

MINUTES
LDAC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
Thursday 10 December 2020. 10:00h-13:00h
Videoconference

Chair: Iván López van der Veen
Vice-Chairs: Béatrice Gorez and Juan Manuel Liria
Rapporteurs (Secretariat): Alexandre Rodríguez and Manuela Iglesias

1. Welcome by the Chair. Adoption of the agenda and the minutes.

The Chair, Mr. Iván López, welcomes attendees and starts the meeting reminding everyone that today, 10 December, is Human Rights Day, since this day in 1948 the United Nations General Assembly adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

He then gives a warm welcome to the recently set up Outermost Regions Advisory Council (ORAC) that has been invited to this meeting and is represented by its Chair and General Secretary.

After counting the representatives of the member organisations present, attendees are informed that, in conformity with Article XXIV of the LDAC Rules of procedure, the necessary quorum for adoption of decisions by simple majority (at least 50% of the members present or represented) is acquired, if so required.

The complete list of attendees (members and observers) is included in **ANNEX I**.

The agenda is then approved with no comments or modifications.

In addition, the minutes of the previous Executive Committee meeting held on 26 May 2020 are approved.

2. Opening speech by the Director of International Ocean Governance and Sustainable Fisheries of DG MARE, Ms. Veronika Veits "The External Dimension of the CFP and the role of the EU in International Ocean Governance: advisory needs from DG MARE to the LDAC"

Ms. Veits presents DG MARE strategies and challenges in the field of the external dimension of the CFP, as well as the role of the EU in international ocean governance.

Full version of the opening speech by Director V. Veits is attached as **ANNEX II**.

3. Exchange of views on LDAC and DG MARE work priorities for 2021

- Questions by LDAC members

Regarding SFPAs, Mr. Iván López, Chair, points out that it is a priority issue for the LDAC for this year. He conveys the LDAC willingness to collaborate in this regard in the public consultation process to be launched by the Commission, and offers consultants in charge of conducting the assessment study the opportunity to arrange a specific meeting with the LDAC if they deem it appropriate. He recalls

that among the LDAC plans there is the organisation in 2021 of an International Conference with the active representation of administration representatives and stakeholders from third countries to highlight the importance of SFPAs and improve their implementation. Moreover, he insists on the work carried out together with FAO for the preparation of a guide on social responsibility in the fisheries value chain. As for management in the high seas, he offers the Commission the LDAC collaboration to work on proposals to improve transparency and management in the South-Western Atlantic.

Ms. Béatrice Gorez, CFFA-CAPE, recalls that for FAO 2022 is the year of small-scale fisheries, so in her opinion this brings an excellent opportunity for the EU to strengthen its role and have more visibility in this regard. Countries receiving aid tend to have a distorted idea of the EU role, which they believe focuses too much on resources and surpluses rather than on sectoral support and collaboration to improve the capacities of these countries and their coastal communities. Besides, in the context of SFPAs, she highlights the important role that women carry out in local fisheries communities. She insists on the fact that this is a topic that the LDAC has already addressed in its meetings and has prepared a specific advice on.

Mr. Michel Goujon, ORTHONGEL, points out that the EU must strengthen its partnerships and its image both within RFMOs and in negotiations of fisheries agreements for partner or third coastal countries to see them as allies and not as rivals. Furthermore, he states that this year due to the pandemic it is extremely difficult to improve relations since they cannot travel on missions or arrange face-to-face meetings. As an example of matters that need improvement, he says that in some coastal member countries like Seychelles, they are considering imposing complementary monitoring and surveillance systems different to VMS, and this would mean a serious problem for long distance fleet operators insofar as it would be very expensive to have different systems for each country where they operate.

In his opinion, it is essential for the Indian Ocean case in particular to set up a regional observer programme, and to provide tuna RFMOs with an effective coordination mechanism.

Mr. Julien Daudu, EJJ, underlines the importance of the different EU policies being consistent with the fisheries one, as well as the importance of strengthening the role of RFMOs in the field of international fisheries and ocean governance. Regarding SFPAs, he asks whether there are any developments in Equatorial Guinea or at least a clear roadmap after the legislative election held in this country.

Mr. Julio Morón, OPAGAC, wishes to insist on the importance of complying with control regulations and of establishing coordination among RFMOs at regional level. In addition, he believes it is necessary to implement observer programmes and VMS at regional level. In fact, in the countries with which the EU has signed SFPAs, these are basic elements that have to be integrated to some extent into the work carried out in RFMOs.

As for Kiribati, he suggests that, since it does not have a yellow card anymore, negotiations could be resumed.

On the other hand, he wishes to comment that Korean and Chinese fleets fishing in Senegal, Ghana and even in the Indian Ocean are going to move the activities of the European fleet if there is no fleet capacity control by RFMOs. It is essential that ICCAT and IOTC reflect upon this aspect. RFMOs need a radical change in terms of management and compliance with the rules.

Mr. Michel Goujon, ORTHONGEL, explains that for some countries like Sierra Leone it is important to know whether the yellow card will become a red one in order to advise against the negotiation of licences, so he asks about the possibility of there being any red cards awarded for 2021.

Mr. Raúl García, WWF, agrees with the previous speakers on the importance of improving international governance with RFMOs. He highlights this year's failure by ICCAT, IOTC and IATTC to implement responsible measures for the sustainable management of tropical tunas and sharks like shortfin mako. He asks about Japan's approval of a new regulation for tuna imports, and whether the EU is having a dialogue with this country.

- Reply from DG MARE:

The DG MARE Director, Ms. Veronika Veits, EC, replies to the many questions and comments made by the members of the LDAC.

- They defend the establishment of an RFMO to manage small pelagic stocks in Western Africa: DG MARE has initiated a study on the role of CECAF as an organisation and its possible transformation into an RFMO in the medium term.
- To improve EU communication and visibility concerning SFPAs, she suggests working together with the European External Action Service (EEAS), EU delegations in beneficiary countries and the authorities of flag and coastal states.
- She admits that the social dimension is obtaining more weight and relevance within DG MARE.
- She shows interest in the consistent management of cephalopods and squid between maritime regions.
- Regarding Brexit, she announces that a new unit is going to be set up at DG MARE to address fisheries agreements and negotiations with coastal countries for the North Atlantic: Norway, United Kingdom, Iceland... The head of which will be Joost Paardekopper.
- As for small-scale fisheries, the EC notes down Ms. Gorez's comment about enhancing the importance and the weight of small-scale fisheries in the world.
- Regarding decisions about potential red cards for 2021, she says that she cannot anticipate any information in this regard owing to research confidentiality reasons.
- About Kiribati, they wish to know the industry's clear opinion about the possibility of negotiating a new agreement, in addition to carrying out an assessment on the effectiveness of the former agreement.
- Regarding RFMOs, she is surprised by the decisions adopted by some SFPA partner countries, and cites by way of example Senegal and its proposal to ban the retention of shortfin mako on board.
- As for the request of SFPA control and management, she agrees on the fact that measures ought to be implemented.
- Regarding the VMS system in Seychelles, she informs that they wrote to them to inform that that measure was not acceptable, as it was compulsory for European vessels to have a VMS system on board.
- As for Equatorial Guinea, it is not one of the countries on the EU negotiations list for an agreement to be reached next year.
- Concerning Japan, she informs that they have a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with this country to collaborate in the fight against IUU fishing. The latest review was conducted

on 2 December, when Japan explained its new legislation for catch certificates. At present, they are discussing the possibility of using the same system.

- About IOTC, she points out that they are concerned about the situation. They have suggested to hold a special session urgent meeting at the beginning of the year to study the possibility of analysing management measures for tropical tunas and, particularly, for yellowfin tuna.

Then, Mr. Alexandre Rodríguez, General Secretary, thanks Director Veits for her active participation in this meeting and for her valuable collaboration and follow-up on advice issued by the LDAC. The LDAC has participated in many consultations and events related to the International Ocean Governance Forum (IOG Forum) in 2020, and he announces that they are preparing the content of his intervention at the next Forum for the High Level Conference to be held at the end of the year to support the strengthening of the EU role in this regard.

Besides, he states that LDAC collaboration can be relied on for the dissemination and exchange of good practices (including a presentation on its performance review) regarding ACs performance review, highlighting the importance of coordination in the preparation of advice addressing horizontal matters of common interest to several ACs. He cites by way of example the preparation of joint advice on issues such as the fight against IUU fishing, the review of the control regulation, marine and plastic pollution, blue growth, underwater mining or straddling fisheries management, among others. Finally, from the point of view of the LDAC, he agrees on the difficulty to adapt to the new virtual work model when preparing and following up RFMO annual meetings.

The representative of the EC, Ms. Veronika Veits, thanks Mr. Rodríguez for the explanations given and for the availability to cooperate in issues of such importance. She is aware of the heavy workload that ACs have, and so believes it is essential that there is coordination among them. They are very satisfied with the advice issued by the LDAC on RFMOs and SFPAs, and she highlights the effort made this year to present an advice on shortfin mako at ICCAT.

To conclude, the Chair, Mr. Iván López, thanks Director Veits for her presence, attention and collaboration with the LDAC.

4. Administrative and financial issues (Chair/Secretariat):

4.1. Proposal for update of the Code of conduct of LDAC: Annex on procedure for performing virtual meetings

Mr. Alexandre Rodríguez, General Secretary, explains the document prepared by the Secretariat in coordination with the LDAC Chair and Vice Chair, that is intended to be added as an annex to the LDAC code of conduct, addressing the specific procedure for the development of virtual meetings, including aspects such as quorum, participation mechanisms and decision-making and setting up study and focus groups which are additional to the working groups.

The draft document is available on the following link:

https://ldac.eu/images/EN_REVISSED_BUREAU_Reuniones_Virtuales_LDAC_Nov2020_30-11-2020.pdf

Mr. Sean O'Donoghue, KFO, agrees in general terms with the procedure proposal for the development of virtual meetings and thanks the Secretariat for the efforts made to formalise said proposal. He has a comment on virtual focus groups: he believes that they must have a very specific

aim, so that it can compile the necessary technical knowledge to be later conveyed to the working group.

Ms. Béatrice Gorez, CFFA-CAPE, voices her conformity with this proposal, but points out the importance of clarifying the second paragraph of the document, insofar as any draft advice/letter should also go to the working group as well as to the Executive Committee in ordinary circumstances.

After the relevant exchange of opinions, the following **ACTION** is agreed on:

- The Secretariat will review the document to include the changes proposed and will circulate the modified version again. The final version will be subject to approval by the LDAC members at the next LDAC General Assembly meeting, planned for May.

4.2 Proposal for setting up an LDAC contingency fund

Mr. Alexandre Rodríguez, General Secretary, introduces this point insisting on the importance of having total transparency regarding the custody and destination of funds obtained and not used due to the cash surplus resulting from the calculations of the annual subsidy from the European Commission for the functioning of ACs.

He announces that the LDAC has currently managed to save an amount of more than EUR 120,000 as a result of surpluses obtained in the last 5-6 years. In order to make a disciplined use of this amount and reserve it only for justified cases of force majeure or objective need owing to unexpected situations beyond annual ordinary planning, this specific document has been prepared to create a multiannual fund as a proposal, which is available on the following link:

https://ldac.eu/images/EN_Proposal_for_LDAC_Contingency_Fund.pdf

Ms. Pascale Colson, ACs coordinator at DG MARE, considers this LDAC initiative very positive, highlighting the great usefulness of the latter. She recommends changing the name from “contingency fund”, as it is not very clear in English, to “extraordinary fund or fund for unexpected situations”.

After an exchange of opinions among the members without any objections, and taking into account the unanimous support from the Chair, Vice Chairs and Executive Committee members present, the following **ACTION** is agreed:

- The document mentioned for the use of the extraordinary fund is approved by consensus, agreeing to use the term “extraordinary fund for unexpected situations” instead of “contingency fund”.

4.3. Draft letter to DG MARE with proposals on how to improve functioning of the ACs – Preparation of the next inter-AC coordination meeting (January 2021)

The General Secretary, Mr. Alexandre Rodríguez, explains that the LDAC has prepared a draft letter for DG MARE with proposals on how to improve the functioning of ACs, based on the conclusions drawn from the reports about the performance review.

The following **ACTION** is approved: **to send a reply letter to the EC including the report on the LDAC performance review.**

4.4 Working Group Chairs and Vice Chairs election procedure

The Chair, Mr. Iván López, recalls the election procedure agreed and the proposal to be followed for the election of Chairs and Vice Chairs in the following Working Group meetings.

He explains that at the previous Executive Committee meeting (May 2020, item 6.1 of the agenda), members were informed about the expressions of interest received by the Secretariat before the agreed deadline for the positions of Chair and/or Vice Chair of each Working Group.

As of December 2020, current candidates are:

- WG 1: Chair: Mr. Michel Goujon; Vice-Chair: Mr. Julio Morón (NGO coordinator: vacant)
- WG 2: Chair: Mr. Gerard van Balsfoort; Vice-Chair: Mr. Xavier Leduc (NGO coordinator: Katrin Poulsen)
- WG 4: Chair: Mr. Julio Morón and Ms. Antonia Leroy; Vice-Chair: vacant.
- WG 5: Chair: Sr. Julien Daudu; Vice-Chair: Mr. Daniel Voces.

It is then suggested that elections should be held at the following Working Group meetings and that the period for submission of expressions of interest by new candidates or for a restructuring of existing ones be reopened.

The following ACTION is approved: At the beginning of 2021, the LDAC Secretariat will send the procedure and deadline for the submission of expressions of interest for the positions of Chair and Vice Chair in writing prior to their appointment at the next meetings to be held in March.

4.5 LDAC mid-term financial and activity report of Year 14

Mr. Alexandre Rodríguez, General Secretary, states that they are on the 7th month of the current financial year and that the final report with the annual accounts will be presented at the Executive Committee to be held in May 2021. As for the financial and administrative rules, the main novelty during this year is that DG MARE has updated its guidelines and now it only demands Advisory Councils to present a report at the end of the year, without it being necessary to send a mid-term report about the first 6 months as it used to be common practice. Therefore, approval by the Executive Committee at this meeting is not required.

The specific presentation on the mid-term and activity report for year 14 is available on the following link:

https://ldac.eu/images/LDAC_FINAL_Presentation_Mid_Term_Y14_ExCom10Dec2020_a_4dic2020.pdf

In general terms, a section is included on the changes in the functioning of the LDAC during the pandemic and a work plan for the second half of the year until the GA takes place in May. In addition, a list of advice and letters approved by each working group is made, as well as an update on current membership and requests received so far.

5. Reflections on the future role of LDAC and collaboration with other ACs in a post-Brexit scenario

Mr. Iván López, Chair, states that in his opinion it is essential to understand very clearly the competence of each Advisory Council at present and to initiate discussions for the future. In our case, the LDAC should coordinate all aspects regarding the external dimension of the CFP and the relationship with third countries. Besides, it is worth analysing whether it is necessary to reorganise the work in LDAC WG2 regarding the North Atlantic. He believes it is very positive to start compiling ideas on this matter and invites the Executive Committee to share its opinions.

Mr. Sean O'Donoghue, KFO, highlights the complexity of the Brexit situation insofar as there will be about 120 fish stocks shared between the United Kingdom and the European Union. In his opinion, this matter ought to be discussed with the rest of ACs owing to the difficulty of the management scenarios to be encountered. He suggests that in January - and prior to the inter-AC meeting with the EC - this could be internally and informally addressed at a meeting among the ACs affected by this issue, to exchange opinions and see if there is a position that may be agreed by consensus among the ACs.

Mr. Gerard van Balsfoort, DPTFA, believes it is essential to hold an open discussion with all the members to find the best way out of this complicated situation.

The Chair, Mr. Iván López, thinks that there should be a set-up or delimitation of powers that allows the EC to distribute the work, so that the different topics may be divided in a coordinated fashion for each Advisory Council to deal with (e.g. TACs, quotas, etc.).

The representative of the EC, Mr. Erik Lindebo, thanks the LDAC for this approach; although he points out that there is still a great deal of uncertainty in the post-Brexit stage. He believes that the inter-AC meeting will provide a good chance to discuss this matter and see the best way to proceed in the future. He takes the opportunity to thank the LDAC for the interesting discussions and for the preparation and concern about this matter.

After an exchange of opinions, the following **ACTION** is approved:

- The LDAC Chair and Secretariat will coordinate with other ACs affected by Brexit (mainly NWWAC, NSAC and PELAC) the possibility to hold a meeting with the Chairs, Vice Chairs and Secretariats in order to have an informal discussion and present their ideas prior to the inter-AC meeting with the EC.

6. AOB - Closure of the meeting.

With no other issues to address, the session is adjourned by the Chair thanking the representatives of the European Commission for their participation; the ORAC Chair and Secretariat for their attendance, the LDAC Secretariat for their efforts in organising and coordinating logistics and documents; and the Executive Committee members and observers for their attendance and participation.

The meeting is closed right on time.

ANNEX I: LIST OF ATTENDEES
LDAC Executive Committee
10 December 2020, Videoconference

MEMBERS PRESENT

1. Iván López. AGARBA/CEPESCA
2. Béatrice Gorez. CFFA-CAPE
3. Juan Manuel Liria. CEPESCA
4. Javier Garat. CEPESCA
5. Juan Manuel Trujillo. ETF
6. Rosalie Crespín. CNPMM
7. Peter Breckling. DHV
8. Emil Remisz. NAPO
9. Luis Vicente. ADAPI
10. Roberto Alonso. AIPCE-CEP
11. Despina Symons. EBCD
12. Esben Sverdrup-Jensen. DPPO
13. Sean O'Donoghue. KFO
14. Katrin Poulsen. WWF Europe
15. Raúl García. WWF Spain
16. Julien Daudu. WG5 Chair. EJJ
17. Francisco Mari. BFW
18. Vanya Vulperhorst. OCEANA
19. Christine Adams. Seas at Risk

WG CHAIRS AND VICE CHAIRS

20. Michel Goujon. WG1 Chair. ORTHONGEL
21. Gerard van Balsfoort. WG2 Chair. DPTFA
22. Julio Morón. WG4 Chair. OPAGAC
23. Daniel Voces. WG5 Vice Chair. EUROPECHE

OBSERVERS

24. Rob Banning. DPFA
25. Stavroula Kremmydiotou. EBCD
26. Jacopo Pasquero. EBCD
27. Edelmiro Ulloa. Anapa, Anamer, Agarba and Acemix
28. Yaiza Dronkers. International Pole & Line Foundation
29. Xavier Leduc. UAPF
30. Rosalie Tukker. EUROPECHE
31. David Troncoso. ANASCO
32. Veronika Veits. Director DG MARE
33. Pascale Colson. DG MARE
34. Mael le Drast. DG MARE
35. Erik Lindebo. DG MARE



36. Carlos Ossorio. Secretariat General for Fisheries, Spain
37. Daniela Costa. ORAC General Secretary
38. Fabiana Nogueira. ORAC Secretariat
39. David Pavón. ORAC Chair
40. Alberto Martin. MSC Spain
41. Pedro Santos. MAC General Secretary

LDAC SECRETARIAT

42. Alexandre Rodríguez. LDAC General Secretary
43. Manuela Iglesias. Fisheries Policy and Communications Technical Officer LDAC
44. Marta de Lucas. Head of Administration and Finance. LDAC
45. Sonia Doblado. LDAC Coordinator of the H2020 FarFish Project



ANNEX II: Speech by Director Veronika Veits (DG MARE.B, International Ocean Governance and Sustainable Fisheries)



Veronika Veits, Director
DG MARE.B, International Ocean Governance and Sustainable Fisheries

LDAC Executive Committee

10 December 2020
10:00 to 11:20

Good morning Chair – dear Ivan, Executive Secretary - dear Alexander, dear Council representatives.

Let me start by thanking you for your invitation to address your Executive Committee. I am delighted to have the opportunity to be here today, as I did last year, even if it is only virtually. Our new Director General, Ms Charlina Vitcheva, would have liked to participate and meet you but unfortunately, this is a very busy period in the year so she could not make herself available. But she has asked me to convey her warmest thanks and congratulations for your work and confirm her interest in meeting LDAC at another occasion. She is very interested to hear from first hand how the Advisory Councils work and what can improved, also in light of some functioning problems encountered by a few Advisory Councils in the recent past.

[Problems with NGOs in the Advisory Councils]

I do not think that this is the case for the LDAC. You were the first Advisory Council to launch a performance review and I congratulate you once again for that. I am pleased that some other Councils follow your example and have also launched their performance review this year.

However, you will be aware, that **some Councils have encountered problems** notably with regard to their **composition** and the need to have a representative share of other interest groups. Several NGOs have left or want to leave Advisory Councils; and this puts at stake and weakens the very essence of Advisory Councils as a forum for stakeholder consultation under the CFP.

I am happy that – to my knowledge - the LDAC has not seen any such departures and that no stakeholder has complained with regard to its functioning. Let me congratulate you for the consensual approach you have built over years, and which makes you one of the best functioning Advisory Councils.

[The next inter-ACs meeting and the LDAC contribution to it]

But let me also inform you that we intend to address actively the shortcomings in Advisory Councils. The **next Inter-ACs** meeting now scheduled for **18 January** will be an important rendez-vous for that. As all the other Councils, the LDAC has been invited to **send its contribution by 11 December** (that is by tomorrow). I am pleased to hear that the LDAC has confirmed its willingness to talk about its performance review at the meeting. And I am happy to see that your agenda today includes discussions on proposals by LDAC on how to improve the functioning of the Advisory Councils. I believe you have good insight to offer here.

[Green Deal, Biodiversity Strategy, Farm to Fork, a strategy for a sustainable post-COVID recovery]

Now let me turn more to the substance and give you an update of developments and **what is coming up next year for the external dimension of the CFP and international ocean governance.**

Last year, I focused on the priorities of the New Commission. One year into its term **much has been achieved**, many of the initiatives under the European Green Deal have been adopted, with the Biodiversity Strategy and the Farm to Fork Strategy being most relevant for the fisheries sector.

2020 was also supposed to be the year of the oceans. However, it turned out to be the year of the COVID pandemic. The market disruption caused by this COVID crisis has hit the fisheries and aquaculture sectors hard. However, it has also demonstrated the vital contribution the fisheries sector makes to the world economy, food and nutritional security. For the **long distance fleet** it brought also **particular problems** for landings and crew changes due to confinement measures of coastal states. I hope our diplomatic outreach has helped to address some of the problems.

This crisis also showed that **both fisheries and aquaculture have to be part of our economic recovery strategy**. Both are needed for resilient seafood systems, to meet a growing demand for fish and seafood products by a growing population as well as to provide jobs and ensure the livelihood of coastal communities.

It is clear that **the Post-COVID economic recovery will be an absolute priority in 2021**. However, this has to go hand in hand with tackling the other challenges we are confronted with – keeping oceans healthy, fighting climate change, halting biodiversity loss, reducing hunger and poverty. Commission President von der Leyen has been clear: **COVID-19 cannot be an excuse to curb our ambition or postpone necessary actions with regard to these challenges**. What we need to do is **Building back better**.

Sustainability remains the underlying principle of our recovery strategy in the years to come, within and outside the EU. **So this is the political framework also for our work on sustainable fisheries in the world and international ocean governance**.

So what is up for next year? In principle, there is a very busy agenda ahead, but there is a big caveat to it. We are still in the fangs of Covid – so delivery and achievements will very much depend on whether and when we can move back to physical meetings. Experience this year has shown that virtual meetings or written procedures have strong limitations and are hardly apt to even assure business continuity.

Let's first look at the global level.

[Global level]

At the global level, next year, **we will be celebrating with FAO** - with one year delay - **the 25th anniversary of its Code of Conduct for Responsible**

fisheries. This has been the main instrument guiding the development of fisheries policy around the world since 1995. In this regard, we have actively contributed to the preparation of the **FAO Declaration on Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture** to be adopted in February, during the 34th session of the FAO Committee of Fisheries. It will be the occasion for COFI members to **support an evolving and positive vision for fisheries and aquaculture in the 21st century**, where the sector is fully recognised for its contribution to fighting poverty, hunger and malnutrition, for its ability to prepare for and respond to changing climate and ocean conditions, and for its commitment to sustainability.

COFI itself will take place in the first week of February and works will be a mix of written and oral proceedings. The agenda – which is not yet final – will follow very much those of previous years. I want to highlight though two aspects.

Over the last two years, we have also supported an in-depth study on **transshipment** by FAO, which will provide the basis for the FAO Committee of Fisheries to develop **guidelines** on the regulation, monitoring and control of transshipment operations and to promote best practices.

From yesterday's letter of the Market Advisory Council to FAO I note and welcome the importance that LDAC attaches to the development of **FAO guidance on social responsibility** in the value chain and that you want to see progress on this issue. We are happy to working with LDAC in preparation of the sub-committee on fish trade that should discuss a scoping paper.

Still on the FAO side, we will continue to encourage the ratification and implementation of the **FAO Port State Measures Agreement** as an important instrument to fight IUU. To give this instrument more visibility, **we will host the first review meeting of the Agreement in May-June 2021**, which will include a high level event (originally meant to take place this December). This

meeting will be the opportunity to assess the Agreement, to report on challenges and progress in its implementation, to move forward the development of its Global Information Exchange System and to consider support for relevant capacity development in third countries.

[IUU policy]

This leads me to our IUU policy. A “**zero tolerance**” approach to IUU fishing is part of our Commissioner’s mandate. It has now also been enshrined in the Green Deal and the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies. This gives us an even stronger mandate to lead globally in the fight against **illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing**, which remains a key threat to biodiversity, food security, and causes the loss of millions of euros to the legal economy. Our commitment to this approach has been clearly demonstrated by our **second yellow card** to Panama at the end of 2019.

Of course COVID-19 pandemic has not facilitated our work and has strongly affected our capacity to carry out our IUU dialogues physically. Despite that we have been very active in maintaining the dialogues and undertaking analytical work as much as we could. As a result we were able to lift the yellow card for Kiribati and you may soon see other results.

Access to the EU – the world’s biggest seafood market - is an important lever for convincing governments and exporters around the world to respect the rules protecting against IUU fishing. With the **digitalised catch certificate**, we are making it easier for EU Member States authorities to control that only IUU-free products enter our market. The use of “CATCH”, as our IT system is called, will become mandatory for EU stakeholders with the revision of the fisheries control regulation. So we do hope to see soon a political agreement on that which keeps up our ambition for an efficient and modern control system.

I would like to take this opportunity to bring to your attention our **new IUU report to the Council and the Parliament** – fresh from the press as published

just on 9 December. It looks back at the last 5 years of implementation of the IUU regulation. We would like to present this report to you and exchange views on it early next year.

There are four other important ongoing global processes I should mention and which are all delayed due to Covid: the **WTO negotiations on fisheries subsidies, the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, BBNJ, work by ISA on a mining code.**

[WTO]

SDG 14.6 set the deadline for reaching a **WTO agreement for eliminating fisheries subsidies** that contribute to overfishing and overcapacity and leads to IUU fishing for the end of 2020. The pace in Geneva towards such an agreement this year accelerated over the past months, notably with draft text by the Chair that was accepted by all as basis for discussions. Also the EU has been working at full throttle towards that goal. However, the Covid situation did not lend itself to finding a compromise on such a complex matter, as well as the fact that we have no Director General at WTO. So in all likelihood – under these circumstances – there will be no agreement this year and negotiations will move to next year and should be concluded not later than the Ministerial conference in 2021. Let me mention that the EU's position in Geneva is difficult since we are perceived as one of the major global subsidisers and we are being finger-pointed for self-serving positions, including on fuel subsidies and access agreements.

[CBD and BBNJ]

The adoption of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework via the COP 15 on the Convention of Biodiversity was postponed to 2021. At the heart of the current discussions on the trade-offs to balance conservation and food security is the issue of **marine protected areas.**

The EU takes a very ambitious stance in this regard, including by proposing to expand the current MPA coverage to 30% for both sea and land. The EU also advocates that **these areas are effectively identified and managed**. However, I want to make it clear that designating protected areas **does not entail closure of fishing activities altogether**.

On the new Treaty under the UNCLOS **on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ)**, the fourth and last Inter-governmental Conference should have taken place in March/April last year. We have used very much this extended intersessional period for reach-out and clarifying positions. Our intention is continue in 2021 to play a leading role in the negotiation on BBNJ and we hope that it will be possible to organise the 4th and last ICG that year. Among other things, this instrument should establish the necessary mechanisms and procedures for facilitating the establishment and management of MPAs in the high seas.

[ISA]

We are also intending to give more attention to the works of the International **Seabed Authority** which is currently preparing the mining code needed to move from exploration to exploitation of the deep seabed for minerals. We are about to adopt negotiating directives for that. As spelt also out in the biodiversity strategy, the stance we propose there is that the **effects of deep-sea mining** on the marine environment, biodiversity and human activities should be clearly identified; the risks should be understood and one should be able to demonstrate that the technologies would not cause serious harm to the environment and to activities that depend on this, such as fisheries, in line with the precautionary principle.

Science is also needed to **assess the risks related to certain activities** such as deep-sea mining. We are already supporting scientific research in this domain.

We continue to consider that much more knowledge is needed before envisaging the exploitation of marine minerals in the international seabed area.

[Regional level – RFMOs]

Let me now turn to the regional level. As you well know, the EU plays an active role in 6 tuna and 11 non-tuna RFMOs as well as in two advisory bodies (CECAF and WECAF). We are also continuing to request accession to the North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC) and the Bering Sea Convention instead of Poland.

The **transposition** into EU law of binding conservation and control measures adopted by these organisations is key for ensuring legal certainty for operators as well as compliance. We have made good progress this year and more proposals are coming next year¹. But clearly, the way we have to transpose RFMO decisions today is cumbersome and too slow as LDAC has pointed also out in the context of NAFO. Hence, we will keep discussing with the co-legislators on how we could make transposition faster so to translate RFMO developments more rapidly into EU law.

What we have seen this year in the RFMO world due to the covid-19 pandemic, was the strong temptation to resort to **exceptions to the existing rules in RFMOs**. However, despite the pandemic related pressures, this trend was contained and we managed to maintain, and where possible improve, the international rules-based system for the management of fisheries, through the RFMOs.

In general, the Covid-19 pandemic heavily impacted the **decision making process of RFMOs** this year. The majority of annual meetings moved to virtual format and their agendas were mostly limited to essential issues such as fishery

¹ The NAFO amendment should be formally adopted early next year, we had a political agreement on BFT but some ex-post mending may be needed, IATTC and eBDC are in the hands of the co-legislators; the transposition of IOTC and WCPFC should be adopted by the COM early next year and will be followed by SIOFA and CCSBT.

measures due to expire in 2020, the approval of the budget and the election of officers.

So clearly, virtual meetings do not represent a sustainable alternative for decision-making in RFMOs. Should the pandemic extend well into the second semester of 2021 (where most meetings take place), this will challenge the functioning and performance of those organisations. So this is a big issue of concern.

Consequently, in 2021 we will have **to focus on the most important matters** that could not be properly discussed this year. This includes **key issues** such as the adoption of marine protected areas in the Southern Ocean; the management of tropical tunas in the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian oceans; as well as our request to become a member of the North Pacific Fisheries Commission.

[Bilateral level - SFPAs evaluation]

Let me now turn to our bilateral relationships, our **Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements**.

Our SFPAs are widely recognised as a model for a **legal, environmental, economic and social governance framework** for an access agreement. They are a unique tool that integrates economic benefits, environmental protection and improved governance. However, this perception is not necessarily shared, and we are seeing strong media campaigns about the EU plundering coastal waters. This will require more effective communication from our side.

We consider that SFPAs are crucial not only for our fishing activities in these waters but are also an **important building block** within the cooperation and political dialogue with our partner countries. In many cases, the importance of an SFPA and its implementation go beyond the fisheries sector, as they also

contribute to **sustainable food production** and the development of the **local fishing sector and blue economy**.

On the SFPA side, 2020 has been a busy year despite the difficulties of the COVID-19 pandemic: we have adopted the **new SFPA with Seychelles** and the **new Protocol with Senegal**, and **extended the Protocols with Mauritania and Cook Islands**. Negotiations have also continued with **Greenland, Mauritania and Gabon**, and should resume soon with **Madagascar, Cook Islands**, and if the yellow card can be lifted also with **Liberia**. We look forward to continue our work on SFPAs and cooperation with you over the next year.

We have also decided **to assess SFPAs**, their features and provisions, their implementation, results and impacts. This **evaluation** will also cover the synergies between SFPAs and related EU policies, their contribution to the sustainable development of the partner countries, as well as their contribution to the overall cooperation between the EU and third countries.

We are about to launch an **external study** to this end, which will in particular explore what has been achieved through the sectoral support component of these agreements; but it will also look also into other aspects, such as the implementation of the social clause of our SFPAs.

We want that everyone has a say in this exercise. For this purpose, we will launch at the beginning of 2021 also a **public consultation** to gather views and opinions. It goes without saying that the successful outcome of this study will also depend on your involvement and inputs. Consequently, I want to encourage you to participate and look forward to **your fruitful cooperation** at the appropriate moments along this process.

We have previously received your feedback on certain aspects of SFPAs as well as the recent recommendations on how to **improve the efficiency of SFPAs' evaluation**. I want to thank you for this feedback.

[IOG and Arctic]

I would like to conclude by updating you on the **consultation process for the development of the EU's International Ocean Governance Agenda** which dates back to 2016.

The online consultation closed on 15 October. We received 123 contributions. I would like to thank you for contributing to the consultation. We are now preparing a summary report, which will be published on DG MARE's website still this year or early next year.

The results are being fed into draft recommendations for future action, which will be discussed next week at the **2nd meeting of the International Ocean Governance Forum** from 14 to 16 December.

We very much appreciate that the LDAC will be represented in the meeting with Alexandre (Rodriguez) participating in one of the roundtable discussions on the first day (14 December).

Results from this meeting will feed our reflections on how to step up EU action to improve international ocean governance, also in the light of the external dimension of the European Green Deal and the political priority to make Europe stronger in the world.

To conclude let me also mention that we are currently preparing together with the External Action Service an update of our **Arctic Policy** for the last trimester of 2021. And in this context we are happy that the **Fisheries Agreement** for the Central Arctic Oceans has already been ratified by 9 signatories with only one ratification pending. Hence we hope to go towards its implementation phase next year.

Thank you very much for your kind attention. I hope this overview will feed our discussion and help identifying on what LDAC work should focus in 2021.

I want to wish you, your families and colleagues already now a very peaceful and safe Christmas and holiday period. I hope that next time we can have the opportunity to meet once again in person.