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## SPEECH

**MEETING:** Second Black Sea Stakeholder Conference "Smart and Blue - New opportunities for the Blue Economy of the Black Sea: Supporting Maritime Business Growth"

**ORGANISED:** by the European Commission (DG MARE) and the Bulgarian Ministry of Transport, Information, Technology and Communications

**DATE, PLACE:** Sofia, 24 March 2015

**INTERVENANT:** Mircea STOIAN, Tulcea County Councillor

Today I stand before you with a dual role - as representative of Tulcea County Council and representative of the CPMR Balkan and Black Sea Regional Commission, and as a result my speech will refer to the situation in the Black Sea area, viewed from the perspective of a county on its shore but also from the perspective of an international associative structure.

CPMR, the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions, is an organisation that, since 1973 has promoted a "maritime priority" in European policies. Commissioner Vella knows our organisation. Our ideas have often received a favorable reception in Brussels. These include the interest of an approach by "sea basin". This approach brings us together today around the challenges and opportunities of the Blue Economy in the Black Sea.

The Black Sea basin is a strategic bridge characterised by close national ties, but also by diversities and rivalries. The Region is an expanding market and, traditionally, major energy production.

Coastal tourism is the third major marine and maritime economic sector with an expanding international clientele. It is also an important fishing Region, where most stocks are cross-border in nature, with an emerging aquaculture sector.

The Black Sea could become an attractive destination for tourists from all over the world. However, this potential has not yet been fully developed, because of limited resources, insufficient transport infrastructure, inadequate tourist facilities, and poor quality of services.

Due to urbanisation and industrialisation of coastal areas and increasing human pressure on its natural resources, the Black Sea has undergone substantial degradation over the last century. As a result, there have been considerable efforts at both regional and national levels to curb pollution and improve natural resource management.

As I said, I come from Tulcea, a county located at the confluence of the Danube and Black Sea. An important part of its surface (coastal area too) was included in the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve. Sustainable administration of natural heritage was initially regarded by the population as a restricting measure but over time they learned to respect nature and its resources. In 2014, statistics show a

total of 31,762 people applied for permits for fishing in the reserve and 43,335 tourists requested access to the reserve.

But we are still looking for sustainable economic alternatives to preserve fishing as a traditional occupation and part of the Delta's culture and to provide a source of income for the inhabitants of protected areas. A real breath of fresh air was created with the establishment of the Local Group of Fisheries FLAG Delta. I welcome the presence of a FLAG representative at this event, who will provide more details about the grants awarded up to now.

In terms of international cooperation, projects between non-EU countries and EU Member States operates largely on a bilateral basis in contrast to EU initiatives in other geographical regions. In the Black Sea area, cooperation is inhibited to some extent by bilateral issues among countries.

To overcome these problems international associative structures, such as the CPMR Balkan and Black Sea Regional Commission, aim to find solutions to common problems and also to promote best practice examples and principles of sustainable development, establishing the conditions necessary for cultural and economic dialogue.

Our Balkan and Black Sea Commission will work primarily on projects. The European Union has a set of instruments to assist in the implementation of transnational projects involving partners from the EU, candidate and neighbouring countries. We must use these instruments and we will.

The most suitable of these instruments is the Black Sea Basin Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020. The draft Operational Programme has just been released for consultation by the Bucharest Managing Authority. We will look closely at this document and, if necessary, proposed amendments to the maritime dimension will be considered. But our Regions, together with other partners, will mainly prepare eligible projects on the programme. You must know that they are open projects, the partnership is not closed and those who are interested are still able (for a few months) to join us by contacting our office.

The General Secretariat of the Commission has recently submitted a project idea of the Eastern Macedonia-Thrace Region, to promote the natural potential of protected areas and to create income opportunities for people, whilst respecting sustainable development principles. The Black Sea Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 has been identified as a potential donor and the project aims to bring together partners from Greece, Turkey, Romania and other eligible countries.

The Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Romania-Bulgaria 2014-2020, another important source of funding for bilateral projects, has also become active.

I would like to present you a project that is of great importance to us, the Vasco da Gama project. In blue growth, which is our subject today, there is a real need to qualify the labour used in the maritime economy: transport, energy, fishing, etc. From 2016, we wish to implement partnerships between maritime educational institutions around the Black Sea area, even if they are not located within the EU. One such project, entitled "Vasco da Gama for the Black Sea", should in particular facilitate the international mobility of students between maritime universities that highlight this sea.

Given the fact that any change requires substantial material efforts, I am confident that we will find efficient and environment friendly solutions in the Black Sea that will contribute to economic development only through a joint public-private partnership, by attracting investors and grants. It is our duty, as stakeholders, to turn the Black Sea into a Blue Sea!