

WORK PROGRAMME FOR LDAC YEAR 19

Period: 01/06/2025 to 31/05/2026

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 at 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 has been fully operational since then without interruption. In terms of composition and membership, the LDAC is currently made up by 53 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 (i.e. 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.

The LDAC was the first AC in suggesting to DG MARE the idea of conducting regular independent performance reviews of the ACs. As a result, a formal proposal was presented in the Inter-AC meeting held in November 2017. Subsequently, the LDAC pursued this goal under its own initiative and conducted the first independent performance review of an AC. This review was undertaken over the course of two financial years (Y12 and Y13). Their 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 conducting an independent performance review exercise by each AC periodically was taken up by MARE and consecrated in article 7a of the Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2022/204 of 8 December 2021. Following this provision, the LDAC has undertaken a second performance review exercise exactly 5 years after the first one (Y18). The work has started in February 2025 and is foreseen to finish in May 2025 with the presentation of its main findings and recommendations at the General Assembly meeting by the designated consultant. The PR also includes a roadmap with a proposal for strategic work plan for the next 5 years (2026-2030). Once the final report is available, it will be made publicly available on the LDAC website and shared with interested parties including the European Commission, EU Member States that are paying observers of the LDAC, EFCA or ICES.

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. Despite not being a legal obligation anymore, the Secretariat still hires every year an external, independent, and certified auditor to carry out an audit and issue an audit certificate that the accounts are true and accurate with reality in accordance with the provisions of Spanish financial and company laws.

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 annual update: 9 January 2025) with ID No. 905805219213-67: <http://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/consultation/displaylobbyist.do?id=905805219213-67>

The LDAC is also included in the UIA Annual Yearbook of International Organizations: <https://uia.org/s/or/en/1122278508>

Mission and objectives of the LDAC

The **LDAC core 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, the LDAC will hold via meetings (both in person and online) and written consultations substantial discussions for the drafting and preparation of letters and advice. The aim of our work is to provide sensible and pragmatic proposal, solutions and recommendations to achieve the three pillars of sustainability laid out in the CFP (environmental, economic, and social).

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 consultations or targeted questionnaires and requests for advice, or under our own initiative.

The **key objectives informing the LDAC advice** will be to:

1. Promote coherence between the internal and external dimension of the CFP³, in relation to objectives established by the EU in the mission letter for Commissioner Kadis⁴ and the CFP legislative package adopted on 21 February 2023⁵. In particular, it will look how to improve implementation of the External Dimension following recommendations made in the EC Communication on the functioning of the common fisheries policy today and tomorrow (2023) and addressing those relevant questions linked to the ongoing process of the evaluation of the CFP (2024-2025).
2. Formulate recommendations to shape the elements of the new European Oceans Pact⁶ included under the mandate of Commissioner Kadis to ensure coherence across all ocean related policies looking at interactions between the international fisheries policy and others such as environment, trade, labour, food security, health or sustainable development.

³ <https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/policy-coherence-development>

⁴ https://commission.europa.eu/document/028ce7d5-e328-4416-8f0d-35c8884acaa8_en

⁵ https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/policy/common-fisheries-policy-cfp_en

⁶ https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/news/shaping-european-oceans-pact-commission-launches-call-evidence-2025-01-20_en

3. Participate in the formal and informal consultations with the European Commission to give technical feedback in the development of a strategic approach to the EU fisheries external action, including by ensuring that Europe retains its international leadership with its zero-tolerance approach to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.
4. Engage with both DG MARE and INTPA to give informed advice towards sustainable, science-based, innovative, and inclusive management measures in the field of international fisheries and its fitting with the international partnerships such as the GLOBAL GATEWAY programme⁷ to underpin the long-term vision for a resilient, competitive, and sustainable European fisheries sector to help secure Europe's food sovereignty which lies at the heart of the EU maritime and blue policies.
5. Explore linkages between the EU marine action plan to protecting and restoring marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries and its application within the remit of the International Ocean Governance agenda (e.g. CBD, BBNJ, SOI Global Dialogue, RFMOs), following the commitments made by the EU and EU stakeholders at the UN Ocean Conference in Nice (June 2025).
6. Give feedback at Inter AC level to reports on legislative developments made in the form of delegated and implementing acts to ensure the 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.
7. The implementation of the EU Regulation on fight against IUU fishing, including the IT-CATCH system uptake, will also be a priority; as well as improving transparency of fishing activities of the external fishing fleet through, inter alia, the SMEFF Regulation.
8. Participate actively in EC technical meetings in preparation of Annual and Intersessional Meetings of relevant RFMOs (i.e. NAFO, ICCAT, IATTC, IOTC, WPFC, SPRFMO...) 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 as a member of the EU delegation.
9. Provide advice to MARE on the new generation of EU SFPAs including topics such as ensuring an adequate and balanced level of financial contributions from EU/private sector in terms of fishing access; identifying priority fishing areas and countries; ensuring that SFPA protocols are comprehensive and establish obligations vis-à-vis Coastal beneficiary state to promote and insert transparency, non-discrimination and social clauses and actively removing barriers to ensure accountability of fishing activity. In terms of sectoral support, ensure the participation of coastal states stakeholders in the identification of their own funding priorities⁸.
10. 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, UNOC3, FAO, CBD, CITES, ISA...).

⁷ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/index_en

⁸ 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

11. 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.
12. 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.

LDAC WORK PRIORITIES

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

The LDAC aims to work proactively on contributing to promote 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 19, 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 and promoting a leading role of the EU

1.1. Implementation of IOG agenda 2030

The LDAC supports a leading role of the EU in the international ocean governance process and remains keen to engage in collaborative spirit with relevant MARE unit under the format of both formal and informal dialogues to provide feedback on the different legislative processes of interest for our work.

The LDAC has been an active actor and present in the three editions of the IOG forums in 2020 and 2021⁹, and contributed to 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 [Setting the course for a sustainable blue planet, Joint Communication on the EU's International Ocean Governance agenda](#) This Communication is an integral part of the EU's implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular SDG14 on [Life Below Water](#).

The LDAC remains committed to tracking and monitor progress on implementation of recommendations made in the Communication under the four policy pillars grouping integrated actions for a safe, secure, clean, healthy and sustainably managed ocean, with particular interest in pillars 1 and 3, namely:

1. [Strengthening the international ocean governance framework](#)
2. [Making ocean sustainability a reality by 2030](#)
3. [Ensuring security and safety at sea](#)
4. [Building up ocean knowledge](#)

⁹ <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/maritimeforum/en/frontpage/1469>

1.2. Review on achievement of UN Sustainable Development Goals targets (in particular SDG14)

A new element that the LDAC will be engaged in this year is the review on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a result of the publication on 19 July 2023 by the European Commission of its first-ever [voluntary review on Sustainable Development Goals\(SDGs\)](#) at the [UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development](#), halfway through the implementation of its [2030 Agenda](#).

The LDAC will look at what has been achieved and what is still left in the EU in terms of specific targets for [SDG 14 “Life below water”](#). It seems that despite significant progress having been achieved under the [common fisheries policy \(CFP\)](#) and in the fight against IUU fishing, sustainability levels have yet to be reached for all fisheries.

1.3. Work at Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs)

In terms of work at RFMO level, the LDAC will continue providing evidence-based and technical advice and gathering stakeholders' views (either under writing/formal or oral/informal way) to give feedback to the European Commission negotiation teams in due course and prior to the closing of their mandate and key annual meeting.

The LDAC will also provide views and arguments to the Commission for appropriate support to the establishment of an RFMO where it doesn't exist, like for the management of small pelagics in West Africa (FAO 47) or demersal and cephalopod stocks in the South West Atlantic (FAO 41).

1.4. Follow up of work at UN and other international governance bodies

The LDAC will follow 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...) via regular reports both from the European Commission and our membership.

In particular, the LDAC will concentrate efforts on the following key areas: a. Support of EU work and leading efforts to ratify and implement the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement) through formal and informal feedback in negotiations and meetings at Prep Coms and intersessional meetings; b. Convention on Biological Diversity and implementation of Global Biodiversity Framework, in particular in relation to ABMTs, MPAs and OECMs.

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 supports the statement of Von der Leyen's mission letter to Commissioner Kadis on taking action to *“uphold a level playing field and protect the European fisheries chain from unfair global competition, notably on seafood products”*. In this respect, the LDAC has developed several recommendations and position papers identifying areas of uneven internal (intra EU between EU products) and external (between EU and imported products) dimensions in the field of fisheries with regards to different aspects related to fair competition, traceability of products and value chains, transparency of

fishing activities and access to EU markets.

This work has been complementary to 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 is still relevant and valid as roadmap. In that document, 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.

In Year 19, the LDAC will pursue to continue deepening its dialogue with DG MARE on this subject, expanding the horizon to DG TRADE, DG EMPL, DG GROW and DG SANTE when required. Consideration will also be given then to develop a few dedicated theme-specific pieces of advice in relation to these topics linked to the evaluation of the CFP process. In particular, the LDAC will set up a joint WG1-WG2 led Focus Group to draft a proposal for advice on European fleet competitiveness in all RFMOs, studying the situation in terms of level playing field.

3. Towards a Strategy for a new EU Fisheries External Action

The LDAC was recently informed of the launch of a Strategy for a new EU Fisheries External Action. This strategic approach goes beyond the External Dimension of the CFP and aims to combine a set of EU instruments and policies to strengthen the sustainability of EU external fisheries—environmental, economic, and social—and promote enhanced global and regional governance and sustainable value chains.

The LDAC supports this approach and the development of a more effective and impactful EU ocean diplomacy. The LDAC will work on formulating recommendations to inform on how we consider this strategy would be better implemented in practice. In particular, the LDAC will use as guidance and address partially/fully the following questions shared by MARE B in the course of the last LDAC Working Group 4 meeting held on 11 March 2025:

- How should RFMOs deal with the consequences of climate change?
- How could the EU help to support the implementation of the new BBNJ treaty?
- What can fisheries external action can made in terms of contribution to endangered species' protection?
- How to ensure that Europe retains its international leadership with its zero-tolerance approach to IUU fishing and promotes its updated fisheries control rules?
- How to foster labour standards in the EU external fleets as well as in non-EU fleets?
- How to build a more sustainable value chain through trade and marketing measures and sustainability of EU imports and exports of aquatic food?
- What could be tailor-made regional approaches? In that context, how do you ensure stability and predictability of access to neighboring waters and what role could a new generation of Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements play in addressing these challenges?
- How can the EU improve its ocean diplomacy?

In terms of timing, the LDAC will try to answer the call for evidence expected to be launched in the second half of 2025 and provide regular input and feedback to the targeted stakeholders' consultation processes, which will lead to the adoption of an EC Communication sometime in 2026.

4. Towards a new generation of Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPAs) with Third Countries

The LDAC notes Commissioner Kadis' mandate to work to ensure stability and predictability of access to neighbouring waters, with the aim of ensuring fairness and a level playing field for EU operators. As part of this, work is required on a new generation of Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements, ensuring they are in line with the EU's wider regional strategies and priorities, most notably for Africa and the Indo-Pacific. A coherent approach should also be promoted for sustainable fisheries in all multilateral fora and bilateral dialogues.

In terms of background, the LDAC has a longstanding track record of advice on SFPAs. In the last years, the LDAC participated both on the call for evidence for a 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 evaluation¹⁰ which ended up in the completion of an EC [study on retrospective evaluation and analysis of the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements \(SFPAs\) between the EU and third countries](#)

In terms of event management, 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. The LDAC also facilitated a seminar in October 2023 hosted by POSEIDON and BMZ with LDAC members to present the preliminary outcomes of the report titled "*Potentials of EU Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements and development cooperation for the sustainable development of local fisheries sectors*" and gather feedback from our members. This report was finally published in December 2023¹¹.

In terms of way forward, the LDAC will continue its work in Y19 at Focus Group level on producing an updated advice to MARE on the future new generation of EU SFPAs. The main focus will be drawn on the themes and questions that have been suggested by MARE B2 unit at the LDAC Working Group 4 meeting held in Brussels on 11 March 2024, namely:

Themes identified by MARE

1. Objectives of the SFPAs (resource conservation and sustainable exploitation of living marine resources in the coastal state; continuation of activity of EU fleets operating within the SFPAs and employments linked; support development of sustainable fisheries sector in partner countries)
2. Financial structure of SFPAs (Access contribution and Sectoral Support contribution)
3. Level playing field (transparency clause; IUU fishing in EEZ of partner countries; existence of dormant agreements and exclusivity clause).

Questions to address in a potential advice:

- Are SFPAs fit for purpose and the right tool for sustainable exploitation of fishing resources?
- Is there a need to address by the EU fleets broader sustainability requirements made by partner countries?
- What are the possible priority areas in terms of fishing grounds and species of commercial interest?
- Should more importance be given to some areas with better performance in terms of quota utilisation?

¹⁰ 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->

¹¹ [1701 BMZ SFPA Poseidon Final Project Report and country reports December 2023.pdf \(consult-poseidon.com\)](#)

- Should the EU focus its limited resources on tuna and tuna like species instead of pelagic resources?
- Finances: how to address public criticism about EU taxpayers' money paying SFPAs vs angle of WTO discussions? In view of limited resources, how are we going to approach financial issues of SFPAs? Can we imagine new avenues, contribution of vessel owners to increase?
- How to improve the LPF through the SFPAs?
- What to do with exclusivity clause and dormant agreements which might undermine LPF and be detrimental for EU fleets/fishing value chain.

In addition, 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.

The LDAC will also provide the Commission with concrete elements to support the identification of priorities linked 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, particularly regarding sectoral support.

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

One of the core building blocks of the work of the LDAC is the production of timely and strategic advice providing detailed input both on conservation and management measures for fish stocks that are the subject of the RFMOs and horizontal topics such as the fight against IUU fishing, monitoring, control and surveillance, fishing capacity, transshipments, Management Strategy Evaluations, scientific research, by-catch of non-commercial species and cetaceans, labour standards or climate change.

The LDAC has increased in recent years the number of RFMOs where it releases a fully-fledged written advice. In Year 18, the LDAC adopted written advice on NAFO and NEAFC for the North West and East Atlantic fisheries; ICCAT, IOTC and WCPFC for tuna and tuna-like species; participated in stakeholder preparatory meetings, exchanged views with MARE during Working Groups and attended most of them as members of the EU delegation. The LDAC has also attended and provided some kind of informal input at EC technical meetings on other RFMOs in the Pacific and Indian Ocean, i.e. IATTC, NPFC, SPRFMO and SIOFA.

The LDAC will continue in Y19 to provide feedback on the above-mentioned RFMOs to the EC designated negotiation teams in due course in preparation of key annual meetings, and ideally before closing the EC negotiation mandate. The LDAC members also offer their availability and expertise to attend and give informal feedback prior to the intersessional panel meetings, special sessions and stakeholder workshops when possible and realistic.

A specific area for improvement will be to deepen into advice on ecosystem approach to fisheries management for some RFMOs such as NAFO or NEAFC Regulatory Areas; Marine Protected Areas and Other Effective Conservation Measures (OECMs); as well as labour dimension for others such as IOTC, WCPFC or SPRFMO, provided there is 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 continue in Year 19 developing recommendations to improve the effective implementation of the recently adopted and amended EU Fisheries Control system, in particular on legislative developments in the form of delegated and implemented acts having a direct impact and affectation for the external fishing fleets. 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 non-EU ports; requirements for landing on a list of authorised non-EU ports; categorisation of serious infringements including forced labour; minimum harmonization of sanctioning regime across Member States; etc.

Considering the fact that the Fisheries Control Regulation is applied across the board for all fisheries and therefore not subject to regionalisation and given the limited resources and availability of MARE services, the LDAC accepted to discuss the topic at Inter-AC level in coordination with other ACs under a common setting to maximise efficiency, communications and timing between Advisory Councils. A first workshop was held in Brussels on 5 February, with a dedicated special session chaired by our WG5 Chair on the distant water fleet where questions were posed to MARE officials in several articles of the new Control Regulation, and a letter was subsequently sent for follow-up purposes.

The LDAC will also continue working, in Year 19, on improving the effective implementation of the fight against IUU Fishing Regulation. With that purpose, shortcomings will be identified and areas to improve from the side of the EU, Member States, and fishing operators to assist in developing strategies for EU fisheries cooperation with the rest of the world by pursuing Europe's zero-tolerance approach to IUU fishing. In terms of topics for advice, the LDAC will explore the possibility of developing 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, and uptake of, an electronic implementation of the EU Catch Certification Scheme (CCS) through the IT CATCH web-based tool. The LDAC is also interested in streamlining the current system of mutual assistance between Member States 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 updates from the DG MARE IUU unit at WG5 meetings on the state of play of the EU carding system (green, yellow, and red cards) and dialogue with countries of interest to LDAC members.

Regarding the implementation of the Sustainable Management of the External Fishing Fleet (SMEFF) Regulation, the LDAC will gather questions from members and proposals to improve the transparency of the external fishing fleet's fishing activities through the legal framework of the SMEFF Regulation. Specific emphasis may be put on using the periodically updated EU database on fishing authorizations to inform possible advice.

In continuation with the work initiated in Y16 and based on such information added to LDAC stakeholders' information, the LDAC will envisage issuing at least one recommendation at the 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 in previous years:

- 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*¹². 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*¹³. 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.

7. Social Dimension of the CFP

The LDAC followed and attended in Year 18 several workshops of the “[Fishers For Future](#)” foresight study, an EU-wide participatory project which took place in 2024 and examined the future role of fishers in society up to 2050. The LDAC contributed to defining the four scenarios finally selected based on climate and market dynamics; and provided feedback on the fishers' profiles and roles as well as a letter of concern on methodological questions together with other ACs. In Year 19, the LDAC will follow the take-up of the [study's findings](#) in the reflections on the European Oceans Pact and the evaluation of CFP regulation.

The LDAC will remain active in Year 19 in the promotion of labour and social issues related to fisheries in the EU agenda. The LDAC is committed to engaging with Commissioner Kadis's mission to prepare a broader vision for the Fisheries Sector for 2040. For that purpose, it will look to develop dedicated advice on improving generational changeover and profession appeal to support job creation in the fisheries sector. This can be done through aspects such as the development of common EU curricula and skills competencies catalogue, further professional training and lifelong learning, measures to improve safety at sea and living conditions on board, promoting 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...).

Furthermore, the LDAC will also continue receiving updates on the work of the EU Social Dialogue Committee and seek to identify issues of shared interest to develop letters of support or joint advice. The LDAC would seek to actively promote a harmonized and robust legal framework within the EU and before relevant international fora in line with internationally agreed social and labour standards for fisheries and a stronger focus on human rights. In particular, the LDAC will 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.

¹² https://www.ldac.eu/images/LDAC-MAC_Joint_Advice_China_Distant_Water_Fleets_13Dic2022.pdf

¹³ https://www.ldac.eu/images/EN_LDAC_Advice_Morocco_Cooperation-Fisheries-Governance_November2023.pdf

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.

8. Role of EU fisheries investments in EU third countries (“joint ventures”) and promotion of cooperation and development of artisanal fisheries and coastal communities from Africa

The LDAC will continue investigating in Year 19 how the International Policy and External Action of the EU, together with the External Dimension of the CFP, can contribute to make more visible and accountable the role of EU fisheries investments in third countries (aka joint ventures) as well as to foster job employment, education, training, health and nutrition, development for cooperation and capacity building of coastal and fishing communities in Africa.

On aspects pertaining to development and cooperation with artisanal fisheries and coastal communities from Africa, work will be carried out in partnership with African intergovernmental organisations (ATLAFCO-COMHAFAT) or stakeholder-led ones (AFRIFISH-Net). Specific initiatives will be sought to improve the quality and frequency of scientific stock assessment for small pelagic and demersal stocks in West Africa, supporting a regional approach to conservation and management of those, supporting 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&D&I to improve techniques for smoking and processing of pelagic fish, etc.

On EU fisheries investments with third countries

In May 2024, after years of various proposals, a seminar was held in Berlin on ‘[The role of EU fishing companies with investments and operations in non-EU third countries. Case studies from Africa](#)’. The event counted 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 to the socio-economic development of coastal communities in third countries. Emphasis was placed on West and East Africa and developing recommendations based on a SWAT analysis and developing a guide of good practices for responsible and sustainable business that can be further implemented voluntarily and taken by FAO, the EP, or flag and coastal Member States.

The ultimate objective of this Seminar is to produce an opinion containing recommendations aimed at identifying key governance issues and establishing a solid framework to help operationalise and give substance to the investment promotion clause of bilateral SFPAs. In addition, it is considered important to include and recognise Community fisheries investments in third countries as part of the external dimension of the CFP.

A Focus Group (FG) was created in Y18 to draft the advice to further develop the ideas taken from the conclusions of the Berlin Seminar also achieving more visibility and recognition of Fishing Joint Ventures (JVs) in the Common Fisheries Policy. After the first meeting of the FG two specific sections were identified: transparency and sustainability. Both sections will be developed in two different pieces of advice during Year 19.

In the first draft advice on transparency, the objective is encouraged. It suggests that all European countries should develop a specific public register at the national level, collecting and publishing information about their EU-owned fishing joint ventures (including their ownership structure). The Spanish register (currently under review and update) could serve as example or template on the data requirements and processing that can be extrapolated to other EU Member States.

Regarding the second draft advice on sustainability, the LDAC plans to kick off work with the setup of a Focus Group in the second quarter of 2025 to identify specific points for debate, such as:

- Improving access to EU markets, provided the beneficial owners will be able to demonstrate in a way that can be independently monitored that sustainability criteria have been respected,
- Ensuring availability for EU inspections carried out by authorities corresponding with the flag of the vessel
- Promoting fishing operations conducted in line with a series of sustainability criteria to promote a level playing field, maybe that criteria could be in line with SMEFF, etc.

Last, the LDAC intends to open a dialogue on how EU and African countries could concretely promote such transparency requirements with its partners COMHAFAT and AFRIFISH-Net, which both highlighted the importance of ensuring transparency through the adequate legislative and administrative framework in joint ventures.

Work priorities identified for each Working Group

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

- Horizontal issues within the context of RFMOs:

The WG1 Chair presented at the LDAC Working Group 1 meeting on March 2025 a [SWOT table with a proposal for advice on level playing field in tuna RFMO to achieve sustainability and competitiveness of the EU External Fisheries model](#). This proposal will serve as basis for discussion in a joint horizontal WG1-WG2 Focus Group to be organized in the first/second quarter of Y19 tasked with developing an advice on European fleet competitiveness and sustainability in all RFMOs, studying the cases of level playing field.

- Transversal work on CMMs for sharks on tuna RFMOs

A draft [proposal for an action plan to work on sharks conservation and management across RFMOs](#) was presented by the Chair and the Secretary at the WG1 meeting in March 2025. This proposal was based on a previous [presentation](#) made by Dr Iris Ziegler at the previous WG1 meeting in October 2024 followed by the comments and feedback received from representatives of the Spanish longline fishing sector. It was decided to analyse all information and identify those elements for inclusion in a horizontal advice on Conservation and Management Measures for Sharks that can be extrapolated to all tuna RFMOs. This work will be conducted through a dedicated Focus Group to be held in the first or second quarter of Y19 with the aim to have a draft ready for presenting at the forthcoming Working Group 1 in October 2025.

- 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 2025 in preparation of next ICCAT Annual Meeting planned for November 2025. 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 (BET-YFT-SKJ) and sharks including blue shark and northern Atlantic shortfin mako. Some of the horizontal sections must be shared in advance with relevant ACs with interest in ICCAT with the view of producing a single joint advice on these topics based on the ideas contained in the [LDAC advice adopted in September 2024](#) (action to be agreed).

Regarding Inter-AC work, the LDAC will continue in Y19 the cooperation with three other ACs with interest in ICCAT (MEDAC, CC-Sud, CCRUP) initiated in 2023 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. Progress has been made already in consolidating this initiative, with regular coordination meetings between the Chairs of the ExCom and Pelagic Working Groups of the four ACs, assisted by the Secretariats, every 3-5 months. Furthermore, [a cooperation agreement was approved in July 2024](#) by all ACs concerned with a number of short term (2024), medium term (2025) and long term (2026 and beyond) objectives. In addition, the concerned ACs are keeping informed of each other's work, sharing relevant information and working documents including advice and organising joint WG meetings where DG MARE and the relevant ACs could attend in order to prepare the ICCAT meetings. There has been also cross-references in some advice to the work of other ACs, and for example this year the advice of the LDAC was endorsed by the MEDAC and also certain references were made by CC-S.

Last, a [MEDAC-LDAC-CCS-CCRUP letter asking for participation in Ambassadors' meetings and info on the progress of ICCAT MSE processes for 2025 and beyond](#) was submitted in March 2025.

- 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 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 19 to follow up decision on conservation and management measures adopted at the IOTC Annual Meeting (May 2025) for all gears targeting yellowfin tuna and associated tropical tuna stocks. Strategic discussions will also take place on allocation criteria. 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, 2023, and 2024 in preparation of the 19th, 20th and 21st regular sessions of the WCPFC Commission. The content of the advice has gained weight and evidence over time with 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 19, 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 a Focus Group to meet in September/October 2025 tasked with drafting some advice to be ready ahead of next annual meeting of WCPFC in December 2025. The following topics will be addressed based on work priorities identified by the DG MARE negotiators, namely:

- Running stock assessments for two key species for EU fleet: SKJ Western and Central Pacific, and SW Pacific SWO (revision of CMM that some members are pushing forward);
- Developing an MSE for South Pacific Swordfish;

- Review of monitoring, control and surveillance rules for WCPFC – many countries of Pacific have signed the FAO PSMA;
- Intersessional work on regional observer programme;
- Intersessional work on FADs that might influence on revision of tropical tunas' measures for 2026.
- Reasons for recurrent underutilisation by the EU fleets of fishing opportunities in this region linked to future discussions on allocation keys.

Working Group 2: North Atlantic and Pacific Fisheries Agreement and RFMOs

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

The LDAC is rethinking both the geographical remit (sea basins and fisheries covered) and material scope (content) of the WG2 in light of the changes provoked by Brexit in the functioning of this Group. The idea is to formulate a proposal to MARE on decoupling from the WG2 the discussions on multilateral negotiations between the EU and Norway, Faroe, Iceland, and Greenland, trilaterals EU-UK-Norway, and NEAFC Coastal States negotiations; and set up instead a dedicated Inter AC group involving all relevant concerned ACs (i.e., LDAC, PELAC, NSAC, NWWAC) to foster synergies and exchange views on a single forum in an analogous manner to the Inter AC Brexit Forum which has proven to work well. This forum, with rotating hosts and Chairs, will allow to streamline resources both to DG MARE negotiators and officials and AC members and staff.

- Implementation of the EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the 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 three of the Inter-AC periodic Joint Focus Group. This new system of work might require in Year 19 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 the forthcoming review of fishing opportunities and allocation keys post-2026.

- North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC):

The LDAC aims to continue in Y19 the work initiated in Y18, where strategic advice was issued ahead of the NEAFC Annual Meeting. The selected topics were not looking at fishing opportunities but sustainability and governance:

- The ecosystem approach to fisheries management, including the need for cross-sectoral ecosystem-based management to be done in collaboration with other bodies like OSPAR and ICES;
- Spatial management considerations (i.e. VMEs, MPAs incl. OECMs)
- The need for a governance reform of the North East Atlantic fisheries management in light of the chronic failure and lack of transparency of the "ad hoc" NEAFC coastal states consultations to manage the large pelagic stocks sustainably.
- Contributions to the NEAFC performance review, whose terms of reference were agreed in 2023 and work is expected to start in 2025.
- 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 under the Collective Arrangement. 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.

The LDAC will also continue engaging with ICES via MIAC and stakeholder workshops to understand the ICES advice to NEAFC to support the definition of operational objectives relating to biodiversity and ecosystems; as well as next steps in the implementation of the EBM in line with OSPAR 2030 strategy.

- Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (NAFO):

Similarly, as in previous years, the LDAC will set up a dedicated task force or focus group to work on a draft advice, once the NAFO Scientific Council report is publicly available (normally, end of June-early July), that can be presented in oral form at the EC technical meeting with stakeholders in August 2025.

The final advice will be submitted in written form to the MARE negotiators ahead of the NAFO Annual Meeting planned for the third week of September 2025 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.

An ample representation of LDAC delegates will be also present in Halifax to provide real time feedback to EU delegates, upon their prior call, during the course of the negotiators while complying with the code of conduct for EU members.

- Pacific RFMOs and international waters not covered by RFMOs or other Working Groups:

The WG2 has decided in Y18 to expand its scope of work also to the North and South Pacific RFMOs, i.e. NPFC and SPRFMO, as well as the South West Atlantic (FAO 41). In view of this, MARE negotiators will be invited in Y19 to exchange views on the EU mandate both before the annual meetings and to provide briefings on the outcomes of the Annual. Dedicated Focus Group tasked with drafting advice will be set up upon request, depending on resources and time availability of experts. The LDAC will also coordinate the participation of relevant members in the stakeholder preparatory meetings called by DG MARE.

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 historical rates of attendance (less than 12 individuals on 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 FAO 41, and role of fishing investments in third countries) have been reallocated between Working Groups 4, 5 and the Executive Committee. To this date, the number of the subsequent working groups have not changed at this stage, with 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

- Towards a new generation of SFPAs

The LDAC will continue inviting DG MARE representatives to forthcoming meetings in Year 19 to continue the ongoing dialogue on how the new generation of SFPAs will look like. A Focus Group is operational and will work to produce updated advice to MARE on this topic. The main focus will be drawn on the themes and questions that have been suggested by MARE B2 unit at the LDAC Working Group 4 meeting held in Brussels on 11 March 2024, namely:

Themes identified by MARE

1. Objectives of the SFPAs (resource conservation and sustainable exploitation of living marine resources in the coastal state; continuation of activity of EU fleets operating within the SFPAs and employments linked; support development of sustainable fisheries sector in partner countries)
2. Financial structure of SFPAs (Access contribution and Sectoral Support contribution)
3. Level playing field (transparency clause; IUU fishing in EEZ of partner countries; existence of dormant agreements and exclusivity clause).

Questions to address in a potential advice:

- Are SFPAs fit for purpose and the right tool for sustainable exploitation of fishing resources?
 - Is there a need to address by the EU fleets broader sustainability requirements made by partner countries?
 - What are the possible priority areas in terms of fishing grounds and species of commercial interest?
 - Should more importance be given to some areas with better performance in terms of quota utilisation?
 - Should the EU focus its limited resources on tuna and tuna like species instead of pelagic resources?
 - Finances: how to address public criticism about EU taxpayers' money paying SFPAs vs angle of WTO discussions? In view of limited resources, how are we going to approach financial issues of SFPAs? Can we imagine new avenues, contribution of vessel owners to increase?
 - How to improve the LPF through the SFPAs?
 - What to do with exclusivity clause and dormant agreements which might undermine LPF and be detrimental for EU fleets/fishing value chain.
- Implementation of protocols of SFPAs in force, negotiations for renewal and dormant agreements

The LDAC will engage with MARE in sending questions/feedback on the state of play of implementation of existing SFPAs in force, negotiations for renewal and dormant agreements as a result of various factors. The main forum for exchange of views will be the plenary working group 4 meetings in October 2025 and March 2026. For Y19, it is envisaged that special consideration will be given to the following countries: Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, Cabo Verde, Gabon, and Seychelles.

The LDAC will endeavour to assess and advise 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/overutilization 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 SFPA partner countries.

- Social clause of SFPAs

In continuation of the work in previous years, the LDAC will look at how to improve the implementation of social clauses 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.

- Regional approach to conservation and management of West African small pelagic and demersal species
The LDAC is currently working on advice supporting a regionally coordinated approach amongst the coastal states for scientific research cooperation and the development of multiannual management plans on the basis of a proposal made by the FAO-NANSEN project. The aim is to submit an advice to MARE that can inform its deliberations at the West African coastal states meeting scheduled for May 2025 to discuss the adoption and implementation of multiannual management plans for small pelagic stocks (e.g. sardinella), which are presently under a critical situation of overexploitation and low productivity on the basis of the last CECAF WG Pelagics report published in October 2024.

In Y19, the LDAC will do a follow-up advice to include considerations related to the importance of small pelagics for nutrition and food security in Africa, as well as the need for further MCS and traceability of fisheries and aquaculture value chains, including fishmeal plants not for human consumption products. The LDAC will also work on deepening recommendations made in previous years on upgrading the status of CECAF to a binding scientific advisory body for stock assessment; as well as for the creation of an RFMO for this topic.

- Role of EU fisheries investments and joint enterprises
The LDAC will reflect on the need for these 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 (including non-EU countries such as Turkey, China, Korea, Taiwan or Russia).
- Work with African Partners: ATLAFCO-COMHAFAT and AFRIFISH-Net

ATLAFCO-COMHAFAT:

An annual coordination meeting between LDAC and ATLAFCO-COMHAFAT will be organized in Y19 to look for synergies such as supporting cooperation by the EU and African Coastal States for making progress on the 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 and streamline 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. A specific action would be to use this to use this partnership to promote the use of the IT-CATCH system in non-EU countries/ATLAFCO countries via the design and facilitation of dedicated communication and training courses in dialogue with the European Commission.

AFRIFISH-Net:

Following work priority areas identified in the MoU agreed in May 2023, the LDAC will continue having in Y19 regular virtual coordination meetings between the Chairs, Secretaries, and key members of both organisations to follow up on outstanding actions as agreed in the joint work plan. Furthermore, AFRIFISH delegates will be invited to attend (either 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

- Evaluation of the CFP: role of the external dimension of the CFP

DG MARE is carrying out a comprehensive process of evaluation of the CFP aimed at producing a report that will be available in 2026. This evaluation will cover all aspects or blocks under the CFP Regulation, namely:

1. Managing fisheries measures for the conservation and sustainable exploitation of marine biological resources
2. Governance regionalization and stakeholder involvement
3. Common market organization
4. External Policy
5. Aquaculture
6. Control and enforcement

The main focus of the LDAC work in Y19 will be on the elements of the external fisheries policy, as well as aspects of International Ocean Governance, the role of ACs and Control and Enforcement. For this purpose, the LDAC will do a literature review and info-gathering exercise based on feedback from MS, fishing industries and/or other interest groups organisations as well as identify real practices and implementation aspects from the stakeholders in the ground. It will also formulate and present recommendations on the future of the external dimension of the CFP. These recommendations, which may take the form of position paper or technical advice, are meant to be a guide to inform the mandate of the new Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans, feed the ongoing calendar of consultations and drive policy discussions amongst relevant decision makers from Member States and the European Parliament.

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

This action is in line with the statement of Von der Leyen's mission letter to Commissioner Kadis on acting to "uphold a level playing field and protect the European fisheries chain from unfair global competition, notably on seafood products." In this respect, the LDAC developed, in 2021, a comprehensive advice with several recommendations identifying areas of uneven internal (intra EU between EU products) and external (between EU and imported products) dimensions in the field of fisheries with regards to different aspects related to fair competition, traceability of products and value chains, transparency of fishing activities and access to EU market. The advice can be found here: https://ldac.eu/images/EN_LDAC_Advice_LPF_25May2021.pdf

Work on this subject will be dealt with on a topic-based approach building on the constituent elements indicated in the LDAC advice and in coordination with other interested Working Groups.

- Towards a Strategy for a new EU Fisheries External Action

The LDAC was recently informed of the launch of a Strategy for a new EU Fisheries External Action. This strategic approach goes beyond the External Dimension of the CFP and aims to combine a set of EU instruments and policies to strengthen the sustainability of EU external fisheries—environmental, economic, and social—and promote enhanced global and regional governance and sustainable value chains.

The LDAC supports this approach and the development of a more effective and impactful EU ocean diplomacy. The LDAC will work on formulating recommendations to inform on how we consider this strategy would be better implemented in practice. In particular, the LDAC will use as guidance and address partially/fully the following questions shared by MARE B in the course of the last LDAC Working Group 4 meeting held on 11 March 2025:

- How should RFMOs deal with the consequences of climate change?
- How could the EU help to support the implementation of the new BBNJ treaty?
- What can fisheries external action can made in terms of contribution to endangered species' protection?

- How to ensure that Europe retains its international leadership with its zero-tolerance approach to IUU fishing and promotes its updated fisheries control rules?
- How to foster labour standards in the EU external fleets as well as in non-EU fleets?
- How to build a more sustainable value chain through trade and marketing measures and sustainability of EU imports and exports of aquatic food?
- What could be tailor-made regional approaches? In that context, how do you ensure stability and predictability of access to neighboring waters and what role could a new generation of Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements play in addressing these challenges?
- How can the EU improve its ocean diplomacy?

In terms of timing, the LDAC will try to answer the call for evidence expected to be launched in the second half of 2025 and provide regular input and feedback to the targeted stakeholders' consultation processes, which will lead to the adoption of an EC Communication sometime in 2026.

- International Ocean Governance: UN processes

The LDAC will liaise with DG MARE to exchange periodically on IOG issues and meetings for 2025-2026. 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 Agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ).*

The LDAC will aim to provide a position paper outlining their views on the implementation of BBNJ with a particular focus on article 29 and the articulation between RFMOs and BBNJ requirements. The LDAC will also assist DG MARE and the EU to promote the ratification of signatories towards its entry 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.

- *UN international meetings: UNFSA, PSMA*

2025 coincides with the 30th anniversary of the UNFSA; in that perspective, and to help preparing the EU position, the LDAC will aim to convey its specific views to MARE on the implementation of this agreement and the challenges ahead. Finally, as highlighted by the FAO Committee on Fisheries at its 36th session, there is a wish to revitalize the Compliance Agreement in the broader context of Flag State Performance. Here too, the LDAC will aim to inform the preparation of the EU position. As relevant, the LDAC will provide advice to MARE on the work carried out in the context of the PSMA.

- *Implementation of UN 2030 Agenda (SDGs)*

The LDAC has actively contributed to the three editions of the IOG fora, 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 the 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. Capacity allowing, and should that be relevant, the LDAC will look again at climate change.

- *UNGA informal consultations on the Sustainable Fisheries Resolution*

As in previous years, the LDAC will aim in Y19 to provide informal feedback to MARE via email or through a technical coordination meeting in late September / early October 2025 to inform the shaping of the EC position ahead of the informal consultations on the UNGA Sustainable Fisheries Resolution in New York on November 2025. 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.

- Social Dimension of CFP - Labour and social aspects linked to import and trade related to fisheries

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 with the European Social Dialogue Committee (EUROPECHE and ETF) to keep informed on their work and projects and will monitor developments in the interagency FAO-IMO-ILO cooperation forum framework.

The LDAC will consider drafting some advice on the EU proposal on eradication of forced labour aimed at reforming/remedying the systemic problem linked to forced labour to produce fishing through a carding system or similar and stricter control standards of imports of fishing products entering the EU market. A proposal to start working on indicators for implementation of the fisheries control regulation, forced labour regulation, and due diligence directive could be considered for Y19.

The LDAC secretariat will follow the work of the STECF Expert Working Group on Social Data in EU Fisheries and share calls for registration on meetings and reports with its membership (last one was [EWG 25-02](#)).

- Implementation of revised IUU Fishing Regulation and the new Fisheries Control Systems

The LDAC will invite DG MARE to provide regular updates on their work on implementing the (revised) IUU Fishing Regulation. The main emphasis will be on providing feedback from operators and NGOs on strengths and weaknesses they found in practice. The LDAC is keen on exploring the possibility of developing advice on individual countries subject to the scrutiny of the EU carding system, and on the catch certification scheme/import controls (considering the entry into force of the IT system "CATCH"). It may also consider other aspects of that regulation, such as nationals.

The LDAC also commits to participate in Inter-AC technical meetings with DG MARE to discuss implementation aspects of the new Fisheries Control Systems. The LDAC will provide feedback at those meetings on aspects relevant to the external fleet and work on written advice based on the updates provided by DG MARE there.

The LDAC may also work on issues relevant to the fight against IUU fishing and fisheries control but not 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 in Y18 a [Joint AC piece of advice together with the PELAC, NWWAC and SWWAC on deep-sea mining and its potential impacts on fisheries](#) highlighting risks and reiterating its request for a precautionary pause on exploitation until further scientific knowledge and evidence are provided.

The LDAC Secretary will continue monitoring his file in Year 19 and function as liaison and coordinator of any advisory or communication requests and needs with the assistance of the WG5 Chair, key members, and technical and scientific experts on this matter.

Upon their request, the LDAC will liaise with the DG MARE unit and the Fisheries departments of the relevant EU MS (Spain, France, Portugal...) to engage in technical preparations ahead of the forthcoming ISA General Assembly and Council meetings scheduled for the second half of 2025 and first half of 2026.

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:

Adjustment on working practices, and work organization and CO2 footprint since 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 in person 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 practice has demonstrated considerable success and a high attendance rate and is expected to continue in Year 19. On the majority of the topic-based Focus and Advice 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 travel and CO2 footprint in line with MARE guidelines. It is also cost-effective in terms of reimbursements.

In terms of the 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 to be between 6-8) will now be called in Year 19 with pre-agreed terms of reference to discuss in depth technical matters with a smaller representation of LDAC members (average of 10-12 members depending on the topic) who are directly concerned or interested and have proven knowledge and expertise in 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 19 with multiple language conferencing and meetings software (e.g. Zoom, WebEx, Interactio, Microsoft 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 19 a proactive approach regarding media relations by updating and using its X 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 them of its meetings and agreed advice produced once submitted to the European Commission.

Furthermore, in year 19, the LDAC will continue for third consecutive year issuing its bi-monthly e-newsletter called "*Fishing Far*" which is free and available by email to all registered subscribers. The newsletter contains different sections including editorial, highlighting 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 regularly publicizes and disseminates the work of the LDAC. The LDAC Chair and Secretary sometimes do radio and newspaper interviews to explain the work priorities of the LDAC and recently adopted advice, based on pre-agreed messages or written conclusions.

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 afternoon).

In terms of reaching a broader audience and work with other ACs, as a result of the European Maritime Day 2024 in Svendborg on 30-31 May 2024, the Executive Secretary contacted the DG MARE coordinator of Communications to record a short media clip (1 min duration approx.) to explain the work of the Advisory Councils (composition, functioning, role in fisheries decision making, main outputs...). This video is being edited by the Inter-AC group and will be released as a media output soon.

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 Y19 its communications with the DG MARE-AC coordination team as well as the focal points within each relevant DG MARE units working with the LDAC. The aim is to keep them informed on the calendar of meetings, pending actions and upcoming advice. This is done either through the usual formal channels (MARE AC general 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 has presented together with other ACs practical proposals by a letter 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 about how sometimes this role relies mainly on a few people, who have to follow up the 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 of 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 at 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 ease 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 and agile 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 2025 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 meeting in person once or twice a year in the fringes of common fora and maintaining regular coordination via online meetings.

In this sense, it will adopt an approach on a “case by case” approach 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); governance and management of shared stocks in the North East Atlantic; ecosystem approach to fisheries management (including impact of human activities such as windmills or deep-sea mining), social and labour dimension of CFP, review of fisheries control and fight against IUU fishing, climate change impacts in fisheries; or advisory work on tuna RFMOs, amongst others.

- North East Atlantic Forum (LDAC-NSAC-NWWAC-PELAC-BSAC-CCRUP)

The LDAC intends to propose to other fellow ACs and DG MARE the creation of an Inter-AC forum in Year 19 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.

- ICCAT (LDAC-MEDAC-CC-S-CCRUP)

Regarding Inter-AC work, the LDAC will continue in Y19 the cooperation with three other ACs with interest in ICCAT (MEDAC, CC-Sud, CCRUP) initiated in March 2023 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 objectives of the Inter AC collaboration on ICCAT are:

- Set up and consolidate a forum for dialogue 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).
- Organise periodically joint AC Focus Group meeting (in person/hybrid/virtual) to deal with topics of interest in ICCAT – the LDAC organised them from March 2023 to Feb 2025 and now is the turn of the MEDAC (agenda, minutes...).
- 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.

Progress has been made already in consolidating this initiative, with regular coordination meetings between the Chairs of the ExCom and Pelagic Working Groups of the four ACs, assisted by the Secretariats, every 3-5 months. Furthermore, a cooperation agreement was approved in July 2024 by all ACs concerned with a number of short term (2024), medium term (2025) and long term (2026 and beyond) objectives. In addition, the concerned ACs are keeping informed of each other's work, sharing relevant information and working documents including advice and organising joint WG meetings where DG MARE and the relevant ACs could attend in order to prepare the ICCAT meetings. There has been also cross-references in some advice to the work of other ACs, and for example this year the advice of the LDAC was endorsed by the MEDAC and also certain references were made by CC-S. Last, a [MEDAC-LDAC-CCS-CCRUP letter asking for participation in Ambassadors' meetings and info on the progress of ICCAT MSE processes for 2025 and beyond](#) was submitted in March 2025.

- Market Advisory Council (MAC)

The LDAC Chair and Secretary will continue attending in Year 19 the Market Advisory Council Meetings (in particular Working Groups 1 and 2 and Executive Committee) in an 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; harmonized control of imports in the EU markets and evaluations of compliance of verifications of CCs by EU MS; fight against IUU fishing and impact of flags of convenience and abusive reflagging; import of products coming from forced labour. It will also look to continue collaborating on topics of shared interest, such as the implementation of the new Fisheries Control systems or the impact of Chinese fleets in world fisheries and aquaculture, amongst others.

- Outermost Regions Advisory Council (CCRUP)

The LDAC will continue inviting the CCRUP key representatives (i.e., Chair, Vice Chairs and Secretary) to attend our meetings regularly and have regular exchanges to coordinate or approach 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 CCRUP Working Group, General Assembly and/or Executive Committee meetings in observer capacity, human (time) and financial (budget) resources permitting. The LDAC has also initiated, in 2024, coordination with CCRUP to improve dialogue and co-organise future meetings with DG MARE to be briefed on outcomes of IOTC meetings (Annual Meeting, intersessional and subsidiary bodies). This does not pre-empt separate work from each AC and different advice.

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 18, 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 2025¹⁴. He also attended as member appointed by the Chairs the ICES Working Group on Stakeholder Engagement (WKENGAGE) on 25-27 March 2025 aimed to implement ICES Stakeholder Engagement Strategy based on recommendation of [WSKTIMP report](#)

More info available here:

- [MIAC 2025 report](#)
- [MIRIA-MIACO 2025](#)
- [WGENGAGE](#)

In Year 19, the LDAC will attend and actively engage in MIAC-MIACO in January 2026, 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 and OSPAR on Ecosystem Based Approach, spatial measures and climate change.

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 January 2025 between MIRIA and MIACO. The main aim of this meeting was to understand how DG MARE works with ICES and analyse Joint AC advice on stakeholder involvement in the shaping of non-recurrent requests for advice including guidelines on how this interaction can be made effectively.

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

The LDAC has teamed up with 6 other ACs to issue advice to MARE, suggesting avenues for improvement in stakeholder engagement and participation at Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries Expert Working Group meetings. Some examples of good practices of collaboration in the past from several ACs was highlighted to inspire future action.

In Year19, some LDAC members are expected to participate as observers in EWG such as Social Data. Furthermore, it is foreseen that the LDAC Secretary will continue participating in individual expert capacity at the Expert Working Group Meeting in June 2024 on the [Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet II](#) (EWG 25-07), provided he is invited by the EWG Chair based on its work experience of the last seven 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 2017¹⁵.

¹⁴ Replace provisional draft by final MIACO 2025 report when available

https://community.ices.dk/Committees/mirac/MIACO%202025%20Meeting%20Documents/02.%20Minutes/MIACO_2025_DRAFT.docx

¹⁵ https://ldac.eu/images/documents/publications/LDAC_Opinion_on_EFCA_Role_on_International_Dimension_of_CFP.pdf

In year 18, the LDAC participated actively in the Advisory Board meetings and also attended the events on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of EFCA in Vigo in April 2025.

In year 19, the LDAC is committed to continuing to play an active role as a 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 new Fisheries Control Regulation and related provisions with a 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, the margin of tolerance exemptions for tuna purse seiners, and categorisation of serious infringements, including forced labour...

Regarding international fisheries, the LDAC is interested in EFCA's work on capacity building and training with third countries, regional JDPs, MCS with RFMOs such as NAFO, ICCAT, and IOTC, and actions related to the fight against IUU fishing.

In terms of international projects, it will follow the developments of the projects in which EFCA is participating as a partner, i.e., the EU-funded WASOP project in West Africa (and its replication in other areas of the continent), and the Southwestern Indian Ocean with SWIOFC.

- 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 each organisation's joint meetings, seminars, and events.

An annual coordination meeting between LDAC and ATLAFCO-COMHAFAT will be organized in Y19 to look for synergies 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.

A specific action for cooperation for Y19 would be the dissemination and promotion of the use of the IT-CATCH system in non-EU countries/ATLAFCO countries via the design and facilitation of dedicated communication and training courses in dialogue with the European Commission

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 (Africa)

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.

As a result of the above, the LDAC will continue having in Y19 regular 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.

Planned recommendations for year 19:

No	Issue/subject	Link with the CFP	WG/FG at the origin of the recommendation	Planned date of adoption (if available)
1	Towards a new EU Strategy for External Fisheries Action	Mission letter / Evaluation of CFP	WG4-WG5	September-December 2025
2	Preparation for NAFO 47th Annual Meeting (Halifax, Sept 2025)	External Dimension / RFMOs	WG2	July-September 2025
3	Recommendations on the New generation of SFPAs	External Dimension / SFPAs	WG4	September-December 2025
4	Conservation and management of stocks, Ecosystem Approach and governance framework for NEAFC	RFMOs (NEAFC)	WG2	October-November 2025
5	Management measures for tropical tunas and sharks in preparation for the ICCAT Annual Meeting	RFMOs (ICCAT)	WG1	September-October 2025
6	Conservation and management measures for tuna and tuna-like species and sharks in preparation of WCPFC Annual Meeting	RFMOs (WCPFC)	WG1	October-November 2025
7	Social dimension of CFP	Forced labour in fisheries-related issues (e.g., indicators of forced labour in fisheries)	WG5	December 2025-February 2026
8	Management measures for tropical tuna stocks and sharks in preparation for the IOTC Annual Meeting	RFMOs (IOTC)	WG1	February-March 2026
9	Regional approach to fisheries management for shared small pelagic and/or demersal stocks in West African countries	IOG, RFMOs, SFPAs, fight against IUU fishing	WG4	February-April 2026
10	Implementation of revised Fisheries Control Systems: aspects related to external fleets	Fisheries Control Regulation, implementing and delegated acts	WG5	February-April 2026
11	Fight against IUU fishing	Carding system; CCS/IT-CATCH; country-specific advice; flags of convenience; beneficial ownership	WG5	March-May 2026

LDAC planning of meetings:**LDAC PLANNING OF MEETINGS (from 1 June 2025 to 31 May 2026)**

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-July 2025	Focus Group on Evaluation of CFP and/or External Fisheries Action	Virtual	no	n.a.	3
2	August 2025	Focus Group on NAFO	Virtual	no	n.a.	4
3	Mid-end September 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
4	Late September/ Early October 2025	Focus Group on ICCAT Tropical Tuna stocks and sharks	Virtual	no	State of play on ICCAT stocks and proposals; time plan	2
5	Mid/end October 2025	Working Groups 1 (Tuna RFMOs), 2 (North Atlantic fisheries), 4 (SFPAs) and 5 (Horizontal Issues)	Hybrid (Brussels or Spain) 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 2025	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	January 2026	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
9	January-February 2026	LDAC-COMHAFAT Annual Coordination Meeting	Hybrid (Morocco/Spain) but encouraging physical attendance where possible	yes	n.a.	3

10	February-March 2026	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 2026	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 2026	Focus Group on IOTC	Hybrid (Brussels/Zoom)	yes	IOTC	1
13	Mid/late May 2026	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 2026	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	FAO, CBD, ISA, UNGA, BBNJ	1