



## **Healthy Oceans – Productive Ecosystems: A European conference for the marine environment**

3-4 March 2014 - Charlemagne Building

### The Declaration of HOPE

The participants at the HOPE (Healthy Oceans – Productive Ecosystems) marine conference, recognising that:

- The Rio+20 declaration, "The future we want", stresses the main global challenges facing our oceans;
- A healthy ocean delivers a range of benefits now and in the future, providing a basis for the sustainable development of ocean-related economic activities;
- Much remains to be learnt about the marine environment, our collective scientific understanding needs to increase, and be shared widely with the public, to enhance ocean literacy;
- Europe's seas and oceans<sup>1</sup> are under significant pressure and must be safeguarded for their intrinsic value and to ensure the health of their ecosystems including for human benefit;
- The Marine Strategy Framework Directive, along with the EU Biodiversity Strategy and nature legislation, addresses the pressures on the marine environment and requires an ecosystem-based approach to the management of human activities, with a view to achieving "Good Environmental Status" of our seas and oceans by 2020;
- Regional Sea Conventions and other relevant international organisations play an essential role in supporting this goal, thereby protecting the seas and oceans that EU Member States share between them and with third countries.

Call for urgent action to better protect the European marine environment and in particular:

- to take the lead in implementing the Rio+20 conference chapter on oceans through the UN post-2015 framework, including through considering a Sustainable Development Goal on Oceans and supporting the UNCLOS implementing agreement on biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction;
- to restore our fish stocks to healthy levels through the coherent implementation of the new Common Fisheries Policy and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive;
- to increase the national and EU research budgets which are devoted to understanding the oceans and their role in supporting life on the planet;
- to halt marine biodiversity loss and meet the targets set by the EU Biodiversity Strategy to measurably improve the conservation status of vulnerable marine habitats and species by 2020, and by the Convention on Biological Diversity to conserve at least 10% of coastal and marine areas by 2020 through effectively and equitably managed ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas, including under the Natura 2000 network;
- to limit the effects of climate change on oceans, in particular acidification;
- to halt and reverse the impacts of eutrophication of large swathes of our seas, including through reducing nutrient-inflow from diverse sources, such as unsustainable agricultural practices;
- to address all other sources of marine pollution and combat them, in particular the increasing amounts of marine litter, including through the implementation of regional actions plans, and the setting of ambitious targets;
- to ensure the sustainable development of economic activities affecting the marine environment at sea and on land, with the private sector taking appropriate responsibility;
- to phase out environmentally harmful subsidies;
- to create a common framework for maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal management;
- to involve the public in ocean protection and better communicate our goals.

Stress the need to work closer together to protect the marine environment, to achieve greater coordination and cost-effectiveness within and between marine regions and to improve the governance of the seas, in particular through the Regional Sea Conventions and effective implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and other relevant EU environmental legislation.

Urge political leaders to turn words into action and encourage all stakeholders, including the private sector, to take the measures necessary to deliver "Good Environmental Status" for Europe's seas and oceans by 2020.

*4 March 2014, Brussels*

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<sup>1</sup> The term "Europe's seas and oceans" is used to encompass the four regional sea basins which EU Member States share with their neighbours.