



The Africa-Europe Ocean Strategic Group

DG MARE – Yasmin Schinasi Romeu

Background

- VdL Commission entered into office in 2019, it announced a new strategy between the EU and Africa, to build a renewed partnership between the two continents. But how to translate this idea into something concrete and elevate the profile of the ocean in this setting?
- 1. thought was that a partnership cannot and should not be imposed. Building a partnership takes time, practice and trust because partners are seeking shared goals and mutual interest need to be defined.
- 2. thought we had was that any ocean partnership between Africa and Europe should be based on an open dialogue and experience-sharing with the aim to finding concrete solutions to common challenges.

Group set up

- The Africa-Europe Ocean Strategic Group was initiated:
- July 2020 launched a study to provide an analysis of the feasibility and modalities for setting up an EU-Africa 'blue' task force. The methodology followed an evidence-based approach, in which listening to stakeholders was essential.
- key recommendation of the study was to set up such a cooperation mechanism, stressing that an EU-Africa task force on ocean governance would be timely and of high relevance.
- The decision was then taken to go ahead. We contacted the Africa-Europe Foundation to support us in the setting-up and management of the Group and we allocated money to the initiative.
- 27 members, 14 from Africa. Gender equality 16 women. The EC, EP, the African Union Commission, the UN Economic Commission for Africa and African Union Development Agency as observers.

- The UfM represented and brought the Med perspective into the discussions.
- two-fold mandate: 1-to define common priorities and objectives, 2-on that basis, to present a joint plan of action. A scoping paper was prepared.

The Group engaged in a consultative process and identified priorities was based on criteria:

- (1) strategic relevance for the Africa-Europe Partnership in general;
- (2) practical feasibility to yield results and tangible deliverables;
- (3) cross-sectoral relevance to other domains of Africa-Europe cooperation

Priorities:

1. governance with a focus on joint efforts at multilateral level to address collective responsibility regarding the state of the ocean,
2. capacity sharing (not building) to emphasise the spirit of fostering an Africa-EU partnership.

The Group submitted its final report in summer- will be made public on 10 October at the Blue Africa Summit in Tangier.