



## Minutes

### **32nd meeting of LDAC Working Group 4 Bilateral Relations with Third Countries**

**Thursday, 19 October 2023, 09:30-13:00h CET**

**Venue: Martin's Brussels EU Hotel (Bd Charlemagne 80, 1000 Brussels)**

Chair: Julio Morón  
Vice Chair: Sara Fröcklin

#### **1. Welcome and opening of the meeting.**

WG4 Chair, Mr. Julio Morón, welcomes members and observers, thanking them for their attendance and participation.

The whole list of members and observers is included as Annex I.

#### **2. Approval of the minutes of the last WG4 meeting held in Brussels on 22 March 2023.**

The minutes of the previous meeting are approved without any modifications.

#### **3. Approval of the agenda.**

The agenda is approved with no changes to it.

#### **4. State of play of negotiations with third countries.**

##### **4.1. Report from DG MARE on:**

- **Implementation of SFPAs currently in force.**
- **Ongoing negotiations for renewal of SFPAs.**
- **Prospective new SFPAs.**

The EC representative, Mr. Emmanuel Berck, explains the state of play of the different SFPAs:

#### **Pacific Ocean:**

- **Kiribati:** There is a new protocol achieved after a long negotiation and years of negotiations interrupted. The Kiribati authorities have changed the management method based on the effort scheme per vessel/day that has been effective in the region. Although this agreement is onerous from a financial point of view, due to the fact that it will be used by a maximum of four vessels, it is complemented by the one with Cook Islands, consolidating this way the strategic position of the EU in the Pacific Ocean by means of a network of agreements.



## **Atlantic Ocean:**

- **Cape Verde**: the agreement expires in May 2024.

- **Guinea Bissau**: it expires in June 2024. Political and administrative changes are expected in the country. It is an important mixed agreement contributing quite a lot of income to the recipient country with significant weight on its economy due to the use of licences and tonnes caught, although the category of small pelagics is underused. This is something to be borne in mind when negotiating fishing opportunities for the next protocol.

Applications have suffered delays, but they are being flexible. At the end of November there will be a technical meeting on protocol implementation. They have also observed a reduction in the use of sectoral support, still having funds available and a remaining amount.

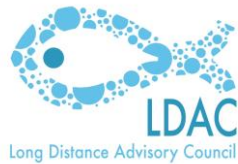
- **Côte d'Ivoire**: it expires in July 2024.

The EU negotiating teams are in the initial renewal phase of the agreements with the aforementioned three countries. For all three of them, having complicated and long dossiers, the aim is to start negotiating in January 2024, contacting with all three countries in December 2023. Generally speaking, the EU is satisfied with the level of use of these agreements, they have even exceeded the reference tonnage, so there is a desire to renew the agreement owing to the significant income for these countries.

Other protocols expiring in 2024 are: **Senegal** (where there will soon be elections and for which ex-ante and ex-post evaluation reports are expected to be completed at the end of the year), **Sao Tome and Principe** (good level of use of sectoral support) and **Cook Islands**, for which the call to study the evaluation will be soon launched.

- **Greenland**: the protocol is expiring at the beginning of 2025, although there is a clause foreseeing a two-year extension. However, Greenlandic authorities wish to negotiate this agreement in 2024 to reach a new protocol as of 2025. The EC would be interested in an automatic renewal to promote continuity, although it does not oppose to renegotiating in an adverse political context (fishery resources rationalisation policy prioritising fisheries operators with Greenlandic flag).

- **Morocco**: the protocol and the agreement terminated on 23 July, 2023. As long as the legal case pending at the ECJ with the Polisario Front is not clarified, the protocol will not be able to be formally negotiated, and therefore the fleet will not have licences and will not be able to carry out fishing operations in Moroccan waters. The aim of the EC is to continue discussions with Morocco and to achieve that the fishing activity stops as little as possible. Nowadays there is still technical and scientific cooperation, and they are awaiting the final versions of the report by the Joint Scientific and Technical Committee to see what has worked in the agreement and what has not.



- **Mauritania**: Mr. Berck informs that generally speaking the agreement and protocol are working, and that the European Commission is currently working on a technical mission to assess the implementation of the agreement there. In the debit column there is an important delay in the execution of the budget devoted to sectoral support. In addition, the level of tonnage use in the small pelagic category is quite low, lower than 20% of the total estimated volume. Lastly, more work needs to be done on scientific aspects. The Joint Committee is expected to meet in mid-December.

- **Senegal**: attention should be drawn to the difficult situation of pole and liners, of which there are 4 or 5 left, but who are the main source of income of the agreement, since they employ many local Senegalese citizens on board and they conduct very selective fisheries. There was a joint committee in July where commitments were achieved by the Senegalese minister, but there have been no news to report ever since. In December, an EC team will probably go on a technical mission to assess sectoral support, compile information and resume contact with the country's authorities. The protocol is terminating next year and purse seiners are also suffering delays in the issuance of licences.

- **The Gambia**: the agreement in force will last a period of 6 years and it is working well.

- **Gabon**: there has recently been a coup d'état with many reactions and concern at international level owing to the political situation of the country. Fishing activities continue for the time being, but sectoral support has been suspended.

#### **Indian Ocean:**

- **Madagascar**: since 1 July this year there is a new fisheries agreement. Negotiations were difficult and took 4 years, but they have managed to ensure the continuity of the agreement. This is of importance to the tuna and longline fleet with vessels that have their basic ports in Reunion. It will help consolidate the rest of agreements in the Indian Ocean. However, the underuse of fishing opportunities in Madagascar has led to a reduced presence in terms of number of vessels in exchange for reducing their financial demands. Even so, they have kept sufficient capacity for the development of fishing activities by vessels demanding so. Catches made are lower than the reference tonnage stipulated in the protocol. As consideration to the coastal state, sectoral support has increased and virtually doubled that of last year. The Madagascar government wishes to introduce blue and maritime economy concepts in the use of sectoral support.

- **Comoros Islands**: Mr. Berck informs that they participated as contracting party in the IOTC meetings. They are considering renewing their commitment to fighting against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. However, there is still a lot to be done and they do

not show a great deal of interest in collaborating. He adds that they might use the information of the fleet to try to negotiate with Kenya or Tanzania.

- **Seychelles**: it is an effective agreement. There have been additional catches. Nevertheless, figures show a recent decrease in the activity. At the joint committee held in September, the problem of by-catches was discussed. These catches have an economic value for the legal economy of Seychelles and if operators report them, they can have some return in terms of landings, which is why this aspect is being encouraged.

- **Mauritius**: the protocol and the agreement were renewed one and a half years ago. He declares that it is a complementary agreement to that of Seychelles, and it is also occasionally used by longliners in the region.

#### **4.2. Questions from the floor on specific countries and feedback from members.**

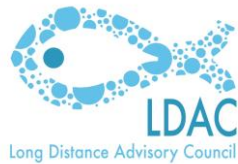
- **Morocco**: Ms. Béatrice Gorez (CFFA) asks whether the same logic as in other dormant agreements is going to be applied, or if it is possible to continue with some fishing activity with scientific purposes to improve the scientific evaluations on surplus. Mr. Berck replies that it is indeed considered a dormant agreement with no exceptions, although it is a very important partner for the EC with both parties having an interest in continuing to collaborate, since it is a strategic ally in the region.

- **Mauritania**: Ms. Béatrice Gorez (CFFA) enquires about the problem there is both with small pelagics and operators, and with the lack of compliance by scientific observers on board some European demersal trawling fishing vessels, that do not report their boarding to avoid reporting by-catches. She requests the licence be removed if the rejection to have observers on board is proven, since it is a compulsory requirement in the agreement. Mr. Berck replies that he is not aware of this situation, but that he will ask his colleagues.

Mr. Fernando Rebollo (ANAMAR) asks about the state of play of the request to increase the maximum number of vessels allowed - from 15 to 18 - to use fishing licences, as it was approved at the latest Scientific Committee and it is yet to be approved at the next Joint Committee. In this regard, he enquires whether it is included in the agenda.

Mr. Berck replies that he does not know whether this issue is included in the agenda of the next committee. Although in principle there is no opposition, it is necessary to have scientific evidence and guarantees regarding the state of the stock and legal evidence and guarantees regarding the possibility of changing the conditions of the protocol. He finds it difficult to have it implemented at the beginning of January.

The joint committee will be held on the first week of December and he adds that he will send his colleagues the information on the problem regarding ports, refuelling costs, as well as the



fleet concern as it is observed that stocks are not in good condition, so it will take some time to recover the status of stocks.

- Senegal: Mr. Michel Goujon (ORTHONGEL) explains that it is important to ensure the continuity of the tuna and mixed agreement network in West Africa, including Senegal, to be able to have free access to and movement in those fishing areas due to the highly migratory nature of target species of tropical tuna and the changing dynamics of the migratory routes owing to climate change. Moreover, he highlights that Dakar is an important port for purse seiners that should be included in the new list of designated ports set out in the Control Regulation that will come into force in January 2024 for landings and transshipments (including monitoring of weighing and margin of tolerance).

Mr. Javier Garat (CEPESCA) reiterates the tricky situation of the European pole and line fleet, particularly the Spanish and French ones. It is a tragic situation since they urgently need life bait to perform their activity. This week there was a disappointing piece of news according to which the Spanish aid request dossier has not yet been submitted to the EU. He hopes this will happen shortly and, if possible, when the EU receives it, he hopes that procedures will be sped up so that parties affected receive money in compensation for the temporary cessation of their activity as soon as possible.

Mr. Berck replies that he takes note of the problem of pole and liners and of the importance of this agreement for the tuna purse seine fleet, together with others such as that of Guinea Bissau. Besides, he comments that they are reflecting upon the list of landing ports (with the potential inclusion of Dakar).

- Guinea Bissau: Mr. Rebollo (ANAMAR) expresses his satisfaction on the use of the agreement, with an average of 10 vessels in his case.

- Gabon: Mr. Rebollo (ANAMAR) asks how the current unstable political situation is going to affect the next Joint Committee to be held in Libreville regarding the inclusion of an experimental survey for the shellfish vessels category in the agreement at the beginning of January.

Mr. Berck replies that, although they have information that fishing is continuing there, there is absolutely no contact with the Gabonese administration at present. He points out that among the items to address there is the mentioned experimental survey for crustaceans that could start at the beginning of January depending on the assessment of outcomes of the second scientific survey by IEO.

- Seychelles: Ms. Gorez (CFFA) enquires about the use of the fund contributed by European shipowners and its impact on or benefit for the country. Mr. Berck replies that based on the report approved by the Joint Committee, this shipowners fund has allowed for the collection of lost or drifting FADs, as well as the recovery of buoys and nets in beaches.



Mr. Julio Morón (OPAGAC) adds that the European tuna purse seine fleet included in Européche Tuna Group participated in the FADWATCH project which was extended to the whole fleet with the collaboration of the governmental authority (SFA) and local NGOs for the recovery of FADs. European vessels provided information on potential FAD entangling areas and NGO groups collected them in beaches and islets. Furthermore, they helped with auxiliary vessels financed by funds (donations). 1-2 surveys were carried out.

- Angola: Mr. Berck informs that, in the light of the interest of many European fishing operators, an ex-ante evaluation is being performed that will be published and available on the DG MARE website very soon. There are many technical prerequisites that ought to be included. In the event that negotiations take form, it would be a mixed agreement, so comprehensive preparation will be needed to know the state of the stocks.

- Guinea Conakry: Mr. Berck informs that, even though they have the green light to move forward, they need to ensure that there are sufficient human as well as financial resources. They are in contact with the legal services, starting with the evaluation studies.

Mr. Anertz Muniategui (ANABAC) asks about the situation of dormant agreements with Equatorial Guinea and Mozambique.

- Mr. Berck replies that there could be a possibility of reporting both agreements to be able to reach private ones, but that they are reluctant owing to the political context. Regarding Mozambique, for the time being they have not shown any interest in reactivating it. They long for funds and means to develop their blue economy.

## **5. Evaluation of the EU SFPAs with third countries and regional dimension of SFPAs**

### **5.1. Presentation by DG MARE on outcomes of the EU SFPAs evaluation report.**

The EC representative, Mr. Emmanuel Berck, informs that the global retrospective evaluation on the running of SFPAs was launched back in 2020, and was developed from 2021 to 2022, with the outcomes being published in 2023.

He points out that it was an independent study conducted by external consultants by means of interviews and meetings. He highlights that it includes useful elements to reflect upon the review of the CFP and particularly on its external dimension.

He explains that the agreements are useful, fulfilling the objectives of being beneficial for EU fishing fleets' access and ensuring a stable and good-governance framework in fisheries. In addition, they support the development of the fisheries sector in partner countries. He also recognises that these are very ambitious objectives that cover aspects related both to the fishing activity and to governance.

On the other hand, EU agreements enable to defend high social standards, promoting a level playing field, fostering transparency and non-discrimination. DG INTPA has focused its actions



on development cooperation, but more on agriculture than fisheries. However, the SFPAs items devoted to sectoral support also help indirectly the development of small-scale fisheries and aquaculture, development of science, improvement of control and surveillance systems and strengthening of fisheries in the blue economy.

As for areas for improvement, the evaluation shows that there is no correct correlation between fishing opportunities and the use of the latter, e.g. in Mauritania, and this damages the European budget. Besides, there are dormant agreements that block fishing activities and cause great damage to the fleet. The evaluation also points out the need to conduct further scientific research, since it is shown that there is a lack of data at regional level.

Finally, the report is critical regarding the capacity of SFPAs to promote investment and increase trade in the third country or region that could be considered a secondary objective to fisheries agreements. In fact, there are countries that wish to benefit from economic activities resulting from the agreement, such as landings and processing; and countries without activities linked to the agreement (only catches with no associated activities), so there is less added value.

Then Mr. Berck summarises the most important recommendations in the report:

- To reduce reference tonnage.
- To increase sectoral support, provided that it works correctly.
- To increase cooperation regarding elements that can improve the blue economy.
- To strengthen collaboration within sectoral support, and to increase visibility and communication.
- To give visibility and disseminate both European projects and agreements.
- To promote discussion with stakeholders.
- To highlight the participating role of NGOs in third countries, although it is not easy because joint committees are determined by the partner country. There is interest in opening up discussions to all stakeholders in consultation processes.

There is a great deal of information (economic, social, employment data), since agreements are complex and go beyond fisheries.

The evaluation report is available on the following link: [https://ldac.eu/images/evaluation\\_and\\_analysis\\_of\\_the\\_sustainable\\_fisheries\\_July\\_2023.pdf](https://ldac.eu/images/evaluation_and_analysis_of_the_sustainable_fisheries_July_2023.pdf)

The ex-ante evaluation of Angola is available on this link: [https://ldac.eu/images/ex-ante\\_evaluation\\_study\\_of\\_a\\_possible\\_sustainable-July\\_2023.pdf](https://ldac.eu/images/ex-ante_evaluation_study_of_a_possible_sustainable-July_2023.pdf)

## **5.2. Questions from the floor and feedback from members.**





Mr. Berck, EC, replies that after this evaluation they do not know the next steps they have to take. Next year there will be European elections and the context and political orientation to be followed remain unknown. Nevertheless, a reflection ought to be made about the future of fisheries agreements, so a communication with an action plan will be probably published soon.

As for dormant agreements (such as that of Mozambique, Equatorial Guinea, etc.), he underlines that each case is different, so specific evaluations need to be conducted.

With regard to the absorption capacity of sectoral support, he says that they would like to reach a higher political agreement, with further discussion with and participation by third countries. Sometimes it is difficult to find consistency among fisheries, environmental and trade related policies, among other, and it is hard to fight against a lack of coordination between administrations and stakeholders in third countries themselves. They can have technical and legal support, so it is possible for them to rely on the team addressing the fight against IUU fishing.

Regarding transparency and non-discrimination, he says that they insist a lot on these aspects in all joint committees.

The following **ACTIONS** are agreed:

- **Regarding the future of SFPAs, Ms. Béatrice Gorez suggests to start preparing a draft piece of advice.**
- **To update the advice on the role of women in fisheries, in collaboration with AFRIFISH-Net, since it is included in the subject matter of the MoU signed in May 2023 between the LDAC and AFRIFISH-Net.**

## **6. Update on outreach and network of external partnerships and projects**

### **6.1. State of play of work with ATLAFCO-COMHAFAT.**

The ATLAFCO representative, Mr. Naji Laamrich, makes a presentation on the state of play of the organisation's activities, as well as of coming events within their work plan.

The presentation is available on the following link:

[https://ldac.eu/images/Presentation\\_COMHAFAT\\_Naji.pdf](https://ldac.eu/images/Presentation_COMHAFAT_Naji.pdf)

The following **ACTION** is agreed:

- **To resume in 2024 the organisation of an annual technical coordination meeting between ATLAFCO-LDAC (on the date and venue that suits both organisations)**

### **6.2. State of play of work with AFRIFISH-Net.**





The Chair of AFRIFISH-Net, Mr. Gaoussou Gueye, gives an update on the state of play of activities in his organisation, explaining it in a speech, available on this link: [https://ldac.eu/images/Afrifish\\_LDAC\\_October\\_2023\\_ENG.pdf](https://ldac.eu/images/Afrifish_LDAC_October_2023_ENG.pdf)

The following **ACTIONS** are agreed:

- **To monitor the FISHGOV2 project, owing to the positive news since May to devote part of the EUR 3 million fund to the participation of the African platform in the mid-term review of the FISHGOV2 project.**
- **To monitor the results and discussions of the events organised by CAOPA to celebrate World Fisheries Day (Benin, 19-21 November) where there will be a discussion on how to implement the call for action by artisanal fishers.**
- **The main topics for collaboration between LDAC and AFRIFISH-Net for the coming months are the following:**
  - **Transparency of fisheries agreements with foreign fleets;**
  - **Development of a (legal) framework for foreign (European and non-European) capital fisheries investments in African countries (“joint enterprises”);**
  - **Improved safety at sea and fishers training (adoption and implementation of ILO C188, OMI STCW-F);**
  - **Promotion of and awareness raising on the role of women in artisanal fisheries and African coastal communities.**

#### **7. Any other business:**

Mr. Alexandre Rodríguez, General Secretary, reminds attendees about the information received from DG MARE on the EU-Angola business forum to be held in Luanda on 17 November 2023. The fisheries sector is one of the fields to be addressed in this forum and DG MARE has planned to organise meetings on each and every one of the topics included in the agenda, which will be sent to all members via email.

Lastly, he informs that the next WG4 meeting will be held in March 2024.

With no other issues to address, the session is adjourned by the Chair thanking present members for their participation, the interpreters for their valuable work and the Secretariat for their efforts in organising and coordinating the meetings.

**END**



**Annex I: List of attendees**  
**LDAC Working Group 4 Meeting**  
**19 October 2023**

**WORKING GROUP MEMBERS**

1. Julio Morón. OPAGAC
2. Edelmiro Ulloa. Opnapa / OPP3/  
Acemix / Agarba
3. Anertz Muniategi. ANABAC
4. Michel Goujon. ORTHONGEL
5. Julien Daudu. EJF
6. Iván López. AGARBA/CEPESCA
7. Daniel Voces. Europêche
8. Béatrice Gorez. CFFA-CAPE
9. Aivaras Labanauskas. Lithuanian  
Long Distance Fisheries Association
10. Raúl García. WWF
11. Joelle Philippe. CFFA-CAPE
12. Sara Fröcklin. SSNC
13. José Beltrán. OPP-Burela
14. Vanya Vulperhorst. OCEANA
15. Javier Garat. CEPESCA
16. Despina Symons. EBCD
17. Emil Remisz. High Seas Fish  
Producers Organization
18. Juan Manuel Trujillo. ETF
19. Francisco Mari. BFW
20. Ángela Cortina. OPNAPA  
(online)
21. Juan Carlos Martín. OPROMAR  
(online)
22. Fernando Rebollo. ANAMAR
23. Ignacio Fresco. OCEANA

**OBSERVERS**

24. Emmanuel Berck. DG MARE
25. Ilias Papadopoulos. DG MARE
26. Gaoussou Gueye. AFRIFISH-  
Net:
27. Naji Laamrich. COMHAFAT-  
ATLAFCO (online)
28. Natalia Sánchez. Spanish  
General Secretariat for Fisheries,  
SGP (online)
29. Carmen Asencio. SGP
30. Cristina Gutiérrez. SGP
31. Stephanie Czudaj. GIZ
32. Graeme Macfadyen. Director.  
Poseidon (consultor)
33. Vincent Defaux. Poseidon  
(consultor)

**LDAC Secretariat**

34. Alexandre Rodríguez. LDAC
35. Manuela Iglesias. LDAC