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## **The Future Economics of the Sea**

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

Meeting of the Employers' Group of the European Economic and Social Committee

**Brussels, 14 March 2011**

Dear President Malosse, dear Members,

It is a great pleasure to meet you all. Today I have at least two reasons to thank you: thank you for inviting me; and thank you for thinking about the maritime perspective, acknowledging the immense economic potential of our seas.

We may be at the dawn of a "maritime era".

Today I'd like to show you with a few concrete figures and examples what I mean and why it is important that you take part in this process of change.

The seas are simultaneously ways of transport, sources of raw material, sources of energy, sources of food, water reservoirs, the world's climate engine, and a place for leisure. With about 70% of its surface covered by water, Earth is the blue planet.

Europe's coastal regions are home to about 40% of the EU population, while the maritime economy accounts for a production value of some 450 billion euro.

Maritime economic activities are of huge economic importance to Europe as a whole, and also to individual countries.

To give you an example, in France, over 540 000 people are directly employed in the maritime industry, generating roughly 75 billion euro in 2009. Island states like Malta or Cyprus have more than 10% of their total employment in maritime sectors. In Denmark, no part of the country is further away from the sea than 50 km.

I could go on, but I think you see my point. We are still underestimating the seas' importance to man's life. Yet, already huge today, it is only bound to grow in the future.

These figures prompted Commission President Barroso to pinpoint the maritime sector as a prime source of new growth, employment and social cohesion. The "EUROPE 2020 strategy" stressed that Europe cannot continue to rely on demand-driven economic growth and reiterates the importance of the maritime sectors in the particular context of resource efficiency, competitiveness and climate action.

We know that there is clearly scope for the oceans, seas and coasts to unlock new sustainable sources of growth. And we must be capable of channelling these activities into industrial applications and ensuring that they benefit society. It is what I like to call "Blue Growth".

I think we can all play a role here – and by 'we' I mean on the one hand we as EU institutions and on the other you as representatives of European employers.

It is up to the IMP to put in place the measures that will bring "Blue Growth" – and the "Blue Jobs" that go with it – to fruition.

This will require an approach on three fronts.

- Firstly, we need to analyse sustainable maritime growth scenarios, their drivers and the policy measures required to make these scenarios a reality.

This means identifying areas where more basic or applied research efforts are needed prior to commercialisation, and which generic innovation trends and technological developments should be supported – a striking example being the harvesting of wave energy in the United Kingdom, where innovators, investors and the government are now moving fast towards the marketing of this marine renewable energy, creating high-quality jobs and paving the way for a new green industry.

- Secondly, we need to establish and satisfy our marine and maritime knowledge and data needs.

You may be aware that at end of last year I launched the "Marine Knowledge 2020" initiative to establish a network of accessible, compatible and timely data about the

status of our seas and oceans, so that our policy-making is based on our best science. The Commission is also proposing a new "innovation partnership" that will improve the viability of deep-sea mining by developing Europe's marine knowledge base. Europe remains a world leader in the enabling technologies for this new frontier. We need a sound understanding of deep-sea environment, which will also ensure that investments are shielded from disasters like the one we have seen in the Gulf of Mexico. Europe has promising sites for mining deep-sea minerals, for example in the Acores and in Italy, but more research is clearly needed for complete protection of the eco-systems that could be affected.

- The third and final front involves us agreeing on what steps are needed from regulatory authorities to set the appropriate framework conditions to foster growth. I am thinking here of moves such as overcoming legal and regulatory obstacles, providing market incentives, optimising planning, licensing and certification processes, addressing training shortcomings and activating financing.

In late 2012 we want to bring this three-pronged approach into a Communication on a blue growth strategy and on the industrial and research policy push needed to make it real.

Without pre-empting on-going studies, we can already see, for example, that bio-economy has a huge potential. The Commission is currently running a public consultation on this, pointing out that the sustainable use of biological resources from both land and sea in order to replace fossil-based resources while guaranteeing food security will have to be one strand of our long-term economic strategy.

Another example is the infrastructure needed by 2020 and 2030 to bring offshore and marine renewable energy onshore to consumers. Here, huge investments will be needed, but they will be compensated by the savings on our fossil fuel bill, which is only bound to increase in the future; plus they will create high-quality jobs in the EU.

So far I have talked about untapped sources of growth. But we must not neglect the sustainable development of well-established industries such as tourism, renewable marine energy, shipbuilding, short-sea shipping, fisheries and aquaculture.

Let's start with tourism: The Lisbon Treaty endowed the EU with a new competence as regards tourism. To translate this into a vision, in 2010 the Commission set out a new political framework to promote Europe as the world's No 1 tourist destination.

A next step will now be to develop a "strategy for sustainable coastal and marine tourism". The challenge here is to identify how to promote responsible, high-quality tourism that will deliver sustainable jobs - jobs that will stay in Europe and have a strong local impact.

I shall be following and contributing to this initiative very closely, as it is of great economic significance for us all, whether we live along the coasts of Europe or visit them as tourists.

Another traditional maritime sector with growth potential is shipping. We need to secure a global level playing field for the sector and to enhance its environmental performance with regard to pollutants, emissions, waste treatment, litter control and ship recycling. This will not only benefit the environment, it will also create jobs as we move to more sophisticated solutions. If we exploit the full potential of short-sea shipping through the trans-European networks and the motorways of the seas; if we have better port infrastructures and adopt e-maritime solutions; if we establish a truly internal market in shipping services, all this will open up new business opportunities and produce an overall benefit to society – especially coastal regions.

As for fisheries, there is a new system in the making that clearly focuses on sustainability in all its aspects: environmental, social and economic. By adopting an ecosystem-based approach, we make sure we exploit resources sustainably and derive stable catches in the long term – which in turn means stability for the sector. By moving decision-making away from Brussels, we make sure that the needs of regional and local communities are accounted for. By financing only projects that contribute to the EU 2020 agenda for growth, we encourage fishermen and other operators to find innovative solutions with green credentials.

Your involvement is only bound to increase under the reform. It is my belief that part of the burden of resource management should lie with the industry. Fish farmers, for example, can flank our conservation efforts with innovative, environment-friendly techniques; producers' organisations can and should take on the sustainability challenge by preparing and implementing sustainable fishing plans or planning and steering market demand. We also plan to improve information to consumers and for that, too, we will need your help.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I'd like to turn now to what you can do to contribute to Blue Growth. As representatives of the European employers, I believe you are the perfect interface between us and the European investors.

You can help us enter into a dialogue with private industry and convince them that Blue Growth is the way to go; show them that maintaining both high environmental standards and high social standards is in fact a win-win choice; explain that investing in clean technologies and creating new, attractive jobs in Europe is a smart move right now.

Help us explain that initial capital investment or daily operating costs should not be the main concern: long-term prosperity and a stable society are. Strategic thinking is required here, as the Chinese have clearly understood.

Through a study we have recently launched, we are going to interview some 150 key people from private industry and ask them what they think is needed to trigger new investments. We need their expertise and knowledge of the market – and I believe you can bring that to us.

In conclusion, ladies and gentlemen,

Maritime policy is called on to play a full part in pulling Europe out of the ongoing economic downturn, providing it with the economic and social backbone to help it stand strong in the face of future challenges.

Sustainability not only enhances skills and promotes advanced technologies. It also implies long-term economic opportunities. It is also the only way we know to protect Europe's maritime zones, biodiversity and the marine environment.

In my vision, your Group is fully involved in this change and, together, we shape a maritime policy that helps change Europe for the better.

Thank you.