EUROPEAN OCEAN PACT ESTABLISHES USEFUL FRAMEWORK — EU POLICY MUST NOW STEP IN TO ADVANCE MARINE CARBON REMOVAL

Brussels, 5 June 2025 – The EU's new European Ocean Pact marks an important step toward **integrating the ocean into Europe's climate strategy** — but its success will depend on what comes next. Carbon Gap welcomes the pact's high-level recognition of the ocean's role in fighting climate change as **the biggest carbon sink on our planet**, but urges the EU to follow through with **dedicated funding, targeted research roadmaps, and robust certification and monitoring systems** to enable marine carbon dioxide removal (mCDR) at scale.

The pact rightly highlights the link between restoring marine ecosystems and increasing the ocean's carbon capture function. More precisely, it outlines plans to strengthen ocean innovation, scale clean technologies, and develop monitoring infrastructure. Carbon Gap calls for these plans to cover the full diversity of mCDR methods to identify viable methods rapidly and for clear commitments to support the development of emerging methods, including engineered ones such as Direct Ocean Capture and Ocean Alkalinity Enhancement.

"The pact sends a strong signal. But signals are not delivery," says **Eloisa Viloria**, Policy Analyst at Carbon Gap. **"To unlock the ocean's potential, the EU must ensure that its initiatives actively support a full portfolio of marine carbon removal solutions — especially those still in early stages."**

While the pact recognises the importance of nature-based solutions, it takes a precautionary stance towards emerging carbon dioxide removal technologies, citing unknown effects on marine ecosystems. Carbon Gap agrees that these uncertainties are a blocker and supports a targeted research agenda to rapidly collect the evidence required to understand which mCDR can be safely scaled and which may not.

"Unanswered questions about engineered mCDR should lead to more research as soon as possible," said **Sylvain Delerce**, Chief Scientist at Carbon Gap. **"We cannot afford to rule out climate tools necessary to reach climate neutrality. Responsible innovation starts with science, robust monitoring, and public investment — and now is the time to build that foundation for marine CDR in the EU."**

Several initiatives announced in the pact offer a window of opportunity. Building on the next Framework Programmes for R&I, one of these initiatives is the planned **EU Ocean R&I Strategy,** which would coordinate marine R&I investments and bridge the gap between R&I through financing for development and deployment. A European network of **ocean technology testing** sites will also be proposed to accelerate innovation and deployment of key ocean technologies. These initiatives must explicitly target marine carbon removal and lay out a clear roadmap to guide RD&I efforts for mCDR step by step and through milestones.

The pact also acknowledges the need to scale funding for ocean innovation, highlighting the need for a collaborative approach between the EU, member states and the private sector. This support must extend to underexplored marine carbon removal approaches — particularly engineered ones — which require targeted public investment to address open questions, and move from concept to credible climate solution.

A strong focus is put on marine knowledge, and building a strong ocean observation capacity and data accessibility. Improving mapping and monitoring of blue carbon habitats and advancing research on their carbon sequestration capacity is key to advancing mCDR. Carbon Gap sees strong potential for this work to complement the **Carbon Removals and Carbon Farming Certification framework (CRCF)**, where the European Commission is preparing to

develop methodologies for marine approaches. But progress on certification — especially for engineered marine methods — will rely on the availability of sound scientific data and fit-for-purpose MRV systems.

Carbon Gap calls on the European Commission to:

- **Ensure that marine CDR — including engineered approaches — is a research priority** in the next Framework Programme for R&I (FP10) and the upcoming Ocean Research & Innovation Strategy. A marine CDR innovation roadmap is needed to address key scientific questions in a coordinated and timely way, so that the most promising methods are ready to support climate neutrality by 2050.

- **Allocate dedicated funding for early-stage mCDR RD&I** under the forthcoming Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). Carbon Gap's recent report shows that at least EUR 2.6 billion needs to be dedicated in the next seven years to support early-stage CDR, including marine approaches.

- **Ensure the development of transparent, science-based certification and MRV systems** that support both nature-based and engineered marine solutions.

Carbon Gap will continue to engage with EU institutions and member states to ensure that marine CDR is sufficiently supported, developed responsibly, and grounded in climate integrity. The Ocean Pact is a timely reminder of the importance of oceans in stabilising the climate system — now the EU must walk through it.

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