

WORK PROGRAMME FOR LDAC Y18

Period: 01/06/2024 to 31/05/2025

Background

Legislative framework

The role and functioning of the Advisory Councils (ACs) are defined in the CFP Regulation (UE) No 1380/2013¹, namely articles 43-45 and Annex III. The ACs are also bound by the specific Delegated Regulations (EU) 2015/242, 2017/1575 and 2022/224, laying down detailed rules on their functioning under the Common Fisheries Policy. Furthermore, Advisory Councils are recognized as organizations aiming a European interest and they are beneficiaries of co-funding by the European Commission in accordance with recital 28 and article 48(d) of the (EU) Regulation 2021/1139 on the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund.

The **Long-Distance Advisory Council (LDAC)** is an EU fisheries stakeholder-led body that provides evidence-based advice to the European Commission and the Member States in relation to conservation and management of fishing resources outside EU waters. According to Annex III of the CFP Regulation, its area of competence and geographical remit is all non-EU waters including both the EEZ of third countries and the high seas.

The LDAC was formally established in 2007 and fully operational since then.

In terms of composition and membership, the LDAC is currently made up by 54 member organisations from 11 EU coastal Member States². It has a 60:40 composition of fishing sector organisations (including catching, processing, and marketing sectors, and trade unions), and other groups of interest (representatives of the civil society and environmental and cooperation for development NGOs), respectively. In the Executive Committee, there are currently 15 seats in the fishing sector and 8 seats fulfilled out of 10 in the “other groups of interest” sector.

It is worthy to note that the LDAC was the first AC in suggesting to DG MARE the idea of carrying out regular independent performance reviews of the ACs. A formal proposal was presented in the Inter-AC meeting held in November 2017. Subsequently, the LDAC pursued this goal and carried out under its own initiative a comprehensive independent performance review commissioned to an external consultant. This review was undertaken over the course of two financial years (Y12 and Y13).

The outcomes of this review can be found in two dedicated reports available in the LDAC website:

- LDAC Strategic Report No 1 Performance Review 2016-2018 - *Organisation and functioning of Working Groups; decision-making process and quality considerations linked to production of advice:*
https://ldac.eu/images/LDAC_web-compressed_Performance_Review.pdf
- LDAC Strategic Report No 2 Performance Review 2017-2019 - *International Cooperation Practices; Communication Outreach and Strategy; Gender Issues:*
https://ldac.eu/images/FINAL_PerformanceReview_II_v5.2_compressed_26_05_2020.pdf

Due to this initiative and the subsequent consultation on how to improve the functioning of the ACs, the idea of carrying out an independent performance review exercise by each AC periodically was consecrated in article 7a of the Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2022/204, of 8 December 2021. Following this provision, the LDAC is committed to undertake another review exercise this financial year (i.e., 2024-2025), i.e. 5 years after the first one.

¹ Amended by the Regulation (EU) 2017/2092 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2017.

² Since year 14, UK is not a member of the LDAC due to the Brexit.

Transparency of finances and publicity

Regarding publication of financial accounts with its membership, the LDAC has full disclosure of its financial contributions and activities. The Secretary provides at the GA a report of the state of the annual accounts (income-expenditure) and shares the presentation on the website. Written copies of the accounts are also provided in writing to members upon request. The Secretariat also hires every year an external, independent, and certified auditor to carry out an audit and issue a certificate that the accounts are true and accurate with reality in accordance with Spanish financial law.

Regarding publication of its accounts and resources to the public in general, the LDAC is actively registered on the EU Transparency Register of organizations (last update: 15 January 2024) with ID No. 905805219213-67: <http://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/consultation/displaylobbyist.do?id=905805219213-67>

The LDAC is also included on the UIA Annual Yearbook of International Organizations: <http://www.uia.org/yearbook>

Mission and objectives of the LDAC

The **LDAC's mission** is to promote the conservation of marine biodiversity and the sustainable use and management of fisheries resources outside EU waters by providing recommendations on the effective implementation of the external dimension of the Common Fisheries Policy.

To achieve this mission, it holds substantial discussions in the drafting and preparation of letters and advice with the aim to provide sensible and pragmatic recommendations to achieve sustainability from the three pillars laid out in the CFP, i.e., from an environmental, economic, and social perspective. It also seeks to collect data which serves to underpin scientific and technical evidence to feed EU consultations, achieve a level playing field and improve the economic competitiveness and performance as well as social responsibility of EU's Member States fleets and companies.

As in previous years, the LDAC is committed to continue providing the European Commission and Member States with timely, evidence-based, technical advice, either in response to public, general or targeted consultations and requests for advice, or under its own initiative.

In terms of **objectives**, the LDAC aims to assist the European Commission and Member States to:

1. Promoting coherence between the internal and external dimension of the CFP, in relation to objectives established by the EU under the EU Green Deal and the CFP legislative package adopted on 21 February 2023ⁱ. In particular, it will look how to improve implementation of the External Dimension in the Communication on the functioning of the common fisheries policy today and tomorrow and how to support the Fisheries and Oceans Pact towards sustainable, science-based, innovative, and inclusive fisheries management.

It will also explore linkages between the EU marine action plan to protect and restoring marine ecosystem for sustainable and resilient fisheries and its application within the remit of international ocean governance agenda (e.g. linkages with CBD, BBNJ, SOI Global Dialogue, RFMOs) and in competition with other marine economic activities (shipping, mining, etc.).

2. The LDAC will also look for policy coherence between fisheries, environment, trade, labour, health, and sustainable development, to ensure EU policies impacts promote the sustainability of external fisheries: <https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/policy-coherence-development>

3. Ensuring effective implementation of the recently adopted and amended EU Fisheries Control system, in particular on legislative provisions having a direct impact and affectation for the external fleet.
The implementation of the EU Regulation on fight against IUU fishing, and in particular of the IT-CATCH and digitalisation of catch documentation scheme would also be important; as well as improving transparency of fishing activities of the external fishing fleet through SMEFF Regulation.
4. Promoting the implementation of the social dimension of the CFP including decent labour conditions at sea and in land and contributing to existing international dialogue on social sustainability in fisheries value chains.
5. Monitoring involvement and participation of the European Union in contributing to a better international ocean governance (IOG) through effective implementation of its agenda 2030 through sustainable fisheries policies and promotion of dialogue with third countries.
6. Providing advice to improve the implementation of EU SFPAs in terms of removing barriers to transparency, accountability, non-discrimination, and participation of coastal states stakeholders³.
7. Highlight the role, visibility, and importance of local artisanal fishing communities of non-EU countries (with specific focus on particular women in fisheries) for socio-economic sustainability of fishing value chains, food security and poverty alleviation.
8. Participating in EC technical meetings in preparation of Annual and Intersessional Meetings of relevant RFMOs (NAFO, ICCAT, IATTC, IOTC, WPFC...) as well as attending in presence those RFMO annual meetings where the LDAC has issued an advice, previous request to and consent from MARE negotiation team and duly registered in member capacity within the EU delegation.
9. Representing the voice of EU fisheries stakeholders in international fora related to sustainable fisheries and related human activities at sea having an impact on fisheries, whenever possible and provided there is a clear mandate from the LDAC members and subject to prior consent of DG MARE (e.g., UNGA, FAO, CBD, CITES, ISA...).
10. Helping to gather information and convey initiatives from fishing operators and other interest groups (OIG) to the EU to improve stakeholder participation, knowledge exchange and engagement within established scientific processes to contribute to provide best available science underpinning policy decisions on a non-confrontational (i.e. non-lobbying) basis.

³ The reference of “removing barriers to transparency” is linked to the dedicated section of the LDAC advice submitted in 2020, under the section "Governance/transparency":
https://ldac.eu/images/LDAC_Advice_on_improving_SFPAs_evaluationsR.13.20.WG4.pdf

LDAC WORK PRIORITIES

Overarching long term and short-term work priorities (at least 3 priorities)

The LDAC aims to work proactively on contributing to the promotion of sustainable, healthy, and profitable fisheries around the world and to achieve a level playing field in terms of environmental, social, and economic sustainability standards between EU and non-EU fleets, as a driver for change.

In order to establish and coordinate short and medium/long term priorities, the LDAC will try to align its work with that of the European Commission through regular (in person or virtual) coordination meetings with DG MARE.

In Year 18, the LDAC intends to provide evidence-based advice to the EC in the field of the CFP external dimension. As a result, EIGHT (8) work priorities have been identified as key deliverable indicators (KDI):

1. International Ocean Governance

The LDAC has actively contributed to the three editions of the IOG forums in 2020 and 2021⁴, and the public consultation launched by DG MARE, culminating in the adoption on June 2022 of the European Commission and the EU's High Representative joint communication on IOG agenda as an integral part of the EU's implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for SDG, SDG14 on Life Below Water. The LDAC will seek to provide elements for making into action the recommendations made on the blue part of the European Green Deal, including impact of climate change and reverse biodiversity loss. Looking at the four policy pillars articulated to integrate actions for a safe, secure, clean, healthy, and sustainably managed ocean, the LDAC will focus particularly on pillar 1. Strengthening the IOG framework, and pillar 3. Ensuring security and safety at sea.

Furthermore, it will provide stakeholders' views (either formal or informal) prior to key negotiations taking place in the context of RFMOs and relevant UN processes such as the UNGA resolution on sustainable fisheries, or the outcomes of the UNFSA Resumed Review Conference held on 22-26 May 2023⁵. Finally, the LDAC will follow with interest other global processes with linkages between environmental conservation and sustainable use of marine resources, including sustainable fisheries management (e.g. CBD, BBNJ, ISA Council, SOI Global Dialogues with RSC and RFMOs...).

2. Promotion of Level playing field of fishing products between EU and non EU operators and traders to ensure the environmental and social sustainability of products in EU market

The LDAC has been working since 2020 in developing several recommendations and position papers identifying areas of uneven internal (intra EU between EU products) and external (between EU and imported products) dimension in the field of fisheries with regards to different aspects related to access to fair competition, traceability of products and value chains, transparency of fishing activities and access to EU market. This work has been complementary of that initiated by the Market Advisory Council and looks specifically at aspects broader than but interlinked to trade such as international governance and policy frameworks, implementation of SFPAs, provisions of RFMOs, fight against IUU fishing, fisheries subsidies and labour, social and human rights. A technical position paper was adopted in May 2021 and that continues to be the current roadmap where the LDAC has identified those areas where there is uneven internal (within the EU) and/or external (EU vis a vis third countries) level playing field.

⁴ <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/maritimeforum/en/frontpage/1469>

⁵ https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/review_conf_fish_stocks.htm

In Year 18, the LDAC will pursue to continue engaging in active dialogue with DG MARE on this subject, perhaps expanding the horizon to DG TRADE, DG EMPL, DG GROW and DG SANTE. Consideration will be also given then to develop a few theme-specific advice in relation to these topics.

3. Social Dimension of the CFP

The LDAC will remain active in Year 18 in the promotion of labour and social issues related to fisheries in the EU agenda. The LDAC is committed to contribute actively to “[Fishers For Future](#)”, an EU-wide participatory project taking place in 2024 that will examine the future role of fishers in society up to 2050. If agreed by its members, the LDAC will deal with both public and targeted consultations, as well as participate in workshops and seminars and give feedback to any relevant interim reports published. Conceptually, it will look to develop dedicated advice on how to improve generational changeover through aspects such as development of common EU curricula and skills competencies catalogue, professional training and lifelong learning, measures to improve safety at sea and living conditions on board, promote through communication a better public image of fishing activity, or disseminate good practices for sustainable and responsible fishing (e.g. marine litter retrieval, engine and design modifications for improving energy efficiency, gear selectivity to avoid by-catch, voluntary self-regulatory measures or industry-science partnerships...). Another element would be how EU fishing companies could contribute to the green and digital transitions, supporting innovation and competitiveness.

Furthermore, the LDAC will also continue working with the EU Social Dialogue Committee to implement the agreed road map updated with specific deliverables and actions for 2023 and beyond. The overall aim is to request the European Commission to actively promote a harmonized and robust legal framework within the EU and before relevant international for a in line with internationally agreed social and labour standards for fisheries – this might feed into the consultation process to the report on the CFP revision.

- Request EU flag Member States to foster the adoption, transposition, ratification, and effective implementation of key international legal instruments of maritime safety at sea such as ILO C188, or IMO Cape Town Agreement. The LDAC will engage into dialogue with MARE to assist if requested in the shaping of a Directive that will transpose into EU legislation the provisions of IMO International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel (STCW-F), 1995 so it can achieve a minimum level of harmonization between Member States.
- Formulate specific recommendations on how to improve definition of decent working and living conditions of fish workers along external fisheries value chains, formulating recommendations on some of the following areas: fair remuneration (minimum salary, pay slips...); adequate training related to work functions and maritime safety; employment rights and non-discrimination of local crews and migrant workers vis-à-vis EU nationals (e.g. rest times, social security benefits...); exploring a framework for collective bargaining agreements, or medical inspections; improving women in fisheries working conditions in partner countries.
- In the international arena, the LDAC will also look at ongoing FAO initiative to raise awareness on the need to promote social responsibility in the fisheries value chains around the world. The LDAC is registered as collaborating organization and has two designated representatives in the figures of the Chair and the Secretariat. It has provided input and comments both via stakeholder meeting (1 December 2022) and a virtual platform (March 2023) to shape the text of the first section of the FAO Guidance Document on “Industrial Fishing”.

In Year 18, it will continue contributing to the subsequent versions of the draft of this and other technical Annexes (e.g., post-harvesting sector) by following the FAO process. This could also serve to inform EU and MS on forthcoming FAO Sub-Committees on Fisheries Trade and Fishing Capacity⁶.

4. Evaluation of Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPAs) with Third Countries.

The LDAC has participated in 2021 both to the roadmap and the EU public and targeted consultations launched by DG MARE to provide a critical overview of the constituent elements of SFPAs and formulate recommendations regarding both the process and content of this overall evaluation, to make the whole exercise more efficient.⁷ On 2 February 2023, the LDAC co-sponsored with DG MARE a side event in HALIEUTIS show to discuss practical aspects of implementation of SFPAs in African partner countries. This consisted in a round panel of experts from DG MARE, representatives of EU industrial and African artisanal fleets, trade unions and environmental NGOs to exchange views on how to improve existing scientific knowledge, implementation of social clause, transparency clause, and optimization of use of sectoral support, amongst others.

In year 18, the LDAC is committed to provide feedback to DG MARE on the outcomes of its recently published [study on retrospective evaluation and analysis of the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements \(SFPAs\) between the EU and third countries](#) including an in-depth analysis of the sectoral support component. The LDAC will invite DG MARE unit to provide regular updates on this topic at its Working Group 4. There, it will exchange views on how to optimize implementation of SFPAs in terms of effective implementation of the protocol in terms of fishing activity including issues such as underutilization of quota consumption in several tuna and demersal SFPAs and cohabitation of EU industrial with other non-EU industrial and artisanal fleets; and improve the efficiency of utilization of funds, allocated to the sectorial support. In relation to the latter, key actions will be identified to improve capacity building, training and development of coastal State and local communities from third countries, including artisanal fishers.

The LDAC will also look at project report published by POSEIDON and BMZ titled “*Potentials of EU Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements and development cooperation for the sustainable development of local fisheries sectors*” published in December 2023⁸. The LDAC facilitated a seminar hosted by POSEIDON and BMZ to present the preliminary outcomes of this report and obtain feedback from relevant interested members in Brussels in October 2023 in the fringe of LDAC Working Group meetings.

In the case of *ex-post* and *ex-ante* evaluations of SFPAs, LDAC will also look at continue assisting the evaluators appointed by the Commission, by distributing the questionnaires and gathering any necessary responses from the industry and/or NGOs, in the reviewing and monitoring of agreements in force. It might also look at the methodology and content of these evaluations on a case-by-case basis following consultations received by external contractors appointed by the European Commission.

It will also provide the Commission with concrete elements to support the identification of priorities linked

⁶ Link to report of COFI 34 Session – see recommendation 39:
https://ldac.eu/images/COFI_34_Draft_Report_for_Adoption_en.pdf

⁷ The LDAC contribution can be found here:
<https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12728-Fisheries-evaluation-of-the-EU-s-sustainable-fisheries-partnership-agreements-SFPAs->

⁸ [1701 BMZ SFPA Poseidon Final Project Report and country reports December 2023.pdf \(consult-poseidon.com\)](#)

to the agreement and needs assessment of recipients from third countries (policy makers and stakeholders). We will also inform our African partners (COMHAFAT, AFRIFISH...) so they can access these evaluations and provide feedback in particular regarding sectoral support. This will also reiterate our advice to improve the transparency of implementation of SFPAs through publication of minutes of scientific and joint committees; publication of annual reports on the use of sectoral support; reporting of fishing activities via publication of public and private agreements from EU and non-EU vessels signed with the third country. In addition, LDAC will look at the specific impacts of SFPAs on the marine environment, where partial work has been done via the Far Fish H2020 project⁹, including by-catch and non-targeted species; socio-economic impact; value chain analysis and trade flows.

5. The role of Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) in sustainable use of fishing and marine resources

The LDAC will aim to provide in Year 18 timely and strategic input to the EC designated negotiation teams prior to the intersessional panel meetings, special sessions, and the plenary annual meetings of key regional fisheries management organizations of high interest for our members. In this respect, the LDAC will provide input to the EC designated negotiation teams of key regional fisheries management organizations, either in the form of writing input/advice (e.g., NAFO, ICCAT, IOTC, WPFC) or by active participate in preparatory technical coordination meetings (IATTC, NPFC, SPRFMO, SIOFA...).

In Year 18, it will be sought to strengthen recommendations related to ecosystem approach to fisheries management for some RFMOs such as NAFO or NEAFC Regulatory Areas, should there be sufficient information and contributions received by relevant members both from the fishing sector and other interest groups/NGOs.

6. Implementation of newly revised EU Fisheries Control Systems; and Regulations on Fight against IUU Fishing (IUU) and Sustainable Management of the External Fishing Fleet (SMEFF)

The LDAC will dedicate Year 18 to develop recommendations to improve the effective implementation of the recently adopted and amended EU Fisheries Control system, in particular on legislative provisions of the EU Fisheries Control Regulation having a direct impact and affectation for the external fleet. Some examples of topics of interest for the external, distant water fleet are (non-exhaustive list): application of remote electronic monitoring (REM) to certain fleet segments based on high risk assessment criteria; reporting and monitoring of transshipments at sea and in ports; derogations to margin of tolerance general rules with special measures for tuna purse seiners and small pelagics; categorisation of serious infringements including forced labour; minimum harmonization of sanctioning regime across MS; etc.

The LDAC will invite DG MARE to provide regular updates at Working Group 5 meetings of their work on this subject.

The LDAC will continue working on Year 18 on improving the effective implementation of the IUU and the SMEFF Regulations. With that purpose, shortcomings will be identified and areas to improve from the side of the EU, Member States, and fishing operators.

⁹ The LDAC was partner of the EU funded H2020 FarFish, a project which started on 1 June 2017 and ended on 30 Nov. 2021 – more info: <https://www.farfish.eu/>

Regarding implementation of the IUU Regulation, the main emphasis will be in providing feedback from operators and NGOs on strengths and weaknesses they found in practice. The LDAC will explore the possibility to develop advice on individual countries subject to the scrutiny of the EU carding system. The LDAC will also provide feedback on the transition phase from a paper-based to an electronic implementation of the EU Catch Documentation Scheme (CDS) through the IT CATCH web-based tool. The LDAC is also interested at streamlining the current system of mutual assistance between MS for early detection of already rejected or suspicious consignments to avoid fraudulent entry of products in the EU market.

The LDAC will ask for regular briefings and update from DG MARE IUU unit at WG5 meetings on the state of play of EU carding system (green, yellow, and red cards), and dialogue with countries of interest for LDAC members such as Guinea Conakry, Liberia, Ghana, Cameroon, China, Thailand, Panama, or Ecuador, amongst others.

Regarding implementation of SMEFF Regulation, the LDAC will gather questions from members and proposals to improve transparency of fishing activities of the external fishing fleet through the legal framework of the SMEFF Regulation. Specific emphasis will be put on using the periodically updated EU database on fishing authorizations to inform our advice, and request measures to improve identification of vessels when required, including compulsory CFR and IMO numbers.

In continuation with the work initiated in Y16 and based on such information added to LDAC stakeholders' information, the LDAC will envisage to produce a series of recommendations and advice on individual country level highlighting shortcomings and deficiencies and proposing remedial actions and measures to overcome them. Below are two examples of countries where recent advice was produced:

- The LDAC issued in December 2022 a comprehensive piece of advice jointly with the MAC addressing *China's distant water fleet activities and its implications in the global fisheries governance*¹⁰. This piece of advice analysed the global footprint of the Chinese distant water fleet and its role, expansion, and impact in world fisheries. It formulated a series of recommendations on transparency, capacity building, fight against IUU fishing, SFPAs, public subsidies, trade and social rights and development for cooperation.
- The LDAC issued In December 2023 a piece of advice on *EU work cooperation with Morocco to improve fisheries governance and resilient fishing communities*¹¹. This advice looked at existing relationships and in particular implementation of SFPA which expired on July 2023 and that has been put on hold since then due to the pending ECJ ruling on disputes of sovereignty with Western Sahara over EEZ. The advice also identified challenges to fisheries governance and maritime security, social and labour dimension, and cooperation in the fight against IUU.

¹⁰ https://www.ldac.eu/images/LDAC-MAC_Joint_Advice_China_Distant_Water_Fleets_13Dic2022.pdf

¹¹ https://www.ldac.eu/images/EN_LDAC_Advice_Morocco_Cooperation-Fisheries-Governance_November2023.pdf

7. Climate change and impacts on fisheries

The LDAC members have shown increased interest and concern over the last years on how climate change might impact the marine environment and to straddling and highly migratory stocks. There is still relatively small scientific and technical evidence on effects of environmental impacts resulting from climate change on international fisheries management in the high seas having an affectation to activities and economic performance of EU distant water fleet.

The LDAC decided to concentrate efforts as a first step in a handful (1-3) of case studies on specific fisheries (by métiers/fishing area/RFMOs) and identify socio-economic impacts for fishing activities. Some topics would be the changes in migration patterns and yield productivity; access to fishing grounds (high seas vs third country EEZ); adaptation to new legal (fishing rights) and practical (fishing footprint) aspects; challenges on IOG frameworks on biodiversity & fisheries; potential new commercial species; trade flows; and energy efficiency measures to mitigate and reduce CO2 and GHG emissions.

An obvious first case is the Northeast Atlantic mixed fisheries, where both big and small pelagic stocks are moving north and west. This is having already implications in terms of fisheries governance in the area, with multilateral negotiations on allocation of fishing opportunities with third countries such as UK, Norway, Iceland, Faroe, or Russia. Another area of interest case will be that of changes in biological productivity (number of individuals, weight, and size) of highly migratory stocks such as tropical tuna. This could also have an impact on the trade flows as catch for both small and big pelagic in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans affect catch for coastal countries fishing communities and distant water fleets operating in beneficiary countries of SFPAs.

The LDAC organized on 25 May 2023 in Stockholm a dedicated workshop on this matter, with speakers from academia, FAO, DG MARE, scientific community, EU industrial and artisanal fishing industry representatives from partner countries, and NGOs. This workshop has produced a report with a number of recommendations which will serve as basis for the development of a future advice on this subject. In terms of bibliographic reference, the LDAC will consider the conclusions of the IPCC Assessment Reports on Climate Change¹² as well as the FAO technical paper on impacts of climate change for fisheries and aquaculture published in 2018¹³ and several EU funded projects such as CERES or FutureMARES.

8. Role of artisanal fisheries from non-EU coastal states in fisheries

The LDAC will continue investigating in Year 18 how the External Dimension of the CFP can contribute to support development of fishing communities in Africa through:

- Developing with external strategic partners (COMHAFAT, AFRIFISH-Net, IOC) specific initiatives to support innovation and creation of value addition in African Artisanal Fisheries Value Chain e.g. through reliable access to raw materials by local women fish processors, R&I to improve techniques for smoking and processing of pelagic fish, etc.
- Giving its importance for supply and nutrition, protect fisheries and food industry from other competing maritime economic sectors present in the blue economy. Promote a precautionary approach for the development of new blue economy activities that impact fisheries in line with multi-AC advice on the roadmap for a Maritime sector – a green post-COVID future submitted in December 2020: https://ldac.eu/images/EN_Multi-AC_advice_Blue_Economy_09Dec2020.pdf

¹² <https://www.ipcc.ch/>

¹³ <https://www.fao.org/policy-support/tools-and-publications/resources-details/es/c/1152846/>

- In September 2015, the LDAC held an International Conference on the External Dimension of the CFP¹⁴ in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. One of the recommendations agreed was to highlight the importance of the socio-economic impact of fisheries investments in African coastal countries¹⁵. The LDAC has been working since then in several informal actions to improve socio-economic data and knowledge about EU owned businesses and companies operating in third countries under joint ventures or analogue schemes. Towards the end of Year 17, the LDAC co-hosted a workshop with CFFA on this topic on 23 May 2024 in Berlin with governmental authorities, scientists, stakeholders, EU fishing industry representatives and SSF groups from third countries aimed to present case studies to highlight the role and contributions for socio-economic development of coastal communities in third countries. Particular emphasis is placed in West and East Africa and develop recommendations based on a SWAT analysis and develop a guide of good practices for responsible and sustainable business that can be further implemented voluntarily and taken by FAO, the EP, or a similar body. The LDAC will build on the recommendations arising from this workshop with the aim to develop its own set of recommendations in Year 18.

Work priorities identified for each Working Group and Focus Group (where available)

Working Group 1: Highly migratory fish stocks (Tuna and Tuna-like species)

- Horizontal issues within the context of RFMOs:

The WG1 will consider working on some advice to DG MARE on the access allocation process and fair ways to address development aspirations of developing countries simultaneously to the respects of EU investments in sustainable tropical tuna fisheries operations. As there can be a link with SFPFA (which provide sectorial help and defines technical conditions for access), the subject might be discussed in a joint horizontal WG1-WG4 Focus Group.

More emphasis will be put on the ecosystem-based approach to fisheries in the context of tuna RFMOs, with specific emphasis on tropical tunas multispecies MSEs and by-catch of key commercial species.

- International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT):

The Secretariat and/or key members will attend either in person or virtually (if feasible) the PA1 (tropical tuna) and PA4 (sharks) inter sessional meetings and workshops to follow the deliberation process amongst CPCs and scientists. The LDAC will be keen to provide feedback to the Commission ahead of the Intersessional meetings and participate at the Commission's meeting with stakeholders expected to happen in fall 2024 in preparation of next ICCAT Annual Meeting planned for November 2024. As in previous years, a dedicated focus group will be set up with a balanced composition of fishing operators from different fleets and gears (purse seiners, long liners, pole and line...) and NGO members. The aspiration will be to produce an advice focused on Atlantic stocks of commercial interest, in particular tropical tunas (with specific concerns on bigeye tuna) and sharks including blue shark and northern Atlantic shortfin mako.

¹⁴ <http://ldac.eu/en/meetings/ldac-international-conference>

¹⁵ Recommendation 1.5 "European investors in the fisheries industry in third countries (joint ventures) must be included and recognised by the CFP. The EU must promote a dialogue with African countries that fosters the development of a regulatory framework for joint venture with respect to catch (applicable to all vessels of foreign origin), processing and marketing that guarantees that joint ventures operate transparently, do not compete with artisanal fishing, and contribute to the development objectives of the country in question"

https://ldac.eu/images/documents/events/2015/EN_FINAL_RECOMMENDATIONS_CONFERENCE_LDAC_ED_CFP.pdf

Last, the LDAC has initiated work in 2023 with the other four concerned ACs with interest in ICCAT (MEDAC, CC-Sud, CCRUP) to exchange views and coordinate our work, as far as possible, with the long term aspiration to be able to present common positions on certain stocks or fisheries. The Chairs of the ExCom and Pelagic Working Groups of the four ACs, assisted by the Secretariats, have met regularly and agreed to draft a common terms of reference for channelling their work which has been recently approved by all ACs concerned. The ToR can be found here:

https://www.ldac.eu/images/FINAL_CLEAN_Proposal_for_Inter_AC_Collaboration_on_ICCAT_13march2024.pdf

- Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC):

The LDAC will provide formal (in writing) or informal (via technical coordination meetings with MARE) feedback and aim to submit specific recommendations to the ongoing negotiations and inform the proposals tabled by the EU on fishing allocations and conservation and management measures (including drifting FADs) for tropical tuna stocks with specific focus on Yellowfin and Skipjack tunas. Upon request from DG MARE or its members, the LDAC will also provide advice on items related to monitoring, control and surveillance of fishing activities and regional observer programmes, as well as data reporting issues.

A dedicated virtual Focus Group on IOTC is operative since Year 14 and will continue its work in Year 18 to follow up decision on conservation and management measures adopted at the IOTC Annual Meeting (May 2024) for all gears targeting yellowfin tuna and associated tropical tuna stocks. Strategic discussions will also take place on allocation criteria in October 2024. The LDAC will consider sending some advice by September 2024.

On those two issues, there is a potential for alignment between CCRUP and LDAC, which could be explored to the two ACs focus group on IOTC.

Due to the difficult negotiation environment of IOTC, the LDAC will reiterate its recommendations for the EU to reinforce collaboration with partner countries and foster multilateralism and cooperation in good faith between coastal states and fishing nations as stated in UNFSA and ensuring proper functioning of this RFMO.

Last, the topic on introducing recommendations on measures to fight against IUU fishing will be also considered for inclusion within the remit of this Focus Group in collaboration with WG5, with topics such as non-declared catches, observation coverage or use of large pelagic driftnets.

- Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC):

The LDAC adopted written advice in November 2022 and 2023 in preparation of the 19th and 20th regular sessions of the WCPFC Commission. These pieces of advice provided recommendations on development and implementation harvest strategies, including precautionary reference points and harvest control rules; conservation and management of tropical tuna stocks; southwest Pacific swordfish; labour standards and observers' safety at sea; electronic monitoring; monitoring of transshipments at sea; FAD management; conservation and management of sharks and rays.

In Year 18, the LDAC will aim to continue providing feedback to the DG MARE negotiation team through dedicated coordination meetings, exchange of views at WG1 meetings and submission of advice ahead of next annual meeting of WCPFC in December 2024.

- Partnerships with organisations working in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans:

The LDAC will seek consolidating and expanding its network of partners outside the EU through the promotion of the initiatives in the field of transparency of fishing activities and projects of research and collaboration for improving responsibility of EU distant water fleets and investments in third countries and contributing to development for cooperation of coastal communities in third countries.

The LDAC has a MoU signed with the Ministerial Conference on Fisheries Cooperation amongst African Coastal States in the Atlantic Ocean (ATLAFCO-COMHAFAT) since 2013 and is still active and in force.

The LDAC Secretariat will liaise with its partner in West Africa ATLAFCO-COMHAFAT to facilitate dialogue with the EU to develop common or joint proposals to be presented or supported at ICCAT Special Annual Meeting; it will also look at recommendations on existing CMM related to Fish Aggregated Devices (FADs) in the Atlantic fisheries of Africa (both in the high seas and EEZ of coastal states) and keep working in finding a suitable administrative, financial and operational framework allowing for the future creation of an RFMO dealing with regional management of demersal and small pelagic stocks in West Africa.

The LDAC also agreed a MoU with the Pan-African platform of Non-State Actors in Fisheries and Aquaculture (AFRIFISH) within the framework of African Union. The MoU was officially signed on 25 May 2023 by the Chairs and Secretaries of both organisations during the GA and ExCom meetings held in Stockholm.

Last, the LDAC will resume contacts with the Indian Ocean Commission in Year 18 to investigate avenues for collaboration within the framework of ECOFISH programme.

Working Group 2: North Atlantic Fisheries Agreement and RFMOs

- Northern Fisheries Bilateral Agreements incl. UK, Norway, Iceland, Faroe Islands and Greenland:

The LDAC is currently rethinking both the geographical remit (sea basins and fisheries covered) and material scope (content) of this group in light of the changes provoked by the Brexit in the functioning of this Group. The idea is to decouple from the group the discussions on multilateral negotiations between the EU and Norway, Faroe, Iceland, and Greenland, trilaterals EU-UK-Norway, and NEAFC Coastal States negotiations. The idea is to avoid duplication between affected ACs (e.g., PELAC, NSAC, NWWAC) and create instead an Inter AC group involving all relevant concerned AC representatives in an analogous manner to the Inter AC Brexit Forum which has proven to work all. This will allow to streamline resources both to DG MARE negotiators and officials and AC members and staff.

- Implementation of EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement between EU and UK:

The LDAC will also continue liaising with other concerned ACs (namely PELAC, NSAC, NWWAC and MAC)) within the structure of an Inter-AC Brexit Focus Group Forum aimed to formulate recommendations on the role and participation of EU fisheries stakeholders in the Specialized Committee on Fisheries (SCF) as a result of the implementation of the EU and UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA).

Following rotation practices amongst ACs, the LDAC has functioned as host/organizer of at three of the Inter-AC periodic Joint Focus Group. This new system of work might require in Year 18 internal adjustments or adaptive ways of providing stakeholders' advice in coordination with other ACs vis-à-vis the concerned unit in DG MARE working in the context of bilateral EU-UK and/or trilateral EU-UK-Norway negotiations on fishing opportunities in 2024 and long-term review of fishing opportunities and allocation keys.

- North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC):

The LDAC aims to provide strategic advice on NEAFC other than on fishing opportunities with the aim to inform the Commission on the positions to take at NEAFC. The selected topics are:

- The ecosystem approach, including the need for a cross-sectoral ecosystem-based management to be done in collaboration with other bodies like OSPAR and ICES;
- Spatial management (VMEs, OECMs, MPAs etc.)
- The need for a governance reform of the North East Atlantic fisheries management in light of the chronic failure of the ad hoc coastal states consultations to manage the large pelagic stocks sustainably.
- Contributions to the NEAFC performance review, whose terms of reference were agreed at the Annual Meeting 2023.
- The impact of climate change on the shared stocks, following a proposal made by the UK.

Compared to NAFO, where the EBFM has been done mainly within the RFMO, considering only fishing issues, a broader approach is privileged at NEAFC because of the need to collaborate with OSPAR and, at a less extent, with ICES. OSPAR has a broad mandate to assess and manage all the other pressures on the ecosystems and one of its objectives is to have a regional ecosystem-based approach that covers all the sectors. ICES has similar views, and also advises NEAFC to take an EBM direction.

- Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (NAFO):

Similarly, as in previous years, the LDAC will setup a dedicated task force or focus group to develop a fully-fledged advice to be presented in oral form at the EC technical meeting with stakeholders in August 2024 and in written form the adopted advice at least one week before the NAFO Annual Meeting planned for the third week of September 2024 in Halifax (Canada). Special efforts will be made to progress in the section of Ecosystem Based Approach to Fisheries Management given the growing influence of this strand of work in NAFO proceedings.

- Other RFMOs of interest for EU DWF not covered by other Working Groups:

Given the composition of this group, an option which is currently under consideration is to include here discussions on NPFC (North Pacific), SPRFMO (South Pacific), SIOFA (South Indian Ocean), with interest on small pelagic, cephalopods, benthic and deep-sea species. The idea is not to develop a fully-fledged advice but to coordinate participation on these meetings with MARE and try to address the specific questions posed by them either by gathering divergent views from membership and indicating it clearly or trying to develop a common position whenever feasible via the organization of dedicated Focus Groups.

Working Group 3: International waters and other RFMOs

This Working Group was formally removed in Year 13 as a result of the retirement of its Chair, the resignation of its Vice Chair and the lack of interest expressed by the members of the Executive Committee in keeping this meeting with very low attendance (less than 12 individuals in average) and lack of active participation. However, the topics dealt with there have not been entirely discarded. Those who are still of interest (e.g., Atlantic South West, and role of fishing investments in third countries) have been reallocated between Working Group 5 and the Executive Committee. To this date, the number of the subsequent working groups have not been changed at this stage, so we have four working groups: WG1, WG2, WG4 and WG5.

Working Group 4: Bilateral relations and Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPAs) between the EU and third countries

- The LDAC will invite DG MARE at forthcoming meetings in Year 18 and follow the progress on negotiation of new SFPAs, renewal of existing ones and implementation of those currently in force. The LDAC will consider developing advice on the future of SFPAs in the wake of the EC evaluation report published in early 2023. For Y18, it is envisaged that special consideration will be given to the following countries: Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, Gabon, and Seychelles.
- The LDAC will endeavour to assess and advice on specific technical elements and aspects of the SFPAs, gathering information from operators and other interest groups on their concerns regarding problems with the implementation of the licensing system, technical measures (seasonal closures, zoning, allocation of fishing effort...) or quota (infra/over utilization and consumption) for certain technical modalities, as well as the use of sectoral support and the promotion of highest transparency, environmental and social sustainability standards in the relations with SFPAs partner countries.
- In continuation to the work in previous years, the LDAC will look at how to improve the implementation of social clause in SFPAs as well as the implementation of ILO Conventions for partner countries fishers'

employment conditions (including remuneration in line with ILO C188), providing equivalent level of protections to third country workers and the cooperation on training on safety standards.

- The LDAC will aim at providing an integrated approach and vision of the industry and NGOs on a number of topics related to beneficiary countries of SFPAs in the Atlantic and Indian Ocean, namely:
 - Proposals on technical requirements, financial and administration conditions for creation of new RFMO for West African small pelagic and demersal species, with the possibility of upgrading the status of CECAF: organigramme, governance, structure, role, and functions of all parties including stakeholder's participation. This analysis will be based on two technical studies commissioned and published by COMHAFAT and DG MARE in 2020 and early 2021, respectively.
 - Role of fishing agents in third countries – reflect and showcase good and bad practices on labour conditions (e.g., remuneration, registration into Social Security schemes, repatriation, insurance, etc.) for African crew members onboard EU and non-EU fishing vessels; as well as the influence and role of fishing agents with examples of third countries such as Senegal or Ivory Coast.
 - Role of the joint enterprises (as promoted in SFPAs) reflecting on the need for EU joint enterprises to operate in a framework that ensures level playing field, transparency, sustainability, non-competition with local artisanal sector for all joint enterprises, regardless of where the beneficial owner comes from (Asia, Russia, EU, etc.).
- The LDAC has a relation with two African groupings (COMHAFAT and AFRIFISH-net), to enable an open dialogue about the priorities of African governments (COMHAFAT) and fisheries stakeholders (AFRIFISH-net) for their relations with the EU.
 - ATLAFCO-COMHAFAT: An annual coordination meeting between LDAC and ATLAFCO-COMHAFAT will be organized in Y18 to look for synergies such as cooperation for implementation of regional programmes for scientific observers at sea onboard EU fishing vessels in African EEZs as well as harmonised control schemes of EU vessels at African ports. The possibility of developing a joint approach on how to improve capacity building and resources to carry out both initiatives will be contemplated with possibility of asking for financial aid via sectoral support and/or EU funded trade and cooperation projects to improve infrastructures, working and living conditions of local fishing communities and have a better image of the positive impact of EU fleets in those countries.
 - AFRIFISH-Net: As agreed since the signature of the MoU in May 2023, the LDAC will continue having in Y18 monthly virtual coordination meetings between the Chairs, Secretaries, and key members of both organisations to follow up outstanding actions derived from its MoU. Furthermore, AFRIFISH delegates will be invited to attend (virtually or in person) the main LDAC plenary meetings and events. The aspiration is to produce more joint advice between both organisations so they can be forwarded simultaneously to the European Commission and African Union, including on issues of common interest.

Working Group 5: Horizontal matters

- External dimension of the CFP and new European Commission 2024-2029

With the EU elections taking place in June 2024, the LDAC will, during Year 18, formulate and present recommendations to the new representatives of the European institutions in the future of the external dimension of the CFP. These recommendations, which make take the form of a position paper of an advice, are meant to be a guide to inform the mandate of the new EC Commissioner and drive policy discussions amongst relevant decision makers from MS and European Parliament.

- Level Playing Field (LPF) in the production, processing, and commercialisation of fishing products amongst EU and non-EU operators.

This action will be dealt with on a topic-based approach building on the constituent elements indicated in the LDAC advice submitted in 2021 on this subject: https://ldac.eu/images/EN_LDAC_Advice_LPF_25May2021.pdf

- International Ocean Governance

The LDAC will liaise with DG MARE to be informed periodically on the IOG process and meetings calendar for 2024-2025. In particular, the LDAC is committed to be actively engaged in the implementation of the IOG agenda adopted in June 2022 and will participate in technical preparatory meetings with DG MARE in relation to the following topics:

- UN Treaty on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ).

The LDAC will assist DG MARE and the EU to promote the ratification of signatories towards it enter into force as soon as possible. It will also provide feedback to MARE on technical details on negotiations at UN COP level for the future setup and structure and creation of a COP tasked with the implementation of the BBNJ Treaty adopted at the Resumed IGC held in New York on Feb-March 2023.

- Implementation of UN 2030 Agenda and related UN Ocean Conference (SDGs).

The LDAC has actively contributed to the three editions of the IOG forums and the public consultation launched by DG MARE, culminating in the adoption on June 2022 of the European Commission and the EU's High Representative joint communication on IOG agenda as an integral part of the EU's implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for SDG, SDG14 on Life Below Water. The LDAC will seek to provide elements for making into action the recommendations made on the blue part of the European Green Deal, including impact of climate change and reverse biodiversity loss. Looking at the four policy pillars articulated to integrate actions for a safe, secure, clean, healthy, and sustainably managed ocean, the LDAC will focus particularly on pillar 1. Strengthening the IOG framework, and pillar 3. Ensuring security and safety at sea.

- UNGA informal consultations on the Sustainable Fisheries Resolution.

As in previous years, the LDAC will aim in Y18 to provide informal feedback to MARE via email or through technical coordination meeting in late September/early October 2024 to inform the shaping of EC position ahead of the informal consultations on the UNGA Sustainable Fisheries Resolution in New York on November 2024. In particular, it will seek to provide feedback to the coordinator's text (zero draft) of the resolution so the EU can incorporate partly these comments or proposal in the consolidated draft EU position that will be subsequently discussed with the Member States in the Council's Fisheries Working Party, so that the resulting EU position can be sent to DOALOS in due course.

- Labour and social aspects related to fisheries - Social Dimension of CFP and in the international dimension of the EU blue economy and FAO blue transformation.

The LDAC will aim to provide a series of recommendations on the labour and social dimension of fisheries, through compliance of international regulations on maritime safety applicable to fishing activities, as well as respect and observance of social, labour, and human rights provisions for crews on board EU and non-EU fishing vessels and fish workers both in third countries and at RFMO level. The LDAC will also closely monitor developments in respect of the EU Forced Labour Regulation and may provide a series of recommendations on aspects relevant to its mandate. The LDAC will continue liaising on this with the European Social Dialogue Committee (EUROPECHE and ETF) and will monitor developments in the framework of the FAO-IMO-ILO cooperation forum.

- Implementation of revised IUU Regulation and Control Regulation

The LDAC will invite DG MARE to provide regular updates of their work on implementing the revised IUU Regulation. The main emphasis will be in providing feedback from operators and NGOs on strengths and weaknesses they found in practice. The LDAC will explore the possibility to develop advice on individual countries subject to the scrutiny of the EU carding system, on the catch certification scheme/import controls ahead of the entry into force of the IT system “CATCH”, and other aspects of that regulation such as nationals.

The LDAC will also invite DG MARE to provide regular updates of their work on implementing the revised Control Regulation. The main emphasis will be in providing feedback from operators and NGOs on strengths and weaknesses they found in practice. The LDAC will explore the possibility to develop advice on aspects of the revised Control Regulation that are relevant to the external dimension of the CFP/EU distant-water fishing fleet.

The LDAC may also work on issues that are relevant to the fight against IUU fishing and fisheries control but not directly related to the two regulations mentioned above such as, for example, the implementation of the FAO Port State Measures Agreement internationally.

- Deepsea mining in the “Area” (high seas)

The LDAC will follow the ongoing negotiations for the future adoption of a Regulation for Exploitation and completion of the Mining Code currently taking place at the International Seabed Authority. The LDAC has coordinated and issued a Joint AC piece of advice together with other ACs on this matter requesting for a precautionary pause on exploitation until further scientific knowledge and evidence are provided:

https://ldac.eu/images/EN_Joint_LDAC_PELAC_NWWAC_Advice_Deepsea_Mining_Nov2021.pdf

The LDAC Secretary will continue monitoring closely this file in Year 18 and act as liaison and coordinator of a follow up advice on this subject with the assistance of the WG5 Chair, key members, and technical and scientific experts on this matter. PELAC and NWWAC have already shown interest in collaborating in this work as well.

The LDAC will liaise with the DG MARE unit and the Fisheries departments of the relevant EU MS (Spain, France, Portugal...) upon their request to engage in technical preparations ahead of the forthcoming ISA Assembly and Council meetings scheduled for 2024 and 2025.

Further discussions will be held with the DG MARE unit in charge of this file to align timelines and be prepared to inform the EU position if required. This work will be done on the basis that, in accordance with the UNCLOS, the Area and its resources are the common heritage of (hu)mankind; and that the development of an ISA Mining Code must be in line with UNCLOS obligation to ensure effective protection for the marine environment from harmful effects which may arise from activities in the Area (Article 145) and other international standards and commitments on the protection of marine environment, the Precautionary Principle and implementation of EBA in relation to regulation of deep-sea mining.

Other issues of interest if any:

Adjustment to remote working practices and work organization post-COVID-19 pandemic

By decision of the Executive Committee, in year 17, the LDAC held its two rounds of plenary Working Groups, as well as General Assembly and Executive Committee meetings under an innovative “semi-hybrid” format. That meant that meetings were grouped together for a minimum of 3-4 days either in Brussels or Madrid to encourage physical attendance by members while also offering possibility of virtual attendance for invited speakers (including DG MARE), scientific experts, observers and those members who were unable to attend in person under justified reasons. This demonstrated a considerable success and a high attendance rate. All the theme-based Focus and Drafting Groups took place in full virtual format. This seeks to ensure an adequate balance between interaction and engagement of members and reduction of unnecessary travels and CO2 footprint in line with MARE guidelines. It is also cost-effective in terms of reimbursements.

In terms of number of meetings, the LDAC Secretariat has tried to keep up the increasing pace of work and demands both from members and the European Commission, including an increase in the number of online focus groups organized on specific themes/issues as indicated in the Annual Work Programme. Besides the ordinary Working Groups, multiple topic-based Focus Groups (estimated between 6-8) will now be called in Year 18 with pre-agreed terms of reference to discuss in depth technical matters with a smaller representation of LDAC members (6-12 representatives of organisations depending on the topic) who are directly concerned or interested and have proven knowledge and expertise on the matter.

The goal of the topic-based Focus/Drafting Groups will be to gather oral feedback and written evidence in order to produce draft position papers to be presented for discussion at the plenary sessions of the Working Groups (ordinary procedure) and/or Executive Committee (fast track procedure) meetings. These papers will integrate all comments made by the relevant experts, including, where necessary, minority or diverging positions.

Regarding IT tools, the LDAC Secretariat staff envisages to work in Year 18 with multiple language conferencing and meetings software (e.g. Zoom, WebEx, Interactio, VoiceBoxer, MS Teams, Google Meet...) providing simultaneous interpretation services as well as online consultation tools and/or AI software.

Communications Plan and Media

The LDAC has developed its own Communications Strategy, although the implementation plan is still pending to be adopted by the membership.

The LDAC will maintain in year 18 a proactive approach regarding media relations by updating and using its Twitter account (@LDAC_eu) and YouTube Channel (<https://www.youtube.com/@longdistanceadvisorycouncil>). It will also issue press releases to their specialized and general media contacts list, to inform of its meetings and agreed advice produced once submitted to the European Commission.

Furthermore, in year 18, the LDAC will continue sending its bi-monthly e-newsletter called “*Fishing Far*” to all registered subscribers. The newsletter contains different sections including editorial, highlight topic of the month, meet our members, legislation, advice and calendar of meetings, or blog, and relevant information. All the newsletters are uploaded on the LDAC website: <https://ldac.eu/en/medias/newsletters>

Regarding additional actions on dissemination, the Executive Secretary has also his own professional personal LinkedIn account where he publicizes and disseminates work of the LDAC. He has also completed in April 2024 an online training course on “Writing for the Press” to acquire competencies such as master press writing and learn key strategies to engage media confidently, craft punchy headlines and structure press releases.

Lastly, regarding the sectorial European legislation in fisheries and environment, the LDAC Secretariat will continue submitting weekly updates to its members regularly by email (normally every Friday).

In terms of reaching a broader audience and work with other ACs, as a result of the preparations for the Inter AC event on the European Maritime Day (30 May 2024), the Executive Secretary has also established contact with the DG MARE coordinator of Communications to exchange views with her and her team on how to improve dissemination of information related to Advisory Councils (composition, functioning, role in fisheries decision making, main outputs...) as well as provide useful and timely information on the recent work of the LDAC in terms of advice, meetings, visual products, and interviews with members if required.

Some of the key messages identified were:

- Inclusiveness and representation of all fisheries stakeholders in a sea basin/horizontal topic including representatives of fisheries and aquaculture value chains (both industrial sector and other interest groups/NGOs);
- Transparency on deliberations and production of advice;
- Active presence and participation in European and international fora such as ICES, EFCA, STECF, or RFMOs;
- A balanced approach with evidence based technical considerations (neutral advisory body and not a "lobby").

Working practices and relations with DG MARE

Following the recommendations made at the first strategic report of the LDAC performance review, the LDAC will seek to consolidate in Y18 a fluid channel of communication with the DG MARE-AC coordination team as well as the focal points from relevant DG MARE units working with the LDAC. The aim is to keep them timely informed on calendar of meetings, pending actions and upcoming advice. This is done either through the usual formal channels (MARE AC inbox) or calling for bilateral coordination meetings (online or presential) with dedicated units for specific topics of interest.

In terms of Inter-AC, the LDAC appreciates greatly the commitment of DG MARE to hold regular Inter AC coordination meetings every 2-3 months with Secretariats only for dealing with administrative and financial issues, in particular informing on implementation aspects of the new "lump sum" approach for direct management and funding of the ACs. Also, the increase of frequency (from 1-2 to 4-5 a year) in the Inter AC technical coordination meetings between DG MARE and delegates of the Advisory Councils in recent times is an asset allowing to better understand and discuss high policy and agenda issues set by DG MARE and be updated on the calendar for future public and targeted consultations. In light of concerns expressed by several ACs in relation to timing of interventions at these meetings, the LDAC will consult with other ACs to come up with proposals to improve time management and efficiency of these meetings so all authorized voices and opinions are heard.

The LDAC highlights one more year the importance of the role of the AC coordination team in DG MARE, as it is essential not only to ensure the attendance of the several EC representatives requested in working groups meetings, but also to channel specific advice requests of highly technical nature and ensure a smooth communication flow with DG MARE officials to channel responses without unnecessary work overload. However, we are a bit concerned on how sometimes this role relies mainly on few people, who have to follow up work of 11 Advisory Councils. This has had implications in terms of delays in the handling, processing, and approval of the LDAC annual work programme or payment of the annual financial grant posing potential risks of liquidity/cash flows. In this respect, we would greatly appreciate a more agile and flexible system which is not reliant in few individuals with the aim to fast-track decisions related to administrative and financial matters.

On participation at meetings, we always invite and welcome our coordinators from DG MARE to attend in person at least to our General Assembly and/or Executive Committee meetings which take place in mid/late May each year. There, they can choose to either listen and observe or take a more active role and advise on, present and/or clarify administrative, budgetary, and procedural matters, oversee election procedures and/or assist in informing policy decisions when required.

Last, the updated EC guidelines for the management of EU lump sum grants to Advisory Councils (ACs) adopted on spring 2023, have proven to be especially useful for our work as it brings more clarity and easiness to understand the new EC approach on financial rules. Overall, both the format and the content are clear, and we trust that this will contribute to a smooth implementation of the grant through the lump sum approach together with the ongoing dialogue happening at the Inter AC Secretariat meeting with MARE financial unit.

Work coordination with other Advisory Councils:

- General considerations

The Inter AC Secretaries and Chairs annual coordination meeting held in January 2024 in Copenhagen identified several cross-cutting policy issues of common interest for many ACs. Considering the new reality arising from travel restrictions and remote work arising from reduced carbon footprint and tele working the LDAC Secretariat will favour its coordination with other ACs via regular virtual meetings.

In this sense, it will adopt an approach on a topic by topic basis to liaise only with those relevant or interested ACs to develop joint papers or positions in topics of shared interest such as implementation of CFP; follow up of the work under the TCA between UK and EU and the role of the Specialized Committee on Fisheries (SCF) on conservation and management measures for shared stocks as a result of the Brexit process (e.g. PELAC, NSAC, NWWAC, MAC); ecosystem approach to fisheries management (including impact of human activities such as windmills or deep-sea mining), social and labour dimension of CFP, marine plastics, blue economy, review of fisheries control and fight against IUU fishing, climate change in fisheries; MPAs; or work with RFMOs.

- North East Atlantic Forum

The LDAC intends to propose to other fellow ACs and DG MARE the creation of an Inter-AC forum in Year 18 on the North East Atlantic. This would allow all interested AC representatives to be informed in one single forum on the content of the EU proposal and the state of play of the negotiations with the above referred countries in the Northeast Atlantic. Pending of agreeing the Terms of Reference, the group might consider providing feedback on the particularities of each of the following agreements: EU relations with Norway, Faroe, and Iceland; trilateral negotiations between EU-UK-Norway; and NEAFC Coastal States negotiations. Some topics for discussion there would be the annual fishing opportunities and utilization of the quotas assigned, technical and commercial measures or monitoring of EEA negotiations, amongst others.

- Atlantic Ocean Tuna Stocks - ICCAT

On 3 March 2023, by initiative of the LDAC, a first informal meeting took place between Chairs and Secretaries of the LDAC, MEDAC, SWWAC and ORAC. The aim was to exchange views on work priorities for ICCAT (areas and stock covered, main topics of interest...) and try to coordinate a common approach. This meeting served to explore avenues of collaboration aiming to coordinate the multiple inputs coming from the ACs so they can be presented and discussed with DG MARE more efficiently. As a result of this meeting, terms of reference were drafted by the LDAC Secretary and then circulated to and presented at all AC Pelagics Working Groups for adoption.

The objectives of the Inter AC collaboration on ICCAT would be to:

- Set up a forum for dialogue (formal/informal) between Chairs, Secretariats, and members to coordinate and be aware of each AC work on this area.
- AC Chairs, Secretariats and/or designated members to participate in observer/expert capacity at each relevant AC Working Groups dealing with this subject (and follow up actions and minutes from them).
- Consider creating a joint (in person/hybrid/virtual) AC Focus Group meeting periodically to deal with topics of interest in ICCAT – each AC could rotate in terms of organization (agenda, minutes, actions...).
- Keep each other informed on relevant consultation procedures and content of advice that can be endorsed/signed-off/incorporated in several AC pieces of advice.
- Have a coordinated voice with the DG MARE, in forthcoming technical coordination Inter-AC meetings.

In February 2024, a second meeting took place in Brussels where a cooperation agreement document was further developed with specific targets as short term (2024), medium term (2025) and long term (2026 and beyond) objectives. The document has been circulated and is now in the course of adoption between all ACs concerned.

- Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC)

The LDAC has initiated preliminary coordination with CCRUP to host together coordination meetings with DG MARE to be briefed on outcomes of IOTC meetings (Annual Meeting, intersessional and subsidiary bodies) and formulate questions and explore shared areas of interest. This does not pre-empt separate work from each AC and different advice.

- Market Advisory Council (MAC)

The LDAC Chair and Secretary will continue attending in Year 18 the Market Advisory Council Meetings (in particular WGs1 and 2 and Executive Committee) in observer capacity in order to follow the mandate provided by the LDAC members to coordinate and report back on the topics and actions of shared interest from the perspective of the long distance fleet and value chain, e.g., implications of trade partnership agreements and trade related measures to human, and labour rights, control of imports, forced labour or other aspects related to fight against IUU fishing or flags of convenience. It will also look to continuing collaborating in topics of shared interest such as the review of Fisheries Control systems, social dimension of CFP or impact of Chinese fleets in world fisheries and aquaculture, amongst others.

- Outermost Regions Advisory Council (ORAC-CCRUP)

The LDAC will continue inviting the ORAC-CCRUP key representatives (i.e., Chair, Vice Chairs and Secretary) to regularly attend our meetings and have regular exchanges to coordinate or approach to topics of common interests related to stakeholders' views in preparation of RFMOs such as ICCAT, CECAF or IOTC. At least one LDAC representative (preferably the LDAC Chair or Vice Chairs and/or a member or Secretariat staff) will be present, if possible, in plenary ORAC-CCRUP Working Group, General Assembly and/or Executive Committee meetings in observer capacity, human (time) and financial (budget) resources permitting.

Work initiatives and relations with European and international organisations:

- International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES)

The LDAC has increased in the last years its interaction with ICES. In year 17, the Executive Secretary attended the Annual ICES coordination meetings with ACs (MIAC & MIACO) and formulated questions and provided feedback to the agenda of MIAC and MIACO 2024¹⁶. More info available here: <https://www.ldac.eu/en/meetings/archive/meeting-of-advisory-councils-and-ices>, <https://ldac.eu/en/meetings/archive/meeting-between-ices-and-advisory-councils-and-other-observers-miaco-2024>

In Year 18, the LDAC will attend and actively engage in MIAC-MIACO in January 2025, with follow up of pending work on the following topics: NAFO/ICES Pandalus Working Group and scientific advice on 3M Shrimp for 2024; Deepwater stocks – identification of (commercial) data gaps into stock assessments; ICES work on inclusion of stakeholder information in stock assessments; work of ICES with NEAFC on Ecosystem Based Approach, spatial measures and climate change.

In March 2023, the Executive Secretary was appointed last year as Co-Chair of the ICES Workshop on Implementation of Stakeholder Engagement Strategy¹⁷ and contributed significantly both to the running of the event and to produce the written output in the form of [WSKTIMP report](#) with 26 recommendations addressed to ICES ACOM-SCICOM approval and consideration. It is expected further work to take place in Year 18, in the case an ICES permanent Working Group on this subject is set up.

Last, the LDAC has also participated in the technical meeting between DG MARE and the Advisory Councils on the formulation of requests of advice to ICES which took place on 29 February 2024 in hybrid mode. The main aim

¹⁶ MIACO 2020 Annual report can be found here: https://ldac.eu/images/MIACO_2024_Report.pdf

¹⁷ ICES WSKTIMP site : <https://www.ices.dk/community/groups/Pages/WKSTIMP.aspx>

of this meeting was to understand how DG MARE works with ICES and timeline for recurrent and non-recurrent requests for advice.

MARE also responded to ACs questions and discussions were held on expectations and roles and responsibilities of each actor in the process. The LDAC proposed together with the NSAC and PELAC an annual coordination meeting with MARE in January 2025 (prior to MIRIA?) to have an overview on EC research priorities for the year and discuss ways to integrate stakeholder input into the process of the EU formulating non-recurrent request for advice to ICES. The LDAC is currently contributing to the work to suggest some guidelines and/or recommendations on how this interaction can be made in an effective manner.

- Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF)

The LDAC Secretary will continue participating at the meetings of the Expert Working Group in April and July 2024 (EWG 23-03 AER-1 and 23-07 AER-2) on the Annual Economic Report of the EU Fishing Fleet for 2025, provided he is invited by the Chair in individual expert capacity based on its work experience of the last six years as coordinator and rapporteur of the regional chapters on the Distant Water Fleets categorized under “Other Fishing Regions”. His expected tasks are to coordinate and draft the sections related to NAFO, ICCAT, IOTC and CECAF. This work requires a review and fine tuning of methodology (performance indicators, percentage of fleet segments coverage and level of detail of geo-indicators provided by MS) and to conduct a comprehensive EU-MAP data analysis. Also, a qualitative assessment of economic data is carried out to increase coverage of DWF in the report to be as comprehensive as possible and tailored to reality so future trends and outlook are accurate.

- European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA)

In Year 17, the LDAC was the designated representative of all Advisory Councils before EFCA Administrative Board and attended a total of two meetings (April and October 2023). During this mandate, the LDAC sought to make it more visible and promote the work of EFCA in the international dimension of the CFP in line with previous advice in this subject from 2017¹⁸.

In year 18, the LDAC is committed to continue playing an active role as member of the Advisory Board of the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA). A particular topic of interest for the LDAC is the mandate of EFCA in the implementation of the amended Fisheries Control Regulation and related provisions with focus on its implications for the external fleet. Among those topics, there would be the application of REM to certain distant water fleets based on high risk assessment criteria, monitoring of transshipments, MOT special measures for tuna purse seiners and small pelagics, categorisation of serious infringements including forced labour...).

Regarding work on international fisheries, the LDAC is interested on EFCA work on capacity building and training with third countries, regional JDPs and work on MCS with RFMOs (in particular NAFO, ICCAT and IOTC), and actions related to the fight against IUU fishing. In relation to the latter, a report on the main outcomes of the EU funded PESCAO project will be required as well as next steps. Other topics such as the work of EFCA on the European Coastguard Force might also be of interest.

Last, the LDAC will keep an eye on the conclusions and recommendations for future activities and role of EFCA in implementing the international dimension of the CFP stemming from the second 5-year Evaluation report from 2017-2021.

¹⁸ [https://ldac.eu/images/documents/publications/LDAC Opinion on EFCA Role on International Dimension of CFP.pdf](https://ldac.eu/images/documents/publications/LDAC_Opinion_on_EFCA_Role_on_International_Dimension_of_CFP.pdf)

- Ministerial Conference on Fisheries Cooperation among Atlantic States bordering the Atlantic Ocean (ATLAFCO-COMHAFAT)

The LDAC signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with ATLAFCO-COMHAFAT in 2013. This MoU is still in force and foresees mutual attendance and participation at joint meetings, seminars, and events of each organisation. An annual coordination meeting between LDAC and ATLAFCO-COMHAFAT will be organized in Y18 to look for synergies such as cooperation for implementation of regional programmes for scientific observers at sea onboard EU fishing vessels in African EEZs as well as harmonised control schemes of EU vessels at African ports. The possibility of developing a joint approach on how to improve capacity building and resources to carry out both initiatives will be contemplated with possibility of asking for financial aid via sectoral support and/or EU funded trade and cooperation projects to improve infrastructures, working and living conditions of local fishing communities and have a better image of the positive impact of EU fleets in those countries.

Other areas of common interest where work is envisaged include regional fisheries arrangements, impact of climate change for African artisanal fisheries, advisory work on ICCAT, or international ocean governance processes.

- AFRIFISH-Net (Western Indian Ocean)

The LDAC has signed a MoU in May 2023 in Stockholm with the Pan-African Platform of Non-State Actors in Fisheries and Aquaculture (AFRIFISH), an organisation within the framework of African Union after a year of contacts to bridge a partnership for cooperation among EU industrial and African artisanal fisheries stakeholders with common goals and concerted action to move forward a sustainable fisheries agenda.

The MoU provides a framework of cooperation to facilitate collaboration between the Parties with the aim to further their shared goals and objectives identified in their work programmes or strategic plans, including provision of joint or harmonized advice to the competent authorities and governing bodies from the EU and Africa in the establishment and implementation of policies on the EEZ waters of the African continent that have a direct or indirect environmental, social and economic impact both on artisanal and industrial fishers of Africa and the EU.

The LDAC will continue having in Y18 monthly virtual coordination meetings between the Chairs, Secretaries, and key members of both organisations to follow up outstanding actions derived from its MoU. Furthermore, AFRIFISH delegates will be invited to attend (virtually or in person) the main LDAC plenary meetings and events. The aspiration is to produce more joint advice between both organisations so they can be forwarded simultaneously to the European Commission and African Union, including on issues of common interest.

- IOC/ECOFISH (Eastern Indian Ocean)

In line with the recommendations made for expanding the network of partnerships at the Second strategic report of the LDAC Performance Review, the LDAC has established informal contacts with responsible coordinators from ECOFISH Programme run by the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) with the view of collaborating in specific actions and develop a partnership in the West Indian Ocean. The LDAC will approach in Year 18 ECOFISH Secretariat/IOC to identify possible areas of collaboration and participation in the programme. A clear mandate will be sought first by the Executive Committee to decide if there will be an institutional agreement (MoU) formalized between both institutions; or rather it will rely on punctual collaborations in tasks or actions a more informal manner.

Planned recommendations for year 18:

No	Issue/subject	Link with the CFP	WG/FG at the origin of the recommendation	Planned date of adoption (if available)
1	Report and recommendations on External Dimension of CFP: policy brief for legislators and new European Commissioner	European Green Deal / CFP	WG5	June-September 2024
2	Implementation of IOG agenda of the EU	IOG / SDGs / Blue Economy / Deepsea mining	WG5	June-December 2024
3	Annual Advice in preparation of NAFO 46th Annual Meeting	RFMOs	WG2	August-September 2024
4	Advice on Ecosystem Approach for NEAFC	RFMOs	WG2	October-November 2024
5	Management measures for tropical tunas and sharks in preparation of ICCAT Annual Meeting	RFMOs	WG1	September-October 2024
6	Conservation and management measures for tuna and tuna-like species and sharks in preparation of WPFC Annual Meeting	RFMOs	WG1	October-November 2024
7	Management measures for tropical tunas and sharks in preparation of IOTC Annual Meeting	RFMOs	WG1	March-April 2025
8	Implementation of SFPAs: benefits and challenges for coastal communities in third countries	SFPAs, access arrangements, role of artisanal fisheries, social dimension	WG4	January-February 2025
9	Fisheries management for shared small pelagic stocks in West African countries	Regional fisheries arrangements, SFPAs, Governance, IUU fishing	WG4	April-May 2025
10	Implementation of revised Fisheries Control Systems: aspects related to external fleets; implementation of IT-CATCH and digital CDS; transparency of fishing activities for distant water fleets. Country-based advice on fight against IUU fishing	Control Regulation, Fight against IUU fishing, Sustainable Management of External Fishing Fleets (SMEFF)	WG5	April-May 2025
11	Impact of Climate Change in international fisheries (both high seas and EEZ of third country waters) fisheries Advice on	Climate Change / European Green Deal / Energy efficiency transition	WG5	January-March 2025

LDAC planning of meetings:

LDAC PLANNING OF MEETINGS (from 1 June 2024 to 31 May 2025)

No	Date	Topics /Subjects of meeting	Type of meeting (physical/planned/hybrid)	European Commission participation requested (yes/no)	If Commission participation requested, specific issues to be dealt with	Priority for a Commission participation (from 1 to 4) (1= highest priority)
1	June 2024	Focus Group on Climate Change and Fisheries	Virtual	no	n.a.	3
2	August 2023	Focus Group on NAFO	Virtual	no	n.a.	4
3	Mid-end September 2023	Coordination mtg of LDAC Chairs and Vice Chairs in preparation of WGs	Hybrid (Madrid/Zoom) but encouraging physical attendance where possible	no	n.a.	4
4	Late September/ Early October 2024	Focus Group on ICCAT Tropical Tuna stocks and sharks	Virtual	yes	State of play on ICCAT stocks and proposals; time plan	2
5	Mid/end October 2024	Working Groups 1 (Tuna RFMOs), 2 (North Atlantic fisheries), 4 (SFPAs) and 5 (Horizontal Issues)	Hybrid (Brussels or Spain/Zoom) but encouraging physical attendance where possible	yes	IOTC, ICCAT, NAFO, NEAFC, SFPAs, IUU, China, IOG, UN processes, Social Dimension	1
6	Late October/early November 2024	Focus Group on Western and Central Pacific (WCPFC) stocks	Virtual	yes	State of play on WCPFC stocks and habitat and proposals; time plan	2
7	Late November / early December 2024	Executive Committee	Hybrid (Madrid/Zoom) but encouraging physical attendance where possible	yes	Update from DG MARE on CFP Report and state of play of EU public consultation	1
8	January 2025	Focus Group on fisheries management for shared small pelagic stocks in West Africa	Virtual	yes	Update on state of small pelagic stocks (CECAF) and implementation of SFPAs (MARE)	2

9	January-February 2025	LDAC-COMHAFAT Annual Coordination Meeting	Hybrid (Morocco/Spain) but encouraging physical attendance where possible	yes	n.a.	3
10	February-March 2025	Coordination mtg of LDAC Chairs and Vice Chairs in preparation of WGs	Hybrid (Madrid/Zoom) but encouraging physical attendance where possible	no	n.a.	4
11	March-April 2025	Working Groups 1 (Tuna RFMOs), 2 (North Atlantic fisheries), 4 (SFPAs) and 5 (Horizontal Issues)	Hybrid (Brussels/Spain/Zoom) but encouraging physical attendance where possible	yes	ICCAT, NAFO, NEAFC, SFPAs, IUU, China, IOG, UN processes, Social Dimension	1
12	March-April 2025	Focus Group on IOTC	Hybrid (Brussels/Zoom)	yes	IOTC	1
13	Mid/late May 2025	Executive Committee	Hybrid (place tbc) but encouraging physical attendance where possible	yes	Horizontal topics on CFP External Dimension; Administrative and financial issues.	2
14	Mid/late May 2025	General Assembly	Hybrid (place tbc) but encouraging physical attendance where possible	yes	Functioning of the ACs (e.g., lump sum approach) Global overview of the LDAC financial year, work plan and actions, and summary of advice adopted	2
*	Other "ad hoc" Focus Group/s or Steering Committees	During the year (at members request)	To be confirmed	yes	Topic-based meetings identified as important or relevant by the LDAC	2-3
*	Informal technical coordination meetings with MARE on IOG	During the year before meetings where the EU will have a mandate (UN processes, FAO COFI, BBNJ) either at MARE or LDAC request	To be confirmed	yes	RFMOs (IOTC, WPFC, SIOFA, NPFC...), FAO, CBD, ISA, UNGA, BBNJ	1

ⁱ https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/policy/common-fisheries-policy-cfp_es