

Ministerial Message from Ajaccio

Recalling the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and in particular Part XII regarding the protection and preservation of the marine environment,

Recalling the conclusions of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, (Rio+20) adopted unanimously by the General Assembly of the United Nations, in particular paragraphs 162 and 177 regarding the importance of creating marine protected areas and the urgency of reaching a decision on the launch of international negotiations on an international instrument for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction,

Recalling the commitment of the international community as part of the ten-year strategic plan adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2010, and in particular Target 11 ("Aichi target"),

We, Ministers, representatives of all the world's main regions, meeting at Ajaccio on 26 October 2013,

Warmly welcome the NGOs, scientists, managers of protected marine areas, the representatives of the local communities and companies who met at Marseille from 21 to 25 October 2013, whose conclusions (in annexe 1) comprised the basis for the reflections and recommendations of the ministerial session at Ajaccio,

Emphasise that the good health of the oceans is essential for maintaining life throughout the world and that within them, protected marine areas, including highly protected marine reserves, play a crucial role in protecting marine biodiversity whose long-term survival is vital for sustainable development and the future of mankind,

Are concerned that, with less than 3% of the oceans covered by protected marine areas, the required level of protection is far from being achieved, this percentage being even lower when only areas that are under effective management are accounted for.

Today, we launch the Message from Ajaccio, one of urgent action, mobilisation and the desire to act together at all levels to meet the challenges:

We thus reaffirm our strong commitment to strive to achieve the Aichi Target 11, recognised by the Rio+20 Summit, to establish by 2020 a network of comprehensive and coherent protected marine areas effectively managed and covering at least 10% of the oceans,

We emphasise that these protected areas should cover the whole range of the ecoregions representative of the diversity of the oceans and to do so cover all relevant areas, in coastal zones and offshore, including the deep seas, whether they are located in areas under national jurisdiction or beyond national jurisdiction,

We encourage the close association of all elements of civil society, science, local communities, NGOs and businesses in particular, to ensure that all the conditions required for the successful establishment and management of protected marine areas are put in place, **and we welcome**, at this occasion, the decisive and exemplary role of the managers of these areas.

We recognise that MPAs have a prominent place in integrated maritime policies and in marine spatial planning. We encourage to include nature conservation targets in activities developed at sea.

We affirm our desire to develop sustainable financing mechanisms that meet the needs for the effective management of protected marine areas and welcome the launch by the governments of Monaco, France and Tunisia of such an initiative for the Mediterranean sea.

We welcome the Global Partnership for Oceans (GPO) announced at Rio + 20 as a tri-lateral public-private-civil society partnership that mobilizes knowledge and finance to accelerate the conservation and restoration of marine and coastal habitats, including MPAs and other area based measures agreed to in Aichi target 11

We welcome and encourage the development of initiatives by civil society that support the scientific work, the processes for creating protected marine areas and which provide backing to the managers. Besides financial support, **we recognise** that the involvement of civil society participates in creating a society that is fully aware of the importance of healthy oceans for mankind.

We also encourage the systematic application of scientific guidelines for the establishment of representative networks of marine protected areas. In this regard, we **support fully** the work carried out as part of the Convention on Biological Diversity on the Ecologically and Biologically Significant Areas (EBSA) with the objective that assessments be carried out for all regions of the oceans by 2014.

Since much has still to be learned about biodiversity in the high seas, **we support** the organisation of systematic ocean inventory campaigns with the international pooling of data. In this respect, **we welcome** the Global Environment Facility's ABNJ programme which promotes innovative partnerships with the private sector and supports the development of scientific knowledge, and more widely the involvement of the GEF in the marine issue,

We support the initiative for a sustainable ocean included in the Convention on Biological Diversity, which develops within a regional framework in particular, dialogue with the fishing community and more generally we **encourage** the organisation of dialogue and joint action among all users of the sea as the preferred mode of action,

Since the initial responsibility for action lies at national level, **we undertake** to mobilise the necessary resources for this purpose. **We welcome** in this regard the new announcements, which will be included in the annexe, made by States on the occasion of this ministerial session, covering all the oceans, enabling us to move significantly closer to the Aichi target and sending a strong signal of concerted international action,

In support of these measures, **we stress** the importance of providing technical and financial support, both bilateral and multilateral, to developing countries, in particular the least developed countries and small island developing States, to assist them with their actions for protecting the marine environment, the establishment of marine protected areas and the sustainable management of fish resources,

Additionally, **we call** for the significant strengthening of regional conventions regarding seas, an essential level which allows the ecosystems to be dealt with coherently and action to be taken in a more effective way, by developing cooperation with regional fishery management organisations and all competent regional and international organisations for managing human activities that have an influence on the marine environments,

We emphasise that this regional level must also allow us to explore the question of the long-term financing required for managing the protected marine areas, in particular through enhancing the value of the protected ecosystems,

We call as an emergency for the protection of areas beyond national jurisdiction, since these cover

64% of the oceans and contain a great wealth of biodiversity,

We welcome in this regard, the initiative of the OSPAR Convention to define, in the North-East Atlantic, the first scientifically-based and representative network of protected marine areas in the high seas.

We solemnly call on the Member States of the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), currently meeting in Hobart, to adopt the two proposals for creating networks of protected marine areas over nearly three million km² in the high seas which are currently submitted to them,

Real protection of high seas biodiversity however needs action to go further and reach a global scale to give a legal basis for the protection of the high seas. Should such a basis not be established, which enables genuine management measures to be taken, the initiatives taken will remain largely devoid of any effective impact,

Therefore, as approved at the Rio+20 summit, which stressed the urgency of the matter, **we solemnly call on** the international community to adopt before the end of 2014 the decision of the General Assembly of the United Nations allowing the launch of negotiations on an implementing agreement of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea for the conservation and sustainable management of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdictions, in order that two thirds of the oceans can finally be protected on a effective legal basis.

This process should ensure full transparency and active participation of the civil society, as agreed in Rio+20 as guiding principles for international environmental governance.

We thank the French Agency for Protected Marine Areas and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature for organising IMPAC 3, and also the City of Marseille and the Territorial Authority of Corsica for their exemplary involvement and welcome,

Finally, we express our heartfelt thanks to CHILE for its proposal to host the 4th International Protected Marine Areas Congress in 2017.