

## Final declaration

*The regions of the CPMR North Sea Commission (NSC) met in Göttingen (Lower Saxony, DE) on the 28<sup>th</sup> of June 2017 for the 26<sup>th</sup> NSC Annual Business Meeting. On behalf of its members, the North Sea Commission wishes to convey the following messages:*

The North Sea Commission:

1. Welcomes the international cooperation on offshore wind and grids in the North Sea resulting from last year's political declaration between the North Sea countries. Marine renewable energy and hydro power plays an increasingly important role in the European energy balance, and the major part of Europe's production comes from the North Sea. Better interconnections, including the installation of fibre optic cables, cooperation on legislation, technical standards, financing, and spatial planning are necessary elements to use the full potential. The North Sea Commission, long-time advocate for a North Sea grid, is grateful for the invitation to speak at this year's stakeholder event, and remains committed to further involvement in the process. We are also urging the EU and the member states to keep up momentum.
2. Regrets the lack of progress on the Preparatory Action for the North Sea. The aim of the Preparatory Action, and the budget allocated to it by the European Parliament in 2013, was to discuss how to unlock the growth potential in the North Sea region as well as the added value of a coherent strategy for this sea basin. The Preparatory Action process has produced two stakeholder conferences with much food for thought, but we still wait for a report from the European Commission drawing conclusions on the way forward.
3. Reiterates its call for a cooperation platform for the North Sea involving the EU, the North Sea states, regional/local authorities, and relevant stakeholders from the business community and the R&D sector. The North Sea is one of the busiest sea basins in the world, used for fisheries, oil and gas production, windfarms, shipping, military purposes, and leisure. The North Sea Region would benefit from a permanent forum for cross-sectoral, multi-level discussions on the development of the sea-basin and the adjacent regions.
4. Recalls that in the lack of a macro-regional strategy, the North Sea Commission adopted several years ago its own North Sea Region 2020 strategy, defining key actions within the areas Managing maritime space, Increased accessibility and clean transport, Tackling climate change and Attractive and sustainable communities. We invite European institutions, national governments and relevant stakeholders to join us in this work, and in the process of drafting a strategy for post 2020.
5. Expresses great concern for the impact of Brexit on the North Sea Region and on the North Sea itself. About 30 per cent of UK export goes to North Sea countries. The UK is among the top 5 export markets for all other North Sea countries. New trade barriers in the North Sea are likely to change this balance, and have a negative economic effect on the entire North Sea region. Coastal regions and port cities might suffer more than others. In particular, the NSC is concerned about how Brexit will affect the conditions for creating growth and jobs in the North Sea Region, as well as the impact on the

management of the maritime space, maritime resource, and the implementation of the TEN-T. More cooperation, not less, is needed to balance the many and conflicting interests in the North Sea, one of the busiest sea basins in the world. The North Sea Commission has initiated a Brexit task force, and intends to monitor Brexit developments and potential effects from a North Sea perspective.

6. Calls upon the European institutions and the British government to negotiate a Brexit deal that causes as little harm as possible to the North Sea basin and the North Sea Region. The NSC further wishes to:
  - Invite UK member Regions to join the NSC, which will remain relevant and useful to them, whatever the outcome of the Brexit negotiations;
  - Express support for UK member regions who wish to maintain access to the internal market and continue to be involved in the implementation of relevant EU directives.
7. Calls for Cohesion Policy to be continued post 2020 as a key component for promoting investments in support of growth and sustainable development, and covering all European regions. European Territorial Cooperation is an integral part of European cohesion and should be strengthened. Our views on Cohesion Policy are reflected in the position paper adopted by the CPMR Political Bureau in Stavanger on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 2017.
8. Welcomes the discussion on the Future of Europe, initiated by the white paper from the European Commission in March 2017, and will contribute to this discussion in our respective regions as well as on a North Sea regional level.
9. Appreciates that several NSC member regions have benefited from funding from the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) to important transport infrastructure projects. We do however believe that the configuration and implementation of the CEF is territorially biased to the detriment of peripheral regions, and we therefore request to raise the ceiling for funding to projects on the comprehensive network. Furthermore, the NSC is calling for the inclusion of links in North Jutland (DK) and between Oslo and Stockholm in the ScanMed corridor in conjunction with the current adjustment of CEF corridors [further specified in the contribution from the CPMR]. (Proposed by the Transport Group)