

MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

TOWARDS A COMMON MARITIME AGENDA FOR THE BLACK SEA

Burgas Declaration - 31 May 2018

The Ministers responsible for maritime affairs of the participating countries, namely the Black Sea coastal States – Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and Ukraine – as well as the Republic of Moldova, met during the European Maritime Day in Burgas on 31 May 2018 under the chairmanship of Bulgaria and *in the presence* of H.E. Mr Karmenu Vella, European Commissioner in charge of Environment, Fisheries and Maritime Affairs and H.E. Ambassador Michael B. Christides, Secretary General of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.

1. RECALLING:

- The outcomes of the Black Sea High-Level Stakeholder Conferences held in Bucharest (2014), Sofia (2015), Odesa (2016) and Batumi (2017) relevant to the sustainable development in the Black Sea area;
- The “Bucharest Declaration” adopted at the conclusion of the High-level conference towards enhanced cooperation on Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture held in Bucharest (24 – 25 October 2016);
- The Charter of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and its role in enhancing regional cooperation and supporting partnership¹;
- The European Commission Communications on “Black Sea Synergy”, related to the aspects of the integrated maritime policy and blue growth;
- The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the new global development agenda 2015-2030 adopted in New York (26 September 2015), entitled “Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, and in particular Goal 14 to “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources”.

2. UNDERLINING that

- The respect for the norms and principles of international law is at the core of regional cooperation in the Black Sea;
- The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea² as well as the other relevant international conventions and customary international law related to activities in oceans and seas are fully considered;

¹ As underlined in the United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/71/18/ on the cooperation between the United Nations and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization.

² The Republic of Turkey is not party to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

- The Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution (Bucharest Convention) plays a key role for the environmental welfare of the Black Sea;
- The International Maritime Organization (IMO) sets a regulatory framework ensuring a safe, secure, efficient international shipping industry and a green and sustainable maritime transportation system.

3. ACKNOWLEDGING that:

- The Black Sea is an enclosed sea where maritime cooperation can be further developed through regional ownership and home-grown initiatives;
- There are common maritime and marine challenges facing all participating countries;
- Maritime and coastal industries, trade, other human activities and marine environment are interdependent;
- Clean and healthy rivers flowing into the Black Sea are drivers for national and regional economies, and contribute to the good environmental status of the Black Sea;
- A coordinated and coherent regional approach – that takes into account the sovereign rights and the distinctive nature of each country and the environmental challenges of the sea as a whole – can help to address the maritime challenges in the region and promote sustainable growth. Areas of future cooperation could take into account the following common drivers:
 - A healthy Black Sea as a stimulus for national and regional economies and a catalyst for sustainable growth and increased investments;
 - Improved connectivity in the region that can bring shared socio-economic benefits;
 - The need to consider at an early planning stage the potential environmental impacts of all maritime activities, and the adequate actions to address them;
 - The need for sustainable exploitation of marine resources and the need to restore and maintain good environmental status, to ensure resilience of ecosystems, communities, and economies in the region;
 - Marine research and innovations can contribute to the sustainable development of the region by fostering integration of knowledge and efforts in the maritime domain.

4. WELCOME:

- The initiative of the European Commission to set up the “Facility for Blue Growth in the Black Sea” which aims to support maritime cooperation between the participating countries for sustainable blue growth in the Black Sea and to identify sources and policy approaches for a more sustainable Blue Economy;
- The work of the Steering Group “Facility for Blue Growth in the Black Sea”;

- The financial support provided through the Joint Operational Programme “Black Sea Basin Programme 2014-2020”, funded by the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA);
- The funding available under the Black Sea Project Promotion Facility³, aiming to foster the achievement of the BSEC objectives and the implementation of the BSEC Economic Agenda;
- The common work of the scientists from the participating countries and the support of the European Commission to identify key challenges for marine research and innovation in view of developing a “Research and Innovation Agenda for Blue Growth in the Black Sea”;
- The work conducted by the participating countries, in particular under the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution (BSC), to improve environmental observation, monitoring and protection;
- The establishment of the “Black Sea Littoral States Border/Coast Guard Agencies Cooperation Forum” (BSCF) with the initiative of the Republic of Turkey and the participation of Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, the Russian Federation and Ukraine for promoting and enhancing the cooperation in various fields, including the protection of Black Sea natural resources, search and rescue activities, prevention of marine pollution and the protection of marine environment;
- The new dynamics in the governance of fisheries and aquaculture in the Black Sea in the context of the Black Sea Working Group of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean within the framework of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (GFCM-FAO);
- The ongoing work to strengthen cooperation on maritime affairs in the Black Sea area between the participating countries, the European Commission, BSEC, BSC, GFCM as well as with the Conference of the Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR).

5. RECOGNISE THE POTENTIAL OF VOLUNTARY COOPERATION ON:

- Shipping, passenger and cruising lines to boost trade and the promotion of transport connectivity to develop business throughout the Black Sea basin;
- Maritime and coastal tourism in the Black Sea to spur cooperation for a sustainable Blue Economy, taking into account the cultural and environmental assets of the region;

³ The Black Sea Project Promotion Facility is a funding mechanism, established through a donation of the Russian Federation to the BSEC PERMIS and open to participation of other countries, for supporting, in particular, projects and initiatives in areas such as: energy efficiency, environmentally friendly technologies, infrastructure, transport, promotion of export potential, development of small and medium-size enterprises, as well as other activities with a view to enhancing BSEC project-oriented approach and interaction with the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (BSTDB), aiming to foster the achievements of the BSEC objectives and the implementation of the BSEC Economic Agenda.

- Marine science and maritime education and training as a good basis for cooperation and as key factors in improving and developing new skills in the Blue Economy;
- Marine research and innovation as a key priority for cooperation;
- Promoting maritime investment for a sustainable blue economy through planning tools;
- An improved marine environmental protection for developing a sustainable Blue Economy, and in particular coordination while addressing transboundary environmental challenges, such as plastic marine litter;
- Maritime and environmental observation and monitoring which will contribute to the sustainable use of marine resources and to the achievement of good environmental status.

6. SUPPORT:

- The setting up of a Common Maritime Agenda with concrete priorities and actions for the development of, *inter alia*, a sustainable Blue Economy in the Black Sea, promoting enhanced cooperation on maritime affairs among the participating countries. Such an Agenda will serve as a valuable tool for the participating countries, the European Commission and other international donors to align available funding with the priority areas identified by the participating countries;
- The objective of the participating countries is to reach agreement on a Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea in 2019.

7. UNDERLINE that:

- The cooperation towards the setting up of the Common Maritime Agenda is a bottom-up process between the participating countries, with the involvement of the relevant stakeholders. Participation in the activities which will be undertaken under this cooperation remains voluntary, depending on the needs to be addressed and as appropriate;
- The cooperation towards the setting up of the Common Maritime Agenda complements the work of the existing regional structures such as BSEC, BSC, as well as CPMR, and capitalises on their achievements. This cooperation is targeted at inclusive growth, marine and coastal environment protection, knowledge exchange, technology transfer, upgrading of skills, job creation and enhancing access to sustainable financing. Further synergies and mutually reinforcing agendas are to be actively explored in the future.

8. ENCOURAGE:

- The participating countries to continue working together to identify the regional maritime and marine priorities and actions to be included in the Common Maritime Agenda. This should be done including through the Steering Group on the implementation of the “Facility for Blue Growth in the Black Sea” project;

- The participating countries to consider, where applicable, the areas listed under Point 5 of this Declaration - shipping, passenger and cruising lines; the promotion of transport connectivity, maritime and coastal tourism; maritime education and training; marine research and innovation; maritime investment; marine environmental protection; environmental observation and monitoring - as possible cooperation areas to be further developed, including under the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea.