



Bremen European Conference Closing Panel (4th May 2007)
**Address of the Portuguese State Secretary for National Defence and
Maritime Affairs, João Mira Gomes**

Let me start by thanking the German Presidency for organizing this conference in Bremen, an ideal location to address the subject of a future maritime policy for the Union and to discuss a European vision for the oceans and seas. It is therefore my privilege to participate in this closing panel and to present the priorities of the incoming Portuguese Presidency.

I

Europe needs an integrated maritime policy. This fact has been acknowledged in numerous initiatives that have laid the foundations for the debate on how the oceans and seas may become once again one of the main factors of our continent's development, if properly used and protected. Maritime policy will be one of the priorities of the incoming Portuguese Presidency. Our goal is to contribute to place Europe as the leading force in international maritime affairs.

With the appointment of its first ever Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and the publication of the Green Paper in June last year the European Union made a bold start in that direction. We welcome and support the Commission in developing, together with member states, regions and stakeholders, the framework for an interdisciplinary and therefore



integrated maritime policy, as already stated in the joint contribution presented by Portugal, Spain and France in 2005, and underlined again in our national contribution to the on-going consultation process of the Green Paper.

Today, more and more countries are developing maritime policies and adopting an ecosystem based approach to oceans and seas management, Portugal's own experience included. Our national approach goes beyond the development of an integrated maritime policy; we have aimed at the formulation of a pro-active strategy for the oceans and seas capable of mobilising human and financial resources.

II

The oceans and seas is also one of the priority themes of the 18-month tripartite Council Presidency's programme, expressing a common ambition shared by Germany, Portugal and Slovenia. And our meeting today is indeed a very appropriate one since the aim of the Conference is to seize the opportunity to take stock and contribute to the ongoing debate on the Green Paper shortly before the end of the consultation phase. Four key issues for a future European maritime policy were thoroughly addressed: employment and competitiveness; life on the coast; research and innovation; and joint responsibility for the oceans and seas.



A holistic and integrated approach on sectorial areas is followed on the Green Paper, proposing a closer coordination of maritime affairs, allied to a multidisciplinary vision enabling the crossing of knowledge within the different domains. The underlying principles to this new way of dealing with the oceans and seas must be based on the Lisbon Agenda and on the European Strategy on Sustainable Development, on its economic, social and environmental aspects, making each and every one responsible for the sustainable use of the ocean resources and considering the defence of the natural heritage a shared responsibility of the community, the economic agents, the citizens and their associations, and of the representatives of the local, regional and central authorities.

A European maritime policy must be put forward in the sense of adding value to what has been done so far. Therefore, the European Union must stimulate the development of common strategies and initiatives in the field of knowledge, technology and innovation, of the regulatory and legislative framework, of the active participation in the different international *fora* and of the spatial planning. To fulfil these objectives the European maritime policy should be based on orientations and solutions enabling the articulation of other policies, strategies and community regulations, easing their implementation, avoiding at the same time and whenever possible, the creation of new structures and new legislation and strengthening the transversal aspects of existing policies.

The advantages of a coordinated European maritime policy will be recognised, for example, in the areas of safety, defence and



surveillance, combat to illegal activities, maritime transports, movement of cargo and people, environmental preservation and protection, increasing the potential of national policies of the Member States and providing greater weight and visibility to the European Union's role at international level.

III

Portugal is preparing its incoming Council Presidency with the same determination and ambition which was the driving force behind the 18-month programme of the three Presidencies. We will benefit from the good work being done by our German friends and we will carry on, paying a special attention to the cooperation with European Institutions such as the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Social and Economic Council and the Regions Committee.

The most important initiative in the second half of this year will take place on the 22nd October, in Lisbon. It will consist of a ministerial conference, organised in partnership with the European Commission, to take stock of the results of the public consultation on the Green Paper. For the first time ever, we aim to sit around the same table ministers responsible for the coordination of sea affairs, regardless of their individual portfolio. Our goal is, also in this way, to start preparing the conclusions of the December European Council of Heads of State and Government. Those conclusions should constitute a sound basis for the establishment of an effective European maritime policy for the Union in the 21st century,



which from our viewpoint will necessarily entail the adoption of concrete and carefully targeted measures in 2008 during the Slovenian and French Council Presidencies. Thus, it is our wish to live up to the commitment and willingness shown by Chancellor Merkel and President Barroso in their opening remarks of this conference.

The following Council Presidencies will have to translate into concrete measures our conceptual policies dealing with oceans and seas. It is our well established opinion that we should focus on consensual themes and projects if we want to succeed. The idea of creating a specific financial line for the European maritime policy on the budget after 2013 should also be considered in due course.

Besides the Lisbon Ministerial Conference, the forthcoming Portuguese Presidency will include other events in its calendar, namely:

- a seminar in "Ilha Terceira" (Azores), on the 9th and 10th July, organised jointly with the Government of the Azores, the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe and the European Commission. The goal of this event is to share points of view on existing good practices in the area of Oceans and sea governance, in different continents and by players of various levels, including world, state and regional instances;
- a seminar in Lisbon, on the 19th and 20th July, organised together with the 'Maritime Affairs Task Force' of the European Commission to



promote a debate between member states on “The governance of a holistic and integrated maritime policy within the European space”.

(On other sectorial related areas, the Portuguese Council Presidency will take forward the work on the Third Maritime Safety Package, the development of the Motorways of the Sea and logistics to achieve a more balanced and sustainable transport modal split, and focus on climate change, biodiversity, water scarcity and drought)

IV

Portugal strongly believes that the future European maritime policy may represent a unique opportunity for Europe in the 21st century, enhancing its role as a global actor. In a moment of great activity in the framework of the oceans international agenda as it is the present case, with several countries worldwide adopting an ecosystem based approach to oceans and seas management or involved in processes of creating strategies or integrated sea policies, we claim that the European Union has the responsibility to be in the frontline.

The EU has 68.000 km of coastline, which border five seas and oceans - including its outer most regions - and the recent enlargement to Bulgaria and Romania introduced a new dimension: the Black Sea. Half of all Europeans live nowadays less than 50 km from the coast and maritime-based industries and services produce between 3 to 5% of the GDP. Bremen is a good example of this reality. But the development of an



integrated maritime policy is in fact important to all European Union member states, including to those which do not have a coastline. Our European maritime vocation is also reflected in our special partnerships with the Mediterranean, Africa, North and South America and Asia.

We must be ambitious and build upon the discussions and conclusions of this conference, with a view to build an integrated European maritime policy, in due course. It may not be an easy objective to achieve, but it is certainly in our own best interest. I believe we are now in a moment in which we ought to project a visionary ambition for the European maritime policy. Such is the commitment of the Council Presidencies trio that Portugal will give continuity in the second half of the current year. It is my firm conviction that by doing so we will be contributing to widen public support to the European project.

Thank you very much.