

## **19<sup>th</sup> EU-OCT Forum**

**Noumea, New Caledonia**

**THEMATIC WORKSHOPS - 19 November 2022**

### **FORUM ROUNDTABLE ON PERSPECTIVES FOR REGIONAL/INTRA-REGIONAL COOPERATION**

#### **BACKGROUND**

Mounting global challenges, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, pandemics or food insecurity and a quest for genuinely sustainable development with enhanced connectivity as envisioned by the EU's Global Gateways, more than ever call on OCTs to co-operation with their neighbours, other OCTs, Outermost Regions and third countries alike. Regional and intra-regional cooperation have strong potential to underpin this endeavour by creating economies of scale, synergies to address common challenges and establishing platforms to foster dialogues, mutual understanding and peer learning. This is also the opportunity for enhancing the regional integration of OCTs in their respective region.

The Decision on the Overseas Association including Greenland (DOAG) of October 2021, cognisant of this ambition, earmarks EUR 61 million for regional cooperation and EUR 15 million for intraregional cooperation (if not used, the envelope for intra-regional cooperation will be implemented through regional cooperation). At the same time, the Post-Cotonou arrangement will create an institutional framework for closer relations between OCTs and their regions, with the Caribbean and Pacific Protocols providing for an observer status for OCTs.

The programming of the regional cooperation is about to be completed. In place are already the regional Multiannual Indicative Programmes for the Pacific (green and blue food systems, EUR 36 million) and the MIP for the TAAF (preservation of marine environments, EUR 4 million), while the Caribbean MIP will have just been adopted before the Forum (management of natural resources, EUR 26 million). On this basis, identification and formulation work for concrete actions on the ground lies ahead of us. The round table will provide participants with an update of next steps and a timely opportunity to provide their input for the work ahead for the benefit of the EU-OCT partnership.

At the same time, the novel EUR 15 million dedicated intra-regional envelope will promote cooperation of OCTs with their neighbour countries including outermost regions, on the condition that the funding for non-OCT partners of such intra-regional cooperation should be additional to the funds for the OCTs.

This journey will require perseverance. Indeed, despite the wish for an increased collaboration of OCTs with their regional neighbours, only two example of intra-regional initiatives are in the pipeline so far: (i) located on the very same Caribbean Island, Sint Maarten (a Dutch OCT) and Saint-Martin (a French Outermost Region) are exploring a cross-border joint water and sanitation programme serving the needs of both sides of the island and (ii) TAAF are cooperation with the OR Mayotte.

We are still in an early phase to see how to best mobilise this intra-regional cooperation tool. The round table will be a very timely opportunity to jointly forge a shared understanding about the tool, to identify

challenges and opportunities and to explore potential broad avenues for further reflection. This should allow us to shape together the process for the work ahead of us.

## **Objectives of the Roundtable**

Discussions will focus on:

1. Regional Cooperation:
  - a. MIPs in place: what next? Update on next steps.
2. Intra-regional Cooperation
  - a. Clarification of the concept (presentation by the Commission).
  - b. First exchanges on suitable areas for intra-regional cooperation and for joining existing initiatives.
  - c. Process to further advance intra-regional cooperation.

## **Expected Outcomes**

The roundtable is expected to produce the following results:

- Provide input to advance intra-regional cooperation
- Identification of areas and existing initiatives to be further explored

## **Format**

The Commission and New Caledonia or OCTA will co-chair and co-moderate the session.

While the thematic workshop mainly aims to stimulate a reflection at the technical/working level of the participating delegations to subsequently feed into the political dialogue on the 22 November, all delegates (OCT, Member States) are invited to participate. Implementing partners are not envisaged to participate to avoid any possible future conflict of interests should they bid to become implementation partners for regional/intra-regional cooperation.

The roundtable will be introduced by a presentation from the Commission. St Maarten and TAAF will have the opportunity to share their experiences on cooperation with outermost regions. French Polynesia will also make a presentation. Break out groups per sub-region (Caribbean, Pacific, Arctic/Atlantic/Antarctic) will allow focused guided group discussions on areas for intra-regional cooperation and present their views to the plenary. A question and answer with the plenary will complement this session.

The co-chairs will draw the main conclusions at the end of the discussion, which will be presented at the Forum on 22 November.