

Understanding Challenges in the Future Maritime Policy of the European Union

Presentation to Panel by Prof. Salvino Busuttil at a Seminar
held by the International Ocean Institute in Valletta, Malta on 17th November, 2006
on the E.U. Green Paper on European Maritime Policy

1. The Challenges posed in the Green Paper are, in fact, indicated in the margins of each chapter. Primarily, they relate to legal, technical, technological as well as to social and environmental issues.

For Governance, the main challenge

- “is one of developing systems of ocean governance that promote peace and security, equity and sustainable development”, primarily through U.N.C.L.O.S., Agenda 21, global agreements (climate change, bio-diversity, land-based sources of marine pollution) regional and sub-regional arrangements.¹

Indeed, the moral values implicit in the above introduction to the Independent World Commission on the Ocean’s Report refer to the basic ethical dimension in that proper Ocean governance must address the critical interface between people and the sea.

2. The over-riding concern and challenge is to secure the sustainable development of the Ocean through good Governance. Institutional evolution now includes civil society in organs of governance, especially through the regional Commissions for Sustainable Development. Indeed, on the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development (MCSD) the representatives of civil society sit on a par basis with official delegates.

¹ Report of the Independent World Commission on the Oceans , P. 21, Cambridge University Press 1998

3. A question meriting examination suggests itself: How about an E.U. Commission for Sustainable Development?

In the Green Paper, Europe is challenged to retain its leadership in sustainable maritime development. Hence, we should ask what mechanisms should be set up to ensure that a robust maritime development is attainable.

Should we not bear in mind that a healthy marine environment for the sustainable use of ocean resources, is fundamental for E.U. competitiveness, long-term growth and employment, so that Europe remains at the cutting edge of knowledge and technology?

4. Sustaining Europe

Such challenges have to be met *inter alia* by :

- identifying and implementing mechanisms which can turn new scientific and technological knowledge into income and jobs;.
- Finding ways to involve all stakeholders;
- Continuous innovation and creativity (e.g. in new and alternative forms of energy through the oceans – off-shore wind farms use of tides and currents, methane hydrates, safe transport of energy mainly through the guidelines for T.E.N. (Trans-European Network for hydrocarbons);
- Integrating and adopting to climate change in the marine environment;
- Involving more women and youth ²;
- Improving the quality of marine education and facilitating access thereto (to include also training and certification of crews as well as improving their overall security);
- Promoting synergies between interrelated sectors, e.g. in a comprehensive and yet integrated maritime regulatory framework free of complex, and sometimes contradictory rules, emanating from national, regional and international entities.;
- The furtherance of economic incentives and of self –regulation;
- The further development of the Common Fisheries Policy to achieve sustainable fisheries.;

² The forthcoming Pacem in Maribus Convention to be held by the International Ocean Institute in Malta, in November 2007, will address the theme: “Women, Youth and the Ocean” .

- Reducing vulnerability of coastal areas to natural and man-made hazards and having an appropriate compensatory and insurance framework when accidents occur;
- Fostering the implementation of integrated coastal zone management [ICZM];
- Continuing the sustainable development of ports;
- Harnessing the work of regional centres of maritime excellence;
- Providing the tools to manage our relation with the oceans e.g. setting up a European Marine Observatory network³ ;
- Seeking compatibility between land and sea planning (e.g.: in deltas);
- Providing appropriate E.U. financial instruments to contribute to reaching maritime policy goals ;
- Strengthening E.U. Maritime governance;
- Emphasising the E.U. role in global maritime affairs;
- Ensuring that the E.U. contributes, through MEDA and other channels, in the evolution of a pan-Mediterranean maritime policy with appropriate tools to carry it out;.
- Protecting the E.U.'s maritime identity and heritage, especially in the Mediterranean (e.g.cultural tourism, underwater archaeology, diving regulations).

5. Recommendations

- (i) Following the adoption of its Green Paper, the E.U. should eventually convene a European Conference on Ocean Affairs, which could lead to the setting up of a U.N. Conference on Ocean Affairs;
- (ii) An E.U. Commission for Sustainable Development should be created.

³ The creation of such an observatory is one of the major recommendations of the Independent World Commission on the Oceans' report. Moreover, some European nations have recently established, in Lisbon, an inter-governmental network for ocean research and information known as EurOcean.