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## **CEMR Position Paper on the Protection and Conservation of the Marine Environment**

The marine environment of Europe is a fundamental and universal asset that is under threat from activities that are under the control of its communities. Its use and the interrelationship with terrestrial activity mean that actors at all levels are key to its well-being. Not least of these are the municipalities and regions of Europe. The concentration of development and activity in coastal regions is particularly marked in northern temperate and northern equatorial zones and so a particular global responsibility rests on the European Community to be proactive in addressing matters of concern.

There have been valuable achievements at a European level in establishing common goals in the coastal zone. Important among these is the Recommendation agreed by the Environment Council. These now need to be extended to fully embrace the marine environment. The Sixth Environmental Action Plan, naturally following from the Fifth Action Plan, has the potential to underpin good management of this vital resource. The importance of it cannot be underestimated. Implementation of the 6th EAP together with other key policies, strategies and good practice should be the way forward.

It is therefore recommended that the Commission in their work on this valuable thematic strategy is mindful of the following:

1. The protection and conservation of the marine environment must be approached in an integrated way that acknowledges the key drivers of environment, economy and community needs.
2. The marine environment is under threat from various pressures, the principle one being pollution.
3. The well being of the marine environment is inextricably linked to the activity taking place on the terrestrial environment.
4. Much can be achieved by action at a European level and by ensuring the work of the Directorate's General is co-ordinated and focussed on common objectives.
5. The objectives already reached at a European level, including the recent Recommendation, in relation to integrated coastal zone management should be foundation stones of the thematic strategies.
6. The vital role of municipalities and regions in delivering sustainable resource management should be integral in the preparation of the thematic strategy.
7. The existing regional sea groupings and conventions should be used as effective units to develop and deliver the thematic strategy.
8. The intention of the Commission to pursue tri-partite contracts should be used as a mechanism to deliver the thematic strategy.