

**BRAINSTORMING EVENT ON MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES
WITH BULGARIAN AND ROMANIAN AUTHORITIES**

**14 OCTOBER 2011 BRUSSELS
HIGH LEVEL SESSION**

How can an integrated approach to maritime affairs benefit the environmental protection of the Black Sea, notably the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive

Ivelina Vassileva, Deputy Minister for Environment and Water, Bulgaria

Dear Commissioner Damanaki,

Ministers,

Colleagues,

Since 2007, the EU Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP) has established itself as a new approach to support optimal and sustainable development of all maritime affairs.

EU institutions, Member States and regions set up or are in the process of establishing governance structures to ensure that maritime policies will not be developed separately and based on sectoral approach, but in synergy with other policy areas.

There are significant opportunities for economic and social development in the Black Sea region, which require coordinated policies at regional level. These policies cover key sectors of human activity such as energy, fisheries, transport, environment, marine scientific research, maritime economy, integrated coastal zone management etc. Therefore, there is a need of a common Black Sea regional strategy, supported by the EU, which to integrate and coordinate policies and to promote fruitful cooperation between countries to achieve integration of sustainable maritime activities environmental protection objectives in the region.

We welcome the initiative of Commissioner Damanaki for today's high-level meeting as a step towards further developing and adding a real dimension to the EU Black Sea policy. We consider this dialogue between the Commission and the Black Sea Member States as a mechanism to achieve coordination and synergy in planning and implementing concrete measures in the Black Sea Region, aiming at further application of the ecosystem based approach at all levels in the maritime policies.

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive is the comprehensive platform for implementing the ecosystem based approach to the various marine activities. The Directive has already been transposed in Bulgaria and we are in the process of its implementation with the view of preparing our Marine Strategy and a Programme of Measures by 1 January 2015.

In order to ensure compatibility between maritime activities and good environmental status an interdepartmental body was established to coordinate and monitor the implementation of the Marine Strategy, which includes ministers and deputy ministers from 9 ministries.

Among the **main priorities** of Bulgaria forming the framework **for the Black Sea environmental action** are:

- Integrated water management and pollution reduction of the Black Sea waters and Black Sea Basin waters;
- Conservation of natural and biological diversity and extension of NATURA 2000 marine protected areas;
- Sustainable fisheries
- Integrated Coastal Zone Management and implementation of best practices in Maritime Spatial Planning.
- Prevention and response to pollution from oil
- Improved scientific cooperation and marine research

While not exhaustive, **the above priorities outline strategic directions** to achieve better integration of activities in different sectors related to the use of the Black Sea and the sustainable development of the Black Sea Region in line with in line with the Resolution on an EU Strategy for the Black Sea, adopted by the European Parliament in January 2011.

Possibilities to achieve the **regional dimension of integration** are through

- existing mechanisms the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution (the Bucharest Convention);
- Enhanced implementation of multilateral environmental agreements and initiatives and establishment of strategic partnerships in this area – a good example is the Black Sea Synergy
- Open cross-sectoral dialogue and wide stakeholder involvement

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive is a good basis for that having in mind that it aims at contributing to “coherence between and aim to ensure integration of environmental concerns into, the different policies, agreements and legislative measures which have an impact on the marine environment”.

The Directive "establishes a framework" within which Member States shall take the necessary measures to achieve or maintain good environmental status in the marine environment by 2020, by implementing **a specific regional approach**. Indeed we need to be very specific when dealing with the Black Sea, not only because it is:

- a *closed sea* – between Europe and Asia,
- has *high hydrogen sulfide concentrations* starting from 120-150 m and deeper which prevent the existence of life forms at these depths,
- crossed by *strategic gas and oil routes*.

But mostly because it is

- an economically and politically diverse region, and
- a region, where *political considerations often override practical implementation* of agreements and can be an obstacle to environmental policy development and cooperation.

Challenges in implementing the Strategy are *numerous* and have both *national and international dimensions*.

On the **international level** there is a big challenge for BG and RO to overcome what now seems to be established practices in the regional environmental cooperation in the framework of the Bucharest Convention:

- reluctance or opposition to EU directives requirements being applied in the framework of the Black Sea Commission;
- slow response and progress in main activities;
- variability of methods and inconsistencies of data on some issues (e.g. pollution loads from major rivers flowing into the Black Sea).

Taking into account the specificity of the Black Sea ecosystem, Bulgaria and Romania discuss the possibilities for recognition and implementation of a specific approach to the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. For this purpose, the possibility for a reference to the exceptions under Article 14 of the Directive and the necessary consultation with DG "Environment" might be considered.

Funding

Securing funding for environmental protection activities in the Black Sea Region is a serious problem for the region as a whole. The nature of problems to be dealt with, require joint activities that are sustained over a long period of time and are therefore difficult to secure funding for.

An Integrated Maritime policy for the Black Sea could also be beneficial in terms of:

- using synergies between existing policies and funding mechanisms;
- better effectiveness of investments;
- high quality and innovative solutions/projects.

International cooperation to protect the Black Sea Environment

In spite of some positive developments over recent years, the differences in terms of economic reform and the quality of governance among the different countries of the region still exist. In this regard, an integrated and coordinated approach to solving environmental problems by the Black Sea countries and the European Union will be of great benefit to the citizens of these countries, contributing to the overall prosperity, stability and security in Europe.

With the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU the Black Sea became a European sea.

In 2007 BG and RO made a proposal to amend *the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution* which would allow EU's accession to this international Treaty. Regrettably, the proposal did not meet the necessary support from the other countries. The reasons, though vaguely worded, are political and the problem can be solved only after an adequate treatment of the issue in the relations between the EU and these countries.

The issue of FISHERIES is a particularly sensitive one. Realizing the importance of preserving commercial fish stocks in the process of improving the state of the Black Sea ecosystem, the Parties to the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution (Bucharest Convention) initiated the elaboration of a *legally binding document on fisheries*.

The draft *legally binding document for Fisheries and Conservation of other Marine Living Resources of the Black Sea* was prepared by an international team of experts and included on the agenda of the 11 Meeting of the BSC in November 2004.

Since 2004, the issue of a *legally binding document on fisheries* has been discussed by the BSC several times but since this is an issue of high economic importance for some countries – there is no solution so far.

Unfortunately, now Bulgaria and Romania, in compliance with EU environmental standards and fisheries policies, suffer economic losses, but have no mechanism to effectively impact on joint actions of the six Black Sea countries on these issues.

In this context, as an initiator together with Romania of the EU accession to the Bucharest Convention, Bulgaria reiterates its position that the EU Membership will contribute considerably to achieving the common goals for sustainable use and management of marine resources and for addressing current environmental issues and challenges for the agenda of the region. Whether the integrated Maritime Policy for the Black Sea would precede, follow or go in parallel with the process for EU accession to the Bucharest convention is a matter of political consideration. However, a more active role of the EC in the Black Sea region can only be beneficial.

Thank you for your attention.