Declaration on the establishment of a Blue Partnership for the Oceans: towards better ocean governance, sustainable fisheries and a thriving maritime economy between the European Union and the People's Republic of China

The European Union (EU) and the People's Republic of China, jointly referred to hereinafter as "the two Sides", as Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), recognise that the ocean is a common good and that ocean governance, including fisheries, is a shared challenge and responsibility that calls for closer international cooperation and global action. They also acknowledge that they have an important role in setting an example to promote better global ocean governance, including fisheries, for sustainable development.

The two Sides acknowledge their longstanding cooperation on ocean affairs, including fisheries, in particular in the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding on establishing a High Level Dialogue on an integrated approach to Ocean affairs, signed between the European Commission and the Government of the People's Republic of China on 6 October 2010 (hereinafter "the 2010 Memorandum of Understanding"). The longstanding cooperation between the two Sides also builds on the High Level Dialogue on Law of the Sea and Polar Affairs, the High Level Dialogue on Fisheries, and the meetings of the EU-China Working Group on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing matters held in 2016 and 2017.

The regular High Level Dialogues that have taken place since 2010 have promoted and enhanced mutual understanding through the exchange of information and views on domestic policy approaches, legislation, experiences and best practices.

The two Sides stepped up their cooperation through the organisation of the EU-China Blue Year in 2017, bringing together representatives from the public and private sectors from both sides to share knowledge and exchange information, views, experiences and good practices on ocean matters, including at the EU-China Blue Industry Cooperation Forum. During the EU-China Blue Year, the two Sides accepted to explore the possibility of reinforced cooperation beyond 2017.

In order to further develop and strengthen their cooperation, the two Sides hereby intend to establish a Blue Partnership for the Oceans: towards better ocean governance, sustainable fisheries and a thriving maritime economy (hereinafter referred to as "the Partnership") as a means to promote better ocean governance and policy coordination, without prejudice to the respective responsibilities of the two Sides in their areas of competence.

A. OBJECTIVES

(1) The two Sides share the objective of promoting enhanced cooperation to ensure effective governance for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources and ecosystem services.

(2) The two Sides share the objective of maintaining, strengthening and, as appropriate, creating ocean governance mechanisms and structures, including in the area of fisheries, that keep the oceans clean, healthy, productive and safe whilst creating the best possible investment climate that is conducive to enabling sustainable use by present and future generations, including job creation and sustainable economic growth.

(3) The two Sides share the objective of enhancing technical cooperation through the exchange of information and views on domestic policy approaches, legislation, experiences and best practice as well as through related concerted actions and approaches and joint initiatives, including at global, national, regional and local level, to improve global ocean governance and to advance ecological progress and scientific research, including in the area of fisheries.

(4) This Partnership aims at an increased coherence and efficiency, as well as at an enhanced quality and impact of the activities of the two Sides in the areas covered by the Partnership.

B. PRINCIPLES

(1) As Parties to UNCLOS, the two Sides value the essential role of international partnerships to achieve shared objectives and agree to develop this partnership based on the principles of equality, respect, and trust with the aim of enhancing cooperation for mutually beneficial results.

(2) The two Sides emphasise their commitment to achieve the Paris Agreement goals and are mindful of the effects and risks that climate change, ocean warming, acidification, sea-level rise and deoxygenation pose to ocean ecosystems and their services. In this context, the two sides stress the importance of progressing work in the International Maritime Organization (IMO) towards the implementation of the IMO strategy for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from ships adopted in April 2018.

(3) The two Sides reaffirm their commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 and other related SDGs.

(4) This Partnership complements and builds on existing cooperation between the two sides, in particular the High Level Dialogues.

(5) This Partnership is a non-binding instrument which does not create rights or obligations under international law, nor commit either Side financially.

C. AREAS FOR DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION

This Partnership covers dialogue and cooperation to improve ocean governance in all its aspects including fisheries, and to develop a sustainable blue economy, as well as cross-cutting tools to implement the partnership.

(1) Ocean governance

a) Coordinated approach and actions to implement the relevant commitments in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular to achieve the ocean-related targets including those of the Sustainable Development Goal on Oceans (SDG 14) and following up the voluntary commitments made and the Call for Action agreed at the UN Ocean Conference (June 2017).

b) Cooperation to improve global ocean governance, such as for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, their resources and ecosystem services, including to elaborate the text of an international legally binding instrument under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ), as well as to support academic research and exchange of views on BBNJ-related issues.

c) Enhancing cooperation, building on the framework set out by UNCLOS, within and between relevant regional organisations, such as multilateral environmental agreements, where appropriate.

d) Cooperation through the Our Ocean Conferences, including the follow-up to the Conference hosted by the EU in Malta on 5-6 October 2017 as well as previous and subsequent editions, in particular as regards the tracking and implementation of commitments.

e) Addressing common concerns relating to the Arctic Ocean to minimise, mitigate or adapt to, where appropriate, the challenges posed by climate change caused notably by global activities in accordance with the Paris Agreement and the conservation and sustainable development of the Arctic Ocean, and supporting scientific research cooperation in this regard.

(f) Addressing common concerns relating to the Southern Ocean such as the conservation of Antarctic marine living resources.

g) Cooperation to prevent, monitor and significantly reduce pollution of all kinds in the oceans, including marine plastic litter and microplastics, in line with Agenda 2030 and relevant SDGs through the exchange of best practices and cooperation in international fora including initiatives supporting the implementation of the G20 Action Plan on Marine Litter, adopted in July 2017.

h) Cooperation in implementing the Paris Agreement on climate change as relevant to the ocean, including by supporting the full consideration of the impacts of acidification and ocean temperature change in the next assessment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), inter alia on sea level rise and conservation and restoration of coastal ecosystems.

i) Cooperation to improve the state of ocean, taking into account the findings of scientific assessments, including the global and regional ecosystem assessment of the Intergovernmental science-policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, the World Ocean Assessment and the IPCC special report on climate change and oceans and the cryosphere.

j) Support for ocean assessment through the UN Regular Process, taking into account regional assessments and increasing experience and best practice exchanges on the evaluation of the state of the marine and coastal environment.

(2) Blue economy

a) Promoting the conditions for a sustainable blue economy, reconciling ocean-related sustainable economic growth with improved livelihoods and promoting a level-playing field through joint discussion and exchange on supporting policies.

b) Exploring the possibility of establishing platforms for information exchange and cooperation involving enterprises, research institutes, financial institutions and industry associations, and of organising joint private/public fora to exchange best practices on selected maritime activities.

c) Exploring the possibility of developing sustainable Blue Economy Financing Principles and encouraging the engagement of financial institutions and investors from the two Sides.

d) Promoting the circular economy within the blue economy based on clean technologies and best available practices.

e) Fostering joint discussion and exchange on supporting policies for enabling sustainable growth of maritime sectors such as encouraging and strengthening investment, enlarging financing for innovative business, and promote knowledge transferring from research to innovation.

f) Promoting business-to-business contacts between European and Chinese companies active in the blue economy.

(3) Fisheries issues

a) Coordination and cooperation in global fora, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations General Assembly.

b) Coordination and cooperation in Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) to which both sides are Parties to promote better governance, science, compliance and science-based fisheries management.

c) Cooperation to prevent unregulated commercial fishing in the high seas areas.

d) Promoting the initiatives of the FAO and of relevant RFMOs aiming at fighting IUU fishing activities and exchanging information relating to fishing vessels suspected of such activities and conducting necessary follow-up cooperation, in accordance with applicable international law, to effectively combat IUU fishing, including through the EU-China Working Group on IUU fishing matters.

e) Cooperation to promote sustainable fisheries governance, policies and management, to strengthen effective systems of control, inspection and enforcement.

(4) Cross-cutting tools to promote this partnership

a) Exchange of best practices on the conservation and sustainable use of marine living resources and marine ecosystems, including through marine protected areas.

b) Exchange of best practices on marine coastal restoration, land-based pollution prevention, maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal zone management.

c) Cooperation to improve "ocean literacy", exchange of know-how, experiences and best practices on marine and maritime research and innovation, and exchanges on marine technological standards.

d) Support initiatives for enhanced global sea and ocean observation, as required, to monitor, inter alia, the impacts and effects of climate change on the ocean, and marine ecosystems while fully sustaining and coordinating with ongoing observation.

e) Promotion of open science and open data, as well as the improvement of the global data sharing infrastructure, to the extent possible, to facilitate the discoverability, accessibility and interoperability of a wide range of marine data to the benefit of international community as a whole.

D. ARRANGEMENTS

(1) The arrangements set out below should apply to the Partnership.

(2) The focal points for the Partnership will be the Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of the European Commission for the European Union on the one hand, and the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of the People's Republic of China on the other. The focal points should ensure coordination with and involvement of other actors, as necessary.

(3) The coordinating mechanism of this Partnership will be the High Level Dialogues, through which the two Sides intend to discuss regularly all matters related to this Partnership. The meetings should take place alternately in the EU and China.

(4) The two Sides also intend to meet in a "Partnership Forum" (hereinafter "the Forum") to be held on the occasion of the High Level Dialogues and bringing together representatives from both Sides. The Forum should be organised and chaired by the host Side and focus on a limited number of previously agreed topics within the areas of cooperation outlined in Section C of this Partnership.

(5) The two Sides may set up ad-hoc working groups relevant to this Partnership on the basis of reciprocity, subject to the due observance of their respective rules and regulations, and also invite each other to other meetings.

(6) The two Sides aim to inform and consult each other, as appropriate, on issues of mutual interest in the areas defined in section C of this Partnership.

(7) The two Sides intend to take all necessary communication measures to maximise the visibility of this Partnership and, more specifically, of their shared objectives and principles, with the aim of increasing awareness and understanding within the general public and specialised audiences.

Written in English and Chinese with both texts having equal validity.

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