

27th EEAC Annual Conference

Partnerships to strengthen sustainable use of oceans, seas & marine resources (SDG 14)

note to debate kick-off by José Guerreiro - CNADS

One of the main challenges facing the future of the oceans today is the compatibilization of the sustainable development goals for the sea, with the huge focus on blue economy and blue growth.

Indeed, on the one hand, we have the overall objective of protecting marine and coastal ecosystems, notably through an ambitious program developing networks of marine protected areas, ecosystem restoration processes, or the reduction of resource extraction; On the other hand, we have a strong commitment to the Blue Economy and Blue Growth, generating huge expectations from the States to contribute to the growth of Gross Domestic Product (for example, in Portugal, a 50% increase in the contribution of the Sea Economy to the relative weight of GDP), the creation of new jobs and the provision of living and mineral resources.

Looking only to EU priorities we find intensive offshore aquaculture to fill the fishing deficit, giant offshore wind farms to meet energetic targets, big cruise ships for tourism and deep mineral exploration to address the lack of rare minerals increasingly used in our technology or the bet on blue biotechnology from the food sector to the pharmaceutical industry. All these new uses, along with the traditional uses of the marine environment, from fishing and shipping to oil and gas exploration, intensified sea uses and have the potential to create even greater anthropic pressure on the oceans.

The truth is that if a Martian researcher landed on Earth today would conclude, that he would be facing a schizophrenic scenario of Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde.

Actually, States and governments, have introduced new instruments for ocean governance by adapting the governments structure with Ministries of the Sea or even Ministries for the Economy of the Sea (eg Cape Verde), creating institutional networks for maritime policy and management of the marine environment. At the same time, states developed supporting legislative frameworks creating the instruments for regulation and planning of the new maritime economy (eg. Marine Policy Acts and Maritime Spatial Planning Plans), to avoid conflicts of use. But let's face it; they are

essentially instruments for economic regulation, Bill Clinton said it better years ago: "It's the Economy Stupid". This is the crucial issue: how to reconcile these two objectives, apparently antagonistic, and find the bridges over this death valley, or to use a more appropriate term, over this deep submarine canyon.

In my view, this is the central role of science and technology: shaping the new projects of the Blue Economy from the start, incorporating in its conception the genes of the best available techniques in environmental sustainability, and not in later stages of development, where only will act as mitigation methods.

To achieve this goal, it is crucial to approach and structure the partnerships between Research Centres, blue entrepreneurship and innovation, development of blue startups and incorporating scientific advances in companies with financial muscle for large investments.

In my opinion, it is precisely here that States, and public policies have been insufficient. This year's OECD Report, "Rethinking Innovation for a Sustainable Use of Oceans" has revealed that ocean innovation networks are mostly in their infancy (most post-2010), many are generalist and not sea-dedicated, dedicated interface mechanisms are very few and the incentives for blue entrepreneurship themselves, appear disconnected and sparse, not always favouring solutions providing greater sustainability.

It is precisely by stimulating the development of "innovating networks" including *ad initium* science and innovation, entrepreneurs and the most financially capable companies, that we can contribute to sea literacy in various sectors and, above all, to the sustainability of blue growth, return benefits to the conservation of the marine environment. But to do so, we have to bet strongly and simultaneously on mobilizing dedicated public policies for Blue Science, entrepreneurship and financial and fiscal incentives to enhance blue investment.

This debate, in my view, is yet to be done and should bring the players together, so that this Cape of Storms becomes Cape of Good Hope. It would be a good start.

Yes, we can dream on taking the Vasco da Gama route to India on a solar powered Cruise-ship and, you know, it might be easier to do it than the