



MINUTES

INTER-ADVISORY COUNCILS (INTER-ACs) MEETING 9 March 2023 - 09:30-17:00

1. Welcome and adoption of the agenda

Ms Lena Andersson Pench (DG MARE/D, Director) welcomed the Advisory Councils (ACs) and other participants to the meeting. The meeting agenda was adopted. Ms Andersson Pench underlined that the Commission appreciates the work and input from all ACs, thanked them for their work on opinions and consultations that contributed to the fisheries package, to be discussed in detail at this meeting. The importance of joint planning and forward thinking was emphasised, to facilitate the participation of the Commission in AC meetings, and while every effort is made to do so already, it is not always feasible or possible on every occasion. Meetings organised in Brussels and jointly between ACs or special interest groups greatly facilitate Commission participation. Subsequently, Ms Al Khudhairy (DG MARE/A, Director) was given the floor to present the work of Directorate A.

2. Introduction and presentation of MARE A work

Ms Al Khudhairy gave a broad overview of Directorate A's work and focus. An emphasis was put on how a sustainable blue economy is profitable, resilient, and future proof. The need for a comprehensive approach, taking in all involved sectors, including fisheries and aquaculture into account, was underlined. A number of topics the Directorate is working on in relation to the marine environment were presented. The Blue Forum of Sea Users, which is a platform that emphasises the sustainable use of marine resources and environments, was introduced. Ms Al Khudhairy expressed that she hoped the ACs would attend the launch event of the forum in May.

The need to facilitate good practices and information sharing was underlined as a key role for the ACs. Four key enablers to facilitate progress were explained: (1) Knowledge, (2) Research, (3) Funding, and (4) Skills. Ms Al Khudhairy emphasised that by taking all enablers into account, and by adopting a cooperative regional management strategy, the resilience and sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture sectors could increase. Ms Al Khudhairy stressed the importance of the ACs in facilitating change within their respective sectors and thanked them for their continued support.

Questions and Answers

Mr Pedro Reis Santos (MAC Secretary General) thanked Ms Al Khudhairy for her speech. He expressed that the MAC hopes the Commission will present something to the ACs on the sustainability of the algae sector in the future. He emphasised the importance of levelling the playing field with regards to the algae sector and explained that the MAC is organising various events around the development of the sector. Mr Reis Santos mentioned that the Commission is invited to all presentations and that MAC hopes members of the Commission will attend.

Ms Al Khudhairy thanked Mr Reis Santos for his invitation and explained that she understood the importance of attending as many AC meetings as possible. However, she highlighted that this would not always be possible although efforts would be made to attend. In addition, Ms Al Khudhairy acknowledged the importance of the algae sector, mentioning several initiatives within DG MARE that are dealing with this.

Mr Alexandre Rodriguez (LDAC General Secretary) took the floor to ask how the new EU blue economy report will relate directly to the fisheries sector. Following this, Mr Rodriguez pointed out that the Communication on the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) mentions the launch of an annual award for sustainable innovation in fisheries. He asked whether more details around this award could be shared with the ACs.

Ms Al Khudhairy explained that there are various themes within the blue economy report that relate directly to fisheries and aquaculture and that the value of these sectors will be addressed.

Ms Andersson Pench thanked Mr Rodriguez for his question around the annual award and explained that it would be answered following the presentation of the CFP package.

Mr Paul Denekamp (AAC First Vice-Chair) raised the question of whether and how animal welfare would be addressed by DG MARE in the future.

Ms Al Khudhairy informed Mr Denekamp that, while she did not directly address this issue in her speech, there is close collaboration between DG SANTE and DG MARE regarding animal welfare.

3. Opening address and presentation of the CFP package

Ms Charlina Vitcheva (DG MARE, Director General) thanked all ACs for their attendance at the meeting and expressed her support for the fostering of personal relationships through in-person events. It was emphasised that the ACs play a vital role in the regionalisation approach and that their advice supports the development of policy within DG MARE. Ms Vitcheva addressed the letter she received from the ACs regarding higher visibility. She thanked them for their letter and explained that the Commission will continue to support and promote the ACs as much as it can. She highlighted that there is an entire section dedicated to the ACs within the Staff Working Document (SWD) accompanying the CFP Communication.

Following this, Ms Vitcheva introduced and presented each document in the CFP package in detail (Communication on the functioning of the CFP, Action Plan, Communication on the energy transition, and Report on common market organisation). Ms Vitcheva emphasised the finding of the CFP communication, that the CFP is fit for purpose and that a reform is not necessary at the moment. The tools exist within the CFP to ensure that the fisheries sector becomes more resilient and sustainable. She emphasised that the CFP Communication was upgraded to a communication from a report, which highlights the importance of the matter.

Throughout her speech, Ms Vitcheva explained to the ACs that all pressures on the marine environment need to be taken into consideration and that a closer collaboration with DG ENV is necessary. She asked ACs to vocalise what pressures have not been sufficiently addressed. In addition, while addressing the landing obligation, Ms Vitcheva emphasised that it should not be viewed as a punishment on fishers but that it should rather encourage innovation and change within the sector. The objective is to eliminate bycatch. Ms

Vitcheva highlighted the importance of data collection and data sharing around the landing obligation and encouraged the ACs to please share any data they might have that could be relevant for an evaluation of the landing obligation with the Commission. The importance of transparency and the role the ACs play in addressing this were also underlined. A plea was made by Ms Vitcheva for a genuine dialogue between and within ACs regarding the future of the sector and the priorities outlined in the package.

Regarding funding, Ms Vitcheva explained that there are already many resources available to the sector that can be used for innovation. She mentioned that guidance on existing funding opportunities will be provided. A call was made to the ACs to contribute to the discussion and explain what they would like to see made available.

Questions and Answers

Mr Nils Höglund (BSAC Chair of the Working Group on Ecosystem Based Management) thanked Ms Vitcheva for her speech and praised the package for its comprehensiveness. He raised a question about the Fisheries and Ocean(s) Pact that has been proposed to be launched as part of the package and wanted to know what this group entailed, who would be involved and what the roles of the ACs would be.

Ms Vitcheva explained to Mr Höglund that this new pact will be for authorities and that the ACs should be involved as observers. She emphasised that there is not enough communication between the ministries within various Member States and stressed that there is a need for better collaboration between environmental- and fisheries ministries, for example. It was pointed out that a similar pact exists on a lower level but that it is necessary for this to be elevated to the ministerial level.

Mr Antonio Marzoa Notlevsen (MEDAC Chair) took the floor to express his concerns with the package. His main concerns regarded how much of an environmental focus the Action Plan has, which could, have devastating effects on the fisheries sector. In addition, he voiced dissatisfaction with the deadlines presented in the Action Plan, stating that they were not realistic and would probably be missed. Furthermore, Mr Marzoa Notlevsen explained how the phasing out of bottom trawling in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) by 2030 would undermine the efforts to decarbonise the fleets, since boats would need to travel further out to sea.

Ms Vitcheva acknowledged Mr Marzoa Notlevsen's concerns. She explained that although there might be some displacement effects from phasing out bottom trawling in MPAs, every effort will be made to avoid this. Thus, a cost-benefit analysis will be done. Ms Vitcheva also addressed the deadline concerns voiced by Mr Marzoa Notlevsen and clarified that the implementation of the action plan was up to Member States, meaning they would have the authority to decide how to tackle the deadlines.

Mr Javier Lopez (SWWAC Vice-Chair) took the floor and thanked Ms Vitcheva for her presentation of the package. He started off by voicing his support for the Action Plan and the idea at the CFP is still fit for purpose. However, he highlighted that there was a reference missing to blue carbon habitats. As a representative of Oceana, he wanted to publicly support the phasing out of bottom trawling in MPAs and expressed that he thought the deadlines were not ambitious enough. Following this, Mr Lopez went on to ask how solutions put forward by stakeholders could be made more binding or implemented better.

Ms Vitcheva addressed that she understood that there was a link to blue carbon habitats missing and explained that, while this topic was not a focus in the Communication, it was

not forgotten. On the need for more binding solutions, Ms Vitcheva said that she hoped the cost-benefit analysis would help fishers understand how the solutions could lead to more profitability. Instead of the need to harshly enforce policies, the Commission was opting for more natural leverage.

Mr Charif Abdallah (CCRUP Vice-President) thanked Ms Vitcheva for her presentation. He expressed concerns about the package and explained that, as a representative of Mayotte, he was worried about the future of the fleet there. The local fleet does not adhere to European standards and is, therefore, not allowed to fish in the region. Mr Abdallah highlighted that there have been umpteenth requests for improvements to be made to the Mayotte fleet but that these requests have been ignored by the French government. He underlined that, would the Mayotte fleet be upgraded, they would be willing to get on board with the package.

Ms Vitcheva acknowledged the need to upgrade the Mayotte fleet and stressed that the Commission is in contact with the French administration. She explained that there are some rules that are difficult to implement in Mayotte but that localised solutions are being worked on. Ms Vitcheva emphasised that there are funds available just for the outermost regions and that the Commission is committed to helping regions such as Mayotte overcome their challenges. In addition, Ms Vitcheva highlighted the interest in aquaculture development in the outermost regions.

Mr Brian Thomsen (AAC Chair) welcomed the initiative by the Commission to promote sustainable aquaculture, underlining that there is no “Common Aquaculture Policy” but rather only a non-binding approach to develop a sustainable sector. He asked that aquaculture become a policy priority and expressed that the sector guideline evaluation taking place in 2025 would be much too late. Furthermore, Mr Thomsen explained that the AAC would be more than happy to contribute toward the development of a protocol on how best to do this evaluation. Finally, Mr Thomsen mentioned that the AAC was still waiting on a reply from the Commission on the CFP/CMO targeted consultation recommendation submitted in March 2022.

Ms Vitcheva acknowledged Mr Thomsen’s plea of integrating aquaculture into the CFP. She explained that the year 2025 was chosen as the Commission is still producing some deliverables and developing criteria that will guide sustainable aquaculture development. Before this is done, an evaluation of the guidelines would be premature.

Mr Giampaolo Buonfiglio (MEDAC Vice-Chair) took the floor to express his concerns with the package. He underlined that the sector has been making efforts to become more sustainable, and while he acknowledged that the Mediterranean has been lagging behind, efforts have been made and things are improving. Mr Buonfiglio explained that he believed that the strategies and goals outlined in the package do not align with those in the CFP and that it seems a drastically environmental focus has been taken. Furthermore, he disapproved of the deadlines presented in the Action Plan and mentioned that these were unrealistic. In concluding his speech, Mr Buonfiglio stressed that the sector cannot support the package and that representatives from Member States have already been approached to oppose it.

Ms Vitcheva highlighted that neither DG MARE nor the Commission have a hidden agenda. She explained that the plan is to pursue healthy fish stocks and that, at the moment, to achieve this, a “business as usual” approach cannot be taken. An emphasis was placed on the need for open dialogue in various formats. Ms Vitcheva also stressed that DG MARE takes a fisheries perspective and that the sector’s opinions are extremely important.

She expressed hope that the ACs would be ambassadors for change and that they would pass on the message that DG MARE is not working against the fisheries sector.

Ms Mo Mathies (NWWAC Executive Secretary) thanked Ms Vitcheva for her presentation and followed this by addressing the letter ACs had sent regarding promoting the Councils. She explained that, in the letter, concrete recommendations were made about how this could be done. Ms Mathies went on to ask whether Ms Vitcheva could address some of these recommendations in more detail. In addition, she expressed hope for more collaboration between ACs and Member States facilitated and promoted by the Commission.

Ms Vitcheva thanked Ms Mathies and the rest of the ACs for the letter and underlined that she was pushing to continue to promote the ACs wherever possible. She highlighted that work was being done to push Member States to promote the ACs too.

Mr Iván López van der Veen (LDAC Chair) took the floor to ask how the package linked to the international dimension. Whilst proposing a revision of the international dimension within the package, he introduced several factors that need to be taken into consideration when doing so. Furthermore, he underlined the importance of collaborating with international partners and increasing stakeholder engagement. In addition, Mr López van der Veen expressed concern that the secretaries of the ACs were not involved enough in discussions with the Commission, and that they were sometimes side-lined when it came to coordination. Finally, Mr López van der Veen addressed the need for clearer rules of engagement at the Inter-AC meetings. More structure is necessary, and each AC should get the chance to take the floor for a set amount of time. He also stressed that the opinions shared at the meetings should represent those of the ACs and not of the parties within these. He asked for more clarity on what is expected of the ACs at the Inter-AC meetings.

Ms Vitcheva acknowledged the need for the inclusion of the international dimension in the package and underlined that DG MARE has a dedicated directorate. Regarding stakeholder engagement, Ms Vitcheva explained that the Commission is performing an evaluation of the Sustainable fisheries partnership agreements (SFPAs), which are hugely important in ensuring that EU fisheries regulations are respected outside of EU waters. Collaboration between EU and non-EU states needs to be continuously strengthened. The Commission is there to defend European values forcefully. She emphasised that more resources are desperately needed and appealed to the ACs to use their platform to take this message to the ministries of finance of Member States. Irrespective, Ms Vitcheva explained, DG MARE would continue to do its best in the interest of the fisheries sector. Regarding the rules of the Inter-AC meetings, Ms Vitcheva suggested that the ACs forward their ideas on this to the Commission for consideration.

Mr Jaroslaw Zieliński (BSAC Chair) took the floor to ask a technical question about the landing obligation. He addressed the Commission's desire for data from the ACs regarding the landing obligation. Mr Zieliński then went on to ask what is expected from the ACs regarding the key elements of this data and whether the ACs are supposed to make recommendations about what kind of data should be collected.

Ms Vitcheva mentioned that the Commission could provide an indication to the ACs about exactly what it is that they need. However, she stressed that all information the ACs feel is relevant to the landing obligation should be shared.

Ms Yobana Bermudez (MAC Chair) thanked Ms Vitcheva for her presentation. She explained that the MAC would be sending the Commission a guidance document for

production marketing plans. Furthermore, expressing her personal point of view and that of the fisheries sector, Ms Bermudez underlined how concerned she was about the unfair competition on certain products in the market. She mentioned that these products were not subject to the same regulations as those produced in the European Union and suggested that something be done to level the playing field.

Ms Vitcheva emphasised the importance of ensuring that imports are bound by the same rules. This also related to the import of raw materials for the processing industry. In line with this, Ms Vitcheva underlined that the EU fish processing industry needs to further develop its self-sufficiency.

Ms Vitcheva closed this part of the meeting by encouraging the ACs to be ambassadors for the package. She stressed the importance of the ACs and emphasised to them that DG MARE has the interests of fishers at heart.

4. Presentation on EU Mission: Restore our Ocean and Waters

Mr Kestutis Sadauskas (DG MARE, Deputy Director General) took the floor to present the EU Mission titled “Restore our Ocean and Waters”. He started off by thanking the ACs for their work, emphasising their importance in policy developments and discussions. While in the long-run the Mission aims to provide solutions that tackle societies greatest problems, Mr Sadauskas explained that the Mission has three main objectives to be achieved by 2030, all relating to the restoration and protection of marine- and freshwater environments: The first objective is to protect and restore marine and freshwater ecosystems and biodiversity. The second objective is to prevent and eliminate the pollution of oceans, seas, and other waters. The third objective is to make the blue economy carbon neutral and circular. Within each of these objectives, Mr Sadauskas presented operational goals and targets. In addition, he mentioned the importance of two enablers that need to be developed in order to achieve these targets: (1) The European Digital Twin of the Ocean and (2) public mobilisation and citizen engagement. The value of each of these enablers was explained in more detail.

Mr Sadauskas followed this up by emphasising the regional dimension that the Mission takes. In line with this, he introduced the concept of the Mission lighthouses, which act as sites to pilot, demonstrate, develop, and deploy the Mission activities across EU seas and river basins. Four Mission lighthouses have been defined: (1) the Baltic and North Sea basin, (2) the Mediterranean Sea basin, (3) the Danube River basin, (4) the Atlantic and Arctic coast. Mr Sadauskas emphasised that the idea is to ensure that if one lighthouse develops a solution, other lighthouses also benefit from it immediately. As the Mission is rooted in Horizon Europe, opportunities exist within each lighthouse to fund research around innovative solutions. However, Mr Sadauskas stressed that the Mission goes beyond research and is not a research agenda. While research is an important aspect of the Mission, the hope is to engage with and involve stakeholders from varied backgrounds, such as end-users, citizens, and national and regional authorities, for example. In line with this, Mr Sadauskas emphasised the importance of the ACs.

Mr Sadauskas went on to explain the process of applying for funds within the Mission and gave examples of project priorities and topics of interest. Following this, he highlighted ways in which stakeholders could otherwise engage with the Mission and emphasised that structures for event and logistical support and funding are already in place within each sea basin. He concluded his presentation by acknowledging that the goals of the Mission are quite lofty and could be difficult to achieve but stressed that enough resources are available to help attain these goals.

Questions and Answers

Ms Daniela Costa (CCRUP Secretary General) thanked Mr Sadauskas for his presentation and touched upon the availability of funds for events and logistics within each region. She went on to ask whether these resources were also available in the outermost regions.

Mr Sadauskas explained that the support structures were indeed available in the outermost regions and underlined that it was also possible to engage with contractors in other basins to facilitate communication and collaboration.

Mr Paul Denekamp (AAC First Vice-Chair) took the floor to acknowledge the vast number of aspects the Mission hoped to address but stated he was missing more concrete information on how pharmaceutical remains within oceans and ocean acidification would be tackled.

Mr Sadauskas explained that he knew that these topics were important to address and stressed that the Mission could help do so. He assured Mr Denekamp that there were project proposals looking into both topics. However, Mr Sadauskas highlighted that the aim of the Mission is to achieve its goals and not spread out too thinly. For this reason, it is important to be very selective about the projects that are funded. He followed this up by emphasising that the research priorities should come directly from stakeholders, such as the ACs.

Mr Nils Höglund (BSAC Chair of the Working Group on Ecosystem Based Management) addressed the fact that there are many marine species that rely on upstream habitats within their life history. He, therefore, wanted to know whether there was funding available for transboundary research.

Mr Sadauskas explained that there was funding available for both marine and riverine projects. He also emphasised the interest of private investors eager to invest in projects through Blue Invest. He highlighted three iconic species (eel, salmon, and sturgeon) which rely on both marine- and freshwater habitats and which, according to him, should probably be prioritised. However, Mr Sadauskas mentioned that, for this to happen, there needs to be consensus within the basin on what the focuses should be on.

Mr Iván López van der Veen (LDAC Chair) took the floor to ask Mr Sadauskas about how much room there was within Mission projects for collaboration between non-EU countries. He emphasised the importance of coordinating projects with other states and regions, especially in relation to upstream issues. In addition, he wanted to know what the expectations were of the ACs regarding more political engagement around the Mission.

Mr Sadauskas emphasised that politics was not a focal point of the Mission. He explained that the expectation was that the members of the ACs be part of the Mission. Mr Sadauskas encouraged the ACs to provide suggestions and stressed that the Mission was there to help them. He mentioned that one of the groups the Mission had been ineffective in reaching out to was the fisheries sector and stressed how eager he was to hear from them.

Ms Cécile Fouquet (AAC Executive Secretary) wanted to know from Mr Sadauskas how one could apply for projects within the Mission.

Mr Sadauskas explained that one would need to join the charter and submit a project, idea, or proposal. Following this, a review would occur. He also mentioned that calls for projects also existed through Horizon Europe but stressed that this was not the only funding

opportunity. He followed this up by emphasising again that the Mission has already allocated resources to each basin for event and logistical support.

Ms Mo Mathies (NWWAC Executive Secretary) took the floor to ask whether it was possible the ACs could be added to any sort of list for Mission meetings.

Mr Sadauskas mentioned the possibility to subscribe to a newsletter to stay up to date. He also highlighted that there is a Mission event taking place in Bucharest in April, and another one taking place in the Mediterranean in May. He encouraged AC attendance and emphasised their importance for policy discussions. Mr Sadauskas concluded by stating he would keep the ACs in the loop about Mission meetings and events.

Ms Andersson Pench thanked Mr Sadauskas for his presentation and closed the floor for questions and comments. A follow-up e-mail with presentations and background information regarding Mission Ocean and the Mission Charter was sent on 16 March 2023 to AC secretariats.

5. AOB

As some members of the ACs needed to leave the meeting earlier, two points of the agenda were switched: the AOB section and the presentation on the Court of Auditors' report on IUU fishing.

Ms Andersson Pench took the floor to thank Ms Colson for her service within the Commission. Ms Colson's roles and achievements were highlighted. The floor was opened for words of congratulations. The secretariats presented Ms Colson with a token of appreciation for her hard work and dedication over the years. Ms Colson thanked all members for their kind words.

6. Presentation on Court of Auditors' report on IUU fishing

Ms Andersson Pench introduced Mr Jérôme Broche (DG MARE/D/4, Deputy Head of Unit) and Mr Pawel Swiderek (DG MARE/B/4, Deputy Head of Unit), explaining that they would give a joint presentation on the Court of Auditors' report on illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

Mr Swiderek took the floor to explain the scope of the report and to provide a bit of background context. He started by clarifying that the aim of the report was to assess the effectiveness of control systems in place that prevent the introduction of products stemming from IUU fisheries onto the EU market. In addition, the report was drafted to analyse the effectiveness of Member State control systems relating to their national fleets and waters. Before passing the floor to Mr Broche, Mr Swiderek highlighted that the Court of Auditors identified that there is uneven implementation of checks and controls by Member States.

Mr Broche continued the presentation by describing the main findings of the report. With regards to fisheries funds allocated for control purposes, Mr Broche explained that the Court of Auditors found that a fair share of funds was actually used for this purpose. However, in their assessment of Member State sanctioning systems, the Court found that penalties applied to offenders were not large enough to deprive them of benefits. In addition, the penalty systems and fines imposed on licence holders fluctuated greatly across Member States. Essentially, there is no level playing field between Member States and there is a lack in a deterrent effect.

Mr Swiderek took the floor again to present the first recommendation put forward by the Court of Auditors: that the Commission monitor Member States reinforcement of their control systems to prevent the import of fishery products stemming from IUU fishing. Mr Swiderek highlighted the three sub-recommendations made by the Court to operationalise this. The first sub-recommendation related to the digitalisation of catch certification schemes the development of automated checks. Mr Swiderek stressed that the platform to do so already exists, but that Member States do not use it because it is not a legal obligation to do so. The second sub-recommendation highlighted the need for Member States to work towards a uniform list of enforcement and control criteria. The third sub-recommendation was for the Commission to monitor that the scope and quality of checks applied by Member States are sufficient to address the risks associated with IUU imports. The Commission accepted all recommendations above.

Mr Broche presented the second recommendation put forward by the Court of Auditors, which related to Member States applying more heavy dissuasive sanctions against illegal fishing. Four sub-recommendations were proposed by the Court for this recommendation. The first sub-recommendation was to check that Member States apply sanctions for serious infringements. The second sub-recommendation was to ensure that sanctions and penalties applied to offenders are dissuasive enough to prevent repeat infringements. The third sub-recommendation was to check that Member States apply dissuasive sanctions against IUU fishing, and finally, the fourth sub-recommendation stated that the Commission should take the necessary actions to remedy any shortcomings. The Commission agreed to all of the above recommendations.

Mr Broche continued by explaining that thirteen Member States have already been approached with pre-infringement warnings that could lead to full infringement procedures if the recommendations made by the Commission are not respected. Currently, the Commission is in the process of examining the replies to the thirteen warnings. In addition, Mr Broche mentioned that the Commission has proposed a number of ways in which all Member State control systems can be improved, and the infringement criteria can be harmonised. This is currently being discussed with Member States and in Parliament.

Ms Andersson Pench thanked Mr Swiderek and Mr Broche for their presentation and opened the floor for questions and comments.

Questions and Answers

Mr Pedro Reis Santos (MAC Secretary General) thanked both Mr Swiderek and Mr Broche for the presentation and mentioned that the MAC is working on a new recommendation around IUU fishing.

Mr Nils Höglund (BSAC Chair of the Working Group on Ecosystem Based Management) took the floor to express his concerns on IUU fishing in the Baltics, mentioning that there is a huge issue with IUU fishing in the region. He highlighted that there is a clear need for reform of penalties applied by different Member States for IUU fishing infringements. Mr Höglund concluded by explaining that there is a considerable illegal fishery for eel in Sweden and that the fines given to offenders do not represent actual damage that is being done in relation to this very sensitive species.

Mr Jaroslaw Zieliński (BSAC Chair) addressed what Mr Höglund said about IUU fishing in the Baltics and mentioned that what Mr Höglund stated was not necessarily the view of the BSAC. He pointed out that the BSAC is increasing its cooperation with the European

Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) and stressed that the topic of tackling IUU fishing is highly important in the Baltic Sea.

Ms Vanya Vulperhorst (LDAC Vice-Chair) thanked Mr Swiderek and Mr Broche for their presentation and explained that the LDAC is working on a letter of recommendations relating to IUU fishing. She expressed support for the recommendations made by the Court of Auditors but underlined that the deadlines proposed in the report would probably affect their implementation capacity.

Ms Andersson Pench took the floor to address the interest amongst ACs on the topic of IUU fishing. She stressed that the Commission could not be present at all individual AC meetings and give presentations around cross-cutting topics such as IUU fishing. Ms Andersson Pench asked the floor once more whether there were any more questions.

Ms Daniela Costa (CCRUP Secretary General) thanked the presenters for their work. She mentioned that the CCRUP would circulate the report amongst their members. In addition, Ms Costa explained that the CCRUP was still learning about the differences between the control and IUU units within DG MARE but that, going forward, they would be more aware about who to contact and whom to address when making recommendations.

Mr Iván López van der Veen (LDAC Chair) took the floor to mention that, following the wishes of both the Commission and the ACs, there would be more coordination around common issues between ACs this year. He went on to ask how the Commission wished to be informed about this and at what stages.

Ms Andersson Pench explained that the Commission tries their best to plan their meetings so that they are available as much as possible for the ACs. She underlined that the Commission would be interested in being informed about any coordination going on between ACs and stressed that this would facilitate the lives of the Commission staff.

Following this, Ms Andersson Pench thanked all participants of the session. She highlighted that the Commission would continue to engage with the ACs on the package and mentioned that a meeting between the secretariats was coming up. In addition, she expressed that she hoped that the Commission and ACs could organise two or three Inter-AC meetings per year. Subsequently, the meeting was closed.