EU-China partnership sets the pace for international marine data sharing

'Strengthening international ocean data through the EU's ocean diplomacy with China'

EMOD-PACE (EMODnet PArtnership for China and Europe)

CEMDnet (China-EU Marine Data Network Partnership)

中国-欧盟海洋数据伙伴关系

Mr. XIANG Wenxi, Deputy DG of NMDIS signing the MoU.

Mr. Jan-Bart CALEWAERT, Head of the EMODnet Secretariat signing the MoU.

Today, EU-China collaborations on marine data took a new step forward with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODnet) and the National Marine Data and Information Service (NMDIS). This builds on existing partnerships between EU and China, among others in the framework of the EC's Partnership Instrument supported EMOD-PACE project (EMODnet PArtnership for China and Europe).

The MoU confirms the commitment from both EMODnet and NMDIS to cooperate in the marine data domain, in areas spanning strategy, research, and operation, where mutually beneficial and desirable. More than 50 EU and Chinese delegates joined the ceremonial presentation of the signed MoU, which took place at the end of a partnership meeting, which ran from 25 until 29 January 2021, marking one year of active dialogue.

Recognising the importance of this collaboration and resulting MoU, Mr. Ren Xingyuan, Director of Science and Technology at NMDIS, stated that "*the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) of China highly values the cooperation with EU in ocean related fields. As the National Oceanographic Data Centre, we see our cooperation as an important measure to extend the achievements of the* **EU-China Blue Year 2017***, and a milestone for the* **China-EU Blue Partnership** *for the oceans.*"

Building on the EU-China Blue Partnership, signed in 2018, both the EU and China have set-up collaborative projects with a focus on marine data exchange and diplomacy, namely the EMODnet PArtnership for China and Europe (EMOD-PACE) of the EU, and the China-European Union Marine Data Network Partnership (CEMDNET) of China. These projects, which have started in 2020, are intricately connected and provide the foundation for the European Union-China Marine Data Network Partnership, marking the beginning of a new phase of strategic China-EU ocean relations. The overall aim of these endeavours is to promote international ocean governance and support the implementation of EU and China's global commitments by making ocean marine data and data products more easily accessible and by providing better data and data products.

The MoU agreement signed this week further consolidates the partnership and recognizes the common willingness for further collaboration. The EMOD-PACE and CEMDnet projects include thematics spanning sea-level ocean reanalysis, seabed habitat mapping, ecological vulnerability and coastal zone adaptability, with a focus on the maritime silk route, and with data visualization available through a dedicated map-viewer.

At the opening of the EU-China meeting, Iain Shepherd, Senior Officer of the European Commission Directorate-General for Maritime and Fisheries (DG MARE) emphasised that "*the EU values the ongoing and strengthening partnership with China for marine data that are already seeing results for data sharing, interoperability knowledge on the maritime silk route between China and Europe. This MoU is an important milestone in recognizing the collaboration with NMDIS, and could provide the basis for wider regional and multi-lateral partnerships in the years to come.*"

For more information

Julie Auerbach
EMOD-PACE Project Manager
European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODnet Secretariat)
Email: julie.auerbach@emodnet.eu
EMOD-PACE Project Coordination Office Telephone: +32(0)497433371

EuropeAid/139904/DH/SER/CN410737 Partnership Instrument

The MoU was developed in the framework of the EMOD-PACE project which is funded through the European Commission Partnership Instrument for the Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, and as such has a strong overall objective to maintaining good bilateral communication with China, in addition to facilitating the technical objectives of interoperable access to the maritime silk route data and data products for the regions.

Background

Over the past few decades, the ocean has become one of the main areas of development in Europe and in China, ranging from ocean science and technology, ocean economy, ocean territory to ocean environment and ecosystem health and protection[1]. The annual volume of marine economy takes account of about 10% of China's GDP, which enjoys the fastest growing rate in the world economy. In recent years, especially through the maritime silk-road program, China is trying to revive the traditional trade route from China to Indo-Pacific and then to Europe[2]. With a turnover of €750 billion in 2018, the EU blue economy is in good health, showing significant blue growth in sectors such as tourism, shipping, resource extraction, fishing, mariculture, and renewable energy. With 5 million people employed in 2018, the number of jobs in the EU blue economy has increased by 11.6% over the previous year[3]. With increased activities in many new business areas, the seas will be busier and their resources in more demand. Unavoidably, increasing ocean-based activities necessary for human life will also put more pressure on the already depressed health of marine ecosystems. It is clear that Marine Knowledge based on rapid access to reliable data and data products is critical for policy-making stakeholders to be able to address todays and future ocean challenges.

Following high-level conferences and forums during the EU-China Blue Year 2017, the EU and China signed a Blue Partnership for the Ocean in 16 June 2018, which marked the beginning of a new phase of strategic EU-China ocean relations. This Partnership sets out a comprehensive and holistic framework for our cooperation in the domain of the oceans. The shared objective of the Partnership is to ensure effective ocean governance for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and their resources. Key aims include sustainable fisheries, a thriving maritime economy and a healthy ocean and their resources. Two EU-China workshops on "Marine data science" in 2017 and subsequent bilateral visits defined major cooperation areas with common interests and challenges in marine data science, which formed the basis for the collaboration between EMODnet and NMDIS under the form of two interconnected projects: EMOD-PACE and CEMDNET.

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[1] See among others Cao, L., Y. Chen, S. Dong, A. Hanson, B. Huang, D. Leadbitter, D. C. Little, E. K. Pikitch, Y. Qiu, Y. Sadovy de Mitcheson, U. R. Sumaila, M. Williams, G. Xue, Y. Ye, W. Zhang, Y. Zhou, P. Zhuang, R. L. Naylor, 2017. Opportunity for marine fisheries reform in China. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, 114: 435-442; Chang, Y.-C., X. Li, 2019. Current developments. Marine Policy, 107: 103588; and https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2019.00261.

[2] See for example Green, M.J., 2018. China's Maritime Silk Road: Strategic and Economic Implications for the Indo-Pacific Region. CSIS Report. https://www.csis.org/analysis/chinas-maritime-silk-road

[3] The EU Blue Economy Report 2020

The overall aim of these efforts is to promote international ocean governance and support the implementation of EU and China's global commitments by making ocean marine data and data products more easily accessible and by providing better data and data products. As EU and China both have common and different best practices in ocean governance and in sharing and managing data and data products, the collaboration focusses on exchanging the use of internationally agreed standards for marine data, both by the public and private sectors, sharing marine data and information as well as R&D know-how and best practices through the assessment of different approached and production of joint information products, in particular related to ocean reanalysis modelling, seabed habitat mapping and coastal adaptation.