

Address to Atlantic Stakeholders Workshop, Galway 24th November:

Good morning and you are all very welcome today this the third national event of the Support Team for the Atlantic Action Plan.

The Atlantic Action Plan, as many of you will know, is about operationalising the Atlantic Strategy-about identifying where we can grow the maritime economy in the Atlantic region.

To do this, it has identified overarching priorities actions linked to the Strategy's themes.

Promote entrepreneurship and innovation

Protect, secure and enhance the marine and coastal environment

Improve accessibility and connectivity

And create a more socially inclusive and sustainable model of regional development.

Each of these detail specific means or ideas for their achievement, including on research and co-operation such as in the area of offshore aquaculture, or marine renewable energy or improving educational measures through the development of cross national programmes or improving connectivity through port development.

There is strong political commitment to its success-recognition that the marine economy is vital to sustainable economic growth and so we have in place an Atlantic Strategy Group comprising of representatives from the 5 Member states as well as the committee of the regions, the CION, the EP, the Economic and Social Committees, CPMR which oversees and offer policy guidance on the Action Plan. The chair of this Group rotates annually- Ireland obviously in the hot seat this year. The Group also works alongside the Support Team in promoting the plan at the public and political levels-this year for Ireland the focus was very much on implementation- we have worked with the regional and managing authorities to consider how the Strategy can be incorporated into the operational programmes, utilising EU structural funds, we have worked with the European Parliament to ensure political awareness of the Strategy and Action Plan and we have also had in September in Dublin our most successful yet Atlantic Stakeholders Platform Conference with over 400 stakeholders registered, senior political participation in the form of EU Commissioner Vella, Minister

Michael Creed-today though we want to take an even more practical approach-hear from you on what else we could be doing, hear of you project ideas but also inform you of how you could take that idea and find the means to realise it.

Nationally, Ireland's commitment to maritime growth is well known –we have had for some time our own integrated maritime policy, known as Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth, which identifies research, knowledge, technology and innovation as key enablers in the achievement of the development of a thriving ocean economy and the more concrete goals of doubling the value of our ocean wealth to 2.4% of GDP by 2030 and increasing turnover from our ocean economy to over €6.4bn by 2020.

Within the plan we have identified areas of priority and have developed pathways forward to meet our targets, for example, Seafood Development Programme 2014-2020, which in conjunction with EMFF (European Maritime Fisheries Fund) will see an investment of some €240 million in key areas such as Seafood development Control and enforcement Data Collection Storage Aid Integrated Maritime Policy, or the development of a National Strategic Plan for Aquaculture, which targets growth of the aquaculture industry by 45,000 tonnes to 81,700 tonnes by 2023, we had last year the review of marine taxation to ensure that taxation in the marine sector is strategic and allows for marine growth and development. Work is ongoing in the area of marine spatial planning with the publication earlier this year of an enablers task force report and we continue to invest in and win investment for much-needed research. Some 8% all Irish FP7 EU funds secured through 2013 related to marine research and Ireland is on track to continue that success this year, having secured over 5% of the total marine related budget in the most recent calls under Horizon2020 and now we have out to public consultation our national marine research and innovation strategy –as a nation we are poised to really seize on the momentum around maritime growth.

The Atlantic Strategy and Action Plan provide a guide for where the focus in achieving that growth could lie. The downside? There is no direct funding through the Strategy but that should not be a deterrent to delivering on those actions. Today, looking specifically at action 2-protecting, securing and enhancing the marine and coastal environment we will hear of the EU funds that are at our disposal-some such as the INTERREG Atlantic Area Programme have direct links with the Atlantic Strategy, others such as COSME the link is not explicit and may require us to think about more creatively about how we target that funding for the marine sector-but that is exactly what we are here to learn-how to make that EU funding work for us - the funding field can seem daunting-the application process bureaucratic nightmare and we are fortunate today to have with us such expert advice but also the support team on a full time basis to help you navigate this field.

We also have some fantastic examples of best practices harnessed from across the Atlantic as well as some amazing and award winning projects examples right here in Ireland such as the Atlantic Ocean Research Alliance, funded through H2020, where Marine Institute leads a group of partners in furthering transatlantic marine research or the Atlantic Area Programme funded project MAREN 2 which focuses on the now vital topic of marine renewable energy or the Northern Periphery Programme funded Cool Routes project focused on yachting routes along the west coast to Norway, or the award of H2020 SME funding to Brandon products Ltd for a blue biotechnology solution for bio oil production..... I could go on and on. There is a huge momentum, a global realisation of the importance of the sea-we need to capitalise on that right now-to shamefully misuse the words of Shakespeare "there is a tide in the affairs of men, which taken at the flood, leads on to fortune..." And now I'll hand over to those who can help us harness that tide.

Thank you