

Hellenic Presidency of the Council of the European Union

Athens, 7 May 2014

Athens Declaration

“Mid-Term Review of the EU’s Maritime Transport Policy until 2018 and Outlook to 2020”

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We, Ministers responsible for the Maritime Transport of the European Union and the European Economic Area under the chairmanship of Miltiadis Varvitsiotis, Minister of Shipping, Maritime Affairs and the Aegean, and in the presence of Siim Kallas, Vice President of the European Commission and Commissioner for Transport, on the occasion of the Informal Maritime Ministerial Meeting in Athens, Greece, on 7 May 2014, have agreed to the following:

HAVING REGARD to the fact that the EU is highly dependent on maritime transport both for its internal and external trade since 75% of the Union's imports and exports and 37% of the internal trade transit through seaports¹ and that shipping is a highly mobile industry facing increasingly fierce competition from third countries;

RECALLING that shipping and related services are an important contributor to the European economy and to the quality of life of European citizens, providing jobs and being essential for European competitiveness; NOTING that the EU's blue economy currently represents 5,4 million jobs and a gross added value of almost €500 billion per year; RECOGNISING the potential of maritime and coastal tourism for economic growth and employment;

ACKNOWLEDGING that shipping is a key element of the security of the EU supply chain, in particular as regards the importation of energy and raw materials;

REAFFIRMING that the European maritime sector faces significant challenges and that further action is needed to maintain and further develop attractive, safe and sustainable quality shipping and to ensure open maritime markets and access to cargoes without restraints; UNDERLINING in particular that European shipping faces significant challenges in relation to strengthened environmental requirements;

STRESSING that competent seafarers with appropriate working conditions and employment rights are an essential prerequisite for global sea trade, and that the implementation of the ILO Maritime Labour Convention 2006 (MLC) and of the IMO International Convention on Standards of

¹ COM (2012) 0494 final.

Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW), as amended by the 2010 Manila amendments, is an important step to create a uniform and enforceable framework for the working and living conditions on board ships and the protection of the health, safety and standards of competence of seafarers, thus substantially contributing to a more positive image of the maritime profession, thereby contributing to the recruitment of seafarers;

RECOGNISING the importance of maintaining a stable and innovation-friendly regulatory framework securing competitiveness for the fleets of EU Member States providing the legal certainty for investments and stimulating the establishment of maritime activities in the EU Member States in a context of liberalised international maritime services;

CONSIDERING that the European Union has already achieved significant progress in maritime safety, security and protection of the marine environment, Member States should focus on the effective implementation of the international Conventions and the EU maritime acquis;

ACKNOWLEDGING that internationally-agreed rules and Conventions, in particular by IMO and ILO, and their worldwide ratification, effective implementation and enforcement, are needed to ensure a global level playing-field for safe, secure and environmentally friendly maritime transport, and secure the long-term competitiveness of the EU's maritime industry;

RECOGNISING that the implementation of international Conventions is a State responsibility and that the forthcoming IMO mandatory audit scheme will be an important tool for assessing the performance of Member States in meeting their responsibilities as flag, port and coastal States;

EMPHASISING that Short Sea Shipping needs to play a stronger role in the EU to ensure the necessary accessibility and trade flows, including between the mainland and islands, and to shift long-distance transport away from roads in order to address capacity, energy and climate challenges while noting, in this context, the goals defined in the White Paper on transport policy published by the Commission in 2011²; RECOGNISING the important role of the European Shortsea Network (ESN) and its members Shortsea Promotion Centres (SPCs) to that regard;

ACKNOWLEDGING the importance of the establishment of the European Maritime Transport Space without Barriers and the Blue Belt initiative as essential elements to facilitate intra-EU maritime transport of goods, the attractiveness of Short Sea Shipping and the well-functioning of

² White Paper on Transport: Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area – Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system - COM (2011) 0144

the internal market;

UNDERLINING that efficient EU-wide digital maritime services, building on existing applications, systems and platforms, are needed to underpin transport and trade facilitation objectives as well as safety, security and environmental protection and ACKNOWLEDGING the progress made in this regard by interlinking and cross-fertilising EMSA hosted applications such as SafeSeaNet, LRIT, CleanSeaNet and THETIS, and in a broader context, by developing the Common Information Sharing Environment (CISE);

BEARING in mind the importance of promoting the competitiveness of European seaports, the interconnection with hinterlands and multimodal transport involving shipping;

RECOGNISING that the development of the TEN-T network under the new guidelines regime using the Connecting Europe Facility funding will create opportunities for increasing the competitiveness and innovation of European seaports and the further development of sea-links such as the Motorways of the Sea;

STRESSING that maritime transport is crucial for connecting peripheral and insular geographical areas to the rest of Europe;

EMPHASISING that Europe strives to keep its leadership in maritime technology, equipment and innovative maritime services and at the same time taking under consideration respective competition by other regions of the world;

UNDERLINING the need for the Commission to evaluate the results achieved to date before presenting the mid-term review of the EU maritime transport strategy;

I. European Shipping in globalised markets

1. AGREE that the EU and its Member States need to intensify efforts at bilateral, plurilateral and international level towards ensuring free access to markets and further liberalisation of trade in maritime services, mainly through maritime transport agreements or free trade agreements on a reciprocal basis, acknowledging that this would benefit EU shipping industry, stimulate economic

development, attract business activities and foster investments; in this context, CALL UPON the Commission and Member States to make all the relevant efforts to reach a high-ambition agreement for the shipping sector as result of the on-going negotiation of the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA);

2. UNDERLINE the need to maintain and further enhance the EU State aid regime for maritime transport, in order to achieve and maintain a global level playing-field for EU shipping in competition with third countries. STRESS that such State aid regime is essential for promoting European trade, the competitiveness of shipping and employment in the EU maritime cluster and in particular for preventing flagging out and relocation of EU shipping to third countries;

II. *Human Resources, Seamanship and Maritime Know-how*

3. REAFFIRM the will to increase employment in the maritime sector as a whole and career mobility between on- and offshore jobs to support the functioning of EU maritime clusters, to create a level playing-field by implementing the ILO Maritime Labour Convention 2006, to ensure fair treatment of seafarers including in the event of a maritime accident and to guarantee their welfare;

4. EMPHASIZE the importance of assessing living and working conditions in shipping as applied in the EU;

5. CALL for further concrete actions towards enhancing maritime know-how and improving the attractiveness of maritime careers for both men and women with the active involvement of all relevant parties by encouraging links between education and industry to promote labour mobility and transferability of skills as well as the effective implementation of relevant international Conventions; in this context, REAFFIRM that the TTE Council Conclusions of 2003 and 2005 “on improving the image of Community shipping and attracting young people to the seafaring profession” remain fully pertinent;

III. *Quality Shipping as a key competitive advantage*

6. INVITE the Commission and the Member States to contribute towards the enhancement of ship safety and protection of human life at sea, at international level as part of continuous safety improvement; STRESS the need to fully implement the EU maritime acquis, including the third maritime safety package;

7. CALL UPON the Commission and the Member States to continue to prioritise the improvement of the environmental, safety and social performance of shipping at EU and international level, while ensuring a global level playing-field and fair competition and that quality shipping leads to a competitive advantage in particular in global seaborne trade;

8. UNDERLINE that the implementation of environmental, safety and social requirements deriving from EU and international legal instruments is a vital precondition for the competitiveness of European quality shipping and INVITE the Commission and the Member States to work towards ensuring effective enforcement of the relevant regulations;

9. INVITE the Commission to review regularly the existing Union legislation applicable to shipping in order to avoid unnecessary regulatory and administrative burden in the context of smarter regulation;

10. REAFFIRM that piracy, armed robbery at sea and terrorist acts against shipping and offshore installations represent a serious threat to security, global trade, maritime transport, the fishing sector and the world economy and most of all life and security at sea, UNDERLINE the crucial role of international cooperation at all levels to counter such threats and URGE to increase respective efforts at EU and international level; in this context, INVITE the Commission and the Member States to elaborate further on the development of a comprehensive European Union Maritime Security Strategy using existing policies, structures and instruments;

11. SUPPORT the use, further development and integration of maritime monitoring, surveillance, positioning and observation systems (such as SafeSeaNet, LRIT, CleanSeaNet, Galileo, Copernicus, THETIS) and LOOK FORWARD TO the further development of the Common Information Sharing Environment (CISE) to provide added-value maritime services for EU shipping and the EU in general by enhancing cross-sectoral interoperability and sharing information between relevant authorities, users and operators;

12. ENCOURAGE a close cooperation between national authorities of the Member States, the Commission and EU agencies, in particular EMSA and FRONTEX, and bodies participating in coastguard functions as promoted by i.a. the European Coast Guard Functions Forum or any regional coastguard functions fora, and other relevant fora with a view to promoting an effective and efficient coordination for safer, more secure, and cleaner seas;

13. **UNDERLINE** the importance of adequate liability and compensation measures in case of maritime incidents and wreck removal in accordance with existing EU and international legal instruments;

IV. Working together on the international scene

14. **REAFFIRM** the determination to work within IMO and other international bodies, such as ILO and WTO, as appropriate, to achieve a level playing-field and a fair working environment in maritime transport by defining and implementing internationally agreed and evidence-based rules and standards for competitive, safe, secure, efficient and environmentally friendly shipping;

V. Exploiting the full potential of short-sea shipping and sea transportation services for business and citizens in Europe

15. **CALL UPON** the Commission and Member States to reinforce policy efforts regarding the promotion of Short Sea Shipping with the aim of shifting long-distance transport away from roads and ensuring the necessary accessibility and trade flows, including between the mainland and islands; and **REQUEST** adequate financial support, as appropriate, to promote the supply and demand for Short Sea Shipping services, in particular through the Connecting Europe Facility, allowing for better environmental performance of shipping, innovation and the integrated development of Motorways of the Sea;

16. **UNDERLINE** the importance of financial support, as appropriate, for the adaptation of ships to new environmental and safety requirements, in particular in the context of Short Sea Shipping;

17. **RECALL** that the implementation of appropriate alternative fuels infrastructure at EU ports, in particular for LNG refuelling, constitutes an issue of priority;

18. **ENCOURAGE** the development of more sustainable and efficient port systems to further enhance the environmental performance of ports and accommodate the ever-increasing maritime transport of goods and passengers with a view to meeting the demands of EU businesses and consumers for cost-efficient and timely transportation from door-to-door; **CALL UPON** the Commission to adopt State aid guidelines for seaports, with the aim of ensuring fair competition and a stable legal framework for port investment;

19. CALL for enhanced connectivity, especially through sea links and better port access as an integral part of the economic and social cohesion of Europe taking full advantage of the funding opportunities provided in the context of the current EU financial perspectives and, in particular, AGREE to promote, including through the Connecting Europe Facility and the European structural funds, better connections of islands and long-distance intra-EU passenger and freight transport through quality ferry services and appropriate port terminals, as well as appropriate hinterland connections of ports, in order to bridge existing gaps, prevent isolation and offer equal growth opportunities to small and remote islands, as well as insular Member States and promote coastal tourism;

20. URGE the Commission and the Member States to continue work on further digitalisation and simplification of administrative and operational procedures and the consequent reduction of administrative burden for the facilitation of maritime traffic, especially through the full and swift implementation of the Blue Belt including e-Manifest, the related e-Maritime services, and the development and deployment of national single windows in accordance with Directive 2010/65/EU, taking also into account the relevant IMO developments, in order to set up a European maritime transport space without barriers and to improve competitiveness;

VI. Europe should be the world leader in maritime research and innovation

21. EMPHASIZE the need to reinforce targeted R&D and innovation efforts, including demonstration projects, to maintain European global leadership in sustainable and competitive shipping and SUPPORT the European manufacturing and shipbuilding industry serving maritime transport to find innovative solutions towards safer, more efficient and cleaner ships, highlighting that Horizon 2020 is a key tool in this context.
