

## International Ocean Governance

### *An agenda for the future of our oceans*

On 30 January 2017 the Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Karmenu Vella, met on the invitation of the Seas, Rivers, Islands and Coastal Areas Intergroup with eleven Members of the European Parliament and more than twenty maritime stakeholders at the European Parliament to discuss the Joint Communication on International Ocean Governance, launched in November 2016, and the upcoming report of the European Parliament. Commissioner Vella presented the key issues addressed by the Joint Communication and emphasised "With this Communication the EU is turning its promises into action. It is taking the lead to create a stronger system of ocean governance around the globe" (full speech [here](#)). Afterwards the MEPs Mrs **Gesine MEISSNER**, President of the Intergroup, Mrs **Sofia RIBEIRO**, Mr **Tonino PICULA** and Mr **Ricardo SERRÃO SANTOS**, Vice-Chairs of the Intergroup, and Mr **José Inácio FARIA**, MEP, Member of the Intergroup and rapporteur of the European Parliament for the ENVI Committee, welcomed jointly the communication and stressed the importance of a closer international cooperation to tackle current and future maritime challenges. Furthermore, they highlighted some key issues to reach EU targets in terms of sustainable blue development such as bridging ocean knowledge gaps and promoting EU high environmental standards at global scale.

At this occasion, the following speakers had been invited to present their point of view on the three priorities of the Communication: Mr **Alexander MÜLLER**, Think Tank TMG, spoke on "improving the iog framework", Mrs **Geneviève PONS-DELADRIÈRE**, WWF, on reducing pressure on oceans and seas and creating the conditions for a sustainable blue economy and Prof. **Luis MENEZES PINHEIRO**, University of Aveiro, on strengthening international ocean research and data.

The meeting was also a chance for maritime stakeholders to share their views on the Joint Communication and Ocean International Governance in general. Mr **Rui BETTENCOURT**, Secretary of the Presidency for External Affairs, Government of the Azores, Mr **Julian BARBIÈRE**, Head, Marine Policy and Regional Coordination Section Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO, Mr **Niall McDONOUGH**, Executive Secretary, European Marine Board, Mr **Jan-Stefan FRITZ**, Head of Brussels Office, KDM, Mrs **Ann DOM**, Deputy Director, Seas At Risk, Mrs **Katherine ANGELL-HANSEN**, JPI Oceans, Mr **Ulf BJORNHOLM**, UN Environment, Mrs **Maria DELIGIANNI**, ECSA, Mr **Christophe TYTGAT**, SeaEurope, Mr **Sebastian Unver**, IASS Potsdam, and Mrs **Emma LAPERLA**, Maltese Presidency.

Various speakers highlighted the importance of a close cooperation between the United Nations and the European Union and the strong link between this initiative and the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular, but not exclusively, n° 14. Participants stressed the need to strengthen the involvement of various stakeholders in the process and the need to increase the visibility of ocean governance towards the public. On behalf of the

# INTERGROUP SEAS, RIVERS, ISLANDS AND COASTAL AREAS



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Maltese Presidency, Mrs **Emma LA FERLA** assured that the oceans will be high on the agenda of the EU during the next months.

The Commissioner took his time to answer all questions raised in the discussion and concluded the meeting stating that the time has come to provide solutions for the challenges pointed out in the past. He also thanked the Searica Intergroup for the organisation of the event and called the Intergroup to organise a second discussions in the months to come.