



Commissioner Karmenu VELLA
Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

Video Message

**Public seminar entitled “Laudato Si’:
Interfaith and Secular perspectives on the care for creation
(*Millenium Chapel, Malta, 4 October 2017*)**

Recording: 11 September at 10H15

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Prepared by: 

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you today.

And thank you to the Church Environment Commission and Nature Trust Malta for organising this event to discuss the Papal Encyclical Letter "Laudato Si – on care for our common home".

There can be no doubt that *Laudato Si* is an important text. It is critical but hopeful, lyrical but unflinching. It is part poetic homage to the beauty of our planet, part scathing analysis of how we are destroying that beauty.

The wording is clear, blunt even. It minces no words. This is not a document for religious experts. Any layperson – Christian or not – can understand what it says.

It names the problems. It points to possible ways forward. And it calls on *all* of us to change our ways.

To put an end to global environmental deterioration. To stop the depletion of natural resources. To halt the loss of biodiversity.

As the European Union's Commissioner for the Environment, Fisheries and Maritime Affairs, taking care of nature is my bread and butter. Whether it's on land, or at sea.

But it is also a deeply personal subject. One that is close to my heart.

Because His Holiness Pope Francis is right. No matter who we are

or what we believe, Mother Earth is "our common home". The only home any of us has.

The European Union is taking care of this common home. We are tackling problems from pollution to air quality. We are improving access to water. We are protecting biodiversity.

And we are initiating the move away from today's mindless "throw-away culture" towards a circular economy. An economy that reduces waste and enhances recycling.

In short, we are pursuing an agenda that is good for our citizens and good for the environment.

And let me single out one area of action in particular: our oceans.

Oceans are the source of life. They provide over 50% of the world's oxygen. Literally every other breath we take.

They feed us. They provide for us.

They regulate our climate. And, if we are not careful, they can unregulate it as well.

Laudato Si rightly highlights the oceans' importance.

And it stresses the many dramatic challenges they are facing today. Rising sea levels and water temperatures. Acidification. Uncontrolled fishing. Coral bleaching. Marine pollution.

It also recognises that more can be done to improve international

ocean cooperation.

And there is hope.

Last year the European Union launched an agenda for the future of the world's oceans. It sets out 50 actions we will take, together with our international partners.

And in 2017 we are pursuing this course.

Several high-level meetings for the oceans are taking place this year. Each of them brings us one step closer to oceans that are cleaner, healthier, more productive.

Tomorrow morning I will open the 4th edition of the international Our Ocean Conference, hosted by the European Union here in Malta.

The Our Ocean conferences are about fostering tangible action for healthy oceans. Whether it's protecting marine eco-systems. Or fighting illegal fishing. Or reducing marine litter.

The conference brings together ocean champions from all walks of life. Policymakers and scientists, business owners and educators.

To track previous pledges we've made. To measure our progress. And to promote further action where needed.

Together we can come up with bright new ideas, put them into practice, and spread the word. Together we can make a difference.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Christianity and the sea have an intimate connection.

Many of Christ's disciples were fishermen, before becoming 'fishers of men'. The fish as a Christian symbol is nearly as old as the Christian faith itself.

But of course, our seas and oceans do not care about our faith. They merely care that we *act*. Decisively. Together. No matter our creed.

Laudato Si recognises this when it speaks of the natural environment as "*a collective good, the patrimony of all humanity, and the responsibility of everyone*".

I am proud of the part the European Union is playing in creating a global alliance for our oceans.

The sea will not get better by chance. But it can get better by change!

Thank you.