

## Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me begin by thanking you all for having found the time to attend this meeting on Atlantic Ocean Research. This is an important meeting for both the Atlantic states but also for Europe as a whole. This is because we are discussing the future of transatlantic research, in particular, but also transatlantic cooperation in general.

On 24 May 2013, the USA, Canada and the EU signed a highly significant agreement that launched the Atlantic Ocean Alliance. The nature of this alliance is poorly understood in the Parliament and the first main objectives of this meeting is simply to deepen our mutual

understanding of the alliance. This entails questions such as

- What is the nature of the alliance
- How does it relate to the Atlantic Action Plan and to the Marine and Maritime Research Strategy

The second objective involves implementation and supposes such questions as:

- How is it to be funded,
- What is the relationship with H2020,
- How is the alliance to be implemented,
- What is the role of the Joint Programming Initiative or JPI on Oceans in the implementation of the alliance.

- Should we introduce an initiative based on article 185 (PPP) involving the European Atlantic States,
- How will this alliance further existing bilateral initiatives,
- How will the alliance to the contribute to the coordination of national efforts in Europe,

Thirdly, I should like us to consider something of how we see the alliance developing. For example:

- Should the alliance be extended to the South Atlantic,
- How can we best include Atlantic countries from the South Atlantic that have already set up effective working relations in the field of

research with the EU. I am thinking of such countries as Brazil and South Africa.

In answering these questions, we are fortunate in the scope and depth of the people present in today's meeting. A significant number of "key actors" have been able to attend - including two director generals, (Mr Smit and Ms Evans) - and for this reason I am sure that we shall have a very fruitful and stimulating discussion.

Once again I should like to thank you all for coming today and it only remains for me to ask Mr Robert-Jan Smits to open the meeting.