

MINUTES

LDAC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 30 November 2021, 10:00h-13:30h

Hybrid meeting: NH Hotel Eurobuilding (Madrid) + Videoconference (Zoom)

Chair: Iván López van der Veen

Vice-Chairs: Béatrice Gorez, Juan Manuel Liria and Marc Ghiglia

Rapporteurs (Secretariat): Alexandre Rodríguez and Manuela Iglesias

1. Welcome by Spanish Secretary General for Fisheries, Ms. Alicia Villauriz.

The Chair, Mr. Iván López, gives the floor to the Spanish Secretary General for Fisheries, Ms. Villauriz, who starts by thanking the LDAC for inviting her to this Executive Committee meeting. She acknowledges the importance of this AC in the management and conservation of oceans and in the design of an international governance model.

In her opening speech, she highlights the fundamental role of fisheries for international sea and ocean governance owing both to its mission of contributing healthy and quality foodstuffs and to its participation in creating jobs and wealth in coastal regions worldwide. She insists on the fact that the future Common Fisheries Policy must aim at ensuring the survival of the EU fisheries sector and at making it more sustainable and competitive.

She finally underlines the importance of reaching a level playing field in the supply chain regardless of the origin of the products, as a main factor within international fisheries governance.

The Secretary General for Fisheries' full speech can be found in **ANNEX I**.

2. Welcome by the Chair - Adoption of the agenda and the minutes.

The Chair, Mr. Iván López, welcomes attendees and thanks the Secretary General for Fisheries, Ms. Alicia Villauriz, for her opening speech. He also thanks EFCA Executive Director, Ms. Susan Steele, and DG MARE Director of International Ocean Governance and Sustainable Fisheries, Ms. Veronika Veits, for their participation.

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 participants (members and observers) is included in **ANNEX III**.

2.1. Adoption of the minutes of the last Executive Committee meeting (11 May 2021)

The minutes of the previous Executive Committee meeting held on 11 May 2021 are approved.

2.2. Approval of the agenda.

The agenda is then approved with no comments or modifications.

3. Presentation by EFCA Executive Director on EFCA work in International Fisheries and fight against IUU fishing - Ms. Susan Steele.

Ms. Susan Steele, Executive Director of the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) starts by highlighting the important role played by Advisory Councils with regards to the CFP, particularly in advising EFCA on its work. More precisely, she points out the wide scope of international fisheries of the Long Distance Advisory Council and the diversity of subjects they deal with, such as the fight against IUU fishing, international ocean governance, the external dimension of the CFP or the sustainable use of fishery resources.

She continues by giving a detailed explanation of the work carried out by EFCA in international waters, particularly regarding the fight against IUU fishing. She says that the three main aims the Agency focuses on are compliance, level playing field and cost efficiency. In addition, back in September the EFCA Administrative Board approved the Agency's multiannual work programme for the 2022-2026 period, where the international dimension is included as one of its four fields of action, although she clarifies that the rest of areas (operative coordination of fisheries surveillance, cooperation assistance, control procedures and capacity building) also contribute to EFCA work within the external dimension of the CFP.

EFCA participates in the international dimension of the CFP following the legislator's mandate under article 30 of the CFP and under its basic Regulation (article 4), although EFCA's participation in missions or specific areas requires a mandate from the Commission. In fact, in order to establish the scope and ways of cooperation, an agreement has been signed between DG MARE and EFCA. The Director highlights that special attention should be drawn to the necessary resources and tasks, since EFCA has limited resources and its participation requires additional financial/human support.

The summary of the fields of action within the external dimension for the following year shows certain stability adding some activities such as:

- Supporting RFMOs, control WGs and fora with third countries
- Carrying out operational activities for the implementation of recommendations from the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM)
- Building capacities in the framework of sustainable fisheries partnership agreements (SFPAs)
- Fighting against IUU fishing at international level
- Participating in research and cooperation projects

In the field of action to support RFMOs and third countries, the first step is to provide support by means of preassigned operational activities. Cooperation and deployment plans are being implemented for the four RFMOs in line with the Member States, and they ensure EU contribution to control activities in this regard. In addition, in some cases, workshops are held with third countries where compliance is assessed, risks are analysed, pilot projects or training programmes are developed and exchanges of inspectors are carried out.

The second field of support is the provision of technical knowledge to the EU Delegation at the different meetings and fora. EFCA experts participate in meetings of RFMOs like NAFO or ICCAT, and in some cases they also assist them by chairing different control and compliance committees.

EFCA also supports the EU in its relationships with North Atlantic States in terms of control, for instance, in its relationships with Norway, Russia and more recently the UK.

EFCA's support or capacity building is mainly provided to countries in the framework of the PESCAO and ECOFISH projects. This support may be more specific in those cases where there is an SFPA in force (e.g. Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea Bissau, Gabon, Cape Verde, Gambia, Seychelles or Mauritius),

With regards to support to fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, EFCA's efforts focus on the development of methodologies, capacities and support to Member States and the EC in the analysis of control, monitoring and surveillance activities by third countries.

She then informs that EFCA will participate in new research projects directly linked to the external dimension of the CFP, hence providing additional resources to EFCA to contribute to extending the EU fisheries governance model at international level. North, West and East Africa will be priority objectives of these projects focusing on operation and activity planning and design and capacity building. Moreover, the control regulation review could provide EFCA with further competences or new work areas in terms of control of international waters, as well as owing to a new mandate from the Commission or the legislator (following some proposals on the initiative of the European Parliament). They believe this is feasible and positive, but she clarifies that they would need additional resources to make it.

To round up, she notes the following conclusions:

- EFCA's aims cannot be fully achieved if the Agency's action is exclusively limited to the EU.
- The international dimension of the CFP is an important part of EFCA's work and allows cooperation to be broadened with the EU in terms of control.
- EFCA contributes to promoting a compliance culture and a level playing field for all stakeholders.
- EFCA actively provides technical advice to the EU in terms of control in its negotiations with RFMOs and in its bilateral relations with third countries, so it is a positive experience for both.
- EFCA is willing to keep on participating and collaborating with the LDAC and is committed to maintaining a fluent dialogue.

Ms. Steele's presentation is available on the LDAC's website:

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

4. Presentation on Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI) - Sven Biermann.

Mr. Sven Biermann starts his presentation explaining that the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI) is an international association made up of many countries and stakeholders aiming to improve public access to information about marine catching fisheries, providing a recognised framework for analysis, with the information that governments must publish on their marine fisheries management. The so-called FiTI Standard implies the need to meet twelve requirements to assess transparency.

He says that the first two countries to voluntarily publish reports with the FiTI format were Seychelles and Mauritania at the end of 2021.

Both reports are available on the following links:

- FiTI report on Seychelles (reference year: 2019):

<https://www.sfa.sc/index.php/fisheries-report-other-document?task=download.send&id=137&catid=33&m=0>

- FiTI report on Mauritania (reference year: 2018):

<https://www.peches.gov.mr/1er-rapport-fiti-mauritanie-2018>

Mr. Biermann's presentation is available on the following link:

https://ldac.eu/images/FiTI_LDAC_Webinar_20211130.pdf

5a) Presentation by DG MARE on the External Dimension of CFP - Ms. Veronika Veits.

The Director of DG MARE, Ms. Veronika Veits, is given the floor and informs about the agenda, the state of the debate and future steps forward to be taken by DG MARE regarding the following issues:

- WTO negotiations - banning of harmful fisheries subsidies
- Action plan regarding the CFP performance review report
- Fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing
- Migratory stocks management in international waters: work within RFMOs
- Sustainable fisheries partnership agreements (SFPAs) between the EU and third countries
- International Ocean Governance Agenda and SDGs

Ms. Veits's full speech can be found in **ANNEX II**.

5b) Industry and NGOs views.

After a round of questions from the floor, the following **ACTIONS** are agreed:

- **To organise a specific meeting within the WG4 framework on DG MARE assessment of SFPAs.**
- **To set up a Focus Group within WG5 on how to implement and strengthen the social clause in SFPAs, as well as on the importance of Member States and the rest of countries ratifying and implementing ILO Convention C188.**
- **To send a letter to DG MARE expressing the LDAC's concern on the announcement of a 30% reduction in their global financial envelope, hoping it does not lead to a reduction of staff.**

6. Final remarks and closure

The General Secretary, Alexandre Rodríguez, explains that after the last modifications the European Commission made in terms of management of the LDAC subsidy, ACs have been granted more flexibility in their financial management and in the use they make of certain items of their budget, which could not be fully used in previous years. After analysing past requests of several members for an upwards update of maximum limits for the reimbursement of accommodation expenses (hotel) and daily allowances (per diem) incurred when attending our meetings, the LDAC Regulation on the reimbursement of travel expenses has been modified to replace limits of €100 for hotel expenses and of €92 for per diems, in application of the guidelines the EC has for their officials and personnel of ACs' secretariats. This allows for an upwards update of amounts with adjustments made depending on the country where the meeting is to be held. He recalls that it is still compulsory to provide supporting documentation for hotel expenses (invoice or receipt).

A consultation was carried out among ExCom members by written or virtual procedure, and it was approved by that same procedure on 26 November.

He reminds attendees that the document is available for consultation on the LDAC website: on https://ldac.eu/images/ES_reglamento_reembolso.pdf

Once the written procedure is concluded with no objections, it is presented at this Executive Committee meeting for its formal ratification.

The following **ACTION** is unanimously agreed:

- **The new reimbursement document applicable by the LDAC for the reimbursement of travel and accommodation expenses to members of the Executive Committee, General Assembly and Working Groups is ratified, updated in line with country-based tables setting reimbursement guidelines for European Commission officials.**



Then a teaser is presented for the first time ever informing about the launching of a new LDAC e-newsletter in January 2022 entitled "Fishing Far". In order to receive this newsletter an online registration form must be completed in compliance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation. Therefore, all attendees are invited to complete their registration. A campaign for the promotion and dissemination of this newsletter will be carried out in social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube).

You can see the teaser here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ZIY9Pxp3iY>

With no other issues to address and thanking the LDAC Secretariat for progress made in terms of finances and communications, the session is adjourned by the Chair thanking the distinguished speakers from the Spanish Secretariat General for Fisheries, the European Fisheries Control Agency, the European Commission and FITI for their participation as well as LDAC members and observers for their attendance, the Secretariat for their coordination efforts and the interpreting team for their excellent work.

The meeting is closed.



ANNEX I: Opening speech by the Spanish Secretary General for Fisheries, Ms. Alicia Villauriz

ANNEX II: Presentation by DG MARE Director General, Ms. Veronika Veits

ANNEX III: LIST OF ATTENDEES
LDAC Executive Committee, 30 November 2021

ON-SITE ATTENDEES

1. Iván López. AGARBA/CEPESCA – LDAC Chair
2. Béatrice Gorez. CFFA-CAPE – LDAC First Vice Chair
3. Marc Ghiglia. UAPF/CNPMEM – LDAC Third Vice Chair
4. Despina Symons. EBCD
5. Michel Goujon. ORTHONGEL – WG1 Chair
6. Raúl García. WWF
7. Julio Morón. OPAGAC – WG4 Chair
8. Daniel Voces. EUROPECHE – WG5 Vice Chair
9. Xavier Leduc. UAPF – WG2 Vice Chair
10. Mar Fernández Merlo. Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Spain
11. Aivaras Labanauskas. Lithuanian Long Distance Fisheries Association
12. Javier Garat. CEPESCA
13. Rocío Béjar. CEPESCA
14. Roberto Alonso. AIPCE-CEP
15. Susan Steele. EFCA Executive Directive
16. Pedro Galache. Head of the International Fisheries Unit. EFCA
17. Alicia Villauriz. Secretary General for Fisheries - Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Spanish government
18. Alexandre Rodríguez. LDAC
19. Manuela Iglesias. LDAC
20. Marta de Lucas. LDAC

ONLINE ATTENDEES
ONLINE MEMBERS

21. Juan Manuel Liria. CEPESCA – LDAC Second Vice Chair
22. Esben Sverdrup-Jensen. DPPO
23. Christine Adams. Seas at Risk
24. Luis Vicente. ADAPI
25. Francisco Mari. Bread for the World
26. Sean O'Donoghue. KFO
27. Juan Manuel Trujillo. European Transport Federation

ONLINE WG Chairs and Vice Chairs

28. Gerard van Balsfoort. DPFTA – WG2 Chair
29. Julien Daudu. EJF – WG5 Chair
30. Sara Fröcklin. SSNC – WG4 Vice Chair
31. Antonia Leroy. WWF – WG1 Vice Chair

OBSERVERS

32. David Troncoso. ANASCO
33. Edelmiro Ulloa. ANAMAR-ACEMIX-OPNAPA
34. Gabriel Ocaña. CONXEMAR
35. Sven Biermann. FITI
36. Veronika Veits. EC DG MARE
37. Stanislovas Jonusas. EC DG MARE
38. Rosalie Tukker. EUROPECHE
39. Florie Hovine. Earthworm Foundation
40. Mariana Toussaint. FAO
41. Alberto Martin. MSC
42. Ana Sedenko. Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania, Fisheries Unit.
43. Annika Mackensen. GIZ
44. Annina Burgin. Marinnleg
45. Clara Fernández. EFCA
46. Alexandra Philippe. EBCD
47. Pedro Reis. MAC



SPEECH BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL FOR FISHERIES

LONG DISTANCE ADVISORY COUNCIL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

30 November 2021

Good morning,

Chair of the Long Distance Advisory Council, ladies and gentlemen.

First of all, I would like to thank you for your invitation to participate once again in the opening of this Advisory Council Executive Committee meeting.

The first message I would like to convey is one of congratulations to all those who are part of this Organisation for the essential role you play in the management and conservation of oceans, for your participation in Regional Fisheries Organisations and for your contribution to the constantly evolving design of the international ocean governance model.

In the Spanish Secretariat General for Fisheries we believe that the sector and NGOs have a lot to say regarding the future of International Ocean Governance and the increasingly important international negotiations on protection and sustainable use of seas and oceans.

Because "governance of seas and oceans" cannot be understood without fishing, since we should not forget the fundamental role it plays in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It provides quality proteins, it contributes to eradicating hunger and to improving health. In addition, it is essential to create jobs and wealth, and the main livelihood in most coastal areas in the world.

The great **experience of the sector in terms of international governance** in the high seas confirms the need to ensure an active role by the fisheries sector in future mandatory instruments both at international and EU level.

NEGOTIATIONS IN INTERNATIONAL FISHERIES GOVERNANCE

The negative effects of the pandemic caused by COVID-19 also had an impact on international governance. Mobility restrictions and health recommendations led to postponing the negotiation of major legal instruments which were very important for the set-up of the legal corpus of the Law of the sea, as well as meetings essential to continuing progress in building a fisheries governance legal framework.

I would like to highlight those referring to the **future legally binding international instrument for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ)**.

Finally, the United Nations 4th Intergovernmental Conference to make progress in the negotiation of this instrument will take place in March 2022. Spain will continue to firmly support this process, although we believe it is essential that the future agreement does not undermine already existing legal instruments that have proven effective, so we will remain vigilant to ensure full compatibility of the future instrument with the role of RFMOs.

In addition, other meetings dealing with fisheries governance will be strongly resumed after this period where they were put on halt, especially those addressing the **1995 New York Agreement on straddling and highly migratory stocks**.

This way, we will actively participate in the fifteenth round of Informal Consultations of States Parties to the agreement dealing with the "implementation of an ecosystem approach to fisheries management" to be held on the first half of 2022 and the bottom fishing workshop that will be held on 2 and 3 August 2022.

We will also participate in the Review Conference of the 1995 New York Agreement and in the sixteenth round of Informal Consultations dedicated to preparations for the conference in the first half of 2023.

And we cannot forget another event which was planned for 2020 but will finally take place in June 2022 in Lisbon, I am talking about the **Ocean Conference**, jointly organised by the governments of Kenya and Portugal. It will be held at a critical time when the world is strengthening its efforts to mobilise, create and promote solutions that allow to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals before 2030.

We also find ourselves at a crucial time regarding the negotiation with the **International Seabed Authority (ISA)** to draft rules, regulations and procedures that will govern the prospecting, exploration and exploitation of minerals in international seabed areas, something that will allow to go from the current situation of scientific and technical exploration to the future commercial exploitation of mineral resources in the seabed within the Area.

As it is so indicated in the Advice of 16 November of this year jointly issued by the Long Distance Advisory Council, the South Western Waters AC, the North Western Waters AC and the Pelagic AC, some of these activities can have serious consequences for fishery resources and, therefore, for the fishing activity.

Besides, we will pay a great deal of attention to the Conference of the Parties to the **Convention on Biological Diversity** to be held in China in spring 2022. I believe that it is particularly important that all decisions made in such fora are based on the best scientific criteria to certainly avoid irreparable damage on the marine environment but also on the economic activities developed in the latter.

Likewise, year after year we continue to actively participate in negotiations on the **Sustainable Fisheries Resolution of the United Nations General Assembly**, that pays increasing attention to one of the main challenges that the fisheries activity is facing, which are the negative effects of climate change on food security and on fisheries sustainability.

There is special concern in this regard owing to the conclusions of the 2019 Special Report on the Ocean and the Cryosphere by the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** where the fisheries and aquaculture sector is considered the most vulnerable one to climatic factors.

FAO Committee on Fisheries has also expressed concern in a report where the consequences of climate change on the well-being of water ecosystems were stated, and this will have an impact on food security and in the livelihoods of fishing and fish farming communities.

COMMON FISHERIES POLICY

According to the **EU 2021 Blue Economy** Report published by the European Commission, the EU fisheries sector ranks sixth worldwide. The about 60,000 active vessels that are currently operating under the flag of a Member State are generating 4.5 million tonnes per year, with an economic value of EUR 6.7 billion a year.

But, in spite of the importance of these figures, we cannot forget that with this production **we can only cover one third of what we need to respond to the internal demand of fishery products that we have**, so this makes us the main importer of these products worldwide.

In brief, in **2021 the European Union has a professionalised and competent sector** that wishes to and knows how to work to provide a source of food with high biological value and low carbon footprint in a society demanding these products.

Now we have to work on defining the focus of the fisheries policy for the next decade. We must never lose sight of this, and although I am sure that there will be many elements to be improved from a technical point of view, we cannot forget this internal imbalance in the future and we have to work together to be able to combine supply and demand to satisfy the interests of our citizens.

We must make sure that we meet our commitment to **not leave anybody behind in the transition** that the European Union and its Member States are consolidating by means of different strategies such as the European Green Deal or the EU Biodiversity Strategy.

In brief, before setting the guidelines for the **future Common Fisheries Policy**, we need to bear the above in mind, as well as the assessment of the main measures implemented in the 2013 reform, trying to promote those elements which are working and to correct those areas where we might have made mistakes.

In any case, any change must be clearly aimed at ensuring the survival of the EU fisheries sector, allowing for it to be increasingly sustainable and competitive, to create more wealth and jobs and to have a future of growth and stability.

As an example of things that have been done correctly, but that can still be improved, we have to strengthen **scientific advice in the new CFP** to be able to consider all areas of sustainability. These tools have to help us conduct an ecosystem approach assessment, both on the situation of stocks (even in the case of mixed fisheries) and on the environment they find themselves, including the variables related to climate change.

And, even though we still have to advocate for the conservation and the sustainable use of resources as a fundamental pillar, I think it is important that we devote our time and effort to try and improve working conditions on board vessels.

There is no doubt that the fishing profession is one of the toughest and more demanding ones. If we wish to ensure that an adequate and necessary generational replacement takes place, we need to invest in improving conditions of vessels, safety and liveability on board.

In this sense, I would like to point out that the Secretariat General for Fisheries is collaborating with the Ministry of Labour on a Royal Decree addressing compliance and control regarding the implementation of the **ILO Work in Fishing Convention** on board Spanish vessels ¹.

As you know, Spain has acquired the commitment to ratify this C188 Convention, but in parallel we have decided to start processing the mentioned RD.

Moreover, we have to continue moving forward to achieve **equal opportunities**, more precisely in terms of the **participation of women** in fisheries and aquaculture, where the important role they play in the economic and environmental development of fishing areas has become evident. However, there are problems that prevent them from reaching effective equality.

¹ (ILO 188 Convention aims to create a unique and consistent instrument to complete international standards on living and working conditions for the fisheries sector).

Similarly, we need to work on the integration of many advances related to research, development and innovation, particularly in terms of digitalisation, in fisheries. All these issues are essential to ensure generational replacement. I would like to emphasise that we cannot forget that it is one of the main challenges we face at EU level.

Furthermore, we believe it is necessary to **optimise energy consumption in our vessels** to reduce their dependence on fossil fuels, even more so in a context like today's where tax exemptions for fuels are called into question. But at the same time I think that this paradigm ought to allow for the opening of a calm and rational discussion on the possibility of funding the renewal of the EU fleet so that we can have modern, safe and efficient vessels without that being linked to an increase in fishing effort.

As for the **external dimension of the Common Fisheries Policy**, it is important that it continues to play an important role in what we may call "Fisheries Diplomacy" and efforts must be strengthened to export a sustainable fisheries model by means of a network of agreements with third countries and regional fisheries organisations.

Spain welcomes the leadership that the European Union is assuming in the different Regional Fisheries Organisations.

In a context of growing pressure on resources resulting from the uncontrolled increase in fleet capacity by third countries, it is fundamental to set fisheries management measures based on all the instruments of the European model.

Because we are sure that the quota system applicable in EU waters and adopted by organisations such as ICCAT and IOTC will only be effective if the rest of Contracting Parties implement it in an equivalent way and with compliance guarantees that only European fleets are requiring so far.

In brief, fishing is an activity that allows for bridges to be built with many countries at a time like the present one where we find that international fisheries governance is growing in importance. The European Union has to continue being an undeniable leader in this sector, and leading by example has to help strengthen and improve sustainability criteria of other fleets worldwide, with our seas and oceans undoubtedly depending on their activity.

In other words, it is important to work to be better, of course, but at the same time we have to **ensure compliance with the so-called level playing field**, promoting the fairest possible rules of the game.

The existence of a true **level playing field** is essential for there to be fair competition in the supply chain of fisheries and aquaculture products, and these equivalent rules of the game regardless of the origin of the products are a key element in the Farm to Fork Strategy.

There is a need for genuine harmonisation of requirements applicable in the European Union. To reach a true LPF it is essential to have a control policy to ensure that decisions are correctly executed and that the same rules of the game are implemented in all Member States. Spain supports this modification and also wishes to set a similar level of sanctions in all MS.

In this sense, it is also worth highlighting that any reform ought to contribute to maintaining our decisive leadership in the **fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing**, which is one of the largest threats to our seas and oceans, and therefore to the fishing activity.

In this context, attention should be drawn to the fact that Spain is committed to the development of a Global Record of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels and Supply Vessels, is promoting it and has participated in its funding through the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAPA).

This tool, which falls into the framework of available legal instruments included in the Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA), is bound to be one of the future pillars in the fight against IUU fishing.

As it was made clear throughout my speech, we are facing numerous challenges. But I am sure that with loyal collaboration among administrations, fisheries sector and NGOs, we will be able to design solutions allowing for what all of us here wish for, that sustainable fishing continues to be an activity with future potential.

Fora such as the one represented by this Long Distance Advisory Council largely contribute to reaching these aims and that is why I wish you a fruitful meeting and I reiterate our willingness to continue working with you.

Thank you very much.



DG MARE

LDAC Executive Meeting

Virtual meeting, 30 November 2021, 12:20 – 13:30
Veronika Veits

Lines to take

- I think I attended the Executive Committee at the end of 2019 the last time. After a break of two years I am happy to be back at the LDAC Executive committee, even if only virtually.

WTO FS

- That I am here and not Anders Jessen is only possible as the **WTO MC** was postponed at very short notice Friday evening, due to the new covid situation arising from the new mutation of the virus. There is no decision yet on the way forward and when and where the MC would take place and how to get there. However, it is very likely that **fisheries subsidies negotiations** will continue still this year, possibly through hybrid meetings with the aim of addressing open issues.
- The intense work over the past weeks has helped to narrow the gap in positions, e.g on the prohibition for subsidies contributing to IUU fishing and overfished stocks. But there are still a number of issues that require thorough discussions (e.g. territoriality, re-flagging, transparency, OFOC and in particular SDT).
- Whilst the current text is good for our access agreements we have some key issues open, and notably the scope as regards fuel/fuel tax relief. So

we will continue our efforts unabated to get an ambitious agreement that allows for a level playing field which takes into consideration the EU interests (protection of EMFAF, fuel tax relief, access agreements, no wide SDT/China).

- You have asked the COM to give a presentation of the **external dimension of the CFP** and what our priorities for the future will be on RFMOs, SFPAs and the fight against IUU fishing , including in the more broader area of international ocean governance.

CFP report and action plan

- I understand also that you are interested in the **report of the CFP which is due for the end of 2022**. Let me start with that.
- Let me clear from the beginning that this will be a report on the **functioning of the CFP and not an evaluation of the CFP**. So it will assess how the CFP works and what can be done to improve its implementation. The intention is also to look more specifically into topics such as the social dimension, climate change and clean oceans. The report will be based on the experience gained, specific studies, eg on climate change.
- Since the external dimension is part of the CFP it will also look into that aspect. The evaluation of the SFPAs about which I will talk a bit later will provide useful input for that. But let me be clear that we have not planned a specific study or evaluation of the external dimension of the CFP.
- The report will be prepared in **consultation with stakeholders**, through a targeted consultation, as well as meetings. We will launch this process still before the end of the year and I would like to encourage you to participate.
- Besides, the Commission is also preparing an **Action Plan to conserve fisheries resources and protect marine ecosystems**. This action plan is anchored in the Biodiversity Strategy 2030. Its adoption is scheduled for

early next year. This Action Plan can be seen as the “advance environmental pillar” of the CFP report. We launched on 25 October a **targeted stakeholder consultation** in the perspective of this Action Plan and I would like to invite you and all relevant LDAC members to participate and make their views known.

IUU fishing

- Let me now turn to our policy on IUU fishing. Fighting IUU fishing has remained a **political priority** under this Commission and is part of the EGD and its strategic documents, the BDS and F2F and more recently also the Indo-Pacific strategy, post-Cotonou agreement which is a good basis for deploying EU funds for that purpose (under Global Europe/NDICI). We have managed to get IUU commitments in G7 and G20 Declarations, and as indicated before, we work also towards an ambitious IUU prohibition at WTO.
- Needless to say that our **IUU work under the IUU Regulation has been strongly impacted by** COVID 19 situation. We do what we can in our cooperation with third countries through virtual meetings. But there are limits to what you can do based on paper. Without on-site missions, we cannot evaluate the progress on the spot and see if controls in the fishing sector in a specific country have actually improved. This week we have the first time since March 2020 an on the spot mission ongoing, and I sincerely hope that my team stays healthy and is able to come back. Despite the difficult situation, our IUU team continues to push for and assist in improvements in third countries, and we have actually achieved some progress.
- I understand that you had a **detailed presentation on 19 October on IUU fishing** which was followed by a lively debate, probably too lively debate

for a discussion where only a desk officer is present. I hope this will not reoccur.

- I also hope some of the outstanding questions have been replied meanwhile.
- Before turning to third countries developments, let me briefly mention the **December 2020 report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the implementation of the IUU regulation** which provides an overview of what has been achieved over the past 5 years but also to indicate challenges and areas for further work.
- I know our IUU team has presented this report to you so I would just like to highlight the **key challenges for the future** highlighted in the report:
- To continue our **work** under the IUU regulation **with third countries**, and to address in particular the problem of recidivism (eg Panama, Ghana).
- To **make the catch certificate as efficient** as possible, notably through its mandatory digital use and a harmonised implementation and control of the CC by MS. This requires a swift adoption of the revision of the fisheries control system. On this particular aspect the political trilogues have agreed. CATCH will not only facilitate the management of documents and uniform related procedures. It will also allow addressing some crucial shortcomings of the paper based catch certificates. The use of CATCH will become obligatory for EU stakeholders (operators and authorities) 2 years after the adoption of the revised control system.
- to **promote further anti-IUU fishing measures** in the context of regional cooperation and beyond (ex. cross-listing of IUU vessels among RFMOs and clear provisions on beneficial ownership), development of FAO guidelines on transshipment. The need to address Flags of Convenience is also high on our radar and I note that LDAC shared their recommendations with us on that.

- Moving on to our **dialogues with third countries**. Since 2010, we have established cooperation with over 60 countries and by now we have used the carding system 35 times (including **29 yellow cards** and **6 red cards**).
- We currently have **nine countries with a yellow card**. Actually since December last, Cameroon was added in February and Ghana in June 2021.
- In addition, we still have Cambodia, Comoros and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines listed as non-cooperating countries (**the so-called red card**).
- Luckily, we have also countries who made large efforts to achieve credible progress in the fight against IUU fishing. This applies to **Kiribati** who saw their yellow card revoked in December 2020.
- We also continue our **IUU working groups** with other important countries such as the US, Japan, Thailand, Taiwan, China and Korea. They allow us to further coordinate actions, but also address any possible problems.
- What is clear is that the fight against IUU fishing is taken seriously by many more third countries than when we started back in 2010 and it remains high on the political agenda.

RFMOs

- In relation to **RFMOs**, an important development in 2021 is that, we secured accession, pending completion of the ratification process in 2022, to the **North Pacific Fisheries Commission**. This achievement will promote further involvement by the EU fleets in the area covered by this RFMO and increase to 13 the number of non-tuna RFMOs and RFBs where the EU participates. For the timely ratification that would allow our participation in the March Annual meeting in March next year we are in the hands of the EP which has to give consent and the then termination of the procedure by the Council (deposit of ratification instrument).

- It is not (yet) an RFMO but also the **Agreement on Fishing in the Central Arctic Ocean** has been ratified by all parties and hence entered into force. As you know this Agreement bans fishing in that area for the next 16 years. We are now working with other parties towards its implementation, notably to put in place the necessary research programme and to adopt rules of procedures. This agreement has an inbuilt mechanisms to explore moving to an RFMO should fishing become possible one day.
- More generally, on RFMOs, I believe you share my view that **RFMOs are the key vectors** for the joint management of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks under the Law of the Sea. Their role has also been recognised in the BDS and F2F strategy. Their **performance** is key to ensure sustainable fisheries worldwide, notably through:
 - Better science
 - better compliance
 - science based decision making

It therefore **remains our priority** to improve the performance of these organisations in all respects. And we provide also considerable funding for that.

- Let me stress how much we welcome the **involvement and participation of the sector in the RFMO meetings** as part of the EU Delegation. This has provided us with the opportunity to quickly get useful insights into the day-to-day of the fishing operations and, moreover, give us the quick replies to technical questions we might have during the discussions. At the same time, we expect **loyal cooperation** from the sector to support the objectives and strategy of the EU in RFMOs and that they use their privileged contacts with other fleets to uphold and not undermine the EU position.

- The covid-19 pandemic has not necessarily facilitated our RFMO work. There were strong temptations to resort to **exceptions to the existing rules**. But, in the face of the pandemic related pressures, we managed to maintain, and where possible improve, the international rules-based system for the management of fisheries, notably in RFMOs.
- The Covid-19 pandemic has also made the negotiating and **decision making process of RFMOs** in 2020 and 2021 much more difficult. The majority of annual meetings moved to a virtual format (either through live discussions or exchange of electronic correspondence) and their agendas were in most cases limited to the essential elements for the functioning of the organisation, such as fishery measures due to expire in 2021, the approval of the budget and the election of officers.
- Some RFMOs, however, managed to get more work done through virtual meetings than others, which is remarkable in view of the circumstances. Due to its reduced membership, the compatible time zones of its participants and their access to stable high speed internet, NAFO probably represents the organisation whose virtual meetings achieved the most results as it was able to discuss a full detailed agenda and agree on more complex matters.
- But with some limitations also this year's **ICCAT** meeting concluded last week saw some considerable progress in conservation and control measures, with, unfortunately, the notable exception of tropical tunas. Let me stress how happy we are that we have finally got a fully fledged recovery plan for SMA, and that this was due to considerable flexibility and an enormous amount of outreach prior and during the meeting by the EU. It was the text amendments by the EU which allowed to find a compromise.

- To come back to Covid: The conclusion is that in the short term virtual meetings do not represent a sustainable alternative for decision-making process in RFMOs. Should the pandemic extend into 2022 – which looks like -, the functioning of those organisations will be under growing strain, unless they take dramatic decisions to adapt their agenda and processes to the virtual format.
- As a result, in **2022** we will require RFMOs to focus on sustainability and **catch up with the most important matters** that could not be properly discussed at the 2021 meetings. This includes key issues for the EU such as the adoption of marine protected areas (MPAs) in the Southern Ocean; the management of tropical tunas in the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian oceans.
- At **more short notice**, in the next weeks we will have WCPFC and SPRFMO on the agenda. And just to add that yesterday the Special Committee meeting of IOTC managed to avoid a vote on the FAD measure.

SFPAs

- As you know we had some very important and very difficult SFPA negotiations this year. We are happy that for **Mauritania** we avoided an interruption with its signature on 15 November. The signature with **Cook** will follow soon. We hope to resume discussions with Madagascar at short notice (political sign that coming back to negotiating table and hopefully with less exaggerated requests) and to have a first round with **Mauritius** before Xmas which kept postponing since late September when our mandate was adopted.
- You will also be aware that the ECJ submitted its ruling on the 2 EU agreements with **Morocco**, including the SFPA. Meanwhile, the Council

has decided to appeal which means the effect of the ruling is not immediate but only when the court rules on the appeal.

- With regard to SFPAs you asked the Commission to talk specifically about the **SFPA evaluation**.
- And indeed, the Commission launched an evaluation of the SFPAs at the end of 2020 to provide a thorough assessment and produce an overall analysis of their features, content, implementation, results and impacts and support their future improvement.
- The evaluation is analysing the governance framework that the SFPAs create, the impacts that they have in the EU and the partner countries, and the extent to which the SFPAs' expected objectives are achieved.
- The results of the evaluation will allow us to understand better the impacts of our SFPAs and provide us with lessons learnt from their implementation. The evaluation will bring evidence on the SFPAs' contribution to EU policies and the synergies created.
- The report by the external consultant is about to be finalised. On its basis we will prepare a **Commission Document** on how we understand the evaluation. If you want to have a dedicated discussion on the study before we are happy to explore this possibility.
- This Document would be available in the first half of 2022. Needless to say that this evaluation will also be relevant for the forthcoming CFP report on the functioning of the CFP by the end of 2022 and the update of the **International Ocean Governance Agenda**.

IOG update

- This brings me to my last point. A new Joint Communication on International Ocean Governance has been included in the Commission Work Programme for 2022.

- We aim for adoption in early June 2022, ahead of the UN Ocean conference which will look at the implementation of the SDG 14 on Life below Water.
- This will give a strong signal for the EU’s commitment to SDG14 and hopefully give new impetus to its delivery.
- **Our ambition is threefold:**
 - First, to up date the EU vision for driving ocean sustainability, also to bring it in line with the European Green Deal.
 - Second, to ensure consistency with major policy milestones, including the BBNJ negotiations, results from COP 26 and the post-2020 global framework on biodiversity once adopted.
 - And third to translate the EU’s geopolitical ambition into our ocean policy approach by taking, as possible, a context specific/sea-basin perspective on what we, as the Commission and the EEAS do in ocean governance.
- Last year’s **online consultation and the recommendations presented by the IOG Forum** in April together with the results of the study on SDG14 published in May 2021 is our starting point to define objectives and actions for “**Setting sail for a sustainable blue planet**” [Draft Title of the update].
- **Key messages** from this process are very clear: the EU’s ocean governance agenda has strong support by many different stakeholders but there is room for development, for example more action to:
 - reverse the declining trend of ocean ecosystems and resources through a strong response to climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and unsustainable and illicit use
 - pay more balanced policy and regulatory attention to all blue economy sectors
 - strengthen the social dimension in ocean governance

- promote the ocean knowledge system, its individual components and uptake in policy making
 - support global compliance with internationally agreed rules and standards
 - and ensure that the post-Covid 19 recovery of the blue economy will be on sustainable footing leading to more resilient ocean ecosystems and governance
- I would like to thank the LDAC for its active involvement in the consultation process.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this **brings me to the end** of my overview on the external dimension of the CFP. I am happy to listen to your views and reply to any question you may have.