

Long Distance Regional Advisory Council

First General Assembly, Madrid, 29 May 2007

Opening Ceremony

Speech by J. Manuel Liria, LDRAC Provisional Chairperson.

Good morning to you all. Firstly, I would like to express my gratitude to the Spanish Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Mrs Elena Espinosa, for chairing this event, reinforcing once again her commitment to this long distance fleet RAC, which was included in the Decision to create RACs at the last minute, thanks to Spain's perseverance.

I would also like to acknowledge the presence of the representative of the European Commission, Mr Emilio Mastracchio, Director of Resources and Relations with stakeholders in the DG Fisheries, who is following very closely the establishment and activities of the different RACs.

Special thanks are also due to the Secretary General of Maritime Fisheries for coming and for his enormous support from the very beginning to the work leading to the constitution of the LDRAC, and for his contribution during the initial phase providing a great deal of human and economic resources that have been essential for us to be able to make this RAC a reality today, as well as for his long-term commitment regarding the financing of the latter.

Additionally, I am very grateful to the rest of participants in this table: Javier Garat, Secretary General of FEOPE, who has acted as Coordinator during these months, carrying the burden of responsibility on a daily basis, as well as Joaquín Padilla, Chairperson of ONAPE, and Francisco Rodríguez, Vice Chair of FEABP, organisations which, together with FEOPE, have taken the initiative of launching the creation of the LDRAC and have provided their support over a period of more than two years.

Finally, I would like to thank all of you present today, representatives of all catching sectors from different countries and the rest of stakeholders, those of you who represent the different administrations and those attending as observers.

More than a year ago, in the last preparatory meeting held in Brussels, we managed to reach basic consensus that enabled the launching of the procedure according to which the RAC would be created as envisaged in Article 3 of the Decision and, even though it has been a long and difficult path, it has finally reached a satisfactory conclusion with the publication of Decision of 29 March 2007 in the OJEC, where the European Commission declares the LDRAC operational.

Following this Decision and the logistic activities and paperwork carried out by the Provisional Secretariat in the last months, we hold today this first Assembly in a

situation in which we can make up for lost time by starting working from tomorrow, since the way has been paved: The organisation has been constituted as a legal person according to the Spanish Association Act, there is an embryonic Secretariat ready to perform its role and, concerning financing issues, all contracts with the Commission have been signed in order for funding to be ensured – the Framework Contract and specific Agreements regarding partnership and specific translation and interpreting activities -, thus we hope we will soon have funds in the account to be able to be operational. In this sense, the Spanish Minister has recently ratified her will to shortly provide the RAC with the contribution made by Spain, and we hope that the representative of the Commission will confirm that we will soon be able to have the funds at our disposal.

The only thing we are still missing, which is therefore the task upon which all of us here should focus, is the ability to ratify the consensus reached last year and to evolve towards making it a reality, building an organisation which is sufficiently representative and effective. With this aim, I appeal to your generosity and forward-looking approach. We must be capable of leaving aside futile arguments and dealing with what is fundamental so that today we can appoint by consensus the different governing bodies of the LDRAC. This is the only way to have a clear path before us that will enable us to start working from tomorrow.