the initiatives agreed at the 12th Facility for Euro-Mediterranean Investment and Partnership (FEMIP) Conference (Athens, 18-19 April 2013) in particular: (a) developing a simple version of a Virtual Knowledge Centre (VKC) on marine and maritime affairs in the Mediterranean⁵ (b) defining a possible Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) project⁶, (c) assessing the feasibility of expanding a network of maritime clusters and (d) launching an assessment on the feasibility, added value and options for setting in motion a network of maritime training academies and institutes.
- Carrying out almost 150 projects and initiatives⁷ related to blue economy and integrated approach on maritime affairs in the Mediterranean with focus on maritime transport, coastal and maritime transport, maritime safety, fisheries control, environmental protection and monitoring, and so on.

The idea of a Ministerial Conference on Maritime Affairs featured in the Work Programme of the Union for the Mediterranean for 2010-2012 and was thereafter repeatedly raised by some Southern partner countries in meetings of the above mentioned Working Group on Integrated Maritime Policy in the Mediterranean³.

2. Rationale

The Mediterranean is a semi-enclosed sea with high population density and seasonal population peaks, which exert an even-increasing pressure on the coastal zones and its waters. All coastal states face similar threats (marine pollution, including marine litter⁸, overfishing, rising of the sea level, coastal erosion, etc.). These threats cannot be tackled or solved without a common effort and close cooperation between all littoral States.

⁵ The VKC is expected to facilitate coordination and cooperation, promote investments and innovation, and support entrepreneurship in the blue economy. Its main infrastructure is an online web portal allowing for the consolidation and sharing of available information and data from existing initiatives and projects related to marine and maritime affairs in the Mediterranean region. The first on-line version of the VKC (www.imp-med.eu/vkc) was officially launched on the occasion of the European Maritime Day 2014 (Bremen, 19-20th May 2014). The European Commission will finance (under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund) a project (to be launched in April/ May 2015) aiming to conduct research work for the future development of the content of the VKC and update it accordingly by the end of 2016.

⁶ Project proposal focusing on the promotion of a MSP in the Western Mediterranean, and in particular on the establishment of a network of Marine/Maritime Highways based on physically-defined navigation routes and Traffic Separation Schemes (TSS).

⁷ List of projects and initiatives could be found at the Annex of the report "Mediterranean Sea – Identification and geographical Scope of Maritime Co-operation", EUNETMAR, September 2014 (available at: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/maritimeforum/sites/maritimeforum/files/Task%205-Report4-Annex.pdf>).

⁸ E.g. Some 10 million tons of litter end up in the world's oceans and seas each year, with significant impacts for human health, the environment and the economy

Mediterranean Sea countries have not yet fully tapped the potential of blue economy and job creation. Uneven economic development, lack of clear vision at sea basin level for the sustainable development of some strategic maritime sectors, limited clustering and networking of education and training organisations, disparities in research and innovation capacity, un-matched supply/demand of skilled people, limited access to finance, are all cooperation and coordination challenges that need to be tackled.

Only strong supervision and steering at political level can address and bring about solutions to these challenges. They cannot be solved only at technical level. A Ministerial Conference getting together all 43 Union for the Mediterranean partners would bring about the political mandate and provide guidance for the next years. It would also give the needed visibility to pressing problems of sea management.

The UfM Ministerial Conference should be prepared by building upon the work carried out by other UfM Ministerial meetings, such as those on energy, environment and climate change, transport, by regional organisations [such as the United Nations Environment Programme/ Mediterranean Action Plan for the Barcelona Convention (UNEP/ MAP) and the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM)] and by associating other relevant actors active in the Mediterranean (such as the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development).

The cross-sectorial feature of the Blue Economy should be reflected in the ministerial set up for the meeting, having in mind the aim to boost jobs and investment and without prejudice to the countries' administrative organisation; it is advisable to involve Ministers responsible for Maritime Affairs and/or for Economy (Planning or Finance may be equivalent). Participation will depend on the institutional set up of each country.

3. Main topics for discussion

The challenges affecting the Mediterranean Sea call for shared and, above all, integrated responses, rooted in improved maritime governance. This is particularly relevant when considering the ever-increasing demands for natural resources and pressures on the marine environment, as well as the continued need for sustainable growth and jobs in maritime sectors and regions

The UfM Ministerial Conference should focus on key opportunities that need to be seized, key obstacles that need to be removed, and in particular the need for coordination and sustainability.

Indicative items may include the following:

- to fully tap the potential of the blue economy for jobs and investment in the Mediterranean Sea, whilst safeguarding its health, and in particular activities such as aquaculture, coastal and maritime tourism (including yachting, marinas and cruise tourism), maritime transport (including deep-sea shipping, short sea shipping, passenger ferry services, port operations), ship-building/repair, offshore wind, and ocean energy. In this process, the interaction between activities and their impacts on coastal zones and maritime space, as well as promoting the circular economy and combating marine litter should be taken into account.
- *Which are the strategic maritime sectors in the Mediterranean Sea basin? Which tools are available for tapping the potential of the Blue Economy in the Mediterranean? Which are the key opportunities? Which threats prevent such sustainable development? Which obstacles need to be overcome? Which should be the elements of a common vision at sea-basin level? How financial instruments can serve better investment and jobs creation in maritime sectors?*

- to address Mediterranean challenges and seize emerging opportunities through research, innovation, education and training.
 - *How to develop new marine based technologies to boost safe and sustainable economic growth and the conservation and valorisation of the marine and environmental cultural heritage?*
 - *How to generate the knowledge needed to ensure ecosystems resilience; provide new tools to mitigate the impacts from global climate change and the multiple environmental stressors in the Mediterranean Sea, and to protect and/or restore vulnerable marine ecosystems? How to implement the ecosystem-based approach in a way that maximises the economic opportunities in working towards Good Environmental Status?*
 - *How to train a new generation of scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs and workers that are able to tackle complex ecological, economic and societal problems, while supporting learning, education, development and transfer of technologies and knowledge for new and qualified “jobs of the sea”?*
- to improve maritime governance by building further on the work carried out so far by ongoing regional initiatives and by existing organizations and cooperation frameworks.
 - *How to ensure coherence and improve coordination amongst countries in order to achieve sustainable and responsible growth of the maritime sectors? To what extent sea-basin strategies can serve those purposes? Is there a need to develop a tailor-made approach for the Mediterranean? What role should the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development play?*
 - *What should be the role for the UfM Secretariat in cross-sectorial coordination of maritime affairs and promotion of blue economy? How the UfM Secretariat should complement, without duplicating, existing initiatives and bodies? Should the mandate of the Working Group on IMP in the Mediterranean be revised/ expanded in order to better fulfil countries' needs? Should a regular process/dialogue be established at UfM level (such as a 'forum') as a mechanism for exchange and consultation on blue economy?*
 - *To what extent the work carried out under existing co-operation frameworks (eg UNEP/MAP, GFCM, etc.) has been effective in addressing maritime governance gaps? How could their added value be increased in a blue economy perspective? How could their effectiveness be strengthened?*
- to capitalise on the existing projects and initiatives and identify areas of common interest for launching new projects.
 - *Amongst existing projects/initiatives, which are the most beneficial for the promotion of sustainable blue economy in the Mediterranean Sea basin? What financial resources could be mobilised for launching new projects?*
 - *What kind of projects focusing on maritime economy should be flagged by the UfM Secretariat?*
 - *Should on-going initiatives such as the Virtual Knowledge Centre on marine and maritime affairs in the Mediterranean and the network of training and education organisations in the maritime fields be undertaken by the UfM Secretariat and/or UNEP/MAP or within the frame of the 2013 Memorandum of Understanding between the two organizations?*

4. Deliverables

The main output will be a ministerial declaration "A roadmap for Blue Investment and Jobs in the Mediterranean". In-line with the UfM philosophy the declaration should:

- be short and focused;
- provide orientations for future cooperation and coordination on maritime affairs;
- give prominence to concrete priority actions and projects with clear ownership, outcomes and deadlines for completion.

It could include (list is non exhaustive):

- ✓ Acknowledgement of the need to cope with challenges and seizing opportunities to growth and jobs creation in the blue economy, such as improved management of sea space, improved training capacity and skills in the maritime domain and increased the potential for cooperation on maritime and marine knowledge.
- ✓ Commitment to seek better coherence, sustainability and integration amongst investments in maritime infrastructures (e.g. submarine pipelines and cables, ocean energy plants, sustainable ports, cruise terminals, etc.), ensuring environmental concerns are properly addressed, and a plan how to do this.
- ✓ Endorsement of a Strategic Marine Research and Innovation Agenda for growth and jobs in the Mediterranean. This agenda should promote research and industrial partnerships across the region and could be built further on the on-going work of the BLUEMED initiative⁹ H2020, and Med4Jobs. This might include welcoming forthcoming initiatives and proposing new ones¹⁰, as per partner countries decisions.
- ✓ Commitment to strengthening cooperation in the area of maritime affairs in order to improve maritime and marine governance and achieve a conducive environment for blue economy in the Mediterranean Sea basin, in particular by:
 - agreeing to task the Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat with cross-sectorial coordination of maritime and marine policies, and the promotion of a sustainable blue economy, together with relevant priority projects, upon availability of dedicated financial resources;
 - endorsing the establishment of a UfM Mediterranean Forum on Blue Economy¹¹, which would annually bring together the Mediterranean countries to exchange information, views and best practices; create synergies among current initiatives; provide input to future actions; develop new sea basin approaches/maritime strategies, without duplicating existing initiatives and bodies, upon availability of dedicated financial resources.
- ✓ Acknowledge the work carried out under existing co-operation frameworks and recommend how their effectiveness could be strengthened.
- ✓ Reconfirming commitment to existing long-term objectives for sustainable management of the sea as expressed in particular by the Barcelona Convention which plays an important role in the efforts to protect and sustainably use marine environment, working towards GES of the Mediterranean; and setting out how to implement the objectives while maximising synergies from a sustainable blue growth perspective also within the frame of

⁹ The BLUEMED initiative is a programming tool developed under the Italian Presidency of the European Council (2nd Semester 2014). The Competitiveness Council of 03-04 December 2014 has endorsed its vision paper.

¹⁰ E.g. establishment of maritime cluster networks in the MED, innovative actions.

¹¹ By building on and replacing the existing Working Group on IMP in the Mediterranean.

the 2013 Memorandum of Understanding between the UfM Secretariat and UNEP/MAP.

- ✓ Ministers could furthermore envisage a Roadmap that sets a clear timeframe, ownerships and clearly define the funding modalities to achieve the above mentioned deliverables and carry out projects/initiatives, including the Virtual Knowledge Centre, the Maritime Training Academy network, Marine Litter, the new project on Integrated Maritime Policy in the Mediterranean region¹², etc.
- ✓ Calling to hold the next Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial on Blue Economy at the latest in 2018, and requesting, in this prospect a reporting mechanism on progress in the implementation of the Roadmap to be agreed.

5. Date and venue

The suggested period for this Ministerial Meeting would be the second half of 2015. The venue and exact date would be agreed through the UfM Senior Officials Meetings. At this stage Brussels appears as the most suitable venue.

6. Preparatory steps for the Ministerial Meeting on Blue Economy

- Two SOMs;
- Two AD HOC SOMs on Blue Economy;
- UfM Stakeholders' Conference on Blue Economy;
- Building on work already done or on going for other relevant UfM Ministerial meetings;
- Informing technical meetings of Regional Organizations.

¹² A new European Neighbourhood Instrument funded project will be launched in the second half of 2015.

Annex I – List of cooperation frameworks in the Mediterranean basin (not exhaustive)

- United Nations Environment Programme/Mediterranean Action Plan for the Barcelona Convention;
- General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean;
- Tripartite initiative launched over 2011-2013 between the European Commission, the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and the European Investment Bank (EIB);
- Mediterranean Coast Guard Functions Forum – a voluntary, independent and non-political body - bringing together administrations, institutions and agencies working on coast guard issues from all Mediterranean countries and supporting their cooperation through promoting networking opportunities (MedCGFF);
- the EuroMed Transport Programme;
- the RAMOGE Agreement for the prevention and combat against pollution in the marine environment and the littoral of the PACA Region (France), the Principality of Monaco and Liguria (Italy);
- Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM), the Inter-Mediterranean Commission under the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR)
- ACCOBAMS (Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area);
- CIESM (Mediterranean Science Commission) with a focus on marine research;
- The dialogue 5+5, between Western Mediterranean EU Member States (France, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain) and the Arab Maghreb Union (Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia);
- Horizon 2020 Initiative, part of the UfM Flagship to de-pollute the Mediterranean Sea by 2020; and SWITCH Med/UfM Med ReSCP.