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# TOWARDS A STRUCTURED DIALOGUE FOR EU ISLANDS

**Committee of the Regions**

**Brussels - 18/06/2019**

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## PREAMBLE

The integrated National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) represent a key step towards the EU objectives of energy transition and reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. They are key tools to address strategy and plans that will encourage investments in the long term. Therefore, due to their strategic importance, the process for approving these plans must involve all island stakeholders.

In this context, representatives of the CPMR Islands Commission and Greening The Islands met in Brussels on 18 June to launch the proposal of setting up a Structured Dialogue between island regional and local governments, utilities and companies operating in the renewable energy and environmental sectors, the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions.

This **Islands Structured Dialogue** will provide island regional and local governments and businesses with a platform to debate with European institutions on key priorities, challenges and opportunities to enhance the greening development of islands.

Island regional and local governments and companies need to join forces and establish sound cooperation with the EU to update and monitor regional and local energy transition plans and identify and scale up appropriate innovative technologies/solutions while pooling available financial resources.



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# JOINT DECLARATION

The representatives of the CPMR Islands Commission and Greening The Islands, met at the Committee of the Regions on 18 June 2019 to:

- **Recall** that islands are among those EU territories the most exposed and vulnerable to the effects of climate change and that they must tackle specific additional costs for their own development;
- **Recall** that, at the same time, islands have enormous potential in the production of renewable energy sources - sun, wind, waves and sea currents;
- **Stress** that, due to their specific environmental and geographical conditions, islands are strategic laboratories for implementing innovative policy measures and technical solutions and digital technology, with the ultimate aim of enhancing energy transition, reducing CO2 emissions and boosting the shift towards the circular economy. As well as considering the large number of visitors on the islands, they be can be true ambassadors for energy transition to other territories;
- **Welcomes** the initiative to make the EU islands an important source of renewable energy, as self-sustainable as possible, and above all, to guarantee their inhabitants more affordable clean energy;
- **Welcome** the initiatives of the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions urging Member States to identify and adopt ambitious objectives also in the islands, in line with the Paris Agreement. In this respect, they welcome and stress their full support for the Committee of the Regions opinions on:
  - ✓ *“Implementing the Clean Energy Package: the INECPs as a tool for a transversal approach to climate, active and passive energy”;*
  - ✓ *“Implementing the Paris Agreement through innovative and sustainable energy transition at regional and local level”;*
- **Monitor** closely the ongoing negotiations on the post 2020 Multiannual Financial Framework and the implementation of the Energy Union package by Member States, paying proper attention to islands;
- **View** the establishment of integrated National Energy and Climate Plans (NCEPs) as a crucial step to fight climate change and enhance the shift towards a more environmentally-friendly EU economic model;

- **Recall** that regional and local island governments have strong competencies in relation to land use and housing, economic development and transport, and managing and implementing European Structural and Investment funds, which places them among the key stakeholders when it comes to planning and financing energy transition and decarbonation of their economies;
- **Note** that to meet EU energy transition objectives set for 2030 and 2050, regional and local governments must work hand in hand with businesses to address needs and match them with appropriate innovative solutions, enhancing the production of renewable energies, their storage and/or their smart utilisation;
- **Consider** it strategically important to involve regional and local island governments as well as local island enterprises and green business representatives in the EU debate on NCEPs. In this respect, they **highlight their concerns** about the public consultation processes carried out by certain EU Member States;
- **Stress** their strong belief that it is only by establishing multilevel and multi-stakeholder climate and energy dialogues that the European Union will be able to deliver the political, social, technical and financial conditions to successfully implement the objectives of the Paris agreement;
- **Call for** Member States, the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions to establish an **Islands Structured Dialogue** providing island regional and local governments and the business sector with a platform to debate on key priorities, challenges and opportunities to enhance the greening development of EU islands.

Taking account of the above considerations and more specifically the integrated National Energy and Climate Plans (NCEPs), the representatives of the CPMR Islands Commission and Greening The Islands:

- **Highlight** their concerns about the lack of a strong territorial dimension in the NCEPs. They are notably concerned by the fact that apart from Island Member States, very few Member States included in their NECPs appropriate diagnoses and/or proposals for specific policy measures targeting islands;
- **Call for** Member States to review their NECPs to identify and list key needs, challenges and opportunities as well as the policy measures and potential investments that should be earmarked in favour of islands. Those measures and activities should be in line with the current development status of each island;
- **Call on** the European Commission to include, in its assessment of NECP methodology, criteria dealing with specific infrastructure needs and potential energy investments or policy measures targeting islands;
- **Consider** it of strategic importance that NECPs could capitalise on existing policy measures and projects identified and implemented in the framework of the local Sustainable Energy Action Plans (SEAPs);
- **Stress** that NECPs could clearly identify and list national, regional and local policy measures and potential investments to allow the private sector to have a long-term visibility when it comes to setting up business models and/or to planning the shift to the industrial phase of innovative technological prototypes or integrated solutions;

- **Recognise** that, concerning the production of renewable energies, most of the EU Islands have reached goals far lower than the mainland territories mainly due to the current legislative framework on energy, which is obsolete and fails to consider consolidated innovative environmental solutions. Therefore, it is urgent to adopt incentive policies to produce renewable energies in the islands. In this context, this could be achieved by transferring the current subsidies for self-sufficiency of islands, from fossil fuels to renewables and smart grid systems;
- **Call on** Member States to set, in each country, specific national laws or any other innovative schemes, to reward and encourage island regional and local governments to boost energy transition and decarbonisation of their economies. In this respect, they invite Member States and EU Institutions to develop a joint reflection on an Island Decarbonisation Index (IDI);
- **Highlight** the need to establish a permanent facility designed to support island regional and local governments in designing business plans and identifying and applying for EU calls for proposals. In this respect they **welcome** the establishment of the EU Islands Facility and encourage the European Investment bank (EIB) to develop targeted measures in favour of energy transition and decarbonisation of economies in EU islands;
- **Rethink** the environmental impact assessments to identify well-balanced solutions (e.g. infrastructures and technologies) to cut down emissions and protect landscapes. Indeed, according to the current rules, solutions with lower visual impacts are preferred although, very often, they do not reduce the pollution of land and marine environments;
- **Recall** the importance of simplifying the administrative procedures and formalities which represent one of the main barriers to the shift to a greener energy model and circular economy in the European islands.