

**Mister President**

**Dear Participants**

**Dear Friends**

**Unfortunately, I'll not be able to participate in today's event as promised, to discuss the International Context of Ocean Governance. However is not much of a loss, I know little about Oceanography. If I'm involved in this issue – and chaired the Commission that produced the Report "Ocean our Future" – discussed in the United Nations General Assembly – it's due to the persuasion capacity of the illustrious Oceanographer Prof. Mário Ruivo.**

**As a politician – since always – I was obviously interested in marine and maritime issues, once the Sea was greatly open to navigation by the Portuguese. As once said by the great Portuguese Poet, Fernando Pessoa, "óh mar salgado, tanto do teu sal são lágrimas de Portugal" (Oh salty sea, how much of your salt / is tears from Portugal).**

**Today all as changed. We are facing a terrible global crisis – financial, social, political and civilizational – and also environmental.**

**The world powers have increasingly turn their backs to ecological problems – as demonstrated in the last Rio+20 Conference – and the results are notorious. The world powers should be self-critic when facing tsunamis and hurricanes like Sandy.**

**I've noted, with concern, the alerts about the health of the Oceans, mainly coming from scientific community. Which, and we have to appraise that fact, has been assuming the responsibility of informing the policy and economy makers. But that is not enough, when for the dominant neoliberal ideology money is what counts.**

**Portugal has been trying to contribute, defending the creation of the European Ocean Agency, which paved the way to the creation of EurOcean as an Information Centre for Marine Sciences and Technology, and to the establishment of the European Maritime Safety Agency in Lisbon.**

**The Ocean and the Seas, by nature, complexity, services and resources were and still are, in my humble opinion, a framing element of the several States identities but simultaneously of regional cohesion and global projection of Europe throughout the World.**

In this context I recall that the origin of EurOcean, came from intergovernmental consultations, promoted by the Portuguese government, under the sponsorship of the Ministry of Science at the time (here present) Prof. Mariano Gago, and coordinated by Prof. Mário Ruivo, aiming the reinforcement of Europe's capacity and competitiveness on ocean affairs.

It's encouraging to see that the creation and implementation of EurOcean, celebrating today its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it's a reality, reflecting the capacity to adapt to circumstantial challenges and to deliver results/products tailored to the different needs of different societal actors (scientists, politicians, industry), and to the increasing need of raising citizens awareness to Ocean issues. Fundamental activity in democratic societies as a way to promote adequate and convergent responses towards the development, employment, well being, respecting and preserving the environment.

Is never enough to stress this point, not yet rooted in the civic culture, even in coastal areas: despite all efforts undertaken to inform on the central role of seas and ocean for

humankind we still find (even in formal education) considerable gaps not compensated by a frequently superficial media coverage of this issues. Not surprisingly the non-recognition of the ocean importance still prevails in the political and economic decision-makers. I know what I'm talking about.

It's therefore urgent to ensure that independent, solid and reliable scientific and technical information (EurOcean's objective) is the basis of decisions regarding the national maritime spaces ensuring the European interests in this domain. When the speeches on the economic, financial and social crisis detract the attention from concrete measures aiming to re-launch and re-establish, development, solidarity and social cohesion one must recall the fundamentals of the European Integrated Maritime Policy as a common tool at service of members states and the European Union.

**Muito obrigado!**

**Mário Soares**

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