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## PRESS RELEASE

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<h3>STAY THE COURSE!</h3>
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“AQUAMARINA”, a working group of the maritime Regions within the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR), created at the initiative of **Jean-Yves Le Drian**, President of the Regional Council of Brittany, met for the first time on 26 March 2008 in Brussels at the Committee of the Regions.

Almost forty European maritime Regions<sup>1</sup> expressed their interest in this working group whose objective is to follow up the implementation of the EU action plan resulting from the Blue Book “[An Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union](#)”.

*“The Blue Book must not be watered down to pale blue! Setting up this follow-up and continuous intervention group is a key initiative of the coastal Regions to guarantee the delivery of the European Maritime Policy,”* said **Mr Le Drian**.

**Maritime safety** was at the heart of the debates during this first meeting. This is a very topical issue, with the recent Erika trial in France and more recently, that of the Prestige in Spain (Galicia). Two aspects in particular were considered:

- Firstly the state of the adoption of the measures contained in the “Erika 3” package, as well as the consequences that the judgement passed by the French justice system in the Erika affair will have for the Regions. In particular this concerns acknowledgement of the ecological damage and the legitimacy of the regional and local authorities to be recognised as fully-fledged partners in maritime safety policy.

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<sup>1</sup> Midtjylland Region, Bornholm, Pays de la Loire, Bretagne, Aquitaine, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Haute-Normandie, Languedoc-Roussillon, Guadeloupe, Basse-Normandie, Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur, Poitou-Charentes, Schleswig-Holstein, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Region of East Macedonia and Thrace, Region of Central Macedonia, Western Greece, Tuscany Region, Regione Puglia, Rabat-Salé-Zemmour-Zaer, Province Noord-Holland, Province of Zeeland, Aust-Agder County, North Norway, Telemark Fylkeskommune, Centro Region, Xunta de Galicia, Gobierno de Aragón, Catalogne, Principauté des Asturies, Comunidad Valenciana, Västra Götaland Council, Blekinge Region, Skåne Region, Shetland Islands Council, West Sussex, Southern England Local Partners, Aberdeen City Council, Northern Ireland, Lincolnshire County Council, Devon County Council

- Secondly, building stronger partnerships between maritime Regions and bodies responsible for maritime safety policy, and more specifically, with the European Maritime Safety Agency and the International Oil Pollution Compensation Funds for oil pollution damage (IOPCF).

The European Commission, represented by Mr Nicolas Mariel from the Maritime Affairs Task Force and by Mr Gilles Bergot from DG TREN, could thus take note of the ambitions of this group of Regions committed to a real maritime policy.

As a source of support and proposals, the Member Regions of the "Aquamarina" group will devote their meetings to the various themes within the Blue Book Action Plan, namely: maritime spatial planning, marine planning and the integrated coastal zone management, maritime transport, maritime economy, research, employment and training.

Jointly run by the Region of Brittany and the CPMR General Secretariat, "Aquamarina" plans to meet three times a year for two years (2008 and 2009), corresponding to the timetable fixed by the European Commission for the introduction of its maritime policy.

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