

Remarks of Admiral James Watkins (Ret.)

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Acknowledgements:

Ambassador John Richardson, Head of the European Commission Maritime Policy Task Force

Jacqueline Grapin, Founder and Co-Chair of the European Institute Board

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Let me start by applauding the European Union's efforts, working through the Commission Task Force John is heading up, to renew a transatlantic agenda using maritime policy as one vehicle for strengthening the EU's collaboration with its neighbors in the Atlantic basin. Your Maritime Policy Task Force Green Paper entitled "*Towards a future Maritime Policy for the Union: A European vision for the oceans and seas*," is a superb piece of work. It will help inspire the United States to emerge from its international leadership malaise in this matter and get serious about restoring the mutual trust and confidence we once enjoyed with our friends and allies around the world on matters that affect all of us. The negative, somewhat arrogant and anti- multi-national approach some have taken here for too many years cannot be allowed to stand.

Fortunately, collaboration on maritime policy offers an excellent opportunity to strengthen international relationships among both natural and uncommon allies. While the oceans separate us, they also bind us all together. They are, as the UN Convention on Law of the Sea states, the common heritage of mankind.

Unfortunately, the phrase, "the common heritage of mankind" and the concept it entails, is one of the reasons the US is not party to the Convention. This, to me, is one of the great travesties of the last decade and demonstrates an unfortunate weakness in our US political system. The fact that a small handful of vocal ideologues have successfully prevented the U.S. Senate from providing the President with its advice and consent, as required by the Constitution, for accession to the Convention --despite the full support of the last three Presidents, the Secretaries of State and Defense, the US industrial

complex and environmental community-- reflects poorly on our system when an overwhelming majority of the Administration, the Congress, and our State Governors support accession. Despite this criticism, I remain hopeful that the Senate will act in the next Congress to overcome the artificial arguments and efforts of the few individuals blocking action, and allow the US to take its rightful place as a full participant in the important deliberations and decisions being made under the Convention now and in the future.

I feel strongly that leading off my remarks by highlighting U.S. delinquency in acceding to the Convention is highly relevant to today's discussion. The Convention provides the right forum and framework for addressing the panoply of ocean-related issues facing nations around the world, issues that are reflected in your Green Paper, such as: International trade and maritime transportation; Health and viability of coastal communities and their surrounding marine ecosystem; Need for better science and data to support *balanced* management decisions; Improved national and regional ecosystem-based approaches to governance to help integrate and coordinate marine-related activities and policies; and recognition of the importance of education and the cultural significance of maritime heritage. We are an ocean illiterate nation, but hopefully the work of the U.S. Commissions, and that of the E.C. Task Force, will help to address this difficult situation that is making forward progress difficult.

As I read the Green Paper, I was struck by the similarities of the issues we faced in development of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy's report. Granted, John spoke with many of individuals who played a role in the development of our report, including me. However, the fact that his Task Force recognized and has highlighted similar issues in the E.U. further reinforces, in my mind, the need for a wholesale change in how one family of nations manages the global oceans. Unarguably, change starts with good and well-collaborated science.

Science and technology play important roles in foreign policy. We rely on it to advance U.S. foreign policy objectives related to environmental issues such as global climate change, the preservation of biodiversity, and improvements in world health. We use science and technology to support values associated with civil societies, democratic institutions, regional stability, and economic development.

But, despite our acknowledgement of the important role science has to play in the development of foreign policy, the U.S. has not made sufficient progress attracting and incorporating science and scientists into the process. I have been a vocal critic of the lack of science supporting and driving U.S. foreign policy. I regularly cite recommendations contained in an excellent 1999 study by our National Academy of Sciences entitled: *"The Pervasive Role of Science, Technology, and Health in Foreign Policy -- Imperatives for the Department of State."* We need more science-literate people in our office here and abroad supporting the efforts of the State Department as we become an even more technology driven society. Dr. Atkinson in his capacity as science advisor to the Secretary of State is trying to do just this; but he needs more support.

We are in an information and technology revolution, and our increased understanding of mankind's capacity to influence natural processes --as demonstrated by disturbing trends in climatic change-- demands that we develop coherent and comprehensive strategies that respond to this new and

constantly changing information. Unfortunately, advances in technology outstrip our institutional capacity to respond to these changes and the current system has difficulty harnessing these advances to help ensure that public priorities, such as environmental health, are adequately addressed.

One area that has considerable potential is the implementation of the Global Earth Observing System of Systems, but only if we convert our current rhetoric to future reality. International cooperation integrating disparate data sets and monitoring changes in earth processes is critical since many of the challenges we face are global in dimension, and their economic and ecologic implications are far reaching and potentially devastating if not realistically addressed by all of us. This is particularly true in the oceans, whose role as the driver for climate change and home to the bulk of nature's biodiversity and biomass, has for too long been underappreciated.

However, we also need policies that are responsive to these changes, policies that will lead us towards more balanced business practices and personal behaviors that recognize the direct and indirect costs and benefits associated with anthropocentrically-driven modification in earth system processes. Thus, the Task Force's effort to identify an all-embracing maritime policy that balances economic and environmental priorities, as we are struggling to do here in the US, is welcome news.

You are all fortunate that I have been asked to limit my remarks to 10 minutes today or I would have subjected you to a much longer dissertation on my strong personal views as to actions needed to address challenges facing the world's oceans. But we have already aired these actions in our 500+ page report of 2004, entitled "*An Ocean Blueprint for the 21st Century.*" Our President's "Ocean Action Plan" was the result. All we need to do now is to actually follow the blueprint, not just talk about it.

So, in closing, I would ask for representatives from the E.U. and other nations to have their government leaders put pressure on ours in the Administration and our Congress to accede to the UN Convention on Law of the Sea as a first order of business. I firmly believe that U.S. participation in the Convention would help restore trust and confidence among our international neighbors, and bring us back into a helpful leadership role internationally. As a result, it will demand us to bring a higher level of resources and expertise to bear on ocean issues that are of concern to us and to all mankind. Personally, I find it perplexing that President Bush can call, as he recently did, for a halt to destructive fishing practices on the high seas, such as bottom trawling, and not also be banging on Senate Majority Leader's door to demand that he bring the Convention to the Senate floor for consideration. For the Convention provides a key forum to address fisheries, as well as many other issues of collective international concern. Over 90% "yes" votes await its passage by the Senate, whose Foreign Relations Committee reported it out in 2004 unanimously, 19-0.

Finally, on behalf of Leon Panetta and myself, I offer John and the members of the Task Force my sincerest thanks for their hard work and wish them luck during the consultation process and then completion of their recommendations to the European Commission. Leon and I have merged our efforts in to a bipartisan organization call the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative, and are actively pushing Congress and the Administration to move forward addressing ocean-related issues. We will continue to follow the progress of the Task Force with great interest, and will use our limited resources

and energy to continue pressing for an increased role for U.S. participation in international ocean science and policy reform.