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German Ocean Award for Karmenu Vella EU Commissioner for the Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries receives prestigious prize

5. November 2018 / Kiel. Today, the European Commissioner for the Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Karmenu Vella receives the German Ocean Award 2018. During his tenure, the Maltese politician has worked intensively for the protection and sustainable use of the oceans. In particular, he has sought to contain illicit fishing and negotiate biodiversity protection in international waters. The German Ocean Award, donated by Deutsche Bank AG, is awarded by the GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel under the auspices of the Prime Minister of Schleswig-Holstein and is endowed with 10,000 euros.

“When you live in Malta, you are almost everywhere close to the ocean”, said Karmenu Vella. The Maltese politician grew up with the sea, its opportunities and its risks. “Issues such as overfishing, pollution and climate change can be experienced much more directly on such a small island as Malta”, Vella continued. For him, this is also a reason to deal as EU Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries especially with the problems of the oceans and their long-term solution.

In his welcome address at the award ceremony at GEOMAR, Prime Minister Daniel Günther acknowledged the great importance of international marine research: “Despite considerable gains in knowledge, we can and must understand much more about our oceans. Therefore, further research is so important, also with regard to climate change. In Schleswig-Holstein we are grateful for the fact that EU Commissioner Karmenu Vella gives such a high priority to maritime policy”, Günther stated.

“The European Commission has taken important steps to protect fish stocks in Europe by changing its fisheries policy in recent years”, said Jan Philipp Albrecht, Minister for the Energy Transition, Agriculture, Environment, Nature and Digitalization of Schleswig-Holstein (Germany) in his laudatory speech for Karmenu Vella. “Commissioner Vella is representative of these advances. Of course, there are still many deficits in the fisheries policy, but here the EU Member States themselves are also responsible. It is therefore necessary to work jointly on these deficits”, said the Schleswig-Holstein Minister of the Environment.

During the award ceremony, a number high-ranking personalities such as the former US Secretary of State John Kerry, Prince Albert II of Monaco, the German Federal Minister of the Environment Svenja Schulze and the Deputy Director of UNESCO, Vladimir Ryabinin, appreciated the merits of Karmenu Vella in video messages.

“The large number of greetings for this year's award winner impressively underscores the performance of Karmenu Vella”, said GEOMAR Director Prof. Dr. Peter Herzig. “These statements made it very clear what a high reputation the EU Commissioner enjoys in the international community even though there were some critical voices in the run-up”, Herzig continued.

Dr. Cornel Wisskirchen, spokesman for the Regional Head Northern Germany of Deutsche Bank AG, also acknowledges the achievements of the Maltese politician. "In some sense the presentation of the German Ocean Award to Commissioner Karmenu Vella could serve as a motivation and an invitation to politicians to tackle the urgent problems of the oceans in the future even more decisively. With Karmenu Vella, we are honoring a personality that has not only set important accents at the EU level", said Dr. Wisskirchen. This is also underpinned by the EU's commitment at this year's OurOcean conference in Bali to provide € 300 million for the Blue Economy, to address climate change impacts, marine pollution, marine conservation and sustainable fisheries in the coming years.

The German Ocean Award is awarded by the GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel and sponsored by the Deutsche Bank under the patronage of the Prime Minister of Schleswig-Holstein.

With a value of €10,000, the German Ocean Award is awarded to well-known individuals from the fields of politics, business, science or the media who have shown special commitment to the cause of preserving and protecting the world's oceans or to communicating knowledge and educating the public about them. Awarded since 2009, the German Ocean Award is the successor prize to the Elisabeth-Mann-Borgese-Meerespreis of Schleswig-Holstein that from 2006 to 2009 was likewise awarded to notable public figures. Past prize winners include Dr. Joe Borg, formerly the EU commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries; Prof. Dr. Boris Worm, renowned internationally as a marine ecologist, and Prof. Dr. Klaus Töpfer, formerly the executive director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Links:

www.geomar.de GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel

www.deutscher-meerespreis.de German Ocean Award

Images:

At www.geomar.de/n6158 images are available for download.

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