Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

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PRESS RELEASE

MEUSAC Core Group discusses the EU's Maritime Policy with Commissioner Joe Borg

The Core Group of the Malta-EU Steering and Action Committee (MEUSAC) met again on 29 May. Commissioner Joe Borg was also present during the meeting.

Dr Borg outlined his work during the past years as Commissioner responsible for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries. He explained that his Office adopted a policy whereby all interested parties are involved in the decision-making process through regional committees which represent fishermen, scientists, environmentalists as well as trade unions. Commissioner Borg stated that the European Commission adopted a maritime policy which focuses on sustainability. Earlier this year a consultation process on the reform of the common fisheries policy was set out. The process is expected to come to an end later this year and will ensure that the different regions manage a maritime policy in line with EU objectives.

On the Integrated Maritime Policy, Dr Borg said that the Commission has adopted a work plan which includes a number of actions: guidelines for governance on different levels which involve Member States and other interested parties; various cross-sector instruments for better maritime surveillance; spatial planning which would concurrently safeguard fishing activities while ensuring development in other fields such as sea transport or offshore energy, among others; as well as research.

Dr Borg also said that the Mediterranean Action Plan will be finalised next year. Commissioner Borg reiterated that the Integrated Maritime Policy for the Mediterranean will not only be developed for the EU Member States but also for third countries in the Mediterranean Region such as the North African countries.

Commissioner Borg explained that the Commission has an exclusive role, that is that of proposing new EU legislation as well as acting as the guardian of the EU's legislation, and of its treaties.

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. Discussion among members focused on, amongst other matters:

- How the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) will be affected by Iceland's possible membership as well as how this Policy should be integrated with third countries;
- The system of penalties for fishermen who commit illegalities;
- The "*Motorways of the Sea*" initiative;
- The European Commission's position on projects commissioned by Member States' Governments in harbour areas;
- The criteria upon which fish quotas are established;
- Flags of convenience;
- Coastal management.

As regards Iceland's possible membership, Commissioner Borg said that when Iceland applies formally for EU membership, the Commission will issue its Opinion on the matter, possibly by December, following which the European Council at the December Summit will decide whether to open negotiations with Iceland. He stated that Iceland will not have any CFP opt-outs but it may be granted special arrangements similar to those granted to Malta.

With regard to the Motorways of the Sea, Dr Borg said that the Commission is currently working on various issues of which short-sea shipping and energy tax payments at ports of call, as well as increasing sea transport and developing the concept of 'green engine' for vessels. Commissioner Borg stated that the latter has been welcomed by the cruise liner industry.

Commissioner Borg reiterated that fish quotas are less stringent in the Mediterranean when compared to other coastal zones. In fact, the only quotas for the Mediterranean region have been imposed on the fishing for swordfish and blue fin tuna to maintain a sustainable level. Dr Borg explained that these quotas are agreed upon by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). The Commission has a Recovery Plan Programme for tuna and both EU and non-EU Mediterranean states have to abide by the quota.

The Commission is determined to eliminate flags of convenience for vessels flying an EU Member State flag, while it is insisting for better rights for workers on vessels, in line with those of other employees. Dr Borg reiterated that the Commission will be working closely

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with the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) so as to introduce such principles gradually to third countries.

Present for the meeting of the Core Group were: Parliamentary Secretary Dr Chris Said *(Chairperson)*, Dr. Joe Borg (Member of the Euroepan Commission responsible for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries), Dr Vanni Xuereb (Head, MEUSAC), Mr Julian Micallef (Secretary), Dr Godwin Grima (Principal Permanent Secretary), Mr Richard Cachia Caruana (Permanent Representative to the EU), Ms Cecilia Attard-Pirotta (Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Ms Graziella Pullicino (A/Head, EU Secretariat, Office of the Prime Minister), Dr Gabriella Pace (Head of Information, MEUSAC), Ms Helen D' Amato, Mr Malcolm Seychell (Azzjoni Nazzjonali), Mr Carmel Cacopardo (Alternattiva Demokratika), Mr Arthur Rossi (CMTU), Mr Joe Grech (Gozo Business Chamber), Mr Paul Abela (GRTU - Chamber of SMEs), Mr Tony Zarb (General Workers' Union), Dr Paul Debattista (Malta Employers' Association), Dr Romina Bartolo (Union Ħaddiema Magħqduin), Mr Kevin Borg (Malta Chamber of Commerce Enterprise and Industry), Mr George Schembri (Malta Hotels and Restaurants' Association), Ms Grace Attard (civil society representative), and Ms Ella Strickland (member of Commissioner Borg's Cabinet) as well as substitute members who attended as observers. Members of staff of MEUSAC were also in attendance.

The next Core Group meeting will be held on Friday 26 June, 2009.

MEUSAC – 29.05.2009

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STQARRIJA GĦALL-ISTAMPA

Il-Core Group tal-MEUSAC jiddiskuti mal-Kummissarju Joe Borg

Il-*Core Group* tal-MEUSAC reġa' ltaqa' fid-29 ta' Mejju, 2009. Fil-laqgħa ħa sehem ukoll l-Kummissarju għall-Affarijiet Marittimi u Sajd, Dott. Joe Borg.

Dott. Borg għamel preżentazzjoni lill-membri tal-*Core Group* dwar il-ħidma tiegħu. Huwa qal li l-politika addottata minnu hija waħda li tinvolvi lill-partijiet kollha involuti fil-proċess tat-teħid ta' deċiżjonijiet permezz ta' kumitati reġjonali li fihom hemm rappreżentati sajjieda, xjentisti, ambjentalisti, kif ukoll rappreżentanti tat-trejd unjins. Il-Kummissarju saħaq li l-Kummissjoni Ewropea addottat politika marittima mmaniġjata b'mod sostennibli. Iktar kmieni din is-sena tnieda wkoll proċess ta' konsultazzjoni dwar ir-riforma tal-politika komuni tas-sajd li huwa mistenni jiġi fi tmiemu fl-aħħar ta' din is-sena u li għandu jwassal għal politika mmaniġjata mir-reġjuni differenti skont l-għanijiet miftehma mal-Kummissjoni.

Dwar il-Politika Marittima Integrata, Dott. Borg qal li l-Kummissjoni ħarġet bi pjan ta' ħidma maqsum fuq diversi livelli: b'linji gwida dwar l-igvernar fuq livelli differenti li jinvolvu lill-Istati Membri u partijiet oħra li għandhom sehem; għodda li jiffaċilitaw l-integrazzjoni tal-politika marittima permezz ta' mezzi ta' sorveljanza aħjar, bħal proġett pilota fil-Mediterran għal sorveljanza marittima; ippjanar aħjar tal-arja tal-baħar għal użu multiplu, bħal per eżempju waqt li jkun salvagwardjat l-operat tas-sajd ikun hemm żvilupp ieħor tal-istess arja għal użu ta' trasport bil-baħar jew *offshore energy*, fost l-oħrajn; kif ukoll l-iżvilupp ta' iktar riċerka fl-aspetti settorjali kollha biex ikun studjat l-impatt u l-potenzjal fuq, u għal, setturi oħra marittimi.

Dott. Borg qal ukoll li l-Pjan ta' ħidma għall-Baħar Mediterran għandu jkun konkluż sas-sena d-dieħla. Dott. Borg saħaq li l-Politika Marittima Integrata għall-Mediterran mhux se tkun żviluppata biss għall-Pajjiżi Membri tal-UE iżda wkoll għall-pajjiżi l-oħra tal-Mediterran bħal ma huma dawk tal-Afrika ta' Fuq.

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Dott. Borg tkellem ukoll dwar id-dritt esklussiv tal-Kummissjoni Ewropea li tipproponi liġijiet ġodda għall-UE, kif ukoll dwar ir-rwol tal-Kummissjoni biex tiżgura l-ħarsien tal-liġijiet u t-Trattati tal-UE, u dwar ir-relazzjoni bejn il-Kummissarju u l-pajjiż minn fejn ikun ġej.

Il-Membri tal-*Core Group* qajjmu diversi punti fost dawn:

- Kif se tintlaqat il-Politika Komuni tas-Sajd bis-sħubija tal-Iżlanda kif ukoll dwar kif l-Politika Komuni tas-Sajd tista' tiġi ntegrata ma' pajjiżi terzi;
- Is-sistema tal-penali għas-sajjieda li jwettqu reati;
- L-inizjattiva "*Motorways of the Sea*";
- Il-jedd tal-Kummissjoni Ewropea fuq proġetti li jkunu se jiġu mplimentati mill-Gvern fiż-żoni tal-portijiet;
- Il-kriterji li bihom jinħadmu l-kwoti tas-sajd;
- Il-bnadar ta' konvenjenza (*flags of convenience*),
- L-immaniġġjar taż-żoni kostali *(coastal management)*.

Dwar is-sħubija tal-Iżlanda, il-Kummissarju Borg semma li malli l-Iżlanda tapplika, jibda l-proċess li jwassal biex il-Kummissjoni tagħti l-Opinjoni tagħha. Dan jista' ikun lest sal-laqgħa tal-Kunsill Ewropew ta' Diċembru li ġej meta jiġi deċiż jekk jinfetħux in-negozjati mal-Iżlanda. Huwa qal l-Iżlanda mhiex ħa jkollha eżenzjoni *(opt-out)* mill-Politika Komuni tas-Sajd iżda jista' jkollha arranġamenti speċjali kif għandha Malta.

Dwar il-"*Motorways of the Sea*", Dott. Borg qal li għaddejja ħidma biex jittieħdu deċiżjonijiet dwar diversi punti fosthom ix-*short-sea shipping* u dwar il-ħlas tat-taxxa fuq l-enerġija fil-portijiet. Aspetti oħrajn huma l-isforzi biex jintuża iktar trasport mill-baħar. Hemm determinazzjoni wkoll biex jiġi żviluppat il-kunċett ta' *'green engine'* għall-vapuri, li s'issa jidher li ntlaqa' tajjeb mill-industrija tal-*cruise liners*.

Il-Kummissarju Borg stqarr li l-Mediterran huwa l-inqas baħar li għandu kwoti għas-sajd meta mqabbel ma' ibħra oħra. Fil-fatt l-uniċi kwoti għall-Mediterran huma fuq it-tonn u l-pixxispad minħabba kwistjonijiet ta' sostennibiltà. Dott. Borg spjega li dawn il-kwoti jiġu maqbula fl-*International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas* (ICCAT). Huwa qal li l-Kummissjoni għandha Pjan ta' Rkupru għat-tonn u kull pajjiż għandu kwota li jrid iżomm magħha, inkluż il-pajjiżi tal-Meditteran li mhumiex membri tal-UE.

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Il-Kummissjoni qed taħdem ukoll biex jiġu eliminati bnadar ta' konvenjenza għall-vapuri li jtajjru bandiera ta' xi Stat Membru, u jingħataw lill-ħaddiema l-istess drittijiet li għandhom ħaddiema li jaħdmu fuq l-art. Dott. Borg tenna li l-Kummissjoni se taħdem id f'id mal-*International Maritime Organisation* (IMO) biex dawn il-prinċipji jidħlu b'mod gradatt fuq bnadar oħra ta' pajjiżi terzi.

Preżenti għal-laqgħa tal-*Core Group* kien hemm: is-Segretarju Parlamentari Dott. Chris Said *(Chairperson)*, Dott. Joe Borg (Membru tal-Kummissjoni Ewropea responsabbli mill-Affarijiet Marittimi u s-Sajd u), Dott. Vanni Xuereb (Kap tal-MEUSAC), is-Sur Julian Micallef (Segretarju), Dott. Godwin Grima (Segretarju Permanenti Ewlieni), is-Sur Richard Cachia Caruana (Rappreżentant Permanenti ta' Malta għall-UE), is-Sinjura Cecilia Attard Pirotta (Segretarju Permanenti, Ministeru tal-Affarjiet Barranin), is-Sinjorina Graziella Pullicino (A/Kap, Segretarjat UE fl-Uffiċċju tal-Prim Ministru), Dott. Gabriella Pace (Kap tal-Informazzjoni, MEUSAC), is-Sinjura Helen D' Amato, is-Sur Malcolm Seychell (Azzjoni Nazzjonali), is-Sur Carmel Cacopardo (Alternattiva Demokratika), is-Sur Arthur Rossi (CMTU), is-Sur Joe Grech (Gozo Business Chamber), is-Sur Paul Abela (GRTU - Chamber of SMEs), is-Sur Tony Zarb (General Workers' Union), Dott. Paul Debattista (Malta Employers' Association), Dott. Romina Bartolo (Union Ħaddiema Magħqduin), is-Sur Kevin Borg (Malta Chamber of Commerce Enterprise and Industry), is-sur George Schembri (Malta Hotels and Resuarants' Association), is-Sinjura Grace Attard (rappreżentanta tas-soċjetà ċivili), kif ukoll is-Sinjorina Ella Strickland (membru tal-Kabinett tal-Kummissarju Borg), sostituti u membri tal-istaff tal-MEUSAC.

Il-laqgħa li jmiss tal-*Core Group* se ssir nhar il-Ġimgħa 26 ta' Ġunju, 2009.

MEUSAC – 29.05.2009