



Mr Commissioner,

Distinguished guests,

It is a privilege for us as participants in the IOI Training Course on Regional Ocean Governance for Mediterranean and Eastern European Countries to have been made aware of and given this opportunity to interact on the EU Green Paper on Maritime Policy.

The majority of us participants in the course come from EU neighbouring countries and consequently we all have a stake in a future maritime policy for the Union.

Mr Commissioner,

In your forward to the Green Paper, you wrote a very pertinent message that the EU can no longer afford to consider the oceans and seas on purely sectoral bases. The challenge is to explore how different maritime sectoral policies interact and how they can be combined to complement each other and to create synergies given that they all relate to the same basic resource: the world's single ocean.

As stakeholders in that policy, we welcome the tone and content of the Green Paper and we thank you for having enabled us to be part of the debate. The number of very pertinent questions that appear in the context of the Paper demonstrates the great challenge, not only to Europe, but also to the EU neighbouring countries. The answers would be pertinent to both. We have listened to the panels and to your statement which inspire us as we move ahead on our learning curve in understanding the evolving maritime governance paradigm.

The discussions on the Green Paper are set to generate increased interest in our countries and among our citizens, particularly as regards the evolving institutional and implementation mechanisms that will be envisaged in the future as these will have direct bearing on the policies of the neighbouring countries. It is thus important in our view to work and to communicate on common goals in order to build a body of understanding that will lead to

coherence and synergies between the EU framework and the neighbouring countries and consequently allow for an enabling policy space to evolve.

Allow us one or two specific concerns to which the Paper has courageously alluded. We believe that the issue of flag state control is a very pertinent one and that a level playing field is in the interest of fair competition. For this reason, we believe that an EU flag would provide an incentive for the phasing-out of flags of convenience. However, we strongly believe that there should be no compromise in the area of fishing and particularly illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. We therefore look forward to the identification of action that the EU will undertake to strengthen international efforts to eliminate IUU fisheries.

The Paper pertinently raises the question of how maritime affairs should be further integrated into the EU's neighbourhood and development policies. We believe that the EU can make a mutually beneficial contribution by extending its assistance in capacity-building to the neighbouring countries, particularly the developing countries and countries in transition. Intensifying delivery of courses such as the IOI training course for mid-career practitioners in the various maritime disciplines will result in greater understanding, harmonization and cooperation not only with regard to policies, but also with regard to implementation actions and adoption of best practices as those we have been fortunate to be exposed to in this training course.

Finally, an integrated maritime policy is not an easy task to achieve. There will always be tensions between vying interests. The President of IOI has called in the United Nations General Assembly on the Secretary-General of the United Nations to appoint an ombudsman, albeit good-will ambassador, or a special representative for the oceans. The EU may wish to consider, in the context of its future maritime policy, the appointment of a similar representative who would inter alia extend good-will offices to neighbouring countries to ensure the peaceful resolution of differences should they arise.

Thank you,

IOI-Malta Course Participants 2006

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