



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels
MARE.B.3/AD

Subject: Reply to the Long-Distance Advisory Council advice “Towards A New Generation of Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPAs)”

Dear Mr López,

Thank you for submitting on 17 October 2025 the Long-Distance Advisory Council (LDAC) advice about the new generation of Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPAs), as a follow-up to the discussions held during the LDAC working group 4 on Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPAs) on 11 March 2025 in Brussels.

First, please allow me to congratulate and thank the LDAC for the well-coordinated work in preparation of the above-mentioned advice. The comprehensiveness of your recommendation shows the effort that the LDAC has invested in its advice.

As you know, the mission letter of Commissioner Kadis includes the development of a new generation of SFPAs that is aligned with the EU’s broader regional strategies and priorities. In line with our objectives under the European Ocean Pact, the new generation of SFPAs will prioritise even greater sustainability (in all aspects), fairness and transparency, and will seek to ensure that we have a coherent and complementary network of SFPAs at regional and global level. As part of this ongoing work, we take good note of the concrete feedback and proposals you put forward.

We share your starting point: the SFPAs are a useful and important instrument, promoting high environmental and social standards and supporting the development of a sustainable fisheries sector in the partner country. We also share the view that this instrument can be improved on a number of aspects.

Policy coherence can be enhanced, as you rightly point out. SFPAs are at the core of the EU’s bilateral relationships with our partner countries. We are currently assessing how the SFPAs can be better leveraged to increase synergies on fisheries and ocean governance and possibly, other areas of EU action. To ensure better coherence and fit-for-purpose actions, we are also aiming to improve the consultation processes with stakeholders. These will both be crucial points of the new generation of SFPAs.

Among the different issues you raised, strengthening the non-discrimination and transparency clauses and their implementation by partner countries is also a priority. We are aware of the challenges associated with the implementation of these clauses. We are working to find pragmatic solutions to better enforce them and we take good note of your suggestions for this purpose.

Another issue you raise is the negative perception of SFPAs in partner countries. We agree that we need to better counter disinformation regarding SFPAs and harness the benefits of the EU's partnerships and substantial investments in partner countries, including in multilateral fora. We are already working to improve this and consider that this element should be an integral part of the new generation of SFPAs. We need to also act as Team-Europe and in this context, we will be looking forward to coordinate actions, including with the industry stakeholders to engage in a stronger, coherent and effective approach.

We also take good note of your recommendations on the other areas for improvement that you identify in your letter. These include the financial structure of SFPAs, social and labour conditions on EU vessels, the role of women in the fisheries sector of partner countries, the issue of dormant agreements, the benefits of a regional approach to SFPAs, strengthening scientific assessment and advice.

Moreover, we thank the LDAC for the follow-up work on the question of dormant agreements. We are looking into the questions sent per email and will answer in due time.

We welcome your timely feedback and concrete suggestions for the new generation of SFPAs. It will usefully feed into the preparations for the framing of the new generation of SFPAs, in view of its presentation by the Commission in the third quarter of 2026, as part of a new EU strategy for fisheries external action, as announced in the European Ocean Pact adopted in June.

I am looking forward to our continued fruitful cooperation. Should you have further questions on this reply, please contact Ms Julia Rubeck, our Advisory Councils coordinator, via the functional mailbox MARE-AC@ec.europa.eu.

Yours sincerely,

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Electronically signed on 09/12/2025 12:21 (UTC+01) in accordance with Article 11 of Commission Decision (EU) 2021/2121