

## General Assembly Minutes

Thursday 30 January 2020  
13:30-15:50  
Avenue de Cortenbergh 168,  
1000 Brussels

**Welcome from the Chair, Guus Pastoor**

**Adoption of agenda and minutes last meeting (13.02.19): adopted**

**Keynote Speech on new European Commission's priorities – Bernhard Friess, Acting Director-General, DG MARE**

- **Exchange of views**

Acting Director-General Bernhard Friess (DG MARE) highlighted that Commissioner Sinkevičius was keen to meet with the MAC and remained committed to participating in a future meeting. The Acting Director-General emphasised the importance of the MAC's work and cooperation, expressing appreciation for the MAC's feedback on the Commission's priorities and implementation.

Concerning the European Green Deal, Mr Friess stated that the Commission is still setting out its policies, taking into account the early stage of the new College of Commissioners and European Parliament. There has been a large shift in focus. Society needs to change ways of living, consumption, and production. The objective of the European Green Deal is for Europe to be the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. The oceans are a key element of this objective. Fish stocks are moving. The ocean environment is declining dramatically. Solutions are needed for the ocean. The solutions can be in the areas of renewable energy, food and feed, cleaning of the seas, and sustainable economic solutions. In order to reach climate neutrality, 25% of electricity production needs to move offshore, so the use of the oceans will have to change.

Mr Friess emphasised that the oceans produce healthy and sustainable food. The efforts in the Atlantic, Baltic, and North seas have been quite successful in achieving sustainable fisheries. Taking into account the plateau situation of wild fisheries, it is necessary to look into sustainable aquaculture and alternative sources of food, such as algae. On this issue, Asia is more advanced than Europe. The European Green Deal will set a Farm to Fork strategy, which also covers seafood. The aim is to assess the existing food system. The Commission will put forward a new policy for aquaculture. The aim is for the European aquaculture sector to be more competitive and



sustainable. The Commission wants to put out a policy on algae production in Europe. At the 2019 Blue Bioeconomy Forum, it was possible to assess different ways in which biotechnology can be used in the maritime sphere. The Commission wants to reduce and remove obstacles to biotechnology.

In terms of consumption, it is necessary to help consumers make sustainable choices. Consumers have been requesting this help and the production and distribution chain is aware. Discussions with retailers demonstrate that this issue is high on their agenda. The Commission has been evaluating the seafood marketing standards framework and published an evaluation study the previous month. The findings were that the current framework does not do much to ensure sustainability of seafood. The MAC will be able to contribute to the elaboration of market-related issues under the Green Deal. The Commission will make sure that the MAC is aware of the consultations. The Commission is aiming to come up with a new proposal on seafood marketing standards by the end of the year. Mr Friess drew attention to other aspects that affect seafood production indirectly, such as the use of the sea. There is a EU directive on maritime spatial planning, which is quite advanced when compared to other areas of the world. The spatial plans are rather advanced, particularly in the North Sea. The Commission needs to look into this topic again. If there will be more offshore wind energy production, it is necessary to look into intelligent ways to use the space and to bring stakeholders together.

Mr Friess underscored that the Green Deal has a very strong environmental aspect. The Commission will initiate a Biodiversity Strategy which will cover the EU's ambitions, but also define the EU's positions in multilateral negotiations. The EU will also be engaging in the UN negotiations on BBNJ for which it is a key player. The Commission is working with scientists and colleagues on a R&D programme specifically for the oceans. The Commission is aiming to reach out more than just professionals, but also young people and schools through the Ocean Literacy Platform. The Commission wants to promote investment in sustainable innovative companies in the maritime sphere. The BlueInvest Day would bring together start-ups and financial institutions and foundations. Additionally, the Commission remains committed to addressing Brexit and achieving good results.

The Chair highlighted that, in the upcoming years, the MAC will be involved in many areas, which will require considerable interaction between the Commission and the ACs.

LIFE, in relation to the strategy for economic development and sustainable environmental development, wanted to know what was foreseen from a social perspective for coastal communities.

ETF requested information on the Green Deal's plan for workers at sea, taking into account the importance of sustainability of the CFP.



Acting Director-General Bernhard Friess (DG MARE) responded that, in terms of socio-economic trends, at the macro-level, the European fleet is not performing badly. There are good results in terms of income and wages. Nevertheless, there are large differences between areas. The Commission is worried the declining of local fisheries in the Baltic Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, which affects small-scale fishing communities. Mr Friess highlighted that the new EMFF will provide more leeway for Member States in the use of the fund. Stakeholders need to discuss with national authorities on how to use the fund. There are several areas that require funding, such as fisheries data and control, but the rest remains quite open. In order to ensure healthy communities, it is not possible to build on subsidies on the long-term. There must be a good baseline on the businesses' side.

ETF argued that the social element needs to be at the same level as environmental management. It is necessary to reflect on the promotion of blue employment.

Acting Director-General Bernhard Friess (DG MARE) argued against distinguishing different elements of sustainability. Resources need to be maintained in Europe, in order to ensure that the relevant professions continue to be attractive. There are several regulations on this area that need to be implemented by the Member States.

Irish South & West Fish Producers Organisation stated that they would like for the Commission to look differently at the industry, including at the capital in coastal communities. In relation to subsidies, they emphasised that coastal communities are being affected by climate change, which will have massive impacts in the industry.

Marine Stewardship Council welcomed the Commission's initiatives to ensure sustainable choices. MSC asked the Commission if they could reflect on how these could develop in the seafood market. They particularly wanted to know the relation with other food, particularly if the Commission was taking fragmented approach for each market section or an horizontal approach.

VisNed drew attention to an event organised the previous week at the European Parliament on the transition to offshore wind energy production. They wondered on the feasibility of coexistence between energy production and fisheries. This would mean a paradigm shift from the sea as a source of a food to a source of energy. They called on the Commission to pay attention to both perspectives, particularly the impact to coastal and rural communities that will not benefit from large-scale development of energy at sea.

CFFA-CAPE wanted to know how the Commission will project the Green Deal in relations with third countries. Trade agreements increasingly include provisions on sustainability, but are not very detailed. Therefore, they wanted to know the tools that will be used by the Commission.



FEDEPESCA emphasised that the Commission must take an holistic vision of the chain until the retailer has contact with the consumer. All value chain operators need to be helped in preparing for these new challenges. Citizens need to be informed on responsible consumption, they argued. Acting Director-General Bernhard Friess (DG MARE) emphasised that the existing environmental impacts will continue to increase. Temperature rise and acidification will probably accelerate, which will be a large challenge. Future generations will deal with food insecurity and large migrations. This is the reason for the EU to try to move towards a sustainable economy. The EMFF is a tool that can be used to support local initiative and which has ample scope.

Irish South & West Fish Producers Organisation stressed the importance of access to financial instruments.

Acting Director-General Bernhard Friess (DG MARE) highlighted that there will be a new EMFF, which will work together with regional funds. It will be possible to use it for climate change allocation. Concerning marketing standards, the Commission will aim for an harmonious approach across all food chains. DG MARE will work to ensure alignment with DG AGRI. Concerning offshore windmill, it is a matter of ensuring compatibility of uses in the future. Regarding international trade, the EU strives to promote sustainability across the world. There will be a new strategy for future cooperation with Africa. The EU is aiming for sustainable fishing globally through several instruments. The IUU Regulation encourages countries to assess their fisheries management systems. The EU promotes multilateral forums. Mr Friess expressed his appreciation for associations that promote local fisheries in other countries. The Acting Director-General agreed with the comments on responsible consumptions. The Commission can promote transparency and standards, so that consumers are informed. The change needs to happen through consumers, while the Commission can try to raise awareness.

The Chair expressed the MAC's willingness to work on the issues mentioned and to cooperate with the Commission.

## Social Dimension of the Seafood Market

- **Presentation by Mariana Toussaint, Fishery Trade Expert, FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture**

Click [here](#) to access the presentation.

Mariana Toussaint (FAO) proceeded with a presentation on social responsibility in the fish value chains. Ms Toussaint highlighted that, over the world, labour rights are being violated. There is a large number of abuses in the fisheries sector. There are problems of enforcement and capacity. The voice of fisher workers is not being heard. This happens at all stages of the fish value chain and not only in developing countries. Several reports show appalling working conditions in the



fishing sector, particularly in fish processing plants and on-board fishing vessels. The situation is difficult to monitor and there are strong elements of human trafficking and forced labour, which is associated to IUU fishing. Migrant workers are a particularly vulnerable group. During the past years, several multi-stakeholder processes at national and regional level have called for the promotion of decent work in the sector, particularly the recognition of labour rights across the fish value chain.

The Chair highlighted the important work done by FAO.

- **Exchange of Views**

ETF emphasised FAO's work with socio-economic stakeholders in Europe in different forums, including with other ACs. ETF highlighted FAO's work to develop the economies of third countries, including the Ministerial Conference on Fishing Vessel Safety and Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing, in Torremolinos. ETF underscored the close connection between IUU fishing and child labour, which requires reflection in the MAC.

Mariana Toussaint (FAO) highlighted that, the previous year, FAO worked with ILO, UNCTAD, and other organisations. They hope to continue cooperating with other international organisations on these topics.

Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation mentioned that that the MAC, in relation to the revision of the marketing standards framework, will be assessing how to incorporate socio-economic aspects. They wanted to know if Ms Toussaint had any views on this issue, particularly on fish marketing standards and the social dimension. Additionally, they wanted to know if the FAO is working on this topic.

Marine Stewardship Council asked for more information on the Social Benchmark Tool.

Mariana Toussaint (FAO) responded that the FAO has standards that are more focused on small-scale fisheries. The FAO does not have instruments or guidelines. In 2018, FAO started developing a guidance document, which has been submitted to the members for consultation and development of the scope. In relation to the Social Benchmark Tool, the FAO is collaborating with GSSI.

Marine Stewardship Council highlighted that the tool is available and would be used for social aspects. They wanted to know to which schemes the tool would be applied to.

Mariana Toussaint (FAO) responded that she would request information to her colleagues working on the tool.



## Update on the work done per Working Group

- **Working Group 1: Sean O'Donoghue**

Sean O'Donoghue, Chair of Working Group 1, explained that the Production & Marketing Plans Guidelines had been successfully distributed to a wide audience, particularly to POs. Regarding the EMFF, the previous day, WG1 held a good discussion and agreed on several action points, including the recirculation of the MAC's advice to the European Parliament. On EUMOFA, the Commission was very helpful and the WG1 agreed on a number of initiatives. On the economic viability of the fleet, the WG will be focusing on the STECF report. The attendance of the annual meeting as an observer has been resolved. The issue of average price continues. On marketing standards, the external consultant's study needs to be assessed and there are new ToR for the FG being developed. As for the landing obligation, with the conclusion of the first year of implementation, there will be data available to assess the effects on the market.

- **Working Group 2: Andrew Kuyk**

Andrew Kuyk, Chair of Working Group 2, highlighted the adoption of the advice on Level Playing Field, which focused on the rules applicable in the EU and in third countries. The WG will be focusing more on the sustainability and socioeconomic dimensions. On the Control Regulation, the European Parliament is restarting its work on the file. On trade agreements, the WG discussed issues of sustainability and social justice. On EUMOFA, the WG discussed the need for a common basis of data on market trade flows. As for the STECF report on the economic performance of the EU fish processing industry, this will be presented in the May meeting.

- **Working Group 3: Georg Werner**

Georg Werner, Chair of Working Group 3, highlighted the positive feedback on the plastics workshop, adding that the MAC benefited from the external views on marine litter. The Chair expressed hope that the same will happen with the ecolabels workshop. A workshop report was produced on the plastics workshop. The topic will be raised again at the next WG meeting. The Secretariat will aim to identify the initiatives of other ACs, in order to develop a clear plan of action. On scientific denominations changes, a letter was sent to the Commission, which received a reply. A representative from Poland raised the issue of another letter sent by the Commission on this topic. The Commission is still reviewing the letters on brown crab and PCBs in fish oil. On Horizon Europe, the WG assessed the position of the MAC. On caviar labelling, the topic has been forward to the Executive Committee,



in order for the MAC to react with a letter with views of the MAC on the AAC's recommendation. On the ecolabels workshop, the ToR will be circulated by written procedure for the members' consideration. On consumer information, the draft document produced by the FG has been made available to WG3. The next WG3 meeting should hold an informed discussion, following consolidated written feedback. As for the labelling of vegetarian products and nutritional labelling, these topics will be discussed at the next WG meeting.

### Administrative Matters

- **Presentation by Pedro Reis Santos, Secretary General**
  - **Final Report of Year 3 (2018-2019)**
  - **Update on the Work Programme of Year 4 (2019-2020)**

Click [here](#) to access the presentation.

The Secretary General proceeded with a presentation on the Final Report of Year 3 and an update on the Work Programme of Year 4. The General Assembly approved the annual report.

- **Presentation by Panos Manias, Financial Officer**
  - **Discharge of Accounts of Year 3 (2018-2019)**
  - **Update on Accounts of Year 4 (2019-2020)**

Click [here](#) to access the presentation.

The Financial Officer proceeded with a presentation on the discharge of accounts of year 3 and an update of the accounts of year 4.

Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation highlighted that there is potential for a significant surplus. The Management Team should dedicate more attention into the accounts. Meetings with additional days should be considered.

The Financial Officer responded that a few additional meetings could be organised, depending on the venue selected.

OPPC-3 stated that, if there is a surplus, the organisation of additional meetings could be considered. At the same time, additional meetings are not necessary useful, so the agenda of the meetings must



also be considered. They highlighted that it can be difficult to book a hotel room in Brussels for less than 100€ per night, so they suggested an increase in the reimbursement to the members.

OPP72 drew attention to the limits to transportation costs applied by the MAC.

The Chair highlighted the difficulties of holding several meetings in two days, adding that increasing the time per WG meeting should be considered. Potentially, there should be one additional day for the WGs. Members should also assess the need to continue combining meetings, adding that there should be sufficient time for Executive Committee meetings. The Management Team will discuss these matters.

### **Election of the Executive Committee Members**

- **Presentation of the candidacies**
- **Vote on the Executive Committee (2020-2023)**

The Representatives of the Value Chain members voted, via secret ballot, on the allocation of the five seats designated to the “primary producers catching sector” for which there were 6 candidates.

The results were the following:

- EAPO: 39 votes
- Europêche: 39 votes
- COPA COGECA: 38 votes
- Les Pêcheurs de Bretagne: 38 votes
- VisNed: 37 votes
- LIFE: 4 votes

There was a total of 41 ballots cast, including 2 invalid ballots.

The General Assembly agreed, by consensus, on the remaining composition of the Executive Committee for the 2020-2023 period. Click [here](#) for the full composition.

### **Election of the Chairmanship of both the General Assembly and Executive Committee**

- **Presentation of the candidacies**
- **Vote on the Chair of the MAC (2020-2023)**

The General Assembly re-appointed, by consensus, Guus Pastoor as Chair of the MAC.



## Election of the Working Group Chairs

- **Presentation of the candidacies**
- **Vote on Working Group 1, Working Group 2, Working 3 Group Chairs (2020-2023)**

The General Assembly re-appointed, by consensus, Sean O'Donoghue as Chair of Working Group 1.

CFFA-CAP expressed concerns regarding the candidature of Andrew Kuyk for Chair of Working Group 2, since the European Commission might not be willing to share all information on Brexit with a representative of the UK's industry.

ETF highlighted that the sector might need to adapt taking into account the sovereignty issues. Nevertheless, dialogue must be maintained after the Brexit date.

LIFE argued that it could be useful to invite representatives of the UK's industry from time to time, but that they would prefer separation on the Chair position.

Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation expressed understanding for the concerns of the previous speakers. They highlighted that the Commission's reply to the NWWAC request for clarification on UK membership of the NWWAC after 31 January 2020 was quite clear that the ACs do not customarily play an active role in negotiations on international fisheries agreements, which would rule out any conflict of interest for UK members of ACs while the negotiations are ongoing.

OPPC-3 agreed with ETF that moderation and calm are needed, adding that they were not opposed to the re-election of Andrew Kuyk. The MAC can re-elect Andrew Kuyk, while taking into account future developments in the Brexit negotiations.

The Chair suggested that the MAC could elect another member as Chair of Working Group 2, if the situation changes at the end of the transition period.

OPPC-3 stated that the MAC would not necessarily have to wait for the end of the year. If there are unexpected changes, Mr Kuyk might need to stand down.

The General Assembly re-appointed Andrew Kuyk as Chair of Working Group 2. The re-appointment was supported by all present members with the exception of CFFA-CAP due to the abovementioned concerns.

Andrew Kuyk, Chair of Working Group 2, committed to not chair discussions where there is a conflict of interests. If there would be a continued permanent conflict of interests, he would stand down.

The General Assembly appointed, by consensus, Benoît Thomassen as Chair of Working Group 3.



## **AOB**

- **Election of the Working Group Vice-Chairs**

The General Assembly re-appointed, by consensus, Katrin Vilhelm Poulsen as Vice-Chair of Working Group 2 and Pierre Commère as Vice-Chair of Working Group 3.

The General Assembly agreed that a call for candidates for Vice-Chair of Working Group 1 should take place ahead of the May 2020 meetings.

- **Next meetings**

The General Assembly agreed to hold meetings on 22 and 23 of September. The dates for the May meetings would be circulated at a later stage via email.



## List of attendees

Representative	Organisation
Alexandre Rodríguez (observer)	Long Distance Advisory Council's Secretariat
Andrea Albertazzi	ETF
Andrew Kuyk	AIPCE-CEP
Ángeles Longa	EMPA
Anna Boulova	FRUCOM
Béatrice Gorez	CFFA-CAP
Benoît Thomassen	FEAP
Bernhard Friess	European Commission
Brian O'Riordan	LIFE
Christine Absil	Good Fish Foundation
Claudia Orlandini	LIFE
Cristina Fernández (observer)	United Kingdom (Seafish)
Daniel Voces de Onáindi	Europêche
Dovile Vaigauskaite	European Commission
Eduardo Míguez	Puerto de Celeiro S.A. – OPP77
Els Bedert	EuroCommerce
Emiel Brouckaert	EAPO
Erik Bjørn Olsen	Danish Society for a Living Sea
Frangiscos Nikolian	European Commission
Georg Werner	Environmental Justice Foundation
Guus Pastoor	AIPCE-CEP
Javier Garat	Europêche
Hans Nieuwenhuis	Marine Stewardship Council
Haydeé Fernández	CONXEMAR
Janne Posti	Marine Stewardship Council



Representative	Organisation
Javier de las Peñas Rivero (observer)	Spain
Joanna Żurawska-Łagoda (observer)	Poland
José Basilio Otero Rodríguez	Federación Provincial de Cofradías de Pescadores de Lugo
José Carlos Escalera Aguiar	Federación de Cofradías de Pescadores de Cadiz (FECOPESCA)
Juan Manuel Trujillo Castillo	ETF
Katarina Sipic	CONXEMAR
Kathryn Stack	FEAP
Katrin Vilhelm Poulsen	WWF
Malin Skog	DPPO
Mariana Toussaint	FAO
Mathilde Voisin	Market Advisory Council
Matthias Keller	Bundesverband der deutschen Fischindustrie und des Fischgrosshandels e.V.
Marc Eskelund	EUfishmeal
María Luisa Álvarez Blanco	FEDEPESCA
Massimo Bellavista	COPA COGECA
Nicolás Fernandez Muñoz	OPP72
Patrick Murphy	IS&WFPO, CLG
Paulien Prent	Visfederatie
Pedro Reis Santos	Market Advisory Council
Pierre Commère	ADEPALE
Pim Visser	VisNed
Purificación del C. Fernández Alvarez	OPPC-3
Rosalie Tukker	Europêche
Sean O'Donoghue	Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation

