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*Speech by*

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## **8th edition of the Monaco Blue Initiative event on "Ocean management and conservation", in Monaco**

Ladies and gentlemen, it is a great pleasure to be speaking here today.

Monaco's world-famous Oceanographic Museum was headed for many years by the legendary Jacques Cousteau who incidentally bought his boat "Calypso" in Malta. It was built as a symbol of Monaco's commitment to our Oceans. That commitment was ambitious, but a spectacular success.

I had the pleasure yesterday of exploring parts of the museum. And it is very evident that, that commitment today is even stronger.

I consider myself lucky to have the Mediterranean running through my veins. I was born in Malta, literally in the middle of this great sea, which will always occupy the best place in my heart. And I will always be grateful to the Mediterranean for leading me further to the ocean. I have always considered the Mediterranean as the gateway to the ocean for many of us. In fact it was Malta in 1967 which convinced the United Nations (UN) to declare the ocean as the common heritage of mankind.

Dealing and protecting the ocean needs two things: a lot of scientific knowledge, and a lot of passion. Our ocean policy needs to be underpinned by both our scientific knowledge (which is still scarce) and our emotional connection (which certainly in my case is overabundant).

I have the enormous privilege to be in a position to shape European Union policy. Of course that is in collaboration with many experts and advocates. But I do think I have a perspective that will allow us to build that policy on the understanding of the facts *and* the emotions – the head and the heart.

And that is what I would like to outline to you today.

**When it comes to our oceans, out of sight cannot mean out of mind.**

I realise, of course, that I am preaching to the converted.

I don't want to try to convince you of the excellent work you are doing. I only want to encourage you to do more. Ocean management and conservation needs your expertise and your passion.

And I want to reassure you that the European Union is doing its part as well.

In the past few years we have taken action on multiple fronts:

- We have established new **environmental rules** to protect the marine environment. Our measures will ensure the sustainable use of marine resources. These include the obligation to set up marine protected areas.
- We have developed an **integrated maritime policy** that provides a more coordinated approach to maritime issues.
- We were also among the first to adopt a **strategy for sustainable 'blue', ocean-based growth** – and we are providing special financing for blue growth projects.
- We have reformed our **Common Fisheries Policy**, putting sustainability at its heart. By 2020, all fish stocks must be fished at sustainable levels.
- We also support the EU's **aquaculture sector** to meet the growing demand for seafood – and I know that aquaculture will be a big part of your discussions today.
- And the European Union is, together with our Member States, investing heavily in **ocean research** – to the tune of 2 billion euros a year.
- Not to mention the amount of effort being put by Member States and the European Union on biotechnology, ocean energy, coastal tourism, and marine resources.

So we have truly set sail. But there is no room for complacency and there is more work to be done.

But EU action alone is not enough – it will not do the job.

As you know very well, the challenges our oceans face today do not recognise national borders.

Rising sea levels. Eutrophication and acidification. Marine litter. Overfishing. Temperature rise – are all negative pressures on our oceans and its biodiversity.

What's more, those are the issues which erode the very basis of sustainable growth.

And these are global issues. No one State can solve these challenges on its own.

Protecting our ocean is not the single task of any single nation. It is a global task.

In the European Union, we have a long tradition of taking the *regional* approach. The Mediterranean is a prime example.

In line with the Barcelona Convention and in co-operation with the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) we are working to address such problems.

And just last week, last Thursday, Mediterranean Ministers from both sides of the Mediterranean Sea signed a Declaration on sustainable fisheries – concluding a process I launched one year ago.

That declaration is, by the way, a good example of heart and head together. We have a huge emotional link to the 450 ports around the coastline. We are passionate about the small scale fishing and the rich local communities support.

But 90% of Mediterranean stocks being overfished possibly even by the same small scale fisheries (SSF).

So we also need those small scale fishermen to pull their weight in protecting their own long term future.

Through new data commitments and management plans we are securing this effort.

This conference today, with its two Mediterranean workshops is taking a similar approach. And the Monaco Manifesto for the Ocean, signed just now, is pointing to the same direction.

So that is our regional approach.

It is also encouraging to see an increasing awareness, a better understanding, and a growing momentum at a global level of the ocean's role.

With Sustainable Development Goal 14, the global community has vowed to protect our oceans and to use its resources sustainably.

Now it's up to all of us to make this a reality. To deliver on our commitment.

That is why, in November, I, together with my colleague High Representative Mogherini, proposed an agenda on international ocean governance.

An agenda that just this morning in Brussels, I am happy to tell you, was welcome by European Union Ministers.

This agenda brings together 50 measures for us and our partners around the world, to make sure our oceans are safe, secure, clean and sustainably managed.

We have identified three priority areas for action.

The first area is about improving the international legal framework and updating it where necessary – I'm thinking in particular of the ongoing negotiations on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction.

We are also pushing for more effective cooperation between regional or international bodies, and working to ensure that everybody plays by the same rules.

Our second priority is to reduce human pressures on the oceans. So we are proposing action to address marine litter and to mitigate climate change impacts.

Protecting the Ocean is central to realising the Paris Agreement.

We are also proposing action to protect and restore marine ecosystems; promote maritime spatial planning; expand marine protected areas; and strengthen the fight against illegal fishing. We are already engaging with our international partners in the WTO to ban harmful subsidies that lead to overcapacity, overfishing and illegal fishing.

Third and finally, we plan to further advance our work on ocean research and data. As the exhibits in this building testify, the ocean is full of treasures, surprises, and many unknowns. We still don't understand what lies and what is happening beneath 70% of our planet's surface.

So we will propose a coherent ocean observation strategy for the European Union in 2018. We aim to create a global marine data network open to all. And we will strengthen our work for an All-Atlantic Ocean Research Alliance, by fostering enhanced marine cooperation with key players in the southern Atlantic.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

I have tried to update you on what the European Union is doing to advance the international ocean agenda.

And I would like to conclude by asking you to join us in Malta on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of October this year.

The European Union will host the fourth edition of the international **Our Ocean Conference**.

This conference series brings together global ocean leaders from government, business and civil society to propose tangible action for safe, healthy and productive oceans – and to review the progress on previous commitments.

In doing so, this conference will continue the work set in motion by past ocean activists and conservationists, like Prince Albert I of Monaco or indeed Jacques Cousteau.

And today I would like to propose that together, we continue to follow in their footsteps.

We are looking for initiatives and commitments not just from governments, but from all sectors of society.

Commitments need not be financial. But they do have to be new, effective, practical and measurable.

The results so far have been impressive. The past three conference editions have generated commitments worth more than 8 billion euros.

They have created nearly 10 million square kilometres of Marine Protected Areas – more than twice the size of the European Union.

With the Our Ocean Conference 2017, the European Union will continue this upward trend.

This is our chance; this is your chance to become part of this global success story.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to conclude with a comment, rather an inspiration from yesterday's visit to Monaco's Oceanographic Museum. I noticed the museum's mission statement: "to know, to love and to protect the ocean".

To know the ocean we need research and knowledge. To love the ocean we need passion. And to protect the ocean we need dedicated people like you. And an ocean strategy such as the one we have launched.

I dare say that we are not only delivering on SDG14, but we are also totally in sync with Monaco's oceanographic museum's mission statement.

Thank you for your attention, and I wish you a very successful conference.