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MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
ENVIRONMENT, MARITIME AFFAIRS & FISHERIES

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Your Holiness,

*As your Laudato si so eloquently pointed out, "we see increasing sensitivity to the environment and the need to protect nature, along with a growing concern, both genuine and distressing, for what is happening to our planet".*

Oceans, in particular, are under pressure from overfishing, the effects of climate change, and pollution. To ensure that our oceans can continue being an ocean for life, we need to protect and use them in a more sustainable way.

We fully share your views on the system of governance of the oceans, according to which *"international and regional conventions do exist, but fragmentation and the lack of strict mechanisms of regulation, control and penalization end up undermining these efforts"*.

That is also why, in the European Union, we have recently adopted a Joint Communication: International ocean governance – an agenda for the future of our oceans, setting out 50 actions for safe, secure, clean and sustainably managed oceans.

In line with this agenda, we will jointly host – in the presence of Mr Joseph Muscat, the Prime Minister of Malta – the fourth international *Our Ocean 2017* conference in Malta on 5 and 6 October 2017. This high-level conference will bring together key decision makers of the international community to identify solutions and commit to meaningful actions. Previous editions have resulted in hundreds of concrete commitments and billions of euros pledged to help secure a healthy and productive ocean.

We are convinced that *Our Ocean 2017* will continue to inspire and empower a new generation of leaders, entrepreneurs, scientists and civil society to identify solutions and – importantly – generate new commitments to take action. Your presence and words would be instrumental in making this happen.

It would be a great honour for us if you could address participants on this special occasion.

We remain, Your Holiness, Yours very truly,

Federica Mogherini

Karmenu Vella