

## Meeting with the Seas

# Official inauguration

Following the 'Flames and Sea' public event, which on Sunday united Basque grills and skewers, the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting with the Seas went full steam ahead on Monday with the programme of speeches kicking off at the Edgar Neville Auditorium at the Provincial Council facilities.

The multi-disciplinary congress in defence of the sea organised by Vocento with the support of Málaga Provincial Council and the Andalusian Regional Government, which will be running in Málaga and Cádiz until Wednesday, began with a speech by Financial and Productive Development delegate **Juan Jesús Bernal**.

"We haven't looked at the sea as much as we ought to have done, but we can't lose track of it because the sea has a great potential for innovation and growth," Bernal warned, highlighting the Provincial Council's Senda Litoral and Senda Azul trail projects, which bring value to the marina flora and fauna and will create new sports and nautical activities. To this respect, he described the creation of the first artificial reef in Andalusia, the first step of the Senda Azul in El Cantal. In his opinion, with this Meeting with the Seas "we're making history where protection of the seas is concerned."

For Andalusian Regional Government delegate in Málaga **Patricia Navarro**, it's a "complex but thrilling journey of international dimensions." After recalling Málaga province's ties with the sea throughout history as part of "our DNA," Navarro underlined the specific allocation for the sector in the 2019 budgets, with support for aquaculture, modernisation of the sector, improvements to ports, subsidies for biological rest periods or a line for the women's associations. She also stressed that the comprehensive sanitation plan is a "priority objective" and underlined the need to take notice: "We're obliged to protect the sea in a time of hazards such as contamination."

That's the essence of the Meeting with the Seas, or as the president of Vocento's Gastronomy division **Benjamín Lana** explained, "the main objective is that, in years to come, everyone who sees they have a problem with their sea thinks they need to come to Málaga and tell us and we'll be able to solve it."

According to Lana, "the idea is to start with something small to do something great, we won't be stopped by storms or by plastics." He was referring to the fact that the forum "is born with a soul" and a clear commitment: to defend the sea. "We have an obligation to work on increasing social awareness to try and save the planet's last remaining wilderness," he pointed out, hoping that "we're still in time."

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