



Global network of MPAs to support ocean governance



Tuesday 7th November 2023, 14:15 – 16:00 CEST

Co-hosted by MEP Stéphane Bijoux and MEP Catherine Chabaud

Vice-Chairs the European Parliament Intergroup on 'Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development'

Speakers:

- **MEP Stéphane Bijoux**
- **Ambassador Olivier Poivre d'Arvor**, Special Envoy of the President of the French Republic for the UN Ocean Conference France 2025
- **Luis Molledo**, Deputy Head of Unit Regional fisheries, DG MARE, European Commission
- **Ms. Eva Raute**, Managing Director of GOPA, Leading company for the EU Ocean Governance Project
- **Dr. Purificació Canals**, Team Leader and Technical Coordinator EU Ocean Governance Project and President of MedPAN
- **Carole Martinez**, Policy Manager of MedPAN
- **Andrea Michelson**, Regional Coordinator, Foro para la Conservación del Mar Patagónico y Áreas de Influencia
- **Jihyun Lee**, Director of Science, Society and Sustainable Futures Division, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity / UNEP
- **Alice Belin**, Policy Officer, Marine Environment and Clean Water Services Unit (C2), DG ENV, European Commission
- **MEP Catherine Chabaud**

Opening Remarks

MEP Stéphane Bijoux

“Cooperation is a tool to foster MPAs, cooperation is the key to sustainable ocean governance.”

As an opening statement, **MEP Stéphane Bijoux** recalled the **importance of oceans** to the **production of oxygen**, as well as serving as **home to millions of species**. He highlighted the importance of **cooperation** and **MPAs** to act as a **bridge between ecology and economy**. He stated the need to go beyond creating MPAs, but properly manage them efficiently. He reminded that ocean issues are the same across the world and called for the creation of a **Blue Belt** that would connect MPAs and managers.

Ambassador Olivier Poivre d’Arvor

“By sharing experience and best practices, by pooling knowledge and scientific information, MPA manager networks will improve the effectiveness and sustainability of MPAs.”

Ambassador Olivier Poivre d’Arvor recalled the **importance of biodiversity conservation**, as well as the fight against plastic pollution and illegal fishing, and the fight for decarbonised maritime transport. He congratulated the role that the EU has played in this fight, both at regional and international level. He underlined the need for a **Blue Belt**, as an ambitious but feasible goal, aligned with the UN Ocean Conference.

Luis Molledo, DG MARE, European Commission

“The challenges that we are facing today, they cannot be addressed alone. They are global challenges that need a global solution.”

Luis Molledo highlighted the **EU’s international effort to ensure ocean governance**. He called for the need of **more MPAs**, especially in the **southern oceans**. He recalled the role of the EU in **progressing international biodiversity goals, sustainable development, and improved ocean governance**. He stated the importance of **MPAs networks** for **sharing knowledge** and **empowering all MPA managers**.

First panel discussion

“Achievement and insights of the EU Ocean Governance”

Speakers that took part in the panel discussion:

- **Ms. Eva Raute**, Managing Director of GOPA, Leading company for the EU Ocean Governance Project
- **Dr. Purificació Canals**, Team Leader and Technical Coordinator EU Ocean Governance Project and President of MedPAN
- **Carole Martinez**, Policy Manager of MedPAN
- **Andrea Michelson**, Regional Coordinador, Foro para la Conservación del Mar Patagónico y Áreas de Influencia

The panel discussion started with the intervention **Ms. Eva Raute**, where she highlighted the importance of ocean governance and the role of the European Parliament in establishing the **EU Ocean Governance Project**. She also underlined the role of GOPA on **transboundary cooperation, connecting high policy level with on-the-ground action**, therefore improving MPAs. She also called for more **international cooperation** before giving the floor to **Dr. Purificació Canals**, who further explained that project. She presented said project, that focused on the **Atlantic and Southeast Asia regions**, and had four components, them being **restoring marine ecosystems** in Southeast Asia, the **continuity of the transatlantic MPA network project**, the **exchange of knowledge** between the two regions, and **improving cooperation** between Southeast Asian states and MPAs. She also highlighted the **role of cooperation** and **involving indigenous communities**, towards **biodiversity conservation** and achieving the **30 by 30 targets**. She then presented the **strategy for MPAs network**, based on **sharing information, knowledge and tools, building network capacity, policy support and advocacy**, and finally **financing**. She claimed that the main challenge is the creation of a **global network of MPA managers**, in order to create a **Blue Belt**.

Carole Martinez continued by presenting a regional MPA network, **MedPAN**, that brings together 131 organizations from 21 countries, and more than 190 MPAs, creating a **knowledge and human network around marine conservation in the Mediterranean region**. She described the 3 main pillars of MedPAN, them being **developing capacities and sharing solutions of MPAs managers, development and sharing of knowledge on MPA management, support to the development of marine conservation policies and improvement of the existing framework**. To that end, MedPAN has elaborated in a very participatory way a dedicated Post 2020 MPA Roadmap and a Policy paper that addresses key issues with result-oriented recommendations from **from the local to the international level**. Regarding the involvement of MedPAN in the EU Ocean Governance project, she highlighted that thanks to the twinning activities of this European project MedPAN has been able to connect to more regional networks, to exchange and to join forces to voice the critical role of the human MPA networks for the successful implementation of global and European targets. The EU Ocean Governance project had a real enabling and multiplier effect in this regard. She highlighted also the need to

better mobilise **funding for marine conservation**, and underscored the support of the EU Ocean Governance project regarding the development of the Global Alliance for marine conservation that has for objectives to **close the geographical gaps, to support existing networks and share tools and training programmes**. She voiced also the need for a **global network of MPAs, a Blue Belt**, that would further catalyse the knowledge and experience sharing between marine conservation networks and thus enhance the implementation of the global and European targets. She stressed that such a global network would definitively support the implementation of the EU Communication on Ocean governance.

Andrea Michelson presented her initiative of an **MPA management school** in the southern cone of South America. She mentioned the importance of “**twinning partnerships**” that allowed her organization to reach more countries, even beyond the southern cone. It also allowed to **strengthen and diversify the community of practices**, while **connecting with other MPA networks** across the globe. She stated that a **global network** would make her work easier.

Second panel discussion

“Coordinating protection networks of MPAs as key allies”

Speakers that took part in the panel discussion:

- **Jihyun Lee**, Director of Science, Society and Sustainable Futures Division, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity / UNEP
- **Alice Belin**, Policy Officer, Marine Environment and Clean Water Services Unit (C2), DG ENV, European Commission

The panel discussion started with the intervention of **Jihyun Lee**, where she presented the **Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) goals**, them being **urgent and transformative action at all levels of society and collaboration and cooperation between different stakeholders across multiple sectors**. The **GBF** has 23 targets that were broke down in 3 groups, the first being about **biodiversity**, the second being about **sustainable use**, and the third being about **implementation and mainstreaming**. She highlighted the **importance of finance and business for the GBF**.

Alice Belin then continued by reminding that **European seas are under threat**, and that more tangible measures are needed, including **MPAs which are an effective tool to reverse the alarming trend in marine biodiversity loss**. She said that the EU’s ambitions when it comes to MPAs, through its policies and legislation, goes beyond simply drawing lines on a map and aims for an **effective management of MPAs** and the sustainable use of marine resources through an **ecosystem-based approach to the management of human activities**. She mentioned that in addition to **protection**, efforts have to be made in **restoring marine ecosystems**, and that **MPAs are directly involved in restoration efforts**. She stated that the **EU can lead by example** when it comes to reaching our international marine conservation commitments, and highlighted the need for **more**

funding, expertise and know-how. She also reminded that threats to the marine environment are similar across the world, and that **connecting MPA networks across the world** could allow for the **sharing of good practices and knowledge** to properly protect the marine ecosystems.

Q&A session

The general panel is asked about what is the **strategy to transit to strongly protected MPAs**, to truly allow some **biodiversity and ecosystem recovery**, highlighting the existence of **paper MPAs**. **Dr. Purificació Canals** underlines the importance of the question asked, saying that **there's more MPAs but that doesn't mean more well managed MPAs**. Without well managed MPAs, people may only see the inconvenience, but not the benefits. She claimed that the **critical points are not enough money, not enough resources, and not enough guidance**. **MEP Catherine Chabaud** asked what are the **next steps** following the establishment of a roadmap for a tangible follow-up of the EU Ocean Governance project. **Alice Belin** explained that while the funding for the current project is coming to an end at the end of the year, different options are being explored by the relevant Commission services **to continue funding work on international marine conservation and MPAs in the coming years**. **Dr. Purificació Canals reminded the importance to maintain the European leadership on the Global Ocean governance issue and called for an EU and European Parliament political mobilisation in these issues**. The EU has a special responsibility regarding global Ocean governance with its Member States and their overseas territories.

Closing remarks

As closing remarks, **MEP Catherine Chabaud** stated the importance of **cooperation and connecting people** and mentions **MPAs also help local communities**. She reminded that there's **only one Ocean** and that **everyone is connected to and through the oceans**. We need a Blue Belt.