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**European Union and Russia
addressing Maritime and Fisheries
Challenges**

Check Against Delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort

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Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a real pleasure to be here today and speak to all of you, new to the family of "fleet professionals". I want to start by saying congratulations! You've already passed your first test. You chose the right career.

In all seriousness, the rewards of a career in fishing are many. You will live by the sea and with the sea, a charismatic force of nature that never ceases to amaze us. You will be able to make a difference in the way we treat and use the sea's resources. You will bring people fish, an essential component of our diet. And, perhaps more importantly, you can look forward to a lifetime of learning. Because the technology to ply the sea – from boats to tools to research - are always advancing. And as fishing professionals, you too will continuously advance, learn and improve.

But let us first of all have a look at the big picture – the backdrop against which you are embarking on your new career.

I don't want to depress you, but sadly we are all facing a harsh reality nowadays. In the EU nine stocks out of ten are overfished and a third of them are in worrying state. Europe has to rely on imports for two-thirds of its fish. The sector lives on low profits and depends on subsidies for survival. How did we get here? There is a fairly simple explanation.

We have enough fleets in Europe to fish much more than fish stocks can sustain. In fact year after year new fishing technology makes us even more powerful. As fish populations start going down, fishermen notice there is less fish available to catch and see their profits decline; so understandably they resort to those potent technological means to try and catch more fish.

Under increasing pressure from the industry, politicians find cushioning solutions that increase short-term fishing opportunities but that do little for the future sustainability of the sector.

Add to this the current global economic downturn and a few intermittent hikes in fuel prices, and you have a very fragile situation which makes fishermen and coastal communities vulnerable in the first place, but which ultimately impacts each and every one of us.

In the EU we have therefore started to undertake a thorough review of the Common Fisheries Policy to change the way we fish. From now on we want to uphold ecological sustainability as the source and economic and social sustainability as the results – and not the other way round.

So sustainability is one of three main messages I bring you today. The problem of overcapacity and overfishing is not just European: it's everywhere in the world!

As fleet experts, you will have a major role to play: in the near future we will need healthy fish stocks; we will need highly-selective gear which minimizes unwanted catches; we will need efficient, low energy vessels, which have the least impact on the environment but provide attracting working conditions for the crew. You will have to use your creativity, your inspiration and your hard work. But the challenge is yours to pick up.

Meanwhile, our efforts for sustainability won't pay off unless they are part of an overall strategic context that both the EU and Russia pursue. Fish swim through seas and borders. We are neighbours and whatever the one does, the other is affected. If we really want the best for our fishing resources and those who make a

living from them, we need to listen to scientific advice and agree common objectives and principles within our international organisations.

So the second message I have for you today concerns cooperation.

The European Union and Russia are no strangers to cooperation: indeed, our strategic cooperation goes back a long way. We enjoy extensive political dialogue on global and more "local" issues.

We don't only have several seas, several stocks and several fishing interests in common; our economic relations are also very important for both parties. The EU and Russia are interdependent in many ways – not least in terms of trade and investment, where the potential for growth is great.

This potential will surely be realised as we improve our framework for cooperation. As sole users of the Baltic Sea, I'm happy to report we are making good progress in managing it together. We are also starting to work together in the Black sea, with the other players sharing that basin.

Our Partnership for Modernisation will give extra momentum to our ongoing cooperation. Furthermore, the new EU-Russia Agreement will provide a solid legal basis for closer bilateral relations. I see this as a comprehensive agreement covering all areas of our relations – from the economy and energy, via science and education, to security policy and human rights. I attach great importance to the inclusion of solid provisions on trade, investments and energy.

But we are not there yet. This is why we must continue to work closely and improve our relationship even more. We need each other to reach our objectives. The EU and Russia are the first and second fishing powers in the world: wherever we fish, whether it is just outside here or out in the Great Seas, our duty is to fish responsibly and sustainably. If we don't, who will?

A good example of the kind of international challenges that we can only meet successfully if we work together, is the Arctic.

A recent report on the EU's environmental footprint in the Arctic region shows that our impact is significant: for example, 24 percent of mercury depositions and 42 percent of sulphur dioxide emissions to the Arctic come from the European Union!

We are aware of our share of responsibility. We intend to work with Russia and the Arctic States for environmental protection and sustainable development – for example to come to good safety standards for polar vessels or for oil and gas exploitation.

The Arctic will test our ability to work together and our common willingness to put environmental protection, sustainability and public safety first. It will show whether we have understood – or not – that all we have is one planet after all.

This leads me to my final message. Respect the sea and its inhabitants: they are your economic future. Fish are a wild and limited resource – one that we have to learn to use judiciously and sparingly. If we overfish a species beyond its capacity to reproduce, that species may never recover to its previous levels. And because nature doesn't like voids, another species will take its place, with a chain reaction of effects that is hard to predict. And we will have changed the ecosystem for ever.

So, don't be like my generation. In my lifetime scientific and technological progress has been quick as lightning; and man, whose instinct is to grasp all it can, has been late in developing the moral sense of it all. This has perhaps weakened our sense of responsibility.

Don't make the same mistake. Understand that our new technologies, combined with our numbers, have made us dangerous; and that those with the most technology have the greatest moral obligation to use it wisely. Always bear in mind that in this business, like in any other, what we do to nature, we do to ourselves.

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At the beginning I said you chose the right career. Yes, I think that new professions are emerging all the time in your field – and if you keep versatile and mobile, you will be in no shortage of intellectual stimulation.

In the EU we have understood that all the policies related to the sea are interconnected and form a complex network: one does not exist without affecting the other. So we are changing the way we work to take those interconnections into account. We call this Integrated Maritime Policy.

The Integrated Policy is creating some new tools and with that, some new jobs. We are starting to manage and plan the use of sea space like we have historically done with cities – because sea development cannot be random, and because good Spatial Planning provides for a better investment climate for businesses.

We have also acknowledged that there is a shortage of comparable and usable data on the present and past state of the sea – things like waves, temperatures, sediments, plankton, algae and so on. So today European scientists and engineers are working together to make high-quality marine data available, so that tomorrow academia and industry can find new uses for these better data. We call this initiative, Marine Knowledge.

Another thing we are doing is creating a common environment for authorities to share data about traffic at sea – merchant ships but also fishing boats, ferries and suspect vessels – so that they can improve both policing activities and rescue operations at sea. If we integrate Maritime Surveillance, we will have a sort of maritime "Europol".

I am telling you all this not just because they are important developments in European Maritime Policy today, but also to show you how there will be plenty of new professions coming up soon in connection with the sea. And you don't want to be left out on any of them.

Even more opportunities will emerge from our Blue Growth strategy. This is a new initiative which analyzes which research and development areas in the maritime domain are the most likely to produce results and jobs in the foreseeable future and deserve immediate attention and means. Part of the strategy is attracting young people like you towards the maritime career and preparing them to be able to move across sectors and cross-fertilize them. This is what I mean when I say: stay mobile.

In closing, I wish you all the best in your careers, staying mobile, respecting the sea and understanding the value of cooperation. Anton Chekhov said: "Knowledge is of no value unless you put it into practice". When you do put it into practice, I hope you will remember some of these messages. For the rest, the future is yours.

Thank you so very much for inviting me.