

*Speech by Giuseppe Valditara, Head of Higher Education and Research Department, Ministry of Education, University and Research, Italy at EurOCEAN 2019 conference in Paris, 12 June 2019*

Dear Chairman, dear delegates,

Italy strongly believes it is necessary to unravel the potential of a sustainable blue economy through a knowledge-based process in order to preserve a healthy marine environment and to achieve the sustainability of human-sea interactions. This is a prominent priority for a Country like Italy, with about 8,000 km of coastline and € 45 Billion/year of turnover and 850,000 jobs coming from its marine and maritime sectors.

We think it is urgent to further Invest in the **integration of Research, Innovation and Technological progress with the labour market**. The data on unemployment in many countries today and, in particular, youth unemployment further complicates this mission. Evolving from this situation is not easy and requires the creation of new **high-level, multidisciplinary, tailor-made training** programs. Matching skills to create new professional profiles for **future blue jobs** in the marine and maritime sectors, constitutes for our country a priority. For this reason, we included, in the new National Research Plan, a concrete action to promote an **International Training Programme** (Masters, PhDs, Summer Schools) in “**Sustainable blue growth**” based on the principle of **Science and Research Diplomacy**. (with the label of the Union for the Mediterranean)

**We have taken further actions promoting Industrial PhDs** with specific training in the job market within the private and public sector.

**Public-private cooperation** is, in-fact, a strategic priority of our national policy. To strengthen it, we have recently launched a **Technological Cluster on Blue Growth**, with more than 80 members from the public and private sectors. Sustainable blue growth and climate-resilient coastal development are the main priorities of the cluster agenda.

The protection of its coastal population from damages induced by climate change is also a key priority of the National Research Plan (2021-2027)

where a specific **Initiative on Natural Resources, Environment Disasters and risk reduction is included.**

**Marine research Infrastructures and operational services of both global and regional relevance** represent a further **fundamental** aspect of national strategies. (We support the ESFRI, marine ERICs Research Infrastructures (EMSO, EuroARGO, ICOS, Lifewatch, EMBRC, ECORD etc.) and are a major partner in COPERNICUS, in the PRACE consortium (European High Performance Computing) and in the European marine data infrastructures (EMODNET, SeaDataCloud, Blue Cloud))**QUI SI POTREBBE EVITARE DI CITARE I DETTAGLI FRA PARENTESI**

Such infrastructures will soon compose an **Open Data framework** to enlarge the potential beneficiaries well beyond the national scientific community.

Considering sustainability of seas and oceans from a geographical perspective, we know that the response to climate change and anthropic pressure is not evenly distributed and certain areas are more exposed than others. In particular, the **Polar and Mediterranean regions** are the most vulnerable ones.

Italy is committed to support and implement its polar excellent research activities as well as to reorganize the Italian fleet of Research Vessels. The first Italian research icebreaker has been recently acquired; it was **named after Laura Bassi**, in honour of the Italian scientist who was the first woman to become a physics professor at a European University.

Mediterranean Region represents a strategic priority for the Country. The SDGs put a specific attention on the threats that may affect developing countries in reaching the objectives; hence we recognize that there is an urgent need to extend the partnering approaches beyond the EU, at **Mediterranean and at macro-regional scales**. On these aspects, my Ministry has taken important initiatives and we will support them in the next National Research Plan (2021-2027). I recall in particular:

- **The BLUEMED initiative** to promote a sustainable blue growth in the Mediterranean basin. Launched by Italy in 2014 during its semester

of Presidency of Council of the EU Union), it is currently joined by 8 EU MS and 8 non EU Countries of the area. It is currently implementing a **Pilot action for a plastic-free healthy Mediterranean Sea** in which multi-stakeholders and multilevel joint actions addressed to reduce and prevent marine litter are ongoing.

- **Italy has the Presidency of the 5+5 Dialogue in Research, Innovation and Higher Education.** This Forum aims at supporting sustainable blue economic growth, social inclusion and new opportunities for youth in the Western Mediterranean Region through the instrument of **science and research diplomacy**. A few days ago, we held in Rome the 5+5 Inter-ministerial Conference and we approved the **Rome Declaration** with its specific action plan. We are also involved in the **WEST MED** initiative active in the same Western region of the Mediterranean Sea.
- Finally, Italy is coordinating the **Euro Mediterranean Partnership for Research and Innovation in Mediterranean Area (PRIMA)**, an article 185 initiative based on water resources and food systems.

We also would like the society to become more aware and responsible of seas and oceans situation, to achieve this purpose why we put the **Blue Planet and Blue Society** concepts as two of the main priorities for the **ESOF 2020** (European Science Open Forum) that we will hold in Trieste next year.

**In conclusion, Italy acknowledges the importance of the goals set by the UN Agenda 2030 and is actively redirecting its R&I and training priorities in the marine and maritime sectors to accomplish them.**

**Italy will actively contribute to the achievements requested by the SDG 14, in particular by assuming its responsibilities in the Mediterranean basin, in cooperation with the other Countries of the area and in line with the locally running European and international strategic initiatives.**