

## Choose NC interviews Ms. Emma Colombin, Manager of the Maritime Cluster of New Caledonia

The blue economy is one of the most promising sectors in New Caledonia. Characterized by transversality and diversity, this sector needs to be structured in order to be better recognized and identified as a key sector.



### \_\_What is the current situation of the maritime sector in New Caledonia, its challenges and opportunities?

The image of New Caledonia as a marine paradise and with an exceptional biodiversity cannot hide the need for infrastructure for professionals, which is a major challenge nowadays. The regional situation on the Indo-Pacific axis makes the territory a key player on blue economy themes in the Pacific.

### \_\_Created in August 2014, the Maritime cluster of New Caledonia is an association which aims to unite stakeholders around maritime activity, and to promote blue growth. What are the key stages in the development of the maritime cluster? What are the factors of its success?

The Maritime Cluster has grown from 32 members when it was created to 96 today. Its members exchange views within synergy groups in order to promote the emergence of sustainable development projects linked to the sea. The General Assembly of 2016 has made us realize the importance of our maritime sector and has allowed us to draw up the roadmap of the Cluster, the sea representing more than 98% of our territory. The major annual meeting of the Days of the Sea makes it possible to share the state of progress of projects through reflections at round tables.

The CMNC promotes and increases the sharing of information through regular bilateral public / private meetings. We rely on the French Maritime Cluster network and overseas maritime clusters for a more global vision.

### \_\_Your missions are to identify maritime issues and promising projects for the future; dialogue with institutions; represent the Caledonian maritime sector and be part of a regional dynamic. What are your goals for the next 3 years?

Large-scale projects that were initiated a few years ago are taking shape and materializing, such as the Numbo project or the structuring of the ship dismantling industry. We also approached the Group of Construction Industries and Naval Activities (GICAN) in the context of the construction of 12 submarines in Adelaide, Australia to involve New Caledonia. The Blue Book, which has occupied us a lot in recent years, was handed over to the institutions in 2020 and proposes many actions, some in the short term, others more structural.

It is now a question of declining these actions, defining which ones are priorities, and organizing their implementation. Maritime infrastructure and training are essential for the maritime sector to continue growing and to generate jobs.



### \_\_The pole of excellence - Port Numbo is one of the flagship projects in Caledonia, what are the specificities of the project? When will it be completed?

This major project aims to create a centre of excellence for: shipbuilding, repair and maintenance; maintenance of heavy tonnage ships and military buildings; dismantling of ships; the establishment of a scientific port.

The objective is for ships of the French Navy or the coasters (that supply the Loyalty Islands) to be able to dock in New Caledonia instead of going to New Zealand or Australia.

In times of health crisis, this appears even more essential and strategic. This project benefits from the support of the French State and the New Caledonian government via the development contract and an incentive from the European Union via OCTA, also initiated by the CMNC. Studies should start before the end of 2021 to determine the appropriate tools and facilities.

### \_\_The Blue Book is an inventory published in 2020. What are the main strategic axes of this work? How will it guide the territory's maritime strategy?

There are 2 tools, an inventory from 2020 of the sea in New Caledonia (in 420 pages) and the Blue Book itself, broken down into 6 strategic axes and 112 actions. The first is an essential reference state for knowledge of what the sea is, and the second a decision-support tool for public policies.

It is about responding to the challenges of blue growth through actions in the short or long term which concern the diversification of sectors as well as training, innovation and the sustainable management of our ecosystems. The Maritime Cluster wants to see these sectors grow, create jobs, be promising for the future of young New Caledonians, by integrating environmental and societal concerns.

### \_\_The marine economy represents a sector of the future in New Caledonia and there are many opportunities to be seized. The OECD thus foresees a doubling of the added value linked to the blue economy by 2030. What is the role of the cluster vis-à-vis the development of this sector? Do you have any examples of projects related to the economics of the sea?

The role of the Cluster is to promote the development of this sector, we have proposed 112 actions, which we will present and implement with the according institutions.

In 2017 we warned of the need to manage waste from the maritime sector, the ship dismantling sector is now on track with 6 vessels dismantled in 2020 and already 16 in 2021.

The creation of an economic observatory to collect data is essential for decision-making. Current projects include measures intended to ensure greater safety at sea, the development of sectors strengthening food self-sufficiency or the establishment of management plans for maritime areas.

Our role is also to encourage vocations for maritime professions, which are often passionate professions, with young people who increasingly understand how important the ocean.

### \_\_Your final message for potential investors interested in the maritime sector in New Caledonia? What do you think are the main assets of this region?

Many opportunities come out from creating a centre of excellence, in terms of infrastructure, transport, innovation, training ...

We have an exceptional natural and cultural heritage in New Caledonia, we are also well integrated regionally.

We should add that New Caledonia is the only overseas territory labelled "innovation territory" under the Future Investment Program.

Leisure activities also being an economic opportunity, we live surrounded by a formidable sports playground, as our recent Olympic champions testify.