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Press Release

Europe steps up efforts to coordinate ocean observing and monitoring for society

*From 21 to 23 November 2018, more than 300 stakeholders gathered in Brussels to discuss the future of ocean observing, monitoring and data collection efforts in Europe. The purpose? To demonstrate the importance of marine observations for our society and find solutions to overcome the current fragmentation and lack of sustainability of ongoing data collection programmes and activities. Driven by a broad range of observing communities and stakeholders that rely on ocean data and information, the Conference delivered a **Call to Action** for the EU and European countries to better coordinate and align the various data collection initiatives and work together towards a more concerted, fit for purpose and cost-effective European ocean observing capability.*

Systematic observation and monitoring of our seas and oceans delivers crucial data and information to underpin the knowledge we need to (i) revolutionise the blue economy, and (ii) improve our understanding of ocean health, geohazards and the oceans' role in climate regulation. The implementation of many of our policies relies upon ocean observations. **To secure Europe's sustainable blue future, it is therefore imperative to ensure that enough of the right observations are being made now and into the future.**

During the Conference opening session, **Elena Višnar Malinovská, Head of Unit Adaptation to Climate Change of the European Commission Directorate-General for Climate Action (DG CLIMA)** said that *"by 2050, there will be about 750.000 people affected in Europe from coastal damage per year with up to EUR 39 billion in economic damage on our assets. Adaptation can relieve this damage and suffering in coastal areas. [...] For adaptation measures to be effective, we need to have up-to-date and high-resolution coastal data from ocean observations and monitoring."*

The Conference showed that **Europe's ocean observing capability is strong**. Both European countries and the EU have already invested significantly in ocean observing infrastructure and technology. With the European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODnet) and Copernicus, good progress has been made over the last decade to ensure that the resulting observations are available to our scientists and engineers so they can help to increase our knowledge, create new opportunities for innovation and business development, improve productivity and reduce risks. However, the various **ocean observing communities remain disconnected and there is no overall process for determining which observations are essential** for achieving blue economy and societal objectives. The difficulty in setting up a more fit-for-purpose European observation system is not money. It is organization.

In a closing speech, **Karmenu Vella, European Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries** noted that *"If we want to build solid, fact-based policy and harness our society for today's and tomorrow's challenges, we need to make sure that ocean observations continue [...] cross-sector international collaboration is a must and coordination and sharing is a Commission priority."*

The European Ocean Conference 2018 highlighted the value of dialogue and connecting existing and emerging communities to improve collaboration and coordination, share and add value to existing efforts and to value ocean observations as a "public utility", as for meteorological data, that benefit all of society. In order to be make this happen, it is now time to collaborate and move from concepts to concrete actions.

A **Call to Action** launched on the final day, communicates the inherent value of ocean observing and monitoring for society and calls on European countries and the EU to examine what is currently being done under their responsibility and to prioritize strategic planning and coordination efforts.

Notes to editors

All presentations, the Call to Action and photos of the event are available at www.EOOSConference2018.eu

A Conference report will be available in January 2019. Progress of the Conference Call to Action will be evaluated in one year's time by the members of the Conference advisory committee, with support from the co-organising secretariats.

For more information on the EOOS Conference 2018, see Twitter #EOOSConference18 and #EOOS

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