

Conference on New Generation of EU SFPAs: A multi stakeholders' perspective

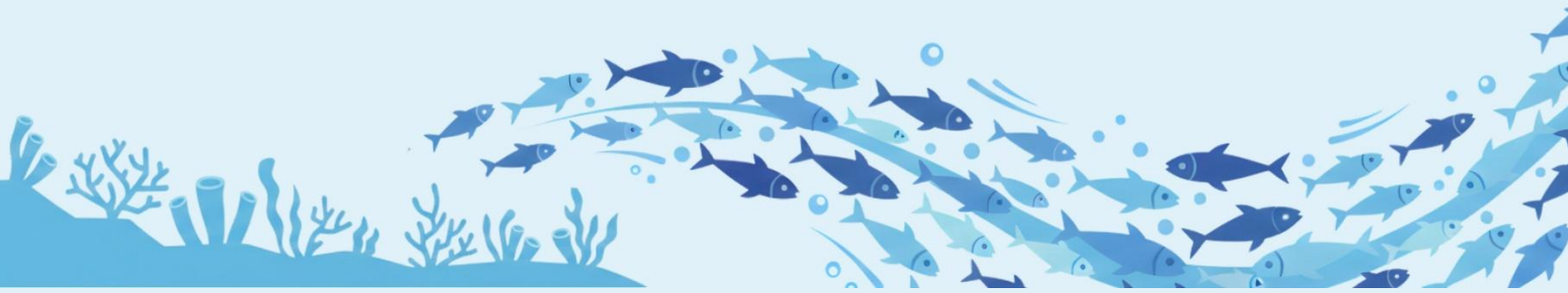
EESC Brussels, 8th April 2026

MEETING RECOMMENDATIONS

Session 1: The value of EU SFPAs for international governance and sustainable fisheries

The LDAC recommends that the next generation of SFPAs should:

- 1. Continue existing as all parties reaffirmed their unanimous support for the continuation of Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements**, recognising their strategic importance in the External Dimension of the CFP.
- 2. Become instruments that are part of the EU external fisheries action in terms of ocean governance and EU ocean diplomacy.** This framing would contribute to sustainable fisheries management, transparency, and rules-based international cooperation.
- 3. Provide a stable and predictable long-term financial, legal and operational framework for the activity, competitiveness and employment of the EU fleet through a coherent and increased network of agreements.**
- 4. Promote a level playing field between EU and non-EU fleets**, ensuring that all operators fishing in partner countries comply with equivalent standards on sustainability.
- 5. Be integrated into broader EU bilateral partnerships with coastal states**, ensuring strategic policy coherence for sustainable development through RFMO frameworks, EU trade policy and development cooperation, amongst others.



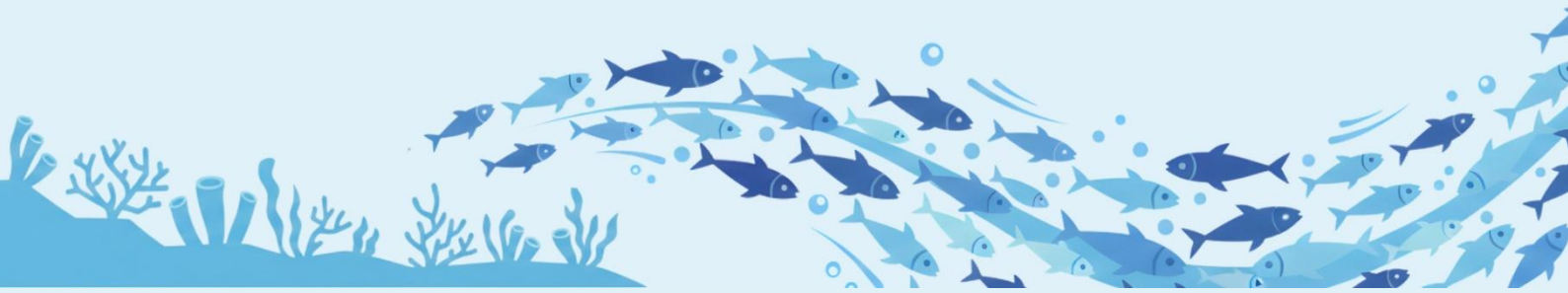
6. Improve communication on the role and benefits of SFPAs, both within the EU and in partner countries, with specific examples of best practices in terms both of the optimisation of fishing access and sectoral support.

- Better public understanding of SFPAs could be achieved by shifting the focus on the narrative from access arrangements to cooperation partnerships and governance outcomes, ensuring that the primary measure of “value” is the contribution to fisheries governance, science, control, and socio-economic benefits for partner countries. It is also important to actively acknowledge and address misperceptions from public opinion in partner countries.
- Promotion of participatory governance could be achieved including structured stakeholder consultation processes in both the EU and partner countries (e.g. advisory groups, local platforms).

7. Strengthen the implementation of the transparency and non-discrimination clauses.

- A better implementation should include clearer definitions, monitoring, and enforcement mechanisms, including to prevent more favourable treatment of competing fleets and to promote informed stakeholder participation.
- It is also worthy to promote full transparency as a foundation of legitimacy, including publicity of access arrangements with other countries, full list of licenses granted by the third country, timely publication of Scientific and Joint Committees reports, identification of information gaps, and improved reporting on sectoral support and its beneficiaries.

8. Address technical and access constraints that undermine the economic viability of EU fleet operations.



Session 2: Exploring future pathways: how can SFPAs contribute to social, economic and environmental sustainability in partner countries?

The LDAC recommends that the next generation of SFPAs should:

1. **Use SFPAs as ocean diplomacy tools**, whereby the EU supports the ratification and implementation by partner countries of international sustainable development commitments and initiatives (e.g. SDGs, FAO PSMA, ILO Conventions, VGSSF, FiTI, etc)
2. **Prioritise fish for human consumption rather than processing into fishmeal and fish oil**, both in partner countries and in the European Union.

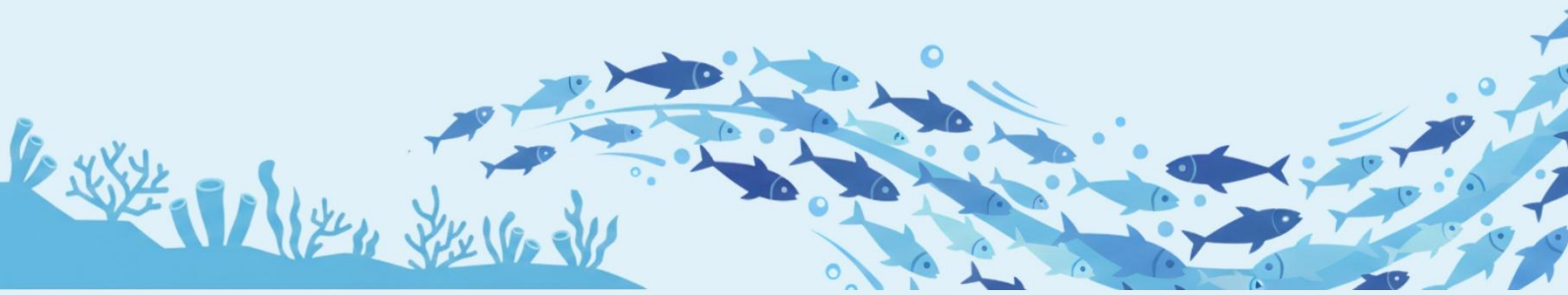
3. **Ensure sectoral support contributes to visible and tangible benefits.**

This can be done by strengthening local value addition, including processing, storage and distribution, while supporting infrastructure, science and governance, and promoting job creation, decent work and benefits for coastal communities. These better conditions should encourage landings.

4. **Enhance synergies between sectoral support and other EU funding instruments**, including regional programmes and development cooperation, to maximise impact.

5. **Apply strengthened new social and labour clauses with practical implementation tools to make them feasible.**

Any social and labour clauses should promote decent work and human rights in fisheries, including effective implementation of relevant clauses under SFPAs. Implementation tools should be developed in areas such as training, recruitment agencies, implementation of safety at sea instruments, and monitoring mechanisms.



6. Integrate women's role in fisheries and post-harvest sectors within the sectoral support in the protocols of the agreements.

It is particularly important to recognise, make visible and support the role of women in fisheries in partner countries, particularly in post-harvest and processing sectors where they are the majority of the working force. This should include access to resources, development of infrastructures, and involvement in decision-making.

7. Address the issue of dormant agreements to have a common view on how to resolve them (NB: we are currently working on an advice on this topic).

8. Encourage SFPAs to function as a coordinated network, contributing to regional governance rather than isolated bilateral arrangements.

Promote a coherent regional approach to SFPAs, including harmonised management measures, joint scientific work, and cooperation with regional organisations

(e.g. SRFC, ATLAFCO-COMHAFAT, ECOWAS, CECAF, AU).

9. Ensure that EU control requirements are workable and fit for local realities and conditions, respecting third countries' regulatory frameworks, without lowering standards.

Enhance monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) through digital tools (ERS, VMS), observer systems, and strengthened partner-country capacities.

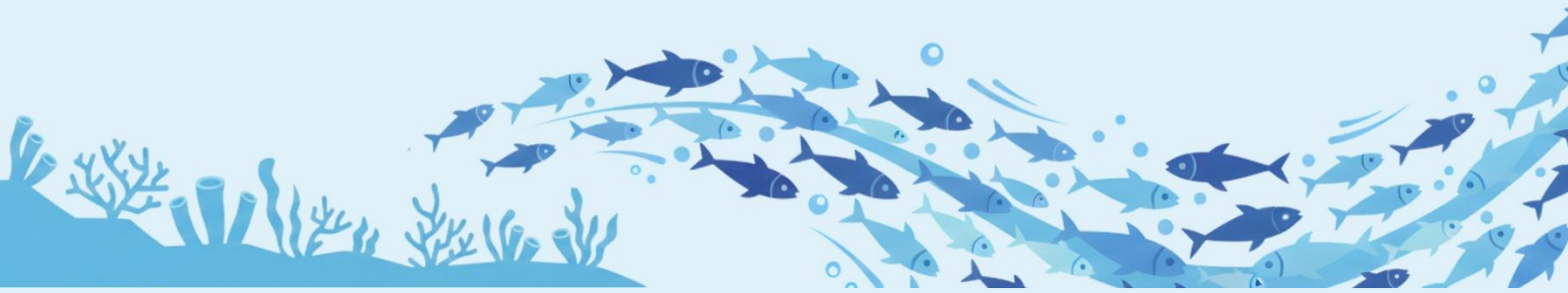
10. Include provisions on EU fisheries investments in third countries (aka joint ventures) in SFPAs to ensure that they contribute positively to sustainability, transparency, and the development objectives of the CFP external dimension.

- Promote transparency of all fishing activities of EU origin, including joint ventures and reflagged vessels, ensuring consistent standards across all operations.
- Encourage transparency on beneficial ownership of vessels and operators, as part of broader efforts to improve accountability and combat IUU fishing.
- Create a specific register for fisheries joint ventures.



11. **Strengthen scientific assessments and data systems**, including regional cooperation, improved data collection (including small-scale fisheries), and integration of socio-economic data.
12. **Ensure that management decisions follow scientific advice and a precautionary approach.**
13. **Include a dedicated budget line for communication and participation within SFPAs**, in order to improve transparency, visibility, and stakeholder informed participation to their negotiation and implementation.
14. **Allocate sufficient human and financial resources within MARE to SFPA negotiations**, ensuring that agreements are concluded, renewed, and implemented in a timely and efficient manner.
15. **Increase the overall EU budget for SFPAs in the 2028–2034 Multiannual Financial Framework.**

These changes should contribute to mutual trust and long-term partnership frameworks between the EU, third countries, and the fishing fleet, fostering stable, predictable, and cooperative working relationships.



Session 3. The SFPAs in practice: operational aspects for fisheries & fleets

Panel 3.1. on demersal and deep-sea fisheries

The LDAC recommends that, for demersal and deep-sea fisheries, the next generation of SFPAs should:

- 1. Improve transparency on all fleets fishing the same stocks, promoting equal standards and a level playing field.**

Transparency should apply to all fleets exploiting the same resources, promoting a level playing field and enabling meaningful assessment of fishing pressure and fairness.

- 2. Address technical and access constraints that undermine the economic viability of EU fleet operations.**

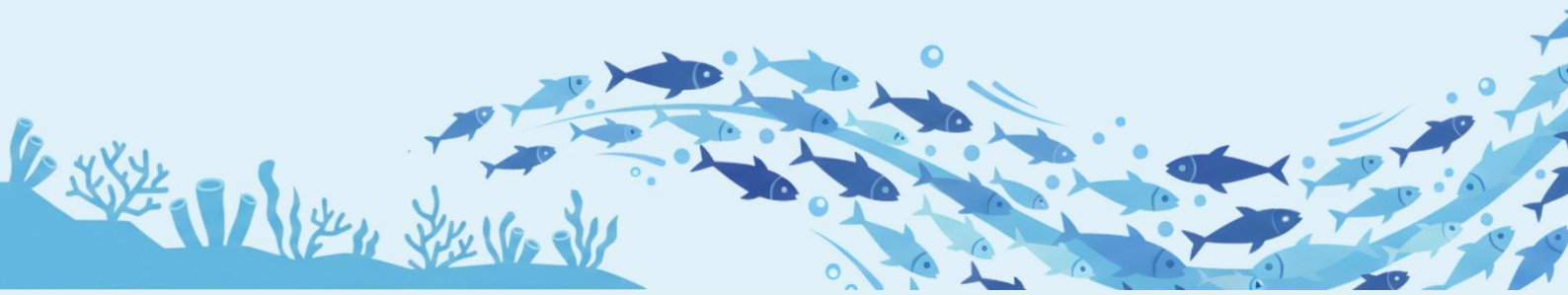
Listen to the practical problems that fishing operators are facing for meeting the requirements established in the SFPAs protocols, with periodic reviews and dialogue through joint meetings and setting of remedial actions to solve access limitations if needed.

- 3. Base access on sound science and sustainability evidence on the determination of the surplus, while ensuring predictability and stability for EU fleets through the life of the protocol.**

Access conditions should be based on robust scientific evidence and sustainability criteria, including impacts on local ecosystems and food systems.

- 4. Consider benefits to local economies, while acknowledging the contribution and long-term benefits that the EU partnership brings.**

Economic benefits for partner countries should be strengthened, including landings, port use, logistics, and employment.



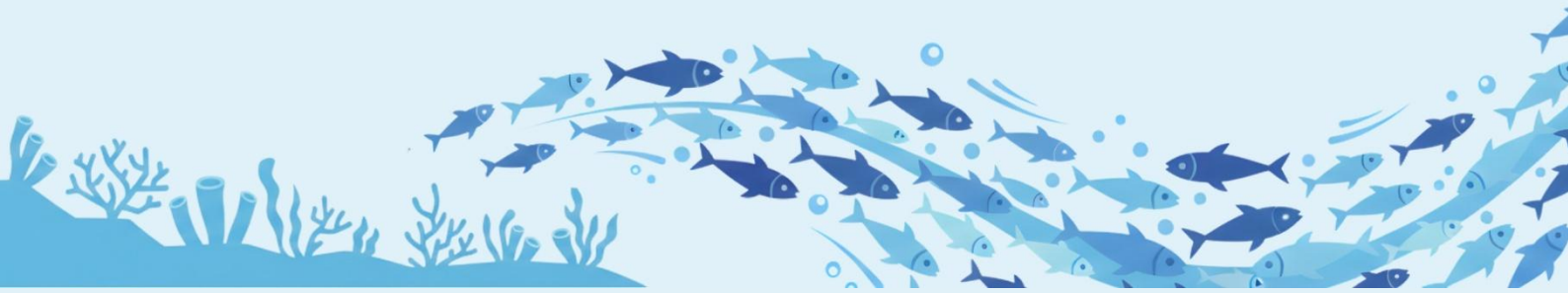
5. **Protect artisanal fisheries and coastal communities in the implementation of the SFPAs through cohabitation and concerted management practices.** Some examples of concerned and management practices are technical measures, including spatio-temporal closures, zoning, such as spatial-temporal closures. These practices must be set through a participatory and inclusive approach with consideration of local livelihoods.



Panel 3.2. on tuna fisheries

The LDAC recommends that, for tuna fisheries, the next generation of SFPAs should:

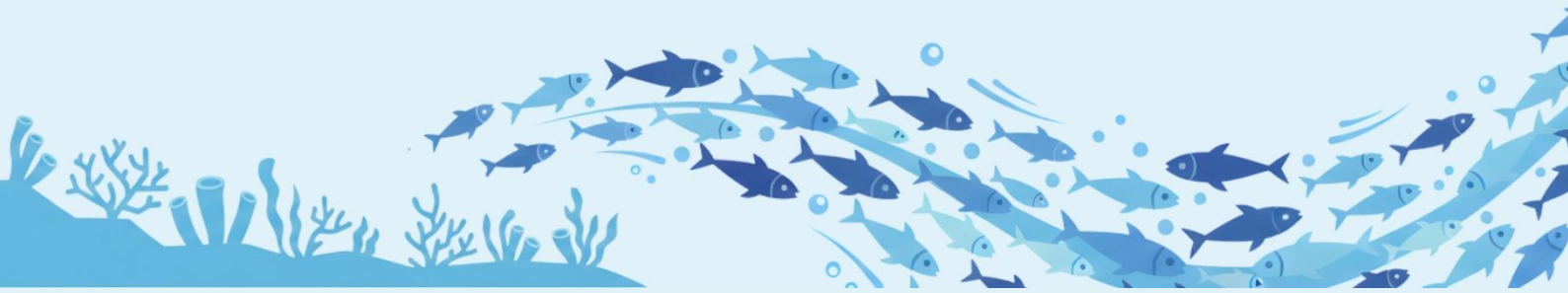
- 1. Recognise the strategic role of tuna SFPAs in ensuring a stable supply of raw material for the EU processing industry and contributing to food security.**
- 2. Improve coherence and communication between tuna agreements and RFMO frameworks** to ensure consistency in management measures and access to fisheries resources.
- 3. Promote a level playing field among fleets** by ensuring that all operators, including third-country fleets, comply with equivalent standards on sustainability, control, transparency and labour conditions.
- 4. Strengthen monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) systems**, including through capacity building, digitalisation and cooperation with partner countries and control authorities, and through a regional VMS in tuna RFMOs.
- 5. Promote equally stringent measures across all gear types**, avoiding policies that single out specific gears, devices, or fleets for commercial advantage.
- 6. Review and address the cumulative impact of EU fisheries regulation and RFMO decisions on the viability of the tuna fleet**, with a view to reversing its ongoing decline and safeguarding the EU's capacity to maintain and conclude SFPAs.



Panel 3.3. on small pelagics

The LDAC recommends that, for small pelagics, the next generation of SFPAs should:

1. **Support the development of a regional, science-based, participatory management approach for shared small pelagic stocks, in line with regional frameworks (e.g. subregional fisheries commissions),** including appropriate allocation mechanisms prioritizing the use of small pelagics for human consumption.
2. **Reinforce investment in scientific research, data collection (including from small scale fisheries), and monitoring tools,** notably through sectoral support and enhanced regional cooperation, highlighting the role of CECAF in ensuring continuity and robustness of stock assessments.
3. **Promote transparency and a level playing field** by encouraging improved reporting of fishing activities and catches for all fleets, as well as greater traceability across all value chains, including data on fishmeal and fish oil production.
4. **Contribute to food security** by encouraging, through SFPAs and other EU partnership initiatives, uses of small pelagics for human consumption, alongside support for appropriate landing, storage and processing infrastructure in partner countries.
5. **Further support the resilience of local fisheries value chains** by promoting investment in infrastructure, market access and skills, with due consideration to the role of small-scale fisheries, women and coastal communities.



6. **Enhance coherence between bilateral SFPAs** by fostering coordination with regional management initiatives and aligning relevant technical measures where appropriate.

7. **Address technical and access constraints that undermine the economic viability of EU fleet operations**, including landing infrastructure, recruitment of local crews, access to ports, closed areas, etc.

END

