



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels
MARE.B.1/BC

Subject: Your letter about the Africa-Europe Ocean Strategic Group

Dear Mr. López,

I acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 9 December where you ask for clarification about the Africa-Europe Ocean Strategic Group and its 2030 Roadmap.

The Group was composed of experts from Africa and Europe who worked under the leadership of two eminent and knowledgeable personalities, Mr Pascal Lamy, former EU Commissioner and Chair of the EU “Ocean and Waters” Mission, and Ambassador Nancy Karigithu, Special Blue Economy Envoy of the President of Kenya. The Group was given a two-fold mandate: to define a joint vision based on common priorities and objectives, and on that basis, to present a plan of action. With this initiative, our ambition was to enlarge the Africa-Europe partnership to new and diverse actors, like youth, the research community, the private sector, and the financial community, and to deepen it in concrete areas of cooperation, with the aim to unlock dormant opportunities and scale up existing activities, as well as open up space for fresh policy thinking and sustainable joint actions in the long-term.

The decision to externalise the setting-up and management of the Group was duly informed by discussions with, and lessons learnt from Commission services who had set up sectoral EU-Africa task forces. Due consideration was also given to human resources implications for Commission services.

We deliberately mandated the Group to work on ocean governance, an issue that goes beyond fisheries. Indeed, until recently, ocean governance including the blue economy was absent in the Africa-Europe partnership, despite the importance the ocean has, and despite the African and European Union having acknowledged the urgent need to harness global action for the ocean. Therefore, the work intentionally went beyond fisheries management and covered the wide spectrum of ocean governance.

Mr. Iván López
Chairman Long Distance Advisory Council
C/Núñez de Balboa nº 49, 3º izquierda
ES-28001 MADRID
SPAIN
ivan.lopez@pesqueraancora.com

However, given the importance of fisheries in Africa and in the EU-Africa relationship, we made sure that the sector was properly represented. In agreement with the African Union Commission, our partner in this initiative, we invited Mrs Rakotondrazafy, Madagascar's small-scale fisheries ambassador, as well as Mrs Lukanga, Secretary General of the African Women Fish Processors and Traders Network (AWFISHNET) to join the Group. I would also like to draw your attention to the participation of Mr Gaoussou Gueye. He is not only the President of the Association for the Promotion and Empowerment of Maritime Fisheries in Senegal and the President of the African Confederation of Artisanal Fishing Trade Associations but also the Continental Coordinator of Non-State Actors in Fisheries and Aquaculture (AFRIFISH) that was thus duly involved. Thanks to their input, the role of artisanal fisheries from non-EU coastal states in fisheries, a topic dear to the LDAC, was brought into the discussions. They also stressed the importance of fisheries transparency, equitable benefit sharing, the involvement of fisheries communities in co-management programmes, gender equality and better working conditions, that were all retained in the Group's final report.

This report therefore benefited from the expertise of the Group's members but also from extensive stakeholders' consultations, communication; and awareness-raising activities. We regret that the meeting request sent to the LDAC by the Africa-Europe Foundation in June 2023, as a follow-up to your letter, has remained unanswered, as well as the Foundation's offer for the LDAC to join working groups and ad-hoc discussions.

I would like to point out that the report issued in October is not a Commission report, but the outcome of extensive work carried out by the Group and the Foundation in the last two years. It is clear from the report and the many ideas it contains that the ocean, the opportunities it offers and the challenges it faces, can create a stronger link between Africa and Europe. It is a pioneering initiative that has increased the level of understanding between the two continents and expanded the sharing of knowledge and capacity building. It has also been a vehicle to strengthen the momentum around ocean governance, in line with the EU International Ocean Governance Agenda.

Relevant services, within and outside of DG MARE, are currently assessing the Group's recommendations. This work will inform our decision whether and which activities could be included in our Work-Programme for 2025 and beyond. We will also have to assess the ambition and scope of action of the European Commission towards Africa as President von der Leyen announced "a new impetus on our mutual partnership with Africa ahead of the next [EU-AU] Summit in 2025".

Yours sincerely,

Charlina VITCHEVA

Contact:

Bénédicte Caremier, senior expert, benedicte.caremier@ec.europa.eu

Cc. MARE-AC@ec.europa.eu

Alexandre Rodriguez, Marta de Lucas, Manuela Iglesias and LDAC secretariat (LDAC)