

## **MINUTES**

### **36th LDAC Working Group 4 Meeting Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements with third countries (SFPAs)**

**14 October 2025, 14:30-17:00h CET/GMT+1**

**Venue: NH Brussels Carrefour de l'Europe**  
(Rue Marché aux Herbes-Grasmarkt Straat, 110. 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, 11 March 2025.**

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

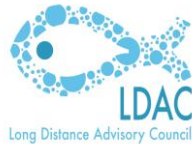
#### **3. Approval of the agenda.**

The agenda is approved with the inclusion of an item proposed by Mr. Juan Manuel Trujillo, ETF, on the creation of a new focus group within WG4 with the aim of preparing a piece of advice on the importance of having prevention protocols against harassment on fishing vessels.

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

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

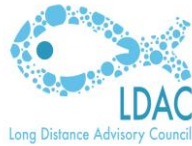
- Morocco: at the beginning of October, the EU legal services finished drafting the preferential tariff agreement with Morocco which was intended to solve the sovereignty issues regarding Sahara and that would reopen the possibility of negotiating sustainable partnership fisheries agreements (SFPAs). In the coming weeks, the European Parliament will request a mandate to negotiate from the Council.
- Gabon: the EC received a letter from the government of Gabon a few months ago in which they informed of their intention to report the agreement, and it is at a standstill ever since



- However, presidential and parliamentary elections have been held and it seems that the situation has calmed down. The EC has already received the mandate from the Council to be able to resume negotiations in order to reach a new agreement.
- Sao Tomé and Príncipe: at the beginning of October, the protocol was signed and the fishing licences for authorised fleet segments have already been issued.
- Cook Islands: it has just been confirmed that the protocol will be signed on 9 December.
- Seychelles: negotiations have started and the idea is that they are concluded before the end of the year in order for the protocol not to be interrupted, as it expires in February 2026. Presidential elections have just been held and after a technical meeting with the EC it is expected that negotiations will be completed on time. The new president and new administration have already been appointed.
- Mauritania: there is a desire to speed up the Council's mandate with a view to starting negotiations, if possible, at the end of January, in order to prevent the protocol from being interrupted, as it expires in November 2026.
- Mauritius: the protocol will expire in December 2026, so they wish to start negotiations in March.
- Senegal: it still has a yellow card pre-identifying it as non-cooperating country in the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, so negotiations will not start until there are developments in this regard.

The floor is then opened for members and attendees to ask questions and for the EC representative to reply on the following countries:

- Madagascar: there are no developments, the continued implementation of the SFPA will be proposed and so will be holding the next joint committee in February 2026 in Brussels.
- Angola and Liberia: as they were both issued a yellow card regarding the fight against IUU fishing, the negotiation of agreements is blocked.
- Morocco: it is confirmed that small pelagic stocks will be part of the negotiations. As for the utilisation rate of some small pelagic stocks, the EC representative says that they will be taken into account and discussed when the time is right.
- Mauritania: negotiations have taken longer than expected, but he believes that this small delay has not had a great impact. As for fishing areas, they will be discussed in a technical meeting in mid November.



- The report of the joint scientific meeting will be analysed in order to study the impacts of fishing closures.
- Senegal: EU member states are requested to be very cautious when considering imports coming from Senegal (as is the case in other countries) according to provisions set forth in the IUU Regulation.
- Liberia: for the time being, there will be no agreement due to changes in their IUU fishing situation. The idea is to wait until there is a clearer picture of the new generation of SFPAs.

Then the DAKARTUNA representative, Mr. Miguel Ángel Solana, notes that the LDAC sent a [letter](#) to the EC explaining the problems faced by the pole-and-line fishing vessels with Spanish and French flag after being expelled from the Senegal fishing ground, and after receiving the [reply from the EC](#) to the latter, DAKARTUNA will send a proposal to the EC in order to find an alternative for their vessels. This Blue Economy project would be intended for four vessels with home port in Senegal with a view to implementing their fishing activities, focused on tuna, in Costa Rica, El Salvador and Panama, so vessels would be adapted to travel to these areas and this would also bring multiple benefits for the countries involved (job creation, development and improvement of their infrastructures, enhancement of local employment with repairs and the incorporation of young people on board, inclusion of women, etc.).

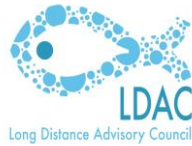
**ACTION: It is agreed that the DAKARTUNA representative send their proposal to the EC representative copying in the LDAC so that it has information in this regard and may follow up on this matter.**

Mr. Molledo is thankful for the project proposal put forward and agrees to consider it.

Mr. Javier Garat, CEPESCA, explains that the biological rest period imposed in Mauritania makes no sense as it has no scientific basis. In fact, IEO (Spanish Institute of Oceanography) experts say that shrimp vessels could be allowed to continue operating in deeper waters since the preservation measure is for cephalopods and therefore its impact on shrimp vessels would not be significant.

Besides, Ms. Anne-France Mattlet, Européche Tuna Group, explains the three main problems faced by tuna purse seiners:

- 1) Margin of tolerance: the 10 % exception does not apply in ports.
- 2) Fight against IUU fishing: European operators compete on an uneven playing field due to lax regulations in some third countries, such as Senegal or Ghana.
- 3) Moratorium for FADs in ICCAT: although it has been reduced to 45 days, since 2016 the fleet has gone from 21 to 8 purse seiners, with four canning companies and six fishing companies shutting down in total. This shows the need to modify management measures so that the EU purse seine fleet can be maintained.



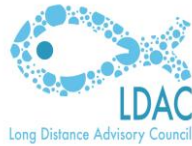
Mr. Molledo, EC, replies that they cannot take action regarding the biological rest period established in Mauritania. Finally, he recalls that the EC wishes to listen to proposals coming from all stakeholders, including member states, so that there can be a discussion with all the parties involved.

Mr. Julio Morón, OPAGAC, notes that in his opinion the EC must engage in comprehensive reflection, not only within the framework of fisheries agreements but also at a strategic level, on the role of long-distance fishing in the CFP, as the EU long-distance fleet keeps declining and its continuity in the future is unclear. There is no level playing field in terms of compliance with the rules, for instance, in Senegal there are Korean vessels that pay a minimal amount and export their products free of taxes into the European and American markets.

Mr. José Ramón Fontán, ANEPAT, recalls that Spain has lost one thousand vessels in the last forty years. He insists on the importance of fishing joint ventures being part of the third element of the external dimension of the CFP (together with RFMOs and fisheries agreements), being considered as an EU essential tool to ensure the supply of marine protein into the EU market, which is in short supply. The EC should protect its companies and European capital investments in third countries, if it does not wish to flood its market with products of Chinese/Asian origin.

Mr. Juan Manuel Trujillo, ETF, highlights the importance of achieving the longed-for level playing field where everyone complies with the same rules. He points out that RFMOs should raise their compliance standards to the rules complied by the European fleet in order to ensure the three sustainability dimensions (environmental, economic and social)

The EC representative, Mr. Luis Molledo, notes that the EC is facing numerous challenges and thanks the members for their comments and reflections. He says that the idea is to improve the situation as much as possible by means of a coordinated and consistent external policy. He points out the privilege of having a system of agreements that are respected worldwide, although the use of these should be optimised. He fully agrees with the importance of achieving a level playing field.



## **5. LDAC work on management of small pelagics in West Africa:**

### **5.1- Follow up of LDAC advice and update from MARE**

The EC representative, Mr. Luis Molledo, informs that the LDAC will soon be receiving a reply to the [advice on small pelagics](#), noting that the EC agrees with many of the items raised by the LDAC in it.

### **5.2- Next steps: work plan with EU and other partners**

Ms. Gorez, WG4 Chair, informs that the LDAC has planned to resume work on this topic in 2026, studying potential partner organisations with which to collaborate (including the possibility of inviting AFRIFISH-Net and ATLAFCO to contribute).

## **6. State of play of LDAC recommendations and future work.**

### **6.1- New generation of SFPAs**

Ms. Gorez, WG4 Chair, informs that constant work has been carried out to prepare a draft advice, noting that the latest version is that of 6 October. After a round of comments by the members, the following **ACTION** is agreed on:

#### **ACTION:**

- **The Secretariat will send a final updated version that includes the comments made today by the members for it to be approved at the next Executive Committee meeting to be held on 16 October.**

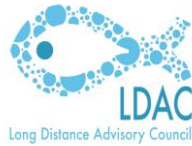
### **6.2- Dormant agreements**

The WG4 Chair, Ms. Béatrice Gorez, informs that there is already a Focus Group (FG) working on a specific document to address the issue of dormant agreements. A new FG meeting will be soon convened to discuss the latest version of the document dated 18 September. It shall be noted that if any other members wish to join this group, they should inform the Secretariat.

An agreement is reached on this

#### **ACTION:**

- **To convene a new FG meeting on dormant agreements to make progress on the document.**



### **6.3- Fishing Companies with Investments and Operations in Third non-EU Countries**

The Chair, Ms. Béatrice Gorez, informs that the LDAC has been working on this matter since 2015. In May 2025 a piece of [advice focusing on the importance and improvement of transparency](#) in this type of companies was sent to the EC. The reply of the EC is available here: [https://ldac.eu/images/LDAC\\_Reply\\_Joint\\_Ventures.pdf](https://ldac.eu/images/LDAC_Reply_Joint_Ventures.pdf).

She adds that now the LDAC has prepared a new draft advice focusing on sustainability that has already been approved by WG4 and WG5, and will be submitted for approval by the Executive Committee next 16 October.

### **7. Presentation of the report on transparency in SFPAs by the IUU Coalition**

Mr. Nikolas Evangelides, PEW, makes a presentation on behalf of the IUU Coalition that is available on the following link:

[https://ldac.eu/images/LDAC\\_SFPA\\_Presentation\\_Nikolas\\_Evangelis.pdf](https://ldac.eu/images/LDAC_SFPA_Presentation_Nikolas_Evangelis.pdf)

Members are informed that the full report is available here: <https://www.iuuwatch.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/FINALSFPA-POSITION-DIGITAL-edited.pdf>

Mr. Julio Morón, OPAGAC, thanks Mr. Evangelides for the presentation, noting that he believes there is a lack of minimum guarantees to keep the European fleet operational.

Mr. Francisco Mari shares the criticism of those third countries that have an obligation to ensure compliance with the transparency clauses included in the articles of the SFPAs: this includes the publication of a list of foreign vessels and companies that have access to the resource, with support for small-scale fishing. As an example, he mentions that there are Fisheries International Transparency Initiative (FITI) country reports containing some data, if not on all vessels, at least on the companies.

Vanya Vulperhost suggests the following

#### **ACTION:**

**The LDAC will follow up on this matter with DG MARE regarding the possibility of drafting a specific letter or advice requesting stricter implementation of the transparency clause, to be agreed by consensus in a coordinated way between WG4 and WG5 (with the approval of the chair).**

### **8. Update on LDAC partnerships: ATLAFCO & AFRIFISH-Net**

The General Secretary, Mr. Alexandre Rodríguez, informs that the ATLAFCO coordination meeting will be held in January in Madrid coinciding with the Executive Committee meeting.

As for AFRIFISH-Net, contact will be resumed in order to discuss when an informal gathering or coordination meeting can be held.



## 9. AOB

Mr. Juan Manuel Trujillo, ETF, explains the item he requested be added to the agenda on the suitability of creating a focus group within this WG4 and not within WG5, as the latter already deals with a great amount of work.

The main aim of this group would be to draft a comprehensive piece of advice on protocols against harassment on fishing vessels.

The initiative stems from the urgent need to address the issue of harassment in this sector, implementing and adapting international guidelines and conventions already adopted by key organisations such as ILO (International Labour Organisation), IMO (International Maritime Organisation) and ITF (International Transport Workers' Federation). This initiative is considered to be necessary due to the emerging process by which women have joined fishing vessels taking up different on-board activities, such as scientific marine observation.

In his opinion, the creation of this focus group will allow to:

- Analyse regulations currently in force and existing gaps regarding harassment in the maritime environment.
- Propose a set of clear and effective protocols that ensure a safe and respectful working atmosphere.
- Promote awareness and training among on-board personnel on the prevention and management of harassment.

The idea is to develop a document which can be used not only as a guide but also to promote an actual and positive change in the fisheries sector.

After discussing this issue, an agreement is reached on the following

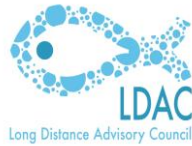
### **ACTIONS:**

- **To create a focus group within WG4 to work on this issue.**
- **The LDAC Secretariat will issue a call for expressions of interest including the terms of reference.**

With no other issues to address, the Chair informs that the next WG4 meeting will be held in March 2026 (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**



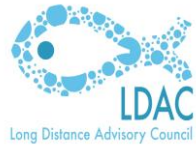
## **ANNEX I: LDAC Working Group 4 attendees Brussels, 14 October 2025**

### **MEMBERS OF WORKING GROUP 4**

1. Béatrice Gorez. CFFA-CAPE
2. Ángela Cortina. Opnapa / OPP3/ Acemix / Agarba
3. Julio Morón. OPAGAC
4. Anertz Muniategi. ANABAC
5. Vanya Vulperhorst. OCEANA
6. Tim Hedemma. Pelagic Freezer Trawler Association
7. Edelmiro Ulloa. Opnapa / OPP3/ Acemix / Agarba
8. Sergio López. OPP Burela
9. Jean-Christophe Vandevelde. The Pew Charitable Trusts
10. Francisco Fernández. OPROMAR
11. Aivaras Labanauskas. Lithuanian Long Distance Fisheries Association
12. Javier Garat. CEPESCA
13. Juana Parada. ORPAGU
14. Iván López. AGARBA/CEPESCA
15. Emil Remisz. High Seas Fish Producers Organization
16. Luis Vicente. ADAPI
17. Raúl García. WWF
18. Anne-France Mattlet. Européche Tuna Group
19. Joelle Philippe. CFFA-CAPE
20. Julien Daudu. EJF
21. José Ramón Fontán. ANEPAT
22. Juan Manuel Trujillo. ETF
23. Rob Banning. PFA
24. Francisco Mari. BFW
25. Ignacio Fresco. OCEANA
26. Margaux Angibaud. EUROPECHE
27. Jose Ramón Muriel. ANAMAR
28. Nikolas Evangelides. The Pew Charitable Trusts
29. Amanda Heitmann. DPPO
30. Michel Goujon. ORTHONGEL
31. Margaux Rochefort. CFFA-CAPE
32. Daniel Voces. EUROPECHE

### **OBSERVERS**

33. Luis Molledo. DG MARE B3 - SFPAs
34. Charlotte Gobin. DG MARE B3 - SFPAs
35. Mariana Cortes-Real. DG MARE B3 - SFPAs
36. Miguel Angel Solana. Dakartuna
37. Manuel Herrería. Dakartuna
38. Stephanie Czudaj. GIZ
39. Yago Rosado. OCEANA
40. Árni Mathiesen. Global Roundtable on Marine Ingredients



41. Teresa Molina Schmid. SGP Spain
42. Ernesto Ortiz Gala. SGP Spain (Zoom)
43. Mirella Roncero Aliende SGP Spain (Zoom)
44. Cristina Gutiérrez Salinero. SGP Spain (Zoom)
45. Natalia Sánchez Coppel. SGP Spain (Zoom)

#### **LDAC SECRETARIAT**

46. Alexandre Rodríguez. LDAC
47. Manuela Iglesias. LDAC
48. Marta de Lucas. LDAC (Zoom)