“From Blue Growth to Blue Justice:

The Mediterranean Sea as a Common Good for a Sustainable Future”
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1. The Sea That Connects Us

Ladies and gentlemen,
we meet today in Chios — an island whose history is written in salt and wind.
From these harbours sailed ships that linked the Aegean with the Black Sea long before Europe existed as an idea.
Today, those same waters are once again at the heart of Europe’s future — not as borders, but as bridges.

Europe’s maritime space generates nearly **€750 billion annually** and **5 million jobs**, yet it is also the frontline of climate change.
Sea-level rise, acidification, plastic pollution, and over-exploitation threaten not only ecosystems but entire communities.
We cannot speak of *Blue Growth* without speaking of justice — between regions, generations, and species.

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2. From Green Deal to Blue Deal

The **European Green Deal** defined a vision: a fair and prosperous society with no net emissions by 2050 and growth decoupled from resource use.
The **European Climate Law** made that vision binding, committing every Member State to cut emissions by 55 % by 2030.

Yet for our island and coastal regions, the Green Deal must become a **Blue Deal** — integrating climate action with maritime policy, shipping, fisheries, and coastal resilience.
The sea is not a sector to be exploited; it is a system to be protected.

That is why the **EU Mission for Healthy Oceans and Waters**, the **EMFAF** programmes, and **Horizon Europe’s Blue Economy cluster** are vital — but they must reach our ports, our islands, and our communities.

3. A Strategic and Civilisational Alliance in the Wider Black Sea Basin

The theme of today's meeting — *Strengthening Economic Alliances in the Wider Black Sea Region* — is not merely economic.
It is strategic. And, more profoundly, it is civilisational.

What unites us — the EU, Türkiye, Georgia, Ukraine, and the coastal nations of our shared seas — is not only geography or trade.
It is a **shared vulnerability**, and therefore a **shared destiny**.
We are co-stakeholders in the fate of a semi-enclosed sea whose health and stability shape the wellbeing of **350 million citizens**.

Across our basins, the risks are converging and accelerating.
The **European Environment Agency** reports that sea-surface temperatures in the Black Sea have risen by **0.5 °C per decade since the 1970s** — among the fastest in Europe.
The **Mercator Ocean 2022 Climate Report** shows that the Eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea are warming **three times faster than the global average**.
The result: marine heatwaves, altered fish migration, and salinised aquifers from the Danube Delta to the Gulf of Izmir.

A 2025 study in *Environmental Sciences Europe* warns that key commercial species — **anchovy, horse mackerel** — will face *"considerable habitat loss"* by 2030–2040.
Tens of thousands of fishers depend on these stocks.
Meanwhile, *Storm Bettina* (2023) caused catastrophic rainfall across the basin; climate change has made such events **twice as likely**, according to the *World Weather Attribution* network.
Ports, roads and industrial zones from Varna to Batumi are increasingly exposed to flooding and storm surges.

And on the geopolitical front, the **European External Action Service** calls the Black Sea *"a critical connector between Europe, the Caucasus and the Eastern Mediterranean"*, vital for **energy and food security**.
Resilience here is therefore not only environmental policy; it is **European security policy**.

That is why our answer must be **cooperation on resilience**:

- **Joint early-warning systems** for extreme events, pooling Copernicus, EMODnet and national data.

- A **regional roadmap for decarbonising shipping**, aligned with *FuelEU Maritime* and the IMO 2050 goals.

- **Investment in green ports and hydrogen corridors** — linking **Piraeus, Constanța, Varna, Samsun, Batumi** into a *Blue Hydrogen Arc*.

- And **networks of coastal research centres** like the *EUNICOast Alliance*, training the next generation of engineers and scientists.

Because the true measure of European power will not be in *tonnes of steel and arms*, but in *megawatts of renewable energy produced together*, *litres of clean water preserved*, and *coastal jobs created for youth and fishers*.
Resilience is the new diplomacy.
The sea that once divided our empires can now unite our democracies.

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4. From Blue Economy to Blue Justice

The *Blue Economy* employs over **4.5 million Europeans**, generating **€750 billion each year**.
But beneath these figures lies deep inequality.
Large shipping conglomerates and port operators capture most value, while small fishers, shipyard workers and island communities absorb the risks.

In Greece, **85 % of vessels** are small coastal boats under 12 m, yet they earn less than **20 % of total revenue**; real incomes for these workers have fallen **30 % since 2010**.
Meanwhile, Eastern Mediterranean shipping emissions have **risen 22 %** in a decade, and investment in port decarbonisation is under **€5 per capita**.
This is not a sustainable model; it is a warning sign.

If we let the Blue Economy evolve without justice, we will reproduce the same extractive system that failed on land.
Our goal must therefore be **Blue Justice** — a new social contract between people, planet and prosperity at sea.

⚓ 1. Decarbonised Maritime Transport with a Fair Transition

Shipping emits **3–4 % of EU greenhouse gases**.
As the EU ETS and *FuelEU Maritime* come into force, we must extend the **Just Transition Mechanism** to maritime workers — retraining crews for hydrogen and electric propulsion, reskilling ship-repair yards for retrofitting, and safeguarding wages during conversion.
This is how decarbonisation becomes social, not punitive.

⚓ 2. Local Value Chains Anchored in Communities

Every tonne of fish, every ferry serviced should leave value where it originates.
That means circular, community-based economies: cooperatives for ship repair, coastal biotech turning marine waste into materials, and eco-tourism that reinvests in nature.
Across the Mediterranean, **60 000 workers** in small shipyards could be revitalised through *InvestEU* and *EMFAF* funding for green-port zones — replacing rust with renewal.

⚓ 3. Social Protection Amid Automation and Energy Shifts

Automation may redefine or replace **1 in 5 maritime jobs by 2040** (OECD Ocean 2030).
We need a **European Maritime Social Pact** — unemployment insurance, mobility support, and lifelong training for coastal and port workers.
Social protection is not a burden; it is the foundation of competitiveness.

⚓ 4. Gender Equality and Youth in Maritime Innovation

Women are **2 % of seafarers**, **22 % of port staff**, and **15 % of researchers**; youth unemployment in many coastal areas exceeds **25 %**.
Europe's *Blue Careers Initiative* and Erasmus+ academies must be explicitly feminist and inclusive — opening the maritime world to every young woman and man of the Aegean.

⚓ 5. Making the Just Transition Mechanism Real at Sea

We propose a **Maritime Just Transition Facility** within the Green Deal, financed through the *Social Climate Fund* and *Innovation Fund*, to support islands and ports as they decarbonise.
Imagine Chios, Syros or Alexandroupolis hosting **green-ship repair zones**, **renewable-fuel cooperatives**, and **marine training schools**.
Justice is measured in the wages of the deckhand fitting the first hydrogen engine, in the security of the fisher no longer crushed by corporate fleets, and in the confidence of the young woman engineer designing zero-carbon ferries.

The *Blue Economy* of the past extracted wealth from our seas; the *Blue Justice* of the future must return wealth to the people who protect them.
This is how the **Just Transition Mechanism** becomes real at sea — a living promise of *Ειρήνη, Ευημερία και Ελευθερία* for every coastal community of Europe.

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5. From Failure of Politics to a Sea of Peace

The climate crisis is not a technical failure.
It is a failure of politics.

We have known the science for decades, we have had the money and the treaties.
What we lacked was the **courage to confront power** — to admit that infinite growth on a finite planet is impossible.

As the **ΚΟΣΜΟΣ manifesto** declares:
"The conflict today is between those who want to preserve a system that produces inequality and destruction, and those who want to build a sustainable and just world for all."
That conflict plays out not only in parliaments but in every port, shipyard and island of our region.

When politics fails, democracy must reinvent itself.
The transition ahead cannot be left to markets; it must be driven by citizens who understand that freedom today means the freedom to live within ecological limits.

That is why this gathering — the **European Maritime Day in Chios** — is more than an academic exercise.
It is a **call to action for our generation**: to transform vulnerability into strength, and knowledge into will.

We must **rethink shipping as a public service**, not merely a private industry.
For the islands of the Aegean, ferries are lifelines — carrying teachers, doctors, and medicines.
A decarbonised, reliable, and publicly accountable fleet is an act of social justice and territorial equality.

We must **treat our seas as common goods**, not commodities.
The Mediterranean and the Black Sea are not frontiers; they are ecosystems and civilisations intertwined.
Their health is our democracy's health.
Polluted seas and polarised societies are symptoms of the same crisis.

And we must **link the Blue Economy with the Green and Social Deals** — creating one coherent European promise:
to restore ecosystems, create dignified jobs, and make justice measurable.
The **Green Deal**, the **Climate Law**, the **Social Climate Fund**, and the **Just Transition** must converge here, in the ports and coastlines where Europe meets the world.

If we succeed, the **Aegean and the Black Sea will no longer be lines of division**, but **corridors of peace, prosperity and freedom** — living laboratories of coexistence and shared resilience.
This is not utopia; it is Europe at its best: pragmatic, visionary, united by necessity and by hope.

Let Chios be remembered as the place where we began to speak a new maritime language — one of justice, partnership and care.
Let it be said that from these islands rose a generation that refused to watch the seas rise in silence.

Because the tide of history is turning.
Either we govern it with wisdom and solidarity, or it will govern us with chaos.
Our choice is clear — and our time is now.