EU and China join forces to improve international ocean governance

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At the first Blue Partnership Forum for the Oceans (05/09/2019), the European Commission and Chinese authorities have shown their eagerness to work together and improve international ocean governance. Together with Chinese and European stakeholders, both administrations have started to define joint actions that will implement the Ocean Partnership, signed in July 2018.

The Ocean Partnership between the EU and China marks an important moment in our bilateral relations. Its implementation can play a major role in achieving the targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular SDG 14. That is why on 5 September, European Commissioner Karmenu VELLA invited more than 150 European and Chinese stakeholders at the Thon hotel in Brussels, to help shape joint actions and future cooperation.

We can look back on a very successful event. A few first conclusions of the day:

1. **The blue economy and the Blue Economy Finance Principles** – Stakeholders agreed more direct investments should go into sustainable oceans sectors and ecosystem restoration. Financial institutions play a crucial role in directing financial flows. The Blue Economy Finance Initiative and Principles are a practical tool for them to deliver ocean solutions.
2. **International cooperation on sustainable fisheries** – China and the EU are important global fisheries players. Actions should reinforce the implementation of the existing legal framework, including ratification of the Port State Measures Agreement, enhancing RFMO performance, strengthening the fight against IUU fishing and strengthening fisheries data transparency.
3. **Area-based management tools**, including maritime spatial planning and marine protected areas – Participants stressed that different sectors (science, business, public organisations, NGOs...) need to work together when developing these tools. EU and China should strengthen

cooperation in the planning of marine protected areas and advancement of global maritime spatial planning. EU stakeholders called on China to support the EU and its Member States' proposals to create two marine protected areas in the Southern Ocean at the annual meeting of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources in October this year.

The Blue Partnership Forum for the Oceans was followed by a high-level dialogue on oceans affairs co-chaired by Commissioner Vella and Administrator Hong Wang, from China's State Ocean Administration.

In 2020, China will host the Blue Partnership Forum as well as three high level dialogues on oceans and fisheries, including IUU, on Law of the Sea and on the Arctic.

Background

The EU and China have a longstanding cooperation on ocean affairs and the organisation of the EU-China Blue Year in 2017 created further momentum to strengthen bilateral cooperation. The "*Blue Partnership for the Oceans: towards better ocean governance, sustainable fisheries and a thriving maritime economy*" [2] was signed at the EU-China Summit on 16 July 2018 in Beijing. The Ocean Partnership with China was the first of its kind and sets out a comprehensive framework for cooperation in the domain of the oceans. In April 2019, at the EU-China Summit, political leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the effective implementation of the Blue Partnership for the Oceans, including cooperation on promoting sustainable fisheries and fighting illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. In particular, leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the exchange on the conservation and sustainable use of Antarctic marine living resources, including the establishment of marine protected areas in the Antarctic Ocean.