

RAPIDO

Libya Conference

At the conclusion of the London Conference on Libya held on 29 March, Catherine Ashton stated: "I am very encouraged by the progress we made today in London. The meeting confirmed that the international community is united in its determination to implement swiftly UN Security Council Resolutions 1970 and 1973(2011) and that Colonel Kadhafi and his regime have completely lost legitimacy. We also reaffirmed our commitment to work together to assist a democratic transition in Libya." She also announced agreement on establishing an international contact group including the EU, UN, African Union and Arab League and other relevant partners to help with the political process and coordinate international support.

Chercher un nom

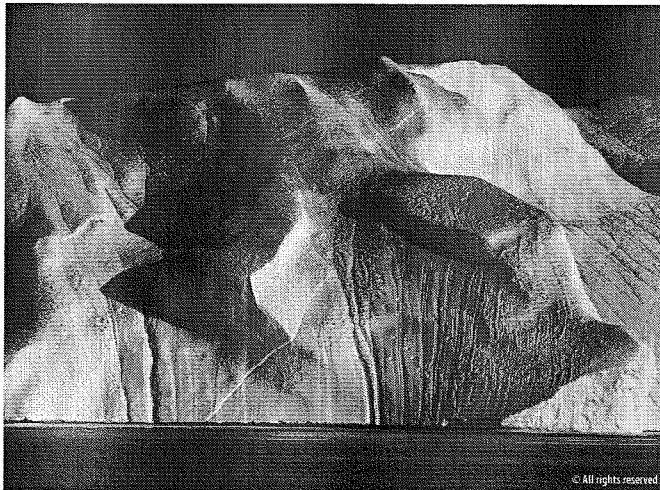
La Commission a lancé le 28 mars un concours ouvert à tous afin de donner un nom pertinent au nouveau programme de recherche et d'innovation de l'UE. Ce concours est lié à la consultation que mène actuellement la Commission au sujet de son livre vert sur ce nouveau programme qui sera au cœur de l'initiative « Union de l'innovation » et de la stratégie Europe 2020. La Commission propose de soutenir les chercheurs et innovateurs européens de façon plus intelligente pour encourager l'excellence, aider à la diffusion des bonnes idées et, ainsi, engendrer une croissance économique durable et de nouveaux emplois. Tous ont jusqu'au 10 mai pour proposer un nom pertinent, attrayant et facile à retenir.

① http://ec.europa.eu/research/csfr/index_en.cfm?pg=younameit

BLUE PLANET

EU in the world

Promoting Arctic cooperation



The Commission has invested some €200 million in Arctic research projects over the last decade.

Climate change is hitting both the Arctic and Antarctic regions harder than the rest of the planet. As surface temperatures rise twice as fast in the Arctic, sea ice is thinning and retreating at record levels. All this means drastic changes for the region's inhabitants and for its vulnerable ecosystems. These changes present both environmental risks as well as new economic opportunities. The questions are how to balance competing interests in the region and what contribution science can make.

On 17-18 March, the German Federal Foreign Office hosted, in cooperation with its Finnish counterpart, the second conference on 'Arctic Science, International Law and Climate Protection – Legal Aspects of Marine Science in the Arctic Ocean'. The conference brought together from across the Arctic states scientists, legal and other

experts, as well as politicians. The aim was to promote the important scientific interests at stake in Arctic policy, in addition to the economic, logistical and fisheries-related policy aspects. After all, researchers carry out crucial work on and in the Arctic.

Sharing responsibilities

Speaking at the conference, Commissioner Maria Damanaki observed, "This dichotomy between economic opportunities and environmental risks is the challenge the international community is facing today. This dichotomy overwhelms all actions of mankind... the same dilemma that ancient Greek tragedies faced: Man against Nature. The winner we already know. So the Arctic will test our ability to work together and our willingness to put environmental protection, sustainability and public safety first."

Arguing for the greatest possible freedom of research, German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle stated, "For several years now, the economic exploitation of the Arctic has been a real possibility. It must not however impede research. Research must in principle be open to all, because the challenges of climate change affect us all. It is a sad fact that all states produce emissions and so contribute to climate change. They can no longer be allowed to be just part of the problem, but must also become part of the solution." Furthermore, he encouraged the states in the High North to seek research-friendly solutions. "Solutions require the firm basis in fact provided by research."

An active observer in the Arctic Council and an important producer of research in the polar region, Germany argues – as does the EU – for observance of the strictest environmental standards and effective enforcement of liability for any environmental damage that occurs.

The Arctic Council, as Maria Damanaki pointed out, has a fundamental role to play, as the main platform for exchanging knowledge and best practices, given the challenges facing the region. Currently, the EU attends its working groups on a case-by-case basis, but the Commissioner hoped this would be on a permanent basis in the future. An EU presence with permanent observer status would be advantageous to all parties, helping to foster international cooperation and sending a clear signal that Arctic states welcome EU investors and researchers.

Making a real contribution

As a world leader in the fight against climate change and in promoting environmental sustainability through reform, research and practical initiatives, the EU has a real contribution to make. As an EU-funded study published in January shows, the significant impact European activities in such areas as biodiversity, transport and energy have on the Arctic.

"A successful policy to mitigate climate change will naturally also benefit the Arctic area and its people," stated Maria Damanaki. Recognising the EU's share of the responsibility, she also recalled that the Commission had invested some €200 million in Arctic research projects over the last decade. Key areas of focus include the retreating and thinning of sea ice, rising sea levels, marine ecosystems, and Arctic pollution. This year, the Commission will also publish a call for a large-scale project to improve our understanding of the dynamic processes affecting permafrost and the implications of global warming. A number of recent projects are aimed at helping indigenous Arctic people protect their lifestyles, including ArcRisk and CLEAR, which look into the links between climate change, contaminants, and human health.

As Maria Damanaki concluded, "our partners, particularly Canada and Russia, know that foreign investments and concerted research efforts are needed to let the region develop sustainably and in the interests of the Arctic people. ...As members of a global community sharing a collective responsibility, we must find every opportunity to work together."

© ZACHHESTER, CEND



German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle and Commissioner Maria Damanaki.

EU Arctic Policy in a nutshell

- The EU's Arctic policy seeks to:
- make a decisive contribution to preserving the region, in unison with its people,
 - ensure that emerging industrialisation and exploitation of Arctic resources follow the highest environmental and safety standards, with fair access and treatment to EU citizens and businesses,
 - foster closer and enhanced international cooperation in the Arctic region.