



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Statement by President Barroso at the joint press conference with Cypriot President Christofias following the Informal Ministerial meeting on EU Integrated Maritime Policy

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

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First of all let me begin by thanking President Christofias and the Cypriot Presidency for the initiative of this Conference and indeed the warm hospitality throughout my visit here. I would like also to thank you, my dear friend, also for the very kind words regarding the role of the Commission in the launching and shaping of the integrated maritime policy, including of course the role of my colleague Maria Damanaki. Thanks also to Minister Flourentzou, and all the Ministers of the Member States, and indeed some non-member states but very close friends of ours that have also given their contribution for the success of this Limassol Conference.

I see this conference and the Limassol Declaration as a break-through moment on how the European Union understands and promotes European maritime policy. I am quite sure that many years from now people will refer to the Limassol Declaration as a very important doctrine and policy guidelines for our maritime policy.

Today, we have full agreement that the maritime economy can make a crucial contribution to fostering jobs and growth. There is no doubt that our seas and oceans can help Europe's economic recovery in a decisive way. We are often told to look to the stars, but we should also look to our seas.

I very much welcome the clear endorsement in the declaration of the European Commission's Blue Growth Communication presented by Commissioner Maria Damanaki. We have made policy recommendations for the sectors with the highest growth potential and these are well reflected in the declaration.

For instance: renewable energy from the sea can contribute to our goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. But developing ocean renewable energy also opens up opportunities for the shipbuilding industry to diversify into off-shore platforms or wind turbines and for coastal communities to regenerate ports, peripheral areas and outermost regions of the European Union. Indeed the EU is a union not only of the land but of the seas, and we have countries like Cyprus that are islands, we have outermost regions in the seas for instance the Azores islands of Portugal in the middle of the Atlantic, so the EU has this very important maritime nature, from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean. It is a great asset and I am sure it will be a more important asset in the future.

To take this forward, we also need funding. That is why it is important to anchor the policy in the funding of the next European budget for 2014-2020. We need to streamline the maritime objectives in the negotiations and concentrate our efforts on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund. We need strategic spending to target sectors with the greatest growth potential. Nor should we forget that the Connecting Europe facility – it was a proposal of the European Commission, a new funding facility – this Connecting Europe facility will have a positive impact on the blue economy, through the strengthening of Energy transport and digital networks.

This Connecting Europe facility makes sense, and I hope that the Member States will fully support it because it is indeed innovative way of funding that is transnational. Networks for instance in transport or energy are so important for maritime policy because transport on the sea, linking also different areas of Europe, and of course energy, is crucial for sustainable development of Europe.

President Christofias and myself yesterday discussed the current economic situation in Europe and in Cyprus. We have an important European Council next week where we need to give a clear direction on the adoption by the end of the year of the Commission's proposal for the single supervisory mechanism. I believe it is critically important that we now are seen as taking concrete, important decisions because this single supervisory mechanism will then provide the trigger for the ability to have direct capitalisation of banks. We will also have the opportunity to give further orientation for the future of the economic and monetary union on the basis of the interim report that has been prepared by the President of the European Council in cooperation with myself, the Presidents of the ECB and the Euro group.

Let me underline something that sometimes I think does not receive enough attention. Europe is making progress in terms of building the integrated capabilities to face the crisis. Just today, in Luxembourg, the first meeting of the European Stability Mechanism Council of governors will take place, so we have this European Stability Mechanism that will be operational. It is another very important instrument with an important funding capacity comparable only with the IMF and my point is the following: some years ago it would have been unthinkable to mention a kind of European Stability Mechanism of this magnitude. So, since we are in a Maritime conference, if I may use a metaphor – we have been building the lifeboats during the storm in the Euro area and it is not easy to build the lifeboats during the storm, but we are making progress and I am fully confident that our Member States, after what are always very lengthy negotiations, will keep this momentum so that we can show our common determination facing the challenges and difficulties that we know still exist.

On the specific situation here in Cyprus, we have discussed the progress on concluding the Memorandum of Understanding. I am not going to get into details at this point as consultations are on-going and I hope that in light of our discussions we can move rapidly to reach an agreement on the measures to be taken to guarantee a long term sustainability of the Cypriot economy. I know it was not the subject of the conference, but since I am in Cyprus, I think it is appropriate to give a message of hope to the people of Cyprus. I know the situation is difficult. The challenges are immense. They require a huge effort from the political system in Cyprus, from the different parties, from the government and the opposition, from the social partners, but it is critically important for the future of Cyprus. Cyprus has been suffering the impact of the financial crisis and also of the situations we have known in the Euro area. I believe it is critically important now to come to some level of consensus for a common determination to face the situation and I am sure that we will find the way because I know the dynamism of the Cypriot people. I know that if they understand correctly how challenging the situation is, they will have the capability to overcome the current situation and also to build together with the other partners of the European Union a future of sustainable growth.

I thank you for your attention.