



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels, 2 May 2022
MARE.C.5/AL/vr/Ares(2022)

Dear Sirs,

Thank you for your joint-AC letter of 4 April 2022, where you call our attention to your request for continued stakeholder engagement in the new EU and UK governance structures, more specifically regarding stakeholder engagement in Specialised Fisheries Committee (SCF).

I want to stress that cooperation and engagement with our stakeholders is of great importance to DG MARE, including in relation to our work with international partners. Although we should remain aware the TCA does not provide for direct stakeholder participation in Specialised Committees, I want to assure you that the Commission will explore possible avenues to ensure and strengthen our cooperation and engagement with stakeholders in the context of the SCF. DG Mare is ready to explore this with you in your stakeholder roles under the CFP.

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From our side we recognise the value and need to find optimized coordination and to centralise the communication in one group, rather than through sometimes repetitive separate meetings with five ACs. Your initiative to create the Forum appears to be a more efficient way forward, especially considering that all relevant communications and discussions would be done jointly with all Advisory Councils in one forum.

Therefore, we welcome your initiative to set up the 'Inter-AC Brexit Forum' and can see its possible potential as a good platform where most AC-Commission communications related with the EU and UK discussions in the SCF could be concentrated. In general, the points discussed in the SCF, and its working group (WG), are cross-cutting to more than one AC and thus relevant to all forum members.

Consequently, we should reflect on the optimal setup and processes of this forum, having full respect to all the provisions in the TCA. In so doing, on the Commission side, we are conscious of the need to respect horizontal procedures applicable to all Specialised Committees, including not in any way prejudicing the role foreseen of the Domestic Advisory Group and the Civil Society Forum in the TCA.

We acknowledge your invitation for the meeting on 5 May 2022, and I would suggest we use this opportunity to start discussing how this new forum can serve our objectives, being a vehicle to structure and transmit stakeholder input to the Commission and a forum that can be used by the Commission to centralise our communication to the Advisory Councils. My services will confirm at a later stage the participants from the Commission side.

In the annex of this letter, you can find some additional information regarding the functioning of the SCF, which addresses the questions raised in your letter.

Finally, let me take this opportunity to thank you for your interest and active engagement with the Commission on these matters. Rest assured that DG MARE is committed to developing appropriate stakeholder engagement concerning its work on bilateral EU-UK matters, including the SCF.

I am looking forward to our continued fruitful cooperation. Should you have any further questions on this reply, please contact Ms Pascale COLSON, coordinator of the Advisory Councils (Pascale.COLSON@ec.europa.eu; +32.2.295.62.73), who will forward them to relevant colleagues.

Yours sincerely,

[e-signed]
Charlina VITCHEVA

Enclosure: 1

Annex

Establishment of SCF and WG

The SCF has already had three meetings, held on 20 July 2021, 27 October 2021, and 27 April 2022.

Following the agreement provided by the Council in Council Decision (EU) 2021/2111 of 25 November 2021, the EU and the UK established the Working Group on Fisheries on 3 March 2022 under Decision No 1/2022 of the Specialised Committee on Fisheries.

The Union position to be taken in the SCF is set out in the Council Decision (EU) 2021/1765 of 5 October 2021. The position to be taken in the Working Group on Fisheries established under the SCF is set out in Council Decision (EU) 2021/2111 of 25 November 2021.

There is a single WG on Fisheries covering all topics under the SCF remit. This WG can meet in different configurations according to the topics it is handling. The WG works under and reports to the SCF.

SCF functioning and formalities

The SCF is one of a number of Specialised Committees established under the TCA and as such has to follow a set of procedures common to all these Committees.

The Commission represents the Union, with one representative per Member State as part of the Union delegation. The UK is represented by DEFRA counterparts, with representatives of Devolved Administrations and Crown Dependencies forming part of its delegation.

Any meeting of the SCF is notified to Council at least eight working days in advance. DG MARE then attends a Council Working Party before each meeting to prepare the meeting, as well as attending afterwards for a debrief. At present, due to the structure the Council has decided on, this takes place a horizontal Working Party on all UK matters.

Agendas for meetings are agreed between the SCF co-chairs from DG MARE and DEFRA. The Union position to be taken on the various topics assigned to the SCF is defined with Council in advance in the form of non-papers, as foreseen in Council Decision (EU) 2021/1765 of 5 October 2021.

All agendas and minutes of the SCF are published online by the Commission: https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/relations-non-eu-countries/relations-united-kingdom/eu-uk-trade-and-cooperation-agreement/meetings-eu-uk-partnership-council-and-specialised-committees-under-trade-and-cooperation-agreement_en

Formal involvement of stakeholders in the SCF

The SCF is one of a number of Specialised Committees established under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) and as such has to follow a set of procedures and rules common to all these Committees. In line with the Council Decision of April 2021 on

conclusion of the TCA, the Commission represents the Union in meetings of the Specialised Committees, and as ratified by the European Parliament and Council, the TCA does not foresee representation of stakeholders on Specialised Committees.

The formal representation of stakeholders and citizens is offered under two groups: the Domestic Advisory Group and the Civil Society Forum.

The EU Domestic Advisory Group, pursuant to Article 13 of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, is already operational and has already met twice. It covers the entire scope of the treaty, including fisheries, and is supported in its work by the European Economic and Social Committee. The call for expression of interest to participate was published in June 2021.

The Civil Society Forum, pursuant to Article 14 of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, covers part two of the TCA, which includes fisheries. The annual meetings of the Forum are open to any civil society organisation. The first meeting of the Civil Society Forum should take place before summer 2022 and a call for participation will be made public.

Fisheries organisations which may be interested in contributing to the work of the EU Domestic Advisory Group are strongly encouraged to contact the European Economic and Social Committee, as well as to participate in the annual Civil Society Forum meeting which is not limited to Domestic Advisory Group members.