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**EUROPEAN COMMISSION DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS**  
**(DG MARE)**

Excellences,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very happy to be here in Addis Ababa at this launch of the 2015-2025 decade of African seas and oceans and the celebration of the African day of the seas and oceans.

The adoption of the African Union's continent wide maritime strategy last year was widely supported by the European Union. The 2050 AIM Strategy provides an excellent framework for action in the maritime field.

*Ocean governance*

The fact that we all are here today is evidence of something. There is a new, growing awareness on the need to manage better our ocean resources. The momentum is building up. Successful maritime policy requires good and functional ocean governance. This is a priority for the EU. We are, together with our partners, committed to improving ocean governance.

Sustainable international ocean governance is needed in view of the multiple challenges facing the oceans and seas, the need to keep them healthy, safe and clean oceans whilst generating economic benefits and jobs.

Ensuring a successful and ambitious outcome to the post-2015 Summit in New York in September is a major priority for the EU. The proposed SDGs and related targets show the willingness of the international community to address sustainable development in a balanced and integrated manner, an important political achievement to build on. The proposed stand-alone SDG on Oceans and Seas is great progress in the global sustainable development policies and together with other SDGs presents an opportunity in the overarching, universal and transformative Post-2015 development agenda.

We are pleased that consensus was achieved at the last BBNJ Working Group with the help of many countries at this Conference that new legally-binding instrument should be elaborated. This new instrument is necessary to enhance international oceans governance and to make sure that UNCLOS is brought up to speed with the developments and challenges which have occurred since it was developed thirty years ago.

We are also pleased that agreement was reached quickly on the "modalities" resolution so that the Preparatory Committee can commence its work early next year in order that it can achieve the tasks set out in the recommendations from the Working Group.

### *Blue growth*

For the last few years the EU has been working on an ambitious programme in support of smart sustainable growth for some very promising sectors of the maritime economy.

Our concept of Blue Growth has sustainability at its core: we want the jobs that come from economic growth, and we can't have sustainable jobs if we don't take very good care of the maritime environment. The EU is looking for devising common approaches towards ocean governance and blue economy with other international players.

### *EU Support for 2050 AIM Strategy*

There are considerable similarities between the EU policy in this area and the 2050 AIM Strategy. The EU has a long tradition of maritime cooperation with African countries – e.g in the Horn of Africa region but also through its multiple fishing agreements.

The EU stands ready to continue supporting the implementation of the strategy with concrete actions, under various programmes including maritime security initiatives.

Fisheries is a major component of a maritime strategy. Fisheries are an important source of revenues for coastal communities and contribute to food security and nutrition in Africa. It is important that this sector is fully taken into account in the AU Integrated Maritime Strategy.

Regarding this sector, the EU is supporting the AU Pan-African Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy framework and Reform Strategy, notably through the FISHGOV programme managed by the African Union-InterAfrican Bureau for Animal Resources.

### *OG Consultation*

The EU Commissioner for maritime affairs Mr Karmenu Vella launched a listening tour and consultation on oceans governance to gather stakeholders' views on where the EU can help and contribute to making our oceans healthier whilst securing their resources for the future. It will focus on how the current framework of European and international rules, processes and institutions, stacks up with regard to the challenges we face. I invite you all to send us your thoughts on these matters. The consultation is open until 15 September and you will find all details on the DG MARE website.

The EU is asking questions about what stakeholders think is missing or not functioning well, and how the European Union can use its assets and strengths to contribute to solutions for these problems, including the lack of knowledge, and the strengthening of the institutional and legal framework. In addition to the consultation we will be meeting regularly, over the coming six months, with stakeholders, international partners and business to discuss these issues. The objective is to complete our action on sustainable Blue Growth by developing ideas for better and more coordinated action on international oceans governance - so our maritime economy can thrive, and our seas and oceans are kept healthy.

We hope to receive many comments also from African stakeholders.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me conclude by congratulating you on the present event and by expressing my conviction that this initiative is a good way forward towards creating sustainable growth and prosperity.

Thank you