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The Integrated Maritime Policy in 2011

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

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Honourable Members,

I would like first to thank you Mr Chairman for your kind invitation to come and talk with you today. It is my second time in your Committee. I had the pleasure to come last June and answer to your questions when Ms Meissner gave a presentation of her report on the Integrated Maritime Policy.

This report is the latest example of the European Parliament's consistently solid support for the IMP. The thoughtful and constructive policy proposals set out in it show a clear and ambitious vision for the IMP going forward. They open up a number of potential new avenues and underline the priority of developing the maritime dimension of the Europe 2020 strategy.

Now it is time to see where we stand. That's why I would like to recall what has been done so far and outline briefly some of the main IMP projects in the pipeline for 2011.

1- In September we delivered the Communication "Marine Knowledge 2020". We are convinced that the sea offers many exciting new opportunities for growth. However, exploiting them requires more knowledge. This knowledge will enable Europe's scientists, engineers and entrepreneurs to come up with the new products and services to drive this growth.

So our proposal seeks to make full use of the data that EU Member States collect and thus recoup the collection costs incurred. In addition, it will help us to achieve many of the other targets set out in your report. For instance, it will help us react more quickly to the unexpected disasters similar to Deepwater Horizon. And it will help us adapt to climate change by improving our forecasting ability. We reckon that if we reduce uncertainty over future sea-level rise by 25% we can save about a hundred million euro per year for those concerned with protecting London, the Netherlands and Venice from angry seas. So this proposal is about making data collection and usage more efficient and accessible and making savings at one and the same time.

2- Cost-effectiveness and optimisation of data collection and usage are also central to the initiative for the Integration of Maritime Surveillance and a Common Information-Sharing Environment for the EU maritime domain. This is an initiative backed by the European Parliament.

The Commission has adopted two weeks ago a Communication, which sets out a roadmap and a tight timetable to enable national authorities across the EU to exchange their data in a lawful, practicable and cost-efficient manner. 2011 will see us continue testing data exchange in practice in the two ongoing pilot projects. We will also begin implementing the roadmap in earnest.

3- The Commission will continue to explore all possible means of creating blue growth and jobs. To that effect, it is launching a study into how we can make blue growth scenarios a reality. We will look at areas in which more research, innovation or technological development is needed. This preparatory work will feed into a Commission Communication on "Blue Growth" planned for 2012. Also, we will continue to work for the sustainable development of industries such as tourism and marine renewable energies.

4- With the Communication on Tourism, we now have a political framework to promote high-quality tourism in Europe that delivers sustainable jobs. And if successfully exploited, new energy sources could trigger investments and create new jobs in coastal areas. I would like to mention that maritime and coastal tourism are fully taken into account in this new text.

Turning to 2011, I'd like to begin with maritime spatial planning. The European parliament has asked the Commission to act in this respect. I am therefore happy to inform you that we are preparing a proposal for action. Our aim is to enable Member States to optimise the use of marine space. We will focus here on a common approach to MSP, in order to facilitate cross-border cooperation, working with the Member States and regions concerned.

Any further action on Maritime spatial planning at EU level must dovetail with broader policies and initiatives and uphold the subsidiary principle. To guide this action, the Commission will launch an impact assessment with a public consultation to explore a range of non-binding and legislative options to take Maritime spatial planning forward.

Next year the Commission will continue its development of integrated sea-basin strategies. Our focus for the Atlantic will be on the strategy and allied actions that Parliament and Council have requested.

The Atlantic presents a number of unique features. Challenges include the isolation felt by some regions, low population densities and communication with these regions. But the powerful wind, waves and tides offer potential for renewables. This way we can reduce Europe's carbon emissions and dependence on unreliable suppliers. And the Atlantic fringe is a prime candidate for the practical support for cultural and linguistic diversity advocated in the Lisbon Treaty. We will build on these thoughts and on the ideas contributed through the consultation process to deliver our strategy by June next year.

Honourable Members,

Clearly, this ambitious set of proposals and actions needs uninterrupted financial support to be effective and operational during the remainder of the current financial perspective, from 2011 to 2013.

This brings me to the key issue of our proposal for a Regulation to secure financial support for the IMP for the remainder of the current financial perspective. Not financing IMP actions and activities over this period would stop us. Stop us from delivering the very cross-sectoral sustainable development for our seas and coasts and the policy objectives that are needed.

I believe the proposed funding of EUR 50 million is quite modest. Especially if you consider that, its purpose is threefold.

Firstly, it should enable the Commission, with Member States and stakeholders, to continue the exploratory work. This work is already initiated through preparatory actions and test projects. It should allow us to further develop and give practical form to options for implementation of the Integrated Maritime Policy in line with Council, European Parliament and stakeholder expectations.

Secondly, it should complement and add value to existing and future financing from Member States and coastal regions.

And thirdly, it should go into finding synergies with other EU financial instruments. This way funds with an impact on the seas and coasts are used more coherently.

We have to focus on IMP priorities which will bring benefits to all concerned. From EU agencies and public and private organisations to NGOs and stakeholders in Member States and third countries.

Hence my appeal to you to give top priority to the legislative process for this Regulation. It has to enter into force as soon as possible in 2011. The European Parliament's enthusiasm for the IMP is beyond doubt. Indeed, in your resolution based on the report of Mr Meissner you called for swift adoption of the Regulation. In doing so you showed once again that you understand the IMP and its priority needs.

The Commission looks forward to working with Parliament on the timely entry into force of this regulation. We already see what the IMP can do. With secure financial backing, it could do so much more.

Honourable Members,

I am confident that, with your support, 2011 will be another good year for the IMP. Looking further ahead, all Commission departments are now working on the financial perspective to take us from 2014 to 2020. My services are looking at ways to mainstream the IMP dimension into all EU funding from 2013 on. This seems only right, as the IMP is now a mainstream policy and an acknowledged source of future growth and prosperity. The IMP has truly come of age.

Thank you.