Only ecologically intact and healthy seas can be a long-term source of food, growth and employment. The Federal Government uses this fundamental truth as a guiding principle for its maritime policy. The “Maritime Development Plan – Strategy for an integrated German maritime policy” adopted by the Federal Government in 2011 is aimed at a holistic approach to the complex systems of our seas and oceans the knowledge and control of which are of great importance for the future of our planet and the survival of humanity.

Why is maritime policy necessary?

The “maritime question” has assumed outstanding importance in particular with regard to climate change and energy issues. It may not be possible to meet many of the major challenges facing mankind in the 21st century without the seas.

For example, seas and oceans are fundamental factors in the global climate. Seas, just like forests, can absorb CO2 and diminish climate change but only if they are ecologically intact. Seas which have been ecologically disrupted by acidification, however, emit disproportionately high levels of CO2 and thus further intensify climate change.

Seas and oceans offer opportunities for making ecologically acceptable use of new energy sources, and at the same time provide habitats for numerous plant and animal species. What is more, the coastal regions are among the most important living environments worldwide as approx. 60 per cent of the world population live there. On the other hand, there are some who point to the perceptible “industrialization of the seas” and fear the increasing destruction of the marine environment. The 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea states within the context of an integrated approach that “the problems of ocean space are closely interrelated and need to be considered as a whole”. The European Commission also builds on this with its holistic approach of “An Integrated Maritime Policy for the EU” issued in October 2007.

What do we want to achieve?

Germany is a trading nation with a high level of exports, a shipping nation, a coastal and port state, and at the same time a major location for shipbuilding, marine research, maritime technologies and innovations, fishing, and coastal and maritime tourism. The diversity of the maritime sectors and the large number of competing as well as coherent interests this involves means that the Federal Government views maritime policy as a cross-cutting strategic issue that requires a reliable framework.

What do we do?

In the “Maritime Development Plan”, a series of policy priorities is developed in order to achieve the formulated objectives:

- Strengthen marine science and research
- Use the seas sustainably
- Protect the marine environment and tackle climate change
- Ensure maritime safety and security
- Protect the coastal regions and infrastructure
- Optimize the quality of life in coastal regions
- Raise people’s awareness of the seas and their importance for the climate, the environment and prosperity

The “Maritime Development Plan” is geared towards the following strategic objectives:

- Enhance the competitiveness of German industry and exploit the potential for job creation
- Achieve a good environmental status in the North Sea and Baltic Sea by 2020, thereby making them the cleanest and safest seas
- Assume a share of the responsibility for global and ecological developments and support efforts to tackle climate change

The "Maritime Development Plan" is geared towards the following strategic objectives:
For implementing these objectives and priorities, the Federal Government has established efficient structures for coordination, cooperation and dialogue. Moreover, linkages between existing marine-related bodies as well as between all political levels within Germany have been ensured. In this way, the framework for the maritime industry, research, the environment, safety and security is to be improved.

The Federal Government will furthermore continue to establish appropriate procedures to ensure that maritime policy concerns and needs are promoted in departmental policies and that departmental policies are reviewed in terms of their impact on the sea.

In the interest of marine environmental protection, maritime security, maritime surveillance and maritime observation, linked-up efforts with European neighbours are also important. What is more, a holistic approach to maritime policy also pursues a global approach, since neither winds, emissions and currents nor marine creatures or ships stop at national borders. The Federal Government is therefore lobbying for an international architecture of integrated maritime policy.

Annexed to the “Maritime Development Plan” is an action plan which contains ongoing or planned marine-related activities of the Federal Government. It also contains an overview of approx. 170 measures and projects at the level of UN, EU, North Sea and Baltic Sea as well as the Federal Government or its executive agencies.

What are the next steps?

Integrated maritime policy provides the opportunity to consider reciprocal interaction between economic growth, environmental protection and social prosperity in a holistic and inclusive policy approach. In the future, it will be necessary to constantly evolve and update the individual measures and projects and to evaluate them at regular intervals.

Further information can be found at www.bmvbs.de/EN-maritimepolicy

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