



**Europêche presents main points of concern for the fishing sector  
at a decisive moment for its future**

*-For immediate release-*

Mr Aguiar Machado, Director General of the Directorate-General for Fisheries in the European Commission (DG MARE), met today with a delegation of fishing representatives from Europêche to discuss industry's concerns relating to recent political and legislative developments at European and international level. Both Mr Machado and Europêche positively valued the good results in achieving sustainable fisheries, leading to healthier stocks and greater socio-economic benefits for the sector. However, the sector recalled the importance to adopt workable measures that can realistically be applied by the industry which has not been the case with the landing obligation. In addition, Europêche requested further efforts and diplomatic pressure for more fisheries agreements with 3<sup>rd</sup> countries which must be linked to trade and regional policies.

Concerning the external dimension of the CFP, both Mr Machado and Europêche members agreed that Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPAs) are the most transparent and mutually beneficial fisheries agreements in the world. For this purpose, the sector requested diplomatic support at the highest level to renew the agreements with Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea and Morocco on fair terms, among others. In light of this, the EU fishing sector stressed the need to establish a coherent network of SFPAs to secure fishing access to our vessels.

In addition, Europêche expressed frustration over the latest Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (RFMO) negotiations that took place in the Atlantic and Mediterranean (ICCAT) as well as in the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC). The EU is becoming increasingly isolated and therefore it is becoming extremely difficult for their officials to defend the interests of the EU fishing sector in international waters. The outcome of ICCAT negotiations was disappointing since the sector expected greater quotas for bluefin tuna and the adoption of a management plan in view of the positive scientific assessment that reported the full recovery of this emblematic species. Concerning the Indian Ocean, a coalition of 3<sup>rd</sup> countries are trying to twist the allocation criteria so as to expropriate the historical rights of the EU long-distance fleet which have been investing and contributing in a decisive manner to the economic development of coastal communities in the Western Indian Ocean. If the position from this coalition is adopted, it is clear that the fishing resources allocated to coastal states that are not able to exploit them, will end up in the hands of the highest bidder such as the fleets from Asian countries which have no regard for the sustainability of the fishing populations or local communities, as demonstrated in Western Africa.

Europêche also stressed the importance of the relations between the EU and Norway, however recalled the significance of defending the rights of Member States in Svalbard. The situation still remains unbalanced and overly favourable to Norway, particularly to the detriment of the EU crabbing fleet. Therefore, Europêche requested further efforts from the European Commission (EC) and their legal services to tackle this issue.

On a different topic, fishing representatives agreed with the EC on the need to simplify the framework established back in 2009 for the control of fishing activities. More specifically, according to the sector, this legislative revision should translate into a harmonised sanction system, cost-effective monitoring systems for under 12 meter vessels, inclusion of recreational fisheries, reduction of red tape and strengthening the role of the European Fisheries Control Agency.

The sector also raised concerns regarding the upcoming trilogue negotiations to adopt the new regulation for the conservation of fishery resources which regulates how, where and when fishermen may fish. Europêche is still worried about the proposal to ban pulse fishing which was based on emotions and not science. Moreover, the enlargement of certain mesh sizes for the demersal fishing fleets, coupled with more environmental standards, stringent objectives, and unchanged catch composition rules will certainly condemn the sector to extinction. The industry needs maximum flexibility in order to comply with the landing obligation and achieving MSY levels by 2020. Under a full documentation regime, fishermen should be allowed for more flexibility.

In light of the EC's upcoming proposals for Multi-Annual Plans (MAPs) for the management of demersal fisheries in the Western Atlantic and Western Mediterranean, the sector requested tailor-made and workable rules to adequately implement the CFP on a regional basis.

Javier Garat, President of Europêche, declared: *"We appreciate the readiness from the EC to overcome the multiple problems faced by the European fishing industry. We are at a crucial moment in time, where the decisions taken by the Commission will shape and influence the future of fisheries. 2019 will be a landmark year defined by the full entry into force of the landing obligation, Brexit, and MSY levels for all commercial stocks. Therefore, we request the full support from the European Institutions to adapt to the new fisheries scenarios and to continue operating both in European and international waters. It cannot be forgotten that we are dealing with the livelihood and safety of the fishermen and their families."*

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**Europêche** represents the fisheries sector in Europe. Currently, the Association comprises 10 national organisations of fishing enterprises from the following 8 EU Member States: DE, ES, FR, IT, MT, NL, LV, PL.

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