

ONE OCEAN SUMMIT - COASTAL REGIONS' FORUM

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ENHANCING EU MARITIME POLICIES: FOCUS ON MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE AND SEA BASIN APPROACH

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Dear President, General Secretary, colleagues and participants,

I am honoured to participate in this meeting today, representing the Sicilian government as well as the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission under the presidency of the Sicilian Region.

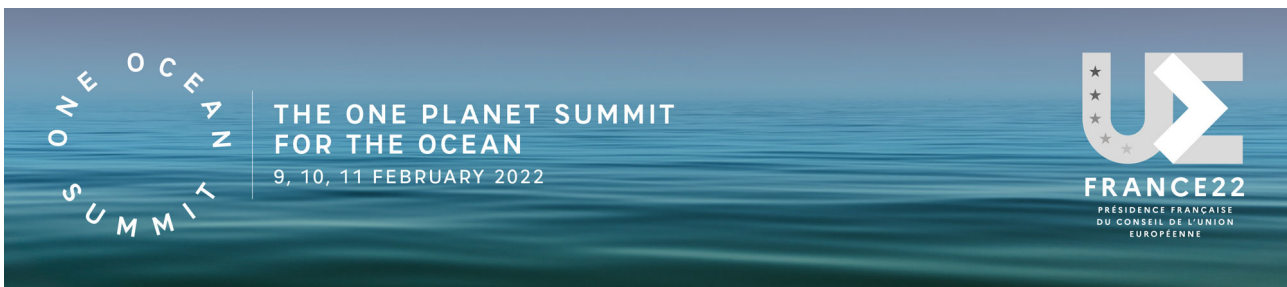
1. The EU's blue economy¹ will help to deliver both the European recovery and the European Green Deal. The objective is a strong, sustainable, resilient and climate-neutral blue economy model. The established sectors of the EU Blue Economy directly employed close to 4.5 million people and generated around €650 billion in turnover and €176 billion in gross value added².

The Mediterranean is the “ground zero” of the global climate crisis that affects 500 million people on three continents. Mediterranean Regions' specific vulnerability to climate change often requires adequate cooperation and funding, while it is also important to recall the EU's commitment to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by 2030 (compared to 1990).

Besides, an approach to a different socio-economic vision for the Mediterranean basin is unavoidable. And this, in order for the *European Neighborhood Policy* to

¹ “Blue Economy”, defined as “the set of human activities depending on the sea and/or underpinned by land-sea interactions in the context of sustainable development” (UNION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN, 2015, *Ministerial conference on blue economy*, in https://ufmsecretariat.org/wpcontent/up-load/2015/11/2015-11-17-declaration-on-blue-economy_en.pdf, is a policy tool or means to drive economic growth and create jobs. Focused on revitalising the economy, the marine industrial activities include construction, transportation, mineral resources development, ship building, communication cable laying, pharmaceutical enterprises, equipment deployment, sustainable energy from waves, currents, seaside leisure tourism, and fisheries and aquaculture. In addition to traditional marine development activities, marine oriented information and science sectors are playing an increasingly stronger role in boosting blue economy development.

² See EU COMMISSION, *The EU Blue Economy Report 2021*, in https://blueindicators.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2021_06_Blue-Economy_Report-2021.pdf. The Blue Economy's emerging and innovative sectors include marine renewable energy (i.e., ocean energy, floating solar energy and offshore hydrogen generation), Blue bioeconomy and biotechnology, marine minerals, desalination, maritime defence, security and surveillance, research and education and maritime works (submarine cables, robotics). These sectors offer significant potential for economic growth, sustainability transition, as well as employment creation.



fulfill its role in supporting the implementation of a sustainable blue economy, while contributing to move the *Mediterranean* towards a different socio-economic paradigm for more sustainability globally. Regarding funding, it is therefore important for it to be sectoral on the one hand, but also transversal on the other hand, to deal with the way all economic ecosystems are interlinked³.

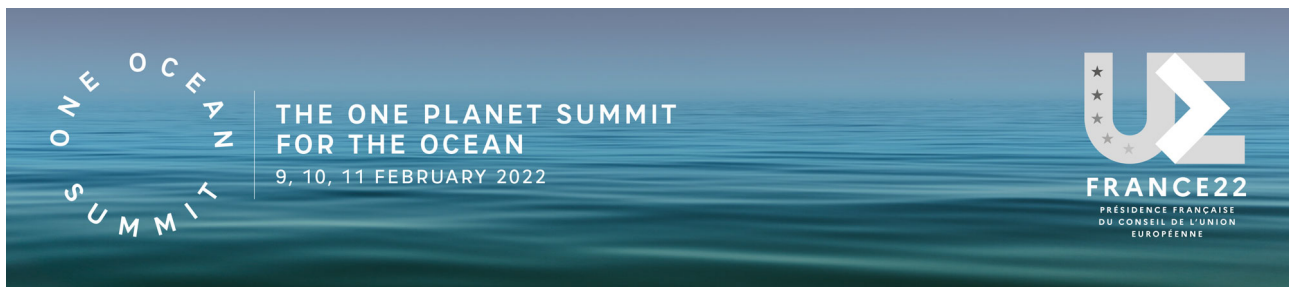
On this occasion, from the *CPMR Intermediterranean Commission*, we emphasize the role of *local-and-regional-authorities-networks*'. Networks, such as the *Mediterranean Cooperation Alliance*, should be fully acknowledged by European and Mediterranean institutions and stakeholders, in their capacities to support decentralisation, integration and mainstreaming of policies and funds at various governance levels throughout the *Mediterranean*. *Local and Regional Authorities* and their networks can play a key role in the search for greater coordination among already existing transnational frameworks and funds, potentially under a macro-regional perspective.

Funding mechanisms for the blue economy should be based on multi-level governance. Albeit complex, *multi-level governance* ensures that public policies at Mediterranean, European and national scales answer territorial needs reflected through the voice, management, and decisions of local and regional authorities on the one hand. On the other hand, through the actions of the latter, multi-level governance allows a sound landing of public policies and funds on the ground.

In this context, the *CPMR Intermediterranean Commission* reminds that local and regional authorities should play a prominent role in the new *Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027*, as well as in the *Recovery Instrument, Next Generation EU*, as many of them have the competences in the policy areas to which these funds are allocated, thus ensuring that recovery funds have the greatest possible impact on people's lives, the economy, and the environment.

Specific attention should be brought to managing potential conflicts for the uses of the sea and for a sustainable use of natural resources. An ecosystem-based approach has to be applied to *Integrated Coastal Zone Management* and *Maritime Spatial Planning*, as well as impact assessments need to be clearly considered and per-

³ While this effort is laudable, a better interrelation across the issues of human development, good governance and the rule of law; resilience, prosperity and digital transition; peace and security, migration and mobility; and the green transition through climate resilience, energy, and the environment is nonetheless needed.



formed prior to the design or the construction of infrastructures on land or at sea to limit conflicts and negative externalities on communities and on the surrounding environment. These are important conditions for awarding public funds to projects, whether at European, national, regional or local levels.

The social and environmental responsibility of enterprises should be considered to a greater extent as a prerequisite to the attribution of public funding, while the implementation of sustainable finance principles (such as the Blue Sustainable finance principles) should be strongly encouraged⁴.

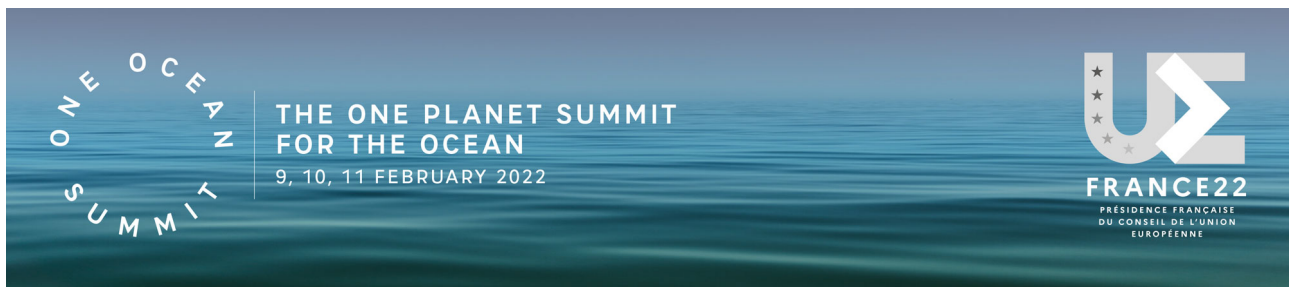
The new *Sustainable Blue Economy communication*: 1) calls on all maritime players to base their activities on the responsible use of natural resources, on decarbonisation and on circular economy concepts; 2) sets out a detailed agenda for greening the blue economy, underpinned by international ocean governance; 3) facilitates coexistence and synergies of economic activities in the maritime space through *Maritime Spatial Planning*, without damaging the environment; 4) proposes a series of actions to boost investment in research, skills and innovation, and mobilises financing opportunities under the new *European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund*, and other *EU Programmes*⁵.

As the “*Report on the Blue Economy for Local and Regional Authorities in the Mediterranean*”⁶ pointed out, it is necessary to lay the foundations for creating and promoting a genuine knowledge of marine culture. Developing a blue awareness among citizens to improve the state of our seas, create synergies and work together for a blue consciousness is now a matter of urgency. It therefore makes sense to

⁴ In coherence with the previous points, for the Mediterranean, incentives directed to enterprises to gather, build and sell in priority across the EU and/or the Mediterranean could be promoted by the European Union and through its Neighborhood policy and related programmes and funds (NDICI-Global Europe, EMFAF, Horizon Europe, LIFE, NEXT MED, Euro-MED...). Non-European Mediterranean countries are strongly encouraged to create and/or to contribute to these incentives as well.

⁵ The “*sustainable blue economy finance principles*”, promoted by the *European Commission’s Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries*, the *World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)*, the *Prince of Wales’s International Sustainability Unit* and the *European Investment Bank (EIB)*, aim to “*build an international coalition of financial institutions that endorse the Sustainable Blue Economy Finance Principles on a voluntary basis and thereby demonstrate their support for healthy oceans in their investment decisions and for the development of a sustainable blue economy.*”

⁶ Arlem Assembly-rapporteur on. Enzo Bianco, adopted by consensus at the 11th ARLEM plenary session, held in Barcelona on 23 January 2020, in <https://cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/Documents/ARLEM/Thematic%20reports/2020/Report%20on%20the%20Blue%20Economy%20for%20local%20and%20regional%20authorities%20in%20the%20Mediterranean%20Region/cor-2019-04007-00-02-tcd-tra-en.pdf>



pave the way towards a culture of the sea and blue issues, which could be included and shared with the general public.

2. The development of the maritime economy is considered a central asset by the Sicilian government, which has included it among the political priorities of the regional economic planning document (*DEFR 2022–24*). Starting from the essential role of research and innovation, they can and must become one of the key drivers of the Sicilian economy to compete in international markets⁷.

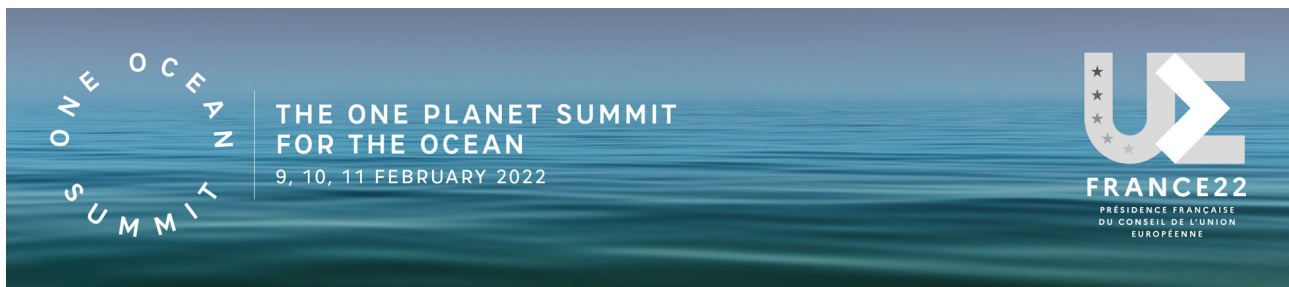
Sicily, the largest island in the Mediterranean, has about 1,500 km of coastline and almost 100 landings of different sizes and features⁸. The economic activities related to the sea resources are mainly located along the southern and western coasts, as well as the eastern one, from *Catania* to *Syracuse*, and along the coast of Palermo Metropolitan Areas, that represent the poles in which the economy of the sea has a relevant weight on the local employment, with shares of employees exceeding 20% (*Portopalo di Capo Passero, Cinisi, Santa Flavia, Lampedusa*), and many others in which the shares are between 5% and 20% of total employment⁹.

The opportunities are enormous and the potential of the blue economy can give significant results in terms of employment, economic development and environmental protection provided that the fundamental gaps in the interoperability,

⁷ The Italian Blue Economy (established sectors) employs around 528 659 people and generates over €23.7 billion in GVA. In 2018, it contributed 2.3% to national jobs and 1.5% to national GVA. The share of Blue GVA underwent a low period between 2011 and 2015 but has returned to 2009 figures. Blue jobs also appear to be recovering, albeit at a slower pace. In absolute terms, Blue jobs have decreased by 13.5% compared to 2009, while GVA has increased by 11.1%, exactly the same increase in national GVA. Apart from maritime transport and, to lesser extent, marine living resources, all other sectors have seen significant drops in employment compared to 2009. On the other hand, only marine non-living resources have seen a substantial decrease in GVA (-60.5%) compared to 2009. The Blue Economy in Italy is largely dominated by coastal tourism, which contributed 58.1% to Blue jobs and 44.2% to GVA in 2018. Marine living resources and Maritime transport are also an important contributors to the Blue Economy, generating 14.1% and 13.1% of jobs and 11.2 and 20.1% of GVA, respectively. In fact, all established blue sectors are important contributors to Italy's economy, apart from marine non-living resources and marine renewable energy. At the EU level and in terms of GVA generation, Italy ranks second in maritime transport, producing 16% of the EU total, third in coastal tourism (13%), marine non-living resources (19%) and shipbuilding and repair (19%), fourth in marine living resources (14%) and port activities (9%), see https://blueindicators.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2021_06_BlueEconomy_Report-2021-Annexes.pdf

⁸ The fishing fleet consists of 2,775 boats, equal to 22.6% of the total in Italy, of which 70% is artisanal fishing and 30% is larger size and engine power; it has about 8,000 employees in the sector, as well as 300 million euros in turnover from fishing and 500 million euros in turnover from the processing of fish products.

⁹ In the national economy of the sea, Sicily is one of the most important regions with over 22 thousand companies (11.5% of the country). Palermo is the sixth Italian province for added value produced by the sea (equal to 1.2 billion euros), and with its 29,500 employees it is the fifth for the number of employees. Furthermore, the import-export of Sicily has a value of 22.3 billion euros.



availability and integrity of data at economic, social and environmental levels are overcome. It is also necessary to define the governance and basic regulations of the blue economy and to identify the financial instruments to support it.

Cohesion policy¹⁰ provided much needed and very swift support to regional and local authorities in the midst of economic slowdowns and the worst crisis of recent times. It has made a difference for many EU regions. It has helped them invest in a more sustainable growth, with long term benefits. It has supported physical and digital infrastructure, education and training, SMEs, and the green transition. In the interest of an insular region, as Sicily, it is urgent to establish and use economic instruments to stimulate the transition through the consolidation of EU financial instruments, including the *Multi-annual Plan for 2021-27*, in order to promote the exchange of best practices and fund pilot projects to build a roster of success stories, related to the *Blue Economy* sector at local and regional level.

The Sicilian government does not only intend to affirm the idea of Sicily as a cultural and digital platform in *Mediterranean* but, above all, it intends to be a pivot of the European development in the island regions. For this reason, we are working to make the *blue economy* a development factor for the Sicilian economy.

Lastly, from the *CPMR Intermediterranean Commission*, we insist on the necessity to strengthen the efforts on awareness raising and capacity building with national, regional and local governments across the Mediterranean, and about the importance to incentivise enterprises and people to understand their part to play for a sustainable and resilient Mediterranean. Likewise, institutions should help the youth and workers to build capacity and upgrade their skills in coherence with the current context of socio-economic recovery and climate-ecological necessities. The sharing of good practices in terms of funding and governance, and their mainstreaming over territories and policies, should be reinforced via the different programmes and funds available in the 2021-2027 programming period and beyond.

Therefore, in the conviction that the blue economy is the future we have to look at, we ask for the support of the EU in increasing funds in order to make companies, engaged in the blue economy more competitive in international markets.

¹⁰ See the 8th Cohesion Report by the Commission. https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/cohesion-report/