

Reference: R-03-19/WG5

Att: Joao Aguiar Machado

Director General of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE)

1000 - Brussels

Madrid, 22nd of April 2019

Subject: Recommendations on the implementation of EU Regulation 2017 / 2403 on the sustainable management of external fishing fleets

Dear Director General Mr Machado,

At its working group on horizontal issues (WG5) held on 24 October 2018, the LDAC members were provided a report by a representative of Unit B3 from DG MARE about the state of play and progress on the implementation of the Regulation EU 2017/2403, on the sustainable management of external fishing fleets (known as "SMEFF").

During this presentation, the LDAC members learned that there has been a considerable delay with regard to the development and entry into force of the implementing act to create an EU public database under Article 39 of the aforementioned Regulation. The LDAC shows its concern with the fact that DG MARE decided to re-launch the EU project only in October 2018 in order to provide technical and operational support to implement the new system. In addition to this, the LDAC did not receive any indication or clarity in relation to the date from which this EC public database will be available and fully operational.

It must be noted that the public database was one of the flagship tools adopted under the SMEFF and that DG MARE also intended to promote and export this database to other non EU flag and coastal states. However, we believe that, prior to advocating for similar transparency and accountability measures across the globe, it is essential for the EU to set up its public database internally first with the contribution from all concerned MS without delay.

Another aspect of concern for the LDAC is that, whereas Spain and France seem to be providing DG MARE periodically with mandatory and requested information about their flagged vessels operations under direct agreements, as required under Articles 17 and 18, other Member States with long distance fleets such as Italy do not seem to have the same level of engagement. This lack of level playing field places compliant national fleets at a serious competitive disadvantage vis à vis non-compliant ones. Furthermore, it bears the risk to undermine the efforts of the EU long distance fleet in terms of credibility and reputation, despite being the most transparent, accountable and sustainable fleet in the world.

In light of the upcoming European elections and the subsequent changes foreseen in the new College of Commissioners that may put this whole process on hold, the LDAC requests that the EU maintains the momentum after the adoption of the SMEFF Regulation and fosters its effective implementation by prioritising the creation of the public database of fishing authorisations and ensures that all EU flagged vessels fishing outside EU waters adhere to without any further delay.

Yours sincerely,



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