

LDAC TALKING POINTS – Rep: Iván López van der Veen (Chair)
High Level Roundtable on “Fisheries and Oceans Dialogue”
Theme: helping to design the European Oceans Pact

Venue: EC Berlaymont Building Brussels - 21 February 2025, 9:00-13:00h

GENERAL INTRO / OPENING REMARKS

- At the Long Distance Advisory Council we deal with that small region that is “the rest of the world”, including the whole External Dimension of the Common Fisheries Policy and the interaction of the EU with the development of international treaties and policies that affect Fisheries, which is to say all past and ongoing Ocean law.
- If the EU wants to lead the world in Ocean policy, it must include fisheries as a strategic activity and priority for the EU Oceans Pact given its importance on food security and nutrition. Despite its limited number of long distance vessels, the EU distant water fleet accounts for approximately 20% of total EU catches.
- It must be said that, albeit work always remains to be done, the external action of the EU fleet, operating under the principles and mandates of the CFP, constitutes the best proof that international fisheries and fisheries in the High Seas are possible and possible in a sustainable manner. It is through this example and ambassadorship that the EU must aim to lead the sustainability of international fisheries and fisheries in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction.
- In order to continue to lead in the fight against unsustainable and undesirable practices, the EU must continue to engage with its stakeholders, directly yes, but not forgetting that the most enriching exercise is to do so through multistakeholder bodies such as the Advisory Councils where debate and consensus are needed to achieve a common advice.

MESSAGE 1. The EU must act as global leader with an Oceans Pact that puts fisheries at the forefront of International Ocean Governance

- The EU is encouraged to act as a leader and champion in International Ocean Governance by continuing to actively promote the ratification and implementation of key instruments of international law in all areas, such as UN BBNJ, the Kuming-Montreal Agreement, FAO PSMA, IMO STCW-F & CTA and ILO C188. The development of International Social Principles into something as relevant as IUU must be an absolute priority.
- It must continue to endorse and participate in REFMOs to ensure the sustainable management of fisheries in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction and to continue its drive for active change in bringing transparency and accountability to all fishing nations reporting catch and abiding by conservation and management measures. REFMOs are the building blocks of International Ocean Governance.

- The EU must strengthen its ocean diplomacy to defend its values and principles fostering responsible multilateralism in the adoption of sound conservation and management measures for management of shared stocks. Equally The EU must deepen its relation with fishing nations and seek allies to secure sustained IUU fishing dialogues, prioritising engagement with key fishing players and concentrating efforts and high risk on countries holding flags of convenience.
- The EU must not be afraid to ensure that compliance at International level becomes disadvantages in the home markets. This can only be achieved by ensuring a Level Playing Field of compliance at market level, especially at the EU market level, the most important market for Seafood in the world.
- So, the Pact should ensure that the EU should uses its market access as a tool to protect its interests and prevent imports from illegal and non sustainable sources or seafood linked to illegal fishing and associated human rights abuses from entering the EU market. The strengthening and controls of imports by EU Member States and their consistency is an absolute need.

MESSAGE 2. Reflecting on the next generation of SFPAs and links to Oceans Pact

- Promotion of principles should also happen at a bilateral level, and so the Pact must build on the recommendations made by the retrospective evaluation on effectiveness of SFPAs. Looking at the future, the EU must work on a new generation of Agreements enhancing relations and cooperation with third countries. This Agreements must be coordinated with other EU policies and Strategies such as the Global Gateway program or the upcoming strategic approach to the EU Fisheries External Action. Also transparency and engagement with local stakeholders, as well as effective sectorial implementation including capacity building and gender equality.

MESSAGE 3. The EU Oceans Pact must promote circular economy and a ban on DSM

- The LDAC expresses its strong support for the EU Commission's reaffirming its position to advocate to prohibit deep-sea mining until robust scientific evidence can demonstrate that it will not negatively impact marine ecosystems or jeopardise the livelihoods of those who depend on the sea, including fisheries. We believe that a promotion of a true and real policy of circular economy is a much better policy in the meantime.

As a concluding remark, we would like to say that Fisheries is a fundamental driver to ensure the viability of coastal communities in the EU and abroad. This reality must be reflected in the EU efforts towards Ocean Governance and Blue Economy. Also that Fisheries is a provider of nutritious food for the population and that therefore the EU must decide where it is going to come from and how it should be produced and then ensure that is the case, no matter the origin, from the Union or from abroad.

Referring to Mr Barange's quote, we must reflect on what happens when we reduce our output and also understand that when we reduce our fishing abroad others take our place and they tend to have much worse practices for the environment.