

Brussels, 2 April 2008.

Joe Borg travels to Morocco

Joe Borg, European Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, will arrive in Morocco this evening where he is to address the first-ever Euro-Med Ministerial Conference on Tourism which opens tomorrow in Fez. The aim of the conference is to define new measures to encourage and support closer cooperation between the EU and its southern Mediterranean partners in the field of tourism. The meeting will bring together Ministers responsible for tourism from the 39 Euro-Med partner countries. On Friday, Mr Borg will travel to Rabat for bilateral meetings with senior Moroccan politicians on both maritime and fisheries issues before travelling to Mauritania in the evening.

The Commission has supported this ministerial conference from the start. It aims at laying down guidelines to ensure that tourism development is pursued in a way that not only encourages collaboration across the Mediterranean basin, but also maximises synergy with other sectors, while ensuring full respect of the natural environment on which the sector so vitally depends.

Regarding the bilateral talks with the Moroccan authorities on Maritime Affairs and Fisheries issues, Commissioner Joe Borg said : "Morocco is already an important partner for the EU, and this is especially true in the area of fisheries. I am delighted to be able to mark the first year of the smooth operation of the EU/Morocco fisheries partnership agreement and to mark its mutual benefit to the two Parties with a visit. In line with the EU's new integrated maritime policy, our aim should now be not simply to extend this example of fruitful relations to other sectors, but to ensure that this is done in a coherent, coordinate and sustainable way."

The Euro-Med Ministerial Conference on Tourism is being hosted jointly by Morocco and Slovenia, which currently holds the EU presidency. It will be attended by Ministers responsible for Tourism from EU Member States, as well as by their counterparts from the 12 Euro-Med partner countries. Mr Borg will address the opening session of the conference. Other key note speakers will include Moroccan Minister for Tourism Mr Mouhamed Boussaid, Slovenian Minister for Economy Mr Andrej Vizjak, Portuguese Minister for Tourism Mr Manuel de Pinho, and Mr Philippe De Fontaine-Vive, Vice President of the European Investment Bank. The conference will close with the adoption of Ministerial conclusions, and will be followed by an informal lunch hosted by the European Commission.

Commissioner Borg will then travel on to Rabat, where he will spend Friday in bilateral meetings with senior Moroccan politicians. He will meet both Prime Minister Mr Abbas El Fassi and Minister for Equipment and Transport Mr Karim Ghellab to discuss the maritime dimension of EU relations with Morocco. He will also meet with Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries Mr Aziz Akhenouch to discuss lessons learned from the first year of implementation of the new EU-Morocco Fisheries Partnership Agreement (FPA).

The FPA came into force on 28 February 2007, and will run for four years. It replaces the earlier fisheries agreement which covered the period 1995-99. The new FPA is one of the most important of the EU's bilateral fisheries arrangements, with an EU financial contribution of € 36.1 million in return for fishing possibilities in Moroccan waters for up to 127 vessels from 11 Member States. Of the EU contribution, € 13.5 million is dedicated to the support of the national fisheries policy of Morocco.