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EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

International Ocean Governance and Sustainable Fisheries
The Director

Brussels,
MARE.B.3/LR

Dear Mr Lopez,

Thank you for submitting, on 13 March 2026, the Long-Distance Advisory Council (LDAC) advice on the impacts of climate change on distant-water fisheries in non-EU waters, as a follow-up to the discussions held during the LDAC working group 5 meetings in 2024 and 2025 and to the dedicated Seminar on linkages between CFP External Dimension and Climate Change, held in Stockholm on 25 May 2023.

First, I would like to congratulate and thank the LDAC for the well-coordinated work carried out in preparing the above-mentioned advice. The comprehensiveness of your recommendation reflects the effort and expertise that the LDAC has invested in its advice.

We share your starting point: climate change is increasingly affecting fisheries resource distribution, migratory patterns, abundance and productivity and seasonal availability of both target and by-catch fish stocks. Climate change impacts also negatively affect the operational conditions and economic predictability for EU distance-water fleets and coastal communities reliant on small-scale fisheries. These changes underline the importance of ensuring that fisheries management remains sustainable, science-based and responsive to changing climate conditions.

We take good note of the potential threats you identify, including changes in stock productivity, ecosystem disruptions, increased operational costs and safety concerns, as well as possible geopolitical tensions arising from climate-driven shifts in stock distribution. These challenges reinforce the importance of international cooperation and sound, evidence-based fisheries management.

I welcome your advice to integrate climate considerations more systematically into EU fisheries relations. DG MARE is working towards identifying measures to strengthen the implementation of ecosystem-based approaches to fisheries management that take account for climate change and other non-fishing pressures. These considerations are also relevant to the development of the new generation of Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPAs).

It also highlights the role of SFPAs in a changing climate. You stress the importance of considering more flexible adaptive approaches in the implementation of SFPAs in response to climate change. I agree that climate-related challenges are also facing EU fleets operating under fisheries agreements.

As you know, the mission letter of Commissioner Kadis includes the development of a new generation of SFPAs that is aligned with the EU's broader regional strategies and priorities. In line with our objectives under the European Ocean Pact, the new generation of SFPAs will prioritise sustainability, fairness and transparency. We take good note of your suggestions to integrate climate considerations more systematically into EU fisheries relations with partner countries, including through policy dialogue, scientific cooperation, relevant legislation, funding instruments and SFPAs. Such considerations can contribute to strengthening the resilience of fisheries partnerships while ensuring that management decisions remain grounded in sound scientific advice.

The example of West Africa, where climate change negatively impacts distribution, productivity, and seasonal availability of small pelagic species, illustrates well that climate change is already causing impacts on EU SFPAs.

Regarding the role of Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs), the EU has systematically promoted incorporating the impacts of climate change in these fora. In particularly, the EU has insisted on maintaining the RFMO work on this issue and ensuring that potential climate change effects are, to the extent possible, incorporated in the scientific models underpinning the stock advice in RFMOs. This is particularly important for cases where Management Strategy Evaluations are developed.

We also take good note of your recommendations to integrate climate resilience considerations into the design, implementation and evaluation of SFPAs. These include developing climate-informed fisheries management approaches for fisheries and adaptive approaches to access; where appropriate, they also include financial contributions, earmarking EU external funding for fisheries-related climate adaptation measures, and considering climate risks in sectoral support programming, ensuring that adaptation measures support sustainable resource use. We also take stock of your recommendation to ensure that EU external fisheries, development, climate and trade policies consistently recognise challenges facing developing coastal communities.

Regarding your recommendations to evaluate and address data requirements for climate-related monitoring as part of ecosystem-based fisheries management (EBFM) implementation, I can ensure you that the CFP, including its external dimension, is backed by the existing data collection framework and avoids creating additional reporting obligations for EU fleets – striving for simplification and efficiency. To share a concrete example, the bilateral scientific collaboration under the EU-Mauritania SFPA Joint Scientific Committee (JSC) has addressed EBFM research and analyses for several years now, including climate change. Most recently, the JSC recommended the establishment of a continuous monitoring programme in selected ecologically sensitive areas along the Mauritanian coast, with a view to protect cold-water corals and providing for an early-warning system of toxic oxygen-minimum zones. This illustrates how scientific cooperation under SFPAs can contribute to improving knowledge of marine ecosystems and informing fisheries management.

Lastly, we also take note of your recommendation to promote the development and operational use of advanced forecasting tools for fish distribution and abundance, in the context of the regular scientific process of RFMOs, provided that these forecasting tools would be reliably integrated in the work of the scientific bodies and that potential outcomes concretely address the remaining scientific uncertainties in this area.

DG MARE will continue to carefully examine these recommendations.

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

Yours sincerely,

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