

Integrated maritime policy (IMP) - Evaluation of progress made and new challenges

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The Commission presents a Communication on developing the international dimension of the Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP) of the European Union. It recalls that the aim of the IMP is to promote the sustainable growth of both the maritime economy in particular, and the coastal regions more generally, by improving coordination between the different sectoral policies and by developing crosscutting tools. If the IMP is to succeed, however, it cannot be just a European policy. Marine ecosystems and maritime economies transcend national boundaries. Many of the most urgent challenges which demand an integrated approach cannot be effectively addressed without robust international cooperation. Where the challenges facing the regional seas adjacent to the EU are concerned, the Commission will shortly set out its vision of the steps required in specific Communications. This Communication complements this regional approach by exploring how the IMP should be extended into the wider international arena. It envisages the creation of an EU framework for a global integrated approach to maritime affairs. It outlines ways in which the EU's authority, as an international maritime power, should be strengthened at the multilateral level. This would also facilitate regional cooperation with maritime neighbours with whom the EU shares sea-basins, as well as helping develop closer bilateral relations with key partners. Efforts promoted in the framework of the international dimension of the EU IMP will be coherent with the EU's overarching external relations policy and the development policy.

The Communication sets out the key themes for an EU platform in international maritime affairs. It notes that the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) remains the key reference in this domain, as supplemented by the UN

Fish Stocks Agreement in the field of fisheries. Yet despite repeated calls from the international community, a number of countries have still to become a party to these instruments and implement them. Furthermore, while UNCLOS contains general obligations for the protection of the marine environment and for cooperation, there are no mechanisms for taking effective action in the high seas from a cross-cutting approach. The EU is also advocating an integrated approach to the protecting and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. It has proposed an Implementation Agreement under UNCLOS for this purpose, which could play a key role in filling gaps in the current legal framework, in particular for the establishment of marine protected areas in the high seas.

The Commission goes on to discuss the need for sustainable fishing activities and efforts to put in place a post-2012 climate change agreement, as well as the need to ensure maritime safety, and enhance participation in large-scale international research programmes going beyond national jurisdictions and deep-sea research.

The paper describes also the need to strengthen the EU as a player in the existing multilateral system, particularly in UN fora and Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs).

It goes on to discuss the establishment of regional cooperation within shared sea basin such as the EU Atlantic basin, and the Black Sea.

The Communication states that an integrated approach to maritime affairs is beginning to establish itself as the gold-standard for maritime governance around the world. The EU's Integrated Maritime Policy positions it as a forerunner in this field. However, to capitalise on this momentum, and to ensure it reaps the full benefits of integrated policy making at home, it needs to ensure that its influence in the international debate is maintained and enhanced. The EU should therefore support the widespread adoption of IMP-type principles, tools and processes based on the ecosystem approach, as both a necessary precondition for effective integrated management in the EU's own waters, and as a good in itself, in line with its belief in cooperative multilateral decision-making.

In particular, the EU should:

- strengthen its role as a global player through greater and more unified participation in multilateral fora, in coherence with the principle of the unity of the EU external representation;
- promote global membership of UNCLOS;
- establish by mutual consent high-level dialogues on maritime affairs with key partners, ensuring synergies with existing sectoral dialogues in other policy areas;
- pursue dialogue on IMP bilaterally through both the ENP instruments and multilateral dialogue at sea-basin-level within existing frameworks (e.g. Union for the Mediterranean, Northern Dimension, Black Sea Synergy), sharing best practice in implementing the IMP tools with its neighbours and encouraging them to implement such tools;
- continue to work on moving oceans and coasts higher up the climate change agenda and provide assistance to developing coastal and island states in this field, in line with the EU development cooperation strategies and initiatives;
- continue to support an integrated approach to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity, particularly in areas beyond national jurisdiction, including for the establishment of marine protected areas;
- pursue its cooperation with the ILO to encourage decent working conditions in the maritime sector;
- pursue its actions to ensure freedom, safety and security of navigation, including actions against piracy;
- strengthen cooperation research activities with third countries in order to enhance participation in large-scale international research programmes and with countries neighbouring the EU in order to define common regional marine research strategies;
- ensure coherence between the activities of various organisations, notably in the fisheries, environment and transport fields;
- encourage the OECD to develop a structure for exchange of best practices on integrated approaches to maritime affairs;
- develop strategies for all relevant shared sea basins.

The Commission invites the EU institutions to endorse the Commission's proposed actions as set out in this Communication and to support the approach outlined.