

## **DRAFT MINUTES**

### **35<sup>th</sup> LDAC Working Group 4 Meeting Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements with third countries (SFPAs)**

**Tuesday, 11 March 2025, 09:30-13:00h CET/GMT+1  
Venue: Martin's Brussels EU Hotel - Bd Charlemagne 80, 1000 Brussels**

Chair: Béatrice Gorez  
Vice Chair: Ángela Cortina.

#### **1. Welcome and opening of the meeting by WG4 Chair.**

WG4 Chair, Ms. Béatrice Gorez, 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 – Brussels, 15 October 2024.**

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

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

The agenda is approved adding an item requested by Mr. Javier Garat, CEPESCA, on the situation of the longline fleet with hooks (pole and liners) of Dakartuna. It is addressed under item 6.

#### **4. European Commission strategic approach to EU fisheries external action**

##### **4.1. Presentation by Isabelle Garzon (MARE coordinator)**

The EC representative, Ms. Isabelle Garzon, makes a presentation entitled "*Toward a Strategy for EU External Fisheries Action*" that is available on this link: [https://ldac.eu/images/I.Garzon\\_2025.03.07\\_Presentation\\_LDAC.pdf](https://ldac.eu/images/I.Garzon_2025.03.07_Presentation_LDAC.pdf)

Ms. Garzon, EC, notes that the aim of the Commission is to combine EU sectoral policies and instruments to strengthen EU external fisheries sustainability —from an environmental, economic and social perspective— and to promote enhanced global and regional governance and sustainable value chains.

In order to implement this strategy, the EC is interested in receiving feedback on general issues that are considered in Ms. Garzon's presentation, namely:

- How shall Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) address the consequences of climate change?
- How shall they support the implementation of the new Treaty on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ)?
- How can fishing contribute to the protection of endangered species?

- How to ensure that Europe maintains its international leadership with its zero tolerance approach to illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and promotes its updated fisheries control rules?
- How to promote labour standards within EU external fishing fleets, and in non-EU fleets?
- How to build a more sustainable value chain through trade and marketing measures and sustainable imports and exports of EU aquatic food?
- Which could be the regional approaches adapted in each case? In this context, how to ensure the stability and foreseeability of access to neighbouring waters and what role could the new generation of Sustainable Fisheries Partnerships Agreements play when addressing these challenges?

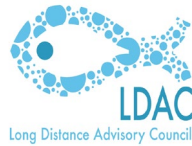
#### **4.2. Feedback from LDAC members.**

Then there is an exchange of views, comments and questions by the members that can be summarised as follows:

##### Questions by LDAC members

- Mr. Julio Morón, OPAGAC, highlights that the EU is concerned by issues like climate change or BBNJ, but it is not worried about the economic viability of the European fleet, that is in risk of going out of business. This will imply a downward review of sustainable fisheries agreements due to the lack of vessels that may access their fishing grounds. In his opinion, fishing opportunities are being missed in RFMOs, an example of this is that 97 % of tropical tuna species are well managed.
- Ms. Joëlle Philippe, CFFA, recalls the importance of policies being consistent.
- Mr. Juan Manuel Trujillo, ETF, highlights the importance of social matters and that of EU Member States ratifying the ILO Convention C-188, as he recalls that so far only nine of them have ratified it.
- In terms of level playing field, he believes that the two regulatory tools need to be used: the directive on due diligence and that against forced labour. Therefore, an attempt shall be done for those policies to be implemented in third countries and for these tools to be applied.
- Mr. José Ramón Fontán, ANEPAT, notes that the objectives pursued can only be achieved by means of catch control and monitoring. For instance, having a European registry of joint ventures could be a way for them to be more transparent and under control. Lastly, he recalls that the LDAC is still waiting to be received by staff from DG INTPA in a bilateral meeting in Brussels.
- Mr. Ignacio Fresco, OCEANA, asks how the whole value chain will be taken into account, since for instance in aquaculture, processed products or even in the case of oil this is not required, unlike in fisheries.

For this reason, he enquires whether MARE is going to make a proposal on the value chain feeding aquaculture; if they are going to include joint ventures in the Ocean Pact, and how the European governance framework can be included in the Ocean Pact.



- Mr. Javier Garat, CEPESCA, notes that the EC must reflect internally, providing the appropriate personnel to assist and participate in all international governance fora, including those within the UN and the different RFMOs.

Regarding BBNJ, he says that it seems to merely focus on closing 30 % of the marine protected areas in the high seas, and there are many other aspects. On the other hand, he notes that the International Coalition of Fisheries Associations (ICFA) that he chaired welcomed the approval of this treaty, as it specifically states that the mandate and role of RFMOs must not be undermined. That is why they believe that the EU ought to work in strengthening RFMOs and use them as an example for other sectors operating at sea.

As for CITES, he says that he would like the EU to listen to the FAO panel of experts and follow their recommendations.

Regarding the fight against IUU fishing, he thinks that China should be taken seriously and the appropriate measures should be adopted.

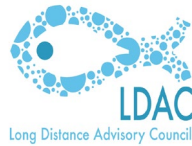
#### Responses from the DG MARE representative:

The EC representative, Ms. Isabelle Garzon, informs that on the second half of the year a consultation will be launched and that she would like to be in contact with all LDAC members. She states that they are much concerned about the economic viability and survival of the European fleet. Concerning how the EU can control the activity of other fleets and promote a level playing field, they are conducting internal research work. She notes that the Ocean Pact will not be the answer to everything, although for specific fisheries aspects the principles contained in this Global Strategy will indeed be applied.

In terms of BBNJ, she agrees that it is an ambitious and complex legal instrument that goes beyond maritime protected areas, and she says it is essential that RFMOs also take part. Lastly, she suggests having further discussions in future LDAC meetings to complement all this information.

The following **ACTION** is then agreed:

- **The Secretariat will share Ms. Garzon's presentation within the members of the Group, and will compile the key topics to prepare a response to the Commission's call for evidence and a specific follow-up opinion.**
- **The Strategy for EU External Fisheries Action will be included as one of the general priorities of the next LDAC annual work programme covering the period from 1 June 2025 to 31 May 2026. This work will help provide feedback to the consultation aiming to contribute to the drafting of a Communication by the EC by the end of 2026.**



## 5. Discussion session between MARE and LDAC on the new generation of SFPAs.

The EC representative, Mr. Luis Molledo, asks the members about the new generation of SFPAs, their challenges and how to face the future.

Then Ms. Charlotte Gobin, EC, makes a presentation indicating the general objectives, which are:

1. To contribute to the conservation of resources and environmental sustainability by means of a rational and sustainable exploitation of living marine resources in the coastal state.
2. To contribute to the continuity of operations of EU fleets and to the employment associated to the fleets operating under SFPAs.
3. To support the development of a sustainable fisheries sector in partner countries.

The presentation is available on the following link:

[https://ldac.eu/images/EC\\_Presentation\\_Brainstorming\\_session\\_LDAC\\_New\\_generation\\_SFPAs.pdf](https://ldac.eu/images/EC_Presentation_Brainstorming_session_LDAC_New_generation_SFPAs.pdf)

Mr. Luis Molledo, EC, highlights that the main issues can be summarised as follows:

1. Are Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPAs) still fit for purpose and the appropriate tool, and is it necessary for partners to approach EU fleets in the interests of overall sustainability needs?
2. What are the potential priority areas and species of commercial interest? We now have 11 SFPAs, should we maybe attach more importance to some areas where particularly good results are being obtained? Or rather, focus limited resources on tuna instead of doing so on pelagic stocks?
3. Finance: how to address criticism of taxpayers' contributions to SFPAs in light of the WTO discussions? Bearing in mind that there are limited resources, how are we going to address financial issues regarding SFPAs? Can we imagine new means, an increase in shipowners' contribution?
4. How to achieve a level playing field through SFPAs?
5. What can be done with the exclusivity clause and dormant agreements that could undermine the level playing field and be detrimental to EU fleets and the fisheries value chain?

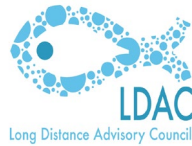
Following the explanation by the EC representatives, WG4 Vice Chair, Ms. Ángela Cortina, makes a presentation including the main conclusions of the Focus Group on SFPAs, where third countries' challenges and opportunities were addressed in a competitive fisheries scenario.

The content of the presentation is available at:

[https://ldac.eu/images/Future\\_of\\_Sustainable\\_Fisheries\\_Partnership\\_Agreements.pdf](https://ldac.eu/images/Future_of_Sustainable_Fisheries_Partnership_Agreements.pdf)

After a round of comments and some discussion among the members the following **ACTION** is agreed on:

- To continue working in the focus group to prepare one or more specific opinions.
- To try to respond to the questions asked by the MARE representatives at the meeting.



## **6. Update from MARE on current state of play of SFPAs in force and negotiations**

The EC representative and acting Head of Unit B3 for trade and fisheries agreements with third countries at DG MARE, Mr. Luis Molledo, explains developments regarding:

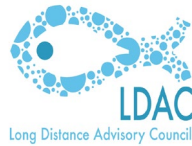
- Morocco: the decision by the Court of Justice of the EU is being analysed. At this moment in time, the European Commission is studying with Morocco the possible solutions to ensure that the conditions set out in the decision are met. This is an evaluation process, not a negotiation one.
- Sao Thomé and Príncipe: it is currently undergoing consultation with Member States. It is about to be concluded.
- Gambia: the EC is studying the options available in order to move forward. An external assessment was conducted.
- Seychelles: it expires at the beginning of 2026. The preparatory phase has been completed and they will soon request the Council to negotiate the mandate. They wish to start negotiations in June/July.
- Gabon: the preparatory work is still progressing and negotiations are expected to start at the end of the year.
- Mauritania and Mauritius: they are about to complete the preparatory phase and in the months to come they will send the ex-post and ex-ante evaluations. The idea is to have a political mandate in June and for negotiations to start at the beginning of 2026 in order to sign the agreement before it expires.
- Senegal and Comoros: there are issues related to IUU fishing in both countries, so they do not intend to resume negotiations with a view to reaching an agreement at this time.
- Angola and Mozambique: these are two priority countries to explore possible negotiations for the new generation of SFPAs.
- Côte d'Ivoire: the agreement is expected to be signed as soon as possible.

Following a round of questions by the LDAC members, the EC representatives reply as follows:

Regarding the Sahara, Mr. Luis Molledo, EC, notes that, according to the judgement, the agreements must have a direct and verifiable benefit for the Sahawi people. In addition, there must be a clearer demarcation of fishing grounds in future agreements. These are politically complex topics and there is no sign of a quick solution. However, the stakeholders will be consulted, as they are in the process of addressing this issue.

Regarding the management plan for small pelagic stocks in Mauritania, Ms. Charlotte Gobin, EC, notes that the joint committee has requested increasing conservation measures.

The EC agrees to them being implemented as of 2025. There will be a 2-month closure in the pupping and nursery area. There is a call for greater consistency. In fact, Mauritania will go to CECAF. She



highlights that measures for pelagic stocks will have an impact on demersal stocks in by-catches. Regarding the landing measures, she notes that they have been activated since January and that they can be implemented in line with the protocol.

Then, Mr. Javier Garat, CEPESCA, explains the serious situation in which the pole-and-line and longline fleets with Basque and French capital find themselves due to the significant economic consequences of not renewing the protocol between the EU and Senegal and how that prevents them from fishing, particularly pole-and-line and longline fishers using live bait and targeting sardine, anchovy, mackerel or horse mackerel.

In light of this urgent situation, he suggests that the LDAC send a letter to the European Commission requesting it to explore support mechanisms and to mobilise the necessary funds, in line with available instruments in terms of research, international cooperation or fair transition, to develop a pilot project in the Pacific waters of Costa Rica, Panama and Colombia with scientific experimental surveys to study the state of the resource (i.e. tuna species and live bait) for its potential exploitation.

The following **ACTION** is unanimously agreed:

- **Javier Garat, CEPESCA, Michel Goujon, ORTHONGEL, and Ignacio Fresco, OCEANA, will jointly study the letter proposal by CEPESCA (on behalf of DAKARTUNA) on the expulsion of pole-and-line tuna vessels from Senegal and providing support in accessing funding for scientific surveys/studies to assess the status of live bait and tuna stocks in alternative fishing grounds such as Costa Rica or Panama.**

## **7. Update from MARE/INTPA on GLOBAL GATEWAY programme**

The DG INTPA representative, Mr. Juan José Almagro, makes a presentation on the [Global Gateway](#) programme that is available on the LDAC website:

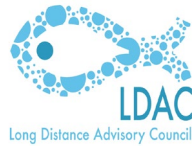
[https://ldac.eu/images/Global\\_Gateway\\_Presentation\\_DG\\_INTPA.pdf](https://ldac.eu/images/Global_Gateway_Presentation_DG_INTPA.pdf)

He points out that there is an advisory body within the sector called "Business Advisory Group" and that they also meet with different civil society organisations. There are different projects within this programme, and they are available on this link: [https://commission.europa.eu/topics/international-partnerships/global-gateway\\_es](https://commission.europa.eu/topics/international-partnerships/global-gateway_es)

He says that the Global Gateway Forum will take place on 11 and 12 July.

Then there is a round of questions/comments by LDAC members:

- Mr. José Ramón Fontán, ANEPAT, asks how the Chinese fishing fleet can be countered and how this instrument can be leveraged. Moreover, he states that he would like to be part of the advisory body representing the private sector. In addition, he believes that the Global Gateway funding could be used to renew the fleet.
- The DG INTPA representative says that the European Sea Ports Organisation is part of the Business Advisory Group and that DG INTPA and DG MARE jointly monitor the work of this group.



- Mr. Francisco Mari, Bread for the World, explains that there is a conflict with the fleet at the Cotonou port, so he asks how civil society can influence such serious issues.
- Mr. Almagro, DG INTPA, replies that one of the key initiatives is Team Unit, which is related to port improvements and progress in energy efficiency in villages.

The following **ACTION** is then approved:

- **To follow up on the letter sent by the LDAC and request a face-to-face bilateral meeting with a small LDAC delegation (4-5 representatives) in Brussels in the coming months to study potential opportunities for fisheries investments in third countries that may benefit from these funds.**

## **8. Update on LDAC work on small pelagic stocks in West Africa**

### **8.1. Focus Group on fisheries management for shared small pelagic stocks in West African countries.**

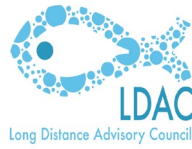
The General Secretary, Mr. Alexandre Rodríguez, informs about the draft advice on small pelagic stocks and summarises the next steps that were agreed upon as an **ACTION**:

- **A call for interest will be launched (including agenda, terms of reference and potential dates) and a focus group will be set up as soon as possible (1-2 weeks after the WG4 meeting) to identify the essential elements of the advice and prepare a first draft proposal internally, including a regional approach to science and development of MAMPs among African coastal states; the importance of food security, nutrition and human consumption, together with the overfishing of stocks, fisheries traceability and the value of aquaculture. Scientists will be invited and a piece of advice is expected to be approved and ready to be sent to DG MARE by the end of April. It can be also shared with our partners AFRIFISH and COMHAFAT/ATLAFCO and made available to the public for the benefit of other interested parties.**

Mr. Árni M. Mathiesen, observer on behalf of the Global Round table on Marine Ingredients, informs that the organisation he represents addresses similar issues to those dealt with by the LDAC and that it is in line with many recommendations included in LDAC advice documents on this matter. Therefore, he proposes to work together in the future on issues such as regional management of small pelagic stocks in West Africa, together with economic development and training matters, so he is considering the possibility of formalising this collaboration in the coming months.

## **9. State of play of the LDAC draft advice on Fishing Companies with Investments and Operations in Third non-EU Countries**

Ms. Manuela Iglesias, LDAC, gives some context and summarises developments on this matter. In December 2024, following the approval of the terms of reference and after launching the call for interest, the Focus Group (FG) on Joint Ventures met for the first time. It was agreed to develop two separate pieces of advice: one on transparency and the other one on joint ventures. The FG is now working on the draft advice on transparency that will be distributed for its review and eventual approval by WG4 and WG5. She recalls that a relevant point will be the potential update of the Registry of Joint Ventures by the Spanish General Secretariat for Fisheries (SGP).

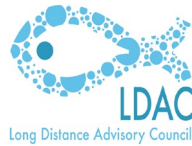


Mr. José Ramón Fontán, ANEPAT, informs about a meeting held with the SGP on the need to update the Registry of Joint Ventures, as they agreed that it is essential to enhance transparency. More information is expected to be revealed at the seminar that the LDAC will hold in Vigo in May.

With no other issues to address, the Chair informs that the next WG4 meeting will be held in October 2025 in Brussels (date and venue to be confirmed soon).

Then, 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**



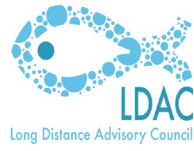
**ANNEX I: LDAC Working Group 4 attendees**  
**Brussels, 11 March 2025 - 09:30 to 13:00h**

**MEMBERS OF WORKING GROUP 4**

1. Béatrice Gorez. CFFA-CAPE LDAC WG4 Chair.
2. Ángela Cortina. Opnapa / OPP3/ Acemix / Agarba. LDAC WG4 Vice Chair.
3. Julio Morón. OPAGAC
4. Marc Ghiglia. UAPF
5. Anertz Muniategi. ANABAC
6. Vanya Vulperhorst. OCEANA
7. Tim Hedemma. Pelagic Freezer trawler Association
8. Iván López. AGARBA/CEPESCA
9. Javier Garat. CEPESCA
10. Michel Goujon. ORTHONGEL
11. Emil Remisz. High Seas Fish Producers Organization
12. Anne-France Mattlet. Européche Tuna Group
13. Joelle Philippe. CFFA-CAPE
14. Julien Daudu. EJF
15. José Ramón Fontán. ANEPAT
16. Juan Manuel Trujillo/Andrea Albertazzi. ETF
17. Rob Banning. PFA
18. Francisco Mari. BFW
19. Iris Ziegler. Seas at Risk
20. Josephine Woronoff. The Pew Charitable Trusts
21. Despina Symons. EBCD
22. Janne Posti. Conxemar
23. Odran Corcoran. WWF EPO
24. Ignacio Fresco. OCEANA

**OBSERVERS**

25. Luis Molledo. SFPAs (Zoom)
26. Charlotte Gobin. SFPAs (Zoom)
27. Mariana Corte-Real. DG MARE B4 (SFPAs)
28. Isabelle Garzon DG MARE CFP Advisor (EC strategy to EU fisheries external action)
29. Mirella Roncero. SGP Spain (Zoom)
30. Carmen Asencio. SGP Spain
31. David Wodlund. SGP Spain
32. Laura Perez. European Parliament.
33. Catherine Davis. Fauna & Flora
34. Madou Raïssa. CAOPA
35. Árni M. Mathiesen. Global Roundtable on Marine Ingredients
36. Benoit Guerin. BG Sea Consulting
37. Amélie Laurent. OCEANA
38. Margaux Rochefort. CFFA-CAPE



**LDAC SECRETARIAT**

39. Alexandre Rodríguez. LDAC

40. Manuela Iglesias. LDAC

41. Marta de Lucas. LDAC (Zoom)

