

Assarmatori's High-Level Visit to Brussels – Stefano Messina (Chairman): “Maritime transport is essential to Europe's security and cohesion”

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"Maritime transport is a key pillar in guaranteeing Europe's security and cohesion. This is especially true for Italy, which possess one of the world's leading ferry fleets in terms of tonnage, freight capacity, and passenger transport. This strategic segment must be protected, starting with correcting the distortions caused by the ETS system and other excesses of the Green Deal," said Stefano Messina, Chairman of Assarmatori – the

Italian shipowners' association, at the conclusion of a two-day visit to Brussels.

A high-level delegation of shipowners, executives, and board members from Assarmatori held a series of strategic and operational meetings with EU leaders, including a bilateral meeting with European Commission Executive Vice-President Raffaele Fitto.

"The maritime-port sector is a critical component of the security of European value chains and of the cohesion of our society and economy," Messina added. "In an era when control over supply chains and access to critical resources has become a central factor in global geopolitics, the strategic role of maritime transport has never been clearer, as already demonstrated during the pandemic.



In addition, maritime routes are essential for connecting both major and minor islands in Italy and across the Mediterranean. The Motorways of the Sea also play a vital role in supporting environmental sustainability by enabling modal shift from road unimodal operations to sea intermodality. Furthermore, the cohesion of insular and coastal regions depends on efficient and reliable maritime links. At the same time, container transshipment hubs must be protected from the distortions caused by the ETS application to the maritime sector, which currently grants a competitive edge to ports just outside the EU's borders, particularly in North Africa. There is a risk of creating a 'desertification' effect in key EU hubs such as Gioia Tauro (Italy), resulting in a loss of control over critical nodes of containerized shipping flows."

During the visit, Assarmatori's delegation also met with the heads of the Italian political delegations in the European Parliament, the Chair of the Parliament's Environment Committee, MEP Antonio Decaro, and senior officials from the European Commission as well as the Permanent Representation of Italy to the EU.

The program also included a high-level dinner attended by over one hundred institutional stakeholders across EU institutions. The opening speeches featured, among others, Italy's Deputy Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Edoardo Rixi.

In his remarks, Chairman Stefano Messina reiterated that "the strengths and specificities of Italy's maritime sector have not been sufficiently recognized in the EU's legislative process over recent years. The legislative cycle launched by the Clean Industrial Deal is a much-needed step forward. Now, we must overcome the excesses of the Green Deal to unleash new momentum, renew our fleets, and accelerate the deployment of sustainable marine fuels, especially in the ferry sector, which in Italy represents an irreplaceable infrastructure and cannot bear the weight of the ETS in the current fragile market conditions."

Source: Assarmatori