



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES
Fisheries Policy Mediterranean and Black Sea

The Director

Brussels,
MARE-D3/PCO (2022)

Subject: LDAC letter on DG MARE clarification on participation in LDAC's meetings

Dear Mr. López,

Many thanks for your letter of 28 December 2022 and its annex on DG MARE participation in LDAC's meetings, reminding how important it is for LDAC to have the opportunity to directly exchange with the services of the Commission. Many thanks also for the explanatory note sent on 12 January 2023 ⁽¹⁾, which complements the letter. I read them with great interest.

Let me first remind that it is also essential for us to have the opportunity to exchange directly with the Advisory Councils (ACs). You are our stakeholders' forum that enable policy-makers to benefit from your knowledge and expertise on the ground. The relation we have with you is key. When answering to your recommendations, we always share our views with you, and systematically consult you when key legislative or policy texts are drafted. We try as much as possible to be present at ACs' meetings. The invitation by our Commissioner to all the ACs in last December to be physically present and discuss Fishing Opportunities show how important it is for us to hear the ACs' voice and have a dialogue with you.

I understand that at the last LDAC working groups meetings of 25 to 27 October in Brussels, you were disappointed that most MARE colleagues were not physically present. First, let me thank the LDAC for holding its meetings in Brussels instead of Madrid, as this indeed facilitates the Commission participation. Our mission budget is now so limited that it becomes nearly impossible to be present in meetings outside Brussels. Whenever meetings take place in Brussels, DG MARE colleagues do their best to participate in person. But this is however not always possible, despite the importance DG MARE grants to the work of the ACs, given our heavy workload and limited resources.

⁽¹⁾ Ares(2023)241217

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For you to well understand the number of requests we are confronted with, I would like to stress that the number of functioning ACs steadily increased these last years (all the 11 ACs are now operational), as well as the number of meetings held and subjects covered: in mid-January 2023, already 150 meetings are planned by the ACs for 2023, and the Commission participation is requested for around 90% of them. I am sure you will understand that we do not have the means to be present in all meetings. This is why we **are working closely with the ACs' Secretariats in order to plan meetings well in advance** and ensure an appropriate participation of the Commission.

As far as **inter-ACs meetings are concerned, we do not consider it as a formal consultative body, but as a place where we can directly exchange with stakeholders on the latest and future developments** of key policy files, discuss good practices and common challenges ahead of us. These meetings avoid duplicating attendance to individual meetings and make it possible to have all stakeholders present at the same time and inform them in view of upcoming advices. As far as the meeting of 17 November is concerned, I am aware that this was a very busy period for most of us, but this is also due to the fact that we wanted to hold 3 inter-ACs meeting in 2022, in order to facilitate direct exchanges with all of you.

Let me come back to the different suggestions of your annex.

1) Inter AC and ICCAT

You acknowledge the need for strengthened coordination among the ACs and the fact that fora were set up to facilitate coordination and avoid duplication of work, but you regret the limited participation within these groups.

Indeed, because some issues concern only some ACs, the setting-up of inter-ACs groups (such as the one on Brexit) is a very good solution to discuss cross-cutting issues specific to some ACs. Similar inter-ACs groups could be developed on other issues such as ICCAT (on which you mention that 4 ACs are interested in). This would facilitate the Commission participation and exchanges on specific issues. In principle, such inter-ACs working groups should not be followed by similar presentations in other Working Groups, in order to avoid duplication of work. I am confident that solutions can be found to increase the attendance by ACs members to such meetings.

2) Control Regulation and IUU

You mention that direct exchanges on control and IUU are essential for LDAC. Our colleagues are doing their best to attend ACs meetings on these issues, but these are often cross-cutting issues for several ACs. This happened recently, when MAC requested to have a presentation on the Court of Auditors report on IUU fishing, while it had already been discussed at LDAC. Given the heavy workload our colleagues are confronted with, the best way to deal with control and IUU is to have these matters discussed at meetings where all interested ACs are present. I am confident a better cooperation on control and IUU between all the ACs will be put in place in a near future.

3) European Commission confirming attendance to LDAC's meetings

Since a few months, a consolidated planning of ACs meetings is available internally within DG MARE. This planning is constantly updated in accordance with the information we receive from the ACs. Colleagues are encouraged to plan and register their participation to meetings. I am confident that in a near future, this tool will facilitate

DG MARE participation to ACs meetings, and contribute to a swifter feedback by MARE colleagues on their attendance to ACs meetings.

Let me thank the LDAC for its collaboration and remind how dear our collaboration with you is. Should you have any further questions on this reply, please contact Ms Pascale COLSON, coordinator of the Advisory Councils (Pascale.COLSON@ec.europa.eu; +32.2.295.62.73).

Yours sincerely,

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