

MINUTES No. 91
General Assembly Meeting – Part I
16 September 2025 – Hybrid format
Gran Canaria
08:50 a.m. –12:30 p.m. (local time) | Int.: PT, FR, ES and EN

Introduction and Nature of the Meeting

The General Assembly of the Advisory Council for the Outermost Regions (*Conselho Consultivo para as Regiões Ultraperiféricas* - CCRUP) met in joint session with the Market Advisory Council (MAC) in a hybrid format, convened from the HN Imperial Playa Hotel. The meeting was held with simultaneous interpretation in Portuguese, French, Spanish and English, commencing at 9 a.m. (local time) on sixteen September two thousand and twenty-five (16 September 2025).

1. Welcome Session

Mr Basílio Otero, President of the CCRUP General Assembly, and Ms Yobana Bermúdez, President of the MAC, opened the session by welcoming all participants.

Ms Yobana Bermúdez recalled that, in accordance with the provisions of the Common Fisheries Policy Regulation, the MAC holds competence over “all market-related areas”. Following an initiative by the CCRUP, an opportunity arose to conduct an in-depth examination of the specific characteristics of markets in the Outermost Regions, including the challenges associated with insularity. This would make it possible to discuss issues relating to the organisation of the sector, procurement policies of local companies, consumption patterns, labelling, certification, as well as consumer information, among other topics. She expressed her appreciation for the availability shown by representatives of the European Commission—particularly those from Spain, Portugal and France—as well as by the European Fisheries Control Agency and the Government of the Canary Islands, for their participation in the debate. She also thanked the members of both the MAC and the CCRUP for their valuable contributions, which have helped to advance the development of the European Union fisheries and aquaculture sector. In addition, she acknowledged the work carried out by the MAC and CCRUP Secretariats in coordinating and organising the meeting.

Mr Basílio Otero thanked all participants and speakers for their presence and congratulated the Secretariats of both Advisory Councils on the successful organisation of the event. He also expressed

his thanks to the interpreters.

2. Market Situation for Fisheries and Aquaculture Products in the Canary Islands - Isabel Artime – Secretary-General for Fisheries, Spain;

Ms Isabel Artime highlighted that fishing is deeply rooted in the culture of the Canary Islands, representing both an economic activity and a way of life. She stated that the region’s small-scale fishing sector plays a particularly significant role, with 117 vessels engaged in small-scale fisheries. Of these, approximately 90% are low-capacity vessels, while 53 larger vessels are primarily dedicated to tuna fishing. She further noted that the Canary Islands also host an international fleet of 23 high-capacity vessels operating in international waters across various regions of the world, including areas such as Argentina. Total landings in the Canary Islands amount to approximately 50,000 tonnes, generating around EUR 100 million in revenue. She highlighted that 70% of the total volume of landings was carried out by the larger vessels. Despite representing a relatively small share of total volume, 8% of landings accounted for 70% of total value, due to the high market price of certain species, notably red porgy (*Pagrus pagrus*) and bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*), which were marketed locally and constituted a central element of the islands’ social and economic fabric. She further emphasised the importance of fish processing and aquaculture and reported that 39 processing facilities were currently operating in the Canary Islands, contributing to local food supply and employment. The aquaculture sector comprised around 200 units, producing approximately 8,000 tonnes per year, valued at EUR 70 million. The sector had recorded steady growth, with continuous diversification into new species, including the cultivation of seaweed alongside traditional species. She also explained that tuna species accounted for around 50% of all catches, giving them significant commercial relevance for both local markets and exports. Spain remained one of the four largest markets worldwide for fisheries and aquaculture products. However, the country imported approximately 15,000 tonnes more than it exported, highlighting the importance of ensuring food security. With regard to challenges, she acknowledged the specific difficulties associated with insularity, as well as a range of broader structural issues. The average age of vessels in the Canary fleet was 44 years, which complicated the management of operating costs and sustainability requirements. She underlined the need for fleet renewal, with the aim of enhancing safety and competitiveness. The structuring and organisation of the fisheries sector were also of critical importance, with three main producer organisations operating in the islands. She also praised the innovative work carried out by these organisations, notably the incorporation of drones and satellite communication technologies to improve efficiency and activity monitoring. She reiterated

Spain's strong commitment to combating illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, describing it as an ongoing challenge. She explained that Spain ensured that all imports of fisheries and aquaculture products were 100% documented, with approximately 140,000 checks processed annually by a dedicated national team. She stressed that adequate European Union funding was essential for fleet modernisation, strengthening competitiveness, improving marketing mechanisms, and reinforcing control and traceability systems. She expressed concern that the current proposal from the European Commission does not satisfactorily address these priorities and called for collaborative work between the Advisory Councils and EU institutions in order to ensure robust and continuous funding capable of securing the sustainability and future development of the sector.

3. Market Situation for Fisheries and Aquaculture Products in the French Outermost Regions – Padma Chinta – Director of the Fisheries Economics Office of the French Ministry responsible for Fisheries;

Ms Padma Chinta highlighted that fisheries constitute a key driver of economic development in the Outermost Regions, particularly in terms of food autonomy, and emphasised the ambition to achieve sustainable development in those territories. Fisheries and aquaculture markets in the French Outermost Regions displayed a range of economic characteristics; in terms of Gross Domestic Product, these sectors were highly significant both for the overall economy and for the livelihoods of local populations. However, major disparities existed, particularly in *Mayotte*, which experienced high levels of unemployment and poverty. She noted that a number of common challenges affected these regions, including a strong dependence on imports, especially in *Mayotte*, where domestic production covered only 15% of internal consumption, corresponding to 2,000 tonnes per year out of a total consumption of 60,000 tonnes. French *Guiana* constituted an exception, benefiting from a more integrated structure. She also stated that price increases were significant, with the cost of living standing 30–40% higher than in mainland France. Some regions, such as French *Guiana* and Réunion Island, benefited from a well-structured offshore fishing sector, demonstrating territorial resilience. By contrast, other regions experienced more fragmented fisheries, with production dispersed across different areas, such as Guadeloupe and Martinique. This fragmentation led to seasonal production peaks, creating challenges for the supply of ready-to-consume products, value addition of fishery products, and employment generation in restaurants, cooperatives, canteens and hospitals. She explained that structural limitations of the fleets in these regions—largely composed of vessels under 12 metres—further constrained resource utilisation, while larger vessels, representing only 2% of the fleet, accounted for 20% of total landings. The fleet had also undergone significant ageing since 2008,

with 25% of vessels having disappeared and innovation remaining limited, highlighting the need for fleet renewal. Aquaculture remained underdeveloped and exposed to climatic risks, characterised by unreliable equipment and limited local production. The Aquaculture Plan 2021–2027 aimed to promote projects focused on sustainable development and the strengthening of local food sovereignty, while also seeking to stimulate maritime services and supply methods adapted to extreme climatic conditions. She highlighted the importance of public structures and European support, calling for compensation mechanisms and high-level monitoring within programmes such as EMFAF, with a view to strengthening territorial structures. Adaptation to European Union rules and state aid schemes was of crucial importance to support fleet renewal and aquaculture development, requiring dedicated national policies and additional data collection. Overall, the priority was to modernise fleets, ensure the sustainable use of resources, and enable fishers in the Outermost Regions to reach their full potential, while simultaneously reinforcing economic and food security.

4. Market Situation for Fisheries and Aquaculture Products in the Portuguese Outermost Regions – Salvador Malheiro - Secretary of State for Fisheries and the Sea of Portugal

Mr Salvador Malheiro stated that it was an honour to take part in an event which, in his words, symbolised the diversity, strength and potential of the EU’s Outermost Regions. He thanked the organisers and the authorities of the Canary Islands and underlined the importance of this annual meeting as a platform for frank and pragmatic dialogue between the regions and the European institutions. He emphasised that the CCRUP plays a decisive role in ensuring that the voice of the Outermost Regions is duly heard and taken into account in the formulation of European policies. He highlighted the unique economic and ecological importance of the Azores and Madeira, whose maritime sectors are central to Portugal’s coastal communities and function as strategic Atlantic hubs, making significant contributions to the fisheries and aquaculture value chain, tourism, gastronomy and marine conservation. He recalled that the Azores host the largest network of marine protected areas in the North Atlantic, covering 30% of their waters, a political decision underpinned by scientific evidence and the involvement of multiple sectors. This reality demonstrated a profound commitment to sustainability and the long-term resilience of resources. In the Madeira region, oceanographic campaigns were under way aimed at mapping marine habitats and assessing ecosystem services, providing essential data to guide the designation of future marine protected areas and to strengthen the commercial positioning of Madeiran products in markets that value transparency. He also referred to the recent inclusion of the waters of Macaronesia (Madeira and the Canary Islands) within the scope of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) under the international regional convention

for the protection of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR), an important step towards environmental convergence while respecting regional specificities. In addition, the adoption of the Maritime Spatial Plan for the Azores meant that Portugal now had full national coverage in terms of maritime spatial planning, harmonising uses such as conservation, fisheries, aquaculture, energy and research. Turning to current market dynamics, he highlighted that inflation and rising energy costs had led to higher nominal expenditure on seafood products but lower consumption volumes, creating challenges for producers in remote regions where logistics are costly. Although demand for sustainable and traceable products was increasing—giving the Azores and Madeira a competitive advantage—structural challenges persisted, including small-scale production, high logistics costs, fleet ageing, fuel prices and labour shortages. He underlined the need for targeted EU support, particularly through enhanced compensation for additional costs under EMFAF, covering energy, transport, packaging and freezing, with reduced administrative burden and greater predictability. He likewise proposed the establishment of dedicated logistics corridors for the cold chain of perishable products and the acceleration of the Strategic Plan for Portuguese Aquaculture, with a focus on administrative simplification and access to maritime space. In terms of priorities, he noted that in the Azores, pole-and-line-caught tuna and high-value demersal species should be positioned in value-added markets, supported by efficient logistics and increased scale to boost regional revenues. In 2024, tuna fisheries generated approximately EUR 12.4 million, while landings of blackspot seabream (*Pagellus bogaraveo*), totalling 506 tonnes, generated EUR 8.6 million. In Madeira, black scabbardfish (*Aphanopus carbo*) continued to be a flagship species, accounting for 61% of landings in 2024 and generating EUR 11.5 million in revenue. Overall, regional fisheries generated EUR 16.7 million, although they continued to face high operating costs and ageing fleets. He highlighted the remarkable growth of Madeiran aquaculture, which had increased by 355% in volume and 484% in value since 2016, stressing the need for further spatial planning, technological innovation and the use of MAR2030 funds to offset additional costs. Finally, he called for the transformation of the natural and scientific assets of Portugal’s Outermost Regions—from marine protected areas to cutting-edge oceanographic research—into competitive advantages based on sustainability, traceability and value integration. He reiterated Portugal’s willingness to work closely with other Outermost Regions and with the European Commission in the implementation of concrete measures with defined objectives and timelines. He further expressed confidence that, through cooperation and shared commitment, the CCRUP could help convert structural challenges into tangible opportunities for the fisheries and aquaculture sectors of Europe’s Outermost Regions.

5. Questions and Answers

Mr Ruben Farias (Azores Fisheries Federation) highlighted the importance of a multisectoral

approach. While fleet renewal was crucial, Member States should provide different forms of support to strengthen fisheries structures, particularly in French Guiana, and he asked whether there were plans to address key issues such as IUU fishing.

Ms Padma Chinta replied that France was strongly committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and highlighted two priority areas for the Outermost Regions: access to European funds for fishers and aquaculture operators, and regional measures to ensure access to infrastructure. She explained that the existing compensation scheme was functioning adequately but constituted a short-term solution, and that France intended to support the Outermost Regions through long-term strategies and plans. She underlined that this would require collaboration between professionals, public services and different stakeholder groups, including in the area of fleet renewal. She also noted that support mechanisms should address a range of challenges, such as onboard safety and improving the attractiveness of the sector, and stressed the need to ensure that all instruments and tools were effective for fleet renewal while respecting sustainability concerns. She added that continuous efforts would be required to maintain and improve efficiency in the coming years.

Mr David Pavón (*Regional Federation of Fishermen's Guilds of the Canary Islands*) emphasised the importance of synergies and identified several critical issues for the Outermost Regions. First, with regard to Marine Protected Areas, small-scale fishers required enhanced protection, as certain species were vital both for fishing activity and for ecosystem health. The European Commission should take this reality into account and ensure the exclusion of fleets that exert negative impacts on those species. Second, stringent EU regulations should be assessed in the context of global competitiveness, as other fleets may not be subject to the same standards, which represented a cause for concern. Third, in relation to imports, stricter parameters were needed to sanction fleets that failed to comply with existing regulations. Finally, funding and the special status of the Outermost Regions were of fundamental importance: without strategic differentiation, these regions could face serious difficulties in competing with larger producers, and it was essential that the European Commission prioritise such differentiation in order to secure a viable future for the Outermost Regions.

6. Director-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of the European Commission –
Charlina Vitcheva;

Ms Charlina Vitcheva highlighted the strategic importance of the Outermost Regions, describing them as economic drivers requiring differentiated attention. She underlined the dual role of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) in supporting fisheries and aquaculture, both as primary production sectors and as markets. She also acknowledged the essential contributions of the Advisory Councils in promoting sustainability and fair competition, noting that almost 200 opinions had underpinned

discussions and key decision-making processes. She highlighted the challenges faced by the Outermost Regions, in particular the vulnerability of small-scale fishers resulting from limited resources and infrastructure, which constrained their ability to compete with industrial fleets and raised concerns regarding a level playing field. Competition from production in third countries also constituted a significant challenge. She further noted that the development of aquaculture, despite its high potential, remained uneven due to structural, environmental and market barriers. The European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund provided EUR 130 million for structural measures specifically targeted at the Outermost Regions, complemented by EUR 180 million to compensate for additional costs arising from geographical isolation and other structural constraints. These funds were intended to enhance economic efficiency and improve market access, both locally and internationally. She also presented key initiatives of DG MARE, beginning with the launch of the European Ocean Pact at the United Nations Ocean Conference, attended by the President of the European Commission and several Heads of State and Government, including the President of the French Republic and the Prime Minister of Spain. The Pact was structured around six pillars: healthy oceans, the blue economy, coastal vulnerability and climate adaptation, maritime security and defence, the development of research and knowledge, and international ocean governance with third countries. She underlined that the Pact would be implemented in a cross-cutting manner by the European Commission services and would facilitate inclusive dialogue and exchanges with stakeholders in the development of the Ocean Act. She highlighted the forthcoming EU Strategy for Islands and Coastal Communities, which would address a range of issues, including resilience, connectivity, food security and environmental developments. An update of the European Strategy for the Outermost Regions would also be launched, and she further drew attention to the ongoing evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy, which included the provisions of the Common Market Organisation Regulation. She stated that the evaluation involved multiple studies aimed at identifying areas for improvement and potential legislative developments, and informed that the Commission was also assessing consumer information and the framework applicable to labelling, covering aspects such as transparency, consumer understanding, origin and method of production, as well as compliance and enforcement. In her view, coherent and transparent labelling strengthened consumer trust and market competitiveness. With regard to the next Multiannual Financial Framework, she stated that the proposal was based on flexibility, an integrated approach and an agile financial instrument. The Outermost Regions were covered by the requirements applicable to national plans, with Member States required to demonstrate specific attention to these regions in areas such as housing, transport, migration and climate change. Although a minimum amount of EUR 2 billion had been earmarked for policy instruments in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, the objective was to move away from siloed funding approaches, thereby enabling access to

additional sources of financing. The sector could benefit from support drawn from all three pillars of the Multiannual Financial Framework. She added that cooperation between DG MARE and the Advisory Councils would be essential to promote sustainable development and strengthen the competitiveness of the Outermost Regions.

Mr François Herman (*Syndicat des Producteurs Aquacoles de Guadeloupe*) stated that the aquaculture sector was well developed in the Canary Islands and in Portugal, but he emphasised, however, that research efforts in France's outermost regions were woefully inadequate, if not non-existent. IFREMER's disengagement from aquaculture in these regions poses a serious concern for the future and sustainable breeding of native species (as recommended by the IUCN for more sustainable aquaculture). He expressed concern about market competition from producers operating to lower standards, in particular Vietnamese pangasius (*Pangasianodon hypophthalmus*). He asked about potential actions to improve product quality and strengthen employment, while at the same time ensuring greater transparency and consumer trust. He called for the reinforcement of local production, notably through research, knowledge dissemination and practical support.

Mr Nicolas Fernández (*Organización de productores pesqueros artesanales Lonja de Conil 72*) expressed concern regarding climate change and its significant impact on fisheries and markets. He noted that some species had disappeared, others had shifted distribution, and exotic species had become established. While scientists might require more time to fully assess these dynamics, the small-scale fisheries sector was facing a situation of crisis. He stated that both the European Commission and the Member States were not providing an adequate response to the challenges affecting small-scale fishers. He called for a clear definition of the concept of small-scale fisheries, stressing that this had direct implications for eligibility for funding. He also requested support to facilitate international trade among small-scale operators.

Mr Julio Morón (OPAGAC) stated that the European Commission was creating inconsistencies in its policies. With regard to funding for the blue economy, although the European Commission was promoting ambitious objectives, reductions in financial support—from EUR 6 billion to EUR 2 billion—were undermining the future of fisheries and the implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy.

Mr Jean-Michel Cotrebil (*Comité Régional des Pêches Maritimes et des Élevages Marins de Martinique*) described the situation in French Guiana, emphasising that little had changed despite persistent concerns. He reported the presence of around 300 illegal vessels in Guianese waters, noting that conditions in Martinique were even more severe. He questioned the origin of the official data published, observing that figures for the catch index for 2023 and 2024 were available, and highlighted delays attributable to segmentation. He underlined that 97% of certain fisheries depended on the

Outermost Regions and called for the adoption of practical measures to support them. Critical infrastructure problems were also identified, including broken ice machines, vessels up to 40 years old, and the lack of support from Member States. He requested that the authorities visit the territories to observe the problems first-hand, noting that many vessels had sunk and that local authorities lacked the capacity to remove them. He also highlighted broader infrastructure challenges, including intermittent funding and delays in access to funds.

Ms Maria Luísa Álvarez Blanco (FEDEPESCA) agreed with Mr Julio Morón and underlined that the Spanish fisheries sector was at a critical juncture, with the ongoing evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy and the Common Market Organisation. She emphasised that it was widely recognised that the sector had faced significant difficulties, stressing the importance of adding value across the entire fisheries value chain. She called for small-scale fishers not to be overlooked throughout this process. Within the framework of the ongoing evaluation of the CFP, she questioned how the policy and its funding could be better aligned and, in particular, how funds were effectively reaching small-scale fishers competing with much larger vessels, and also how to promote small-scale operators by encouraging fish consumption as part of a healthy diet, at a time when consumers were showing increasingly limited knowledge of fisheries products. She underlined the need to raise consumer awareness regarding the origin of the fish they purchase and noted that, in Spain, one third of fish consumed was imported, which she described as an unencouraging signal for the future. She further highlighted the importance of promoting social cohesion within the sector, particularly to reduce the gap between coastal and rural communities and urban areas.

Mr Pedro Capela (Associação de Produtores de Atum e Similares dos Açores) expressed concern regarding the manner in which marine protected areas were being established. Although the fisheries sector was not, in principle, opposed to marine protected areas, it did not agree with the way in which the process had been conducted. He underlined that an adequate socio-economic study should have been carried out beforehand, describing its absence as a serious error. He also argued that fleet restructuring had become a necessity, although funding for this transition remained uncertain. Despite references to potential funding sources, it was not clear where effective financial support would come from. He warned that, for his fleet, many areas would soon become restricted, leading to the loss of traditional fishing practices.

Ms Charlina Vitcheva (Director-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of the European Commission) acknowledged that the potential of aquaculture in the Outermost Regions was unevenly developed. She noted that research in this field was robust, particularly in France through IFREMER, and highlighted the availability of EU funding specifically earmarked for research to support studies and projects promoting aquaculture. She referred to the sustainable blue economy package presented

in 2021, which identified key elements and best practices to unlock the potential of aquaculture, while also recognising that consumers continued to show a strong preference for wild-caught fish. She further noted that promotional campaigns, such as the European aquaculture campaign, as well as other initiatives, were available to support the sector. With regard to social and economic requirements, she informed that DG MARE was examining how labelling and consumer information could be used, within the framework of the Common Market Organisation, to strengthen them. She recalled that the EU regulation on forced labour prohibited the placing on the market of products associated with forced labour practices. She underlined that robust data collection constituted an essential element for more accurately reflecting the realities of the Outermost Regions. She stated that climate change had also been identified as a key factor affecting small-scale fisheries, with funding opportunities available under Horizon Europe and the Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters” to support studies on impacts on the seabed and climate effects. She indicated that fisheries were integrated into policy priorities, notably within the European Ocean Pact, ensuring that stakeholders were adequately represented and that decisions were based on real-world data. With regard to the Multiannual Financial Framework, she stressed that EUR 2 billion constituted the minimum amount, reiterating that the objective was to eliminate siloed approaches between funds, in particular through enhanced cooperation with Member States. With respect to French *Guiana*, she highlighted the intensive dialogue maintained with the French authorities, as well as the commitment undertaken with neighbouring countries. Specific missions were carried out to combat IUU fishing in the waters of French *Guiana*, with the support of the French Navy, and with regard to state support mechanisms, she acknowledged that, although some delays had occurred, several decisions had already been authorised, including support for the construction of small vessels. Their implementation would now fall to the Member States. With regard to the definition of “small-scale fisheries”, she highlighted that 75% of the EU fleet fell within that category and that, in the Outermost Regions, the proportion was even higher. In her view, it would not be acceptable to classify vessels over 12 metres in length as small-scale, and DG MARE would continue to support small-scale fishers. She recognised the importance of a value-chain-wide approach, which was essential to address both the impacts of climate change and the challenges of sector profitability, notably through strengthened research and decarbonisation. She also acknowledged concerns related to the process for designating Marine Protected Areas, stating that such instruments should integrate fishers into decision-making processes and that this issue would be duly taken into account in future exercises.

7. Relevant initiatives of the European Parliament for Fisheries and Aquaculture Product Markets in the ORs – Member of the European Parliament’s Committee on Fisheries – Gabriel

Mato (Video);

Mr Gabriel Mato (Member of the European Parliament’s Committee on Fisheries) began by thanking those present for the opportunity to address them and stated that the work of the Advisory Councils had always been highly valuable to politicians. As they could not attend all meetings, he noted that, even at a distance, they sought to closely follow the work carried out and to give due weight to the recommendations put forward. He argued that the Advisory Councils should be granted greater influence and be listened to more attentively by the European Commission (EC), as well as within the Council of the European Union. On the importance of fisheries and aquaculture in the Outermost Regions (ORs), he considered that they were not only economic drivers but also fundamental pillars of employment, cultural heritage and food security, as they produced high-quality products for local markets while facing challenges unknown to any other EU region, such as higher production costs, limited fishing economies and strong competition from imports. For these reasons, several parliamentary initiatives had emerged in the fisheries sector. The European Parliament consistently advocated measures tailored to the Outermost Regions, recognising their structural disadvantages, in particular through the strengthening of specific support schemes such as the additional costs compensation scheme, with the aim of supporting the sustainable development of the fisheries sector and ensuring its continuity in the next financial framework. He stated that fisheries and aquaculture in the Outermost Regions required specific measures adapted to their needs and realities. He stated that he had been advocating for several years for the creation of a single European Union legislative instrument encompassing all relevant provisions, following the model of the Programme of Specific Options to Address Remoteness and Insularity (POSEI). He explained that POSEI applied across all economic sectors and had proven successful in agriculture, and that they therefore believed the same model should be extended to fisheries. The request to establish a POSEI for Fisheries had been included in his report the previous year on the future of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), which had received strong support from the European Parliament. He highlighted that the Commission’s proposal for the future Multiannual Financial Framework represented a genuine threat to the specific treatment that has traditionally been granted to the Outermost Regions. The European Parliament was clearly opposed to the abolition of the single national plan in the future financial framework, as proposed by the European Commission. He reiterated that they would continue to firmly defend the need to safeguard funding for fisheries and aquaculture in a clearly differentiated manner. He considered that the CFP, by its very nature, was a truly European achievement and that, consequently, its budget should remain European. The potential transfer of the additional-cost compensation scheme for fishers in the Outermost Regions to other mechanisms could entail unprecedented budgetary risks, without any guarantee that current

levels of support would be maintained. The compensation scheme was an essential European Union instrument and, as such, should be financed with EU resources, as should the construction of new vessels. He stressed that fleet renewal was not a luxury but a necessity to ensure the survival of fishing communities and fishers. Europe needed to move beyond this taboo and support the Outermost Regions by ensuring fairness and competitiveness, guaranteeing that fishery products from all regions could compete on equal terms with imports and that added value was genuinely recognised. He considered it neither normal nor acceptable that, for example, in *Réunion*, Martinique or Guadeloupe, local fisheries accounted for only 15% of fish consumed, while the remaining 85% was imported, often caught by fleets with little regard for social or environmental standards. He emphasised that this problem could not be ignored, as Europe could not allow its fisheries sector to lose competitiveness day after day. He further stressed that EU policies must ensure that producers in the Outermost Regions are not negatively discriminated against in comparison with mainland producers. For these reasons, he argued that a stable long-term commitment was required and reaffirmed both his personal commitment and that of the European Parliament to ensuring that the specific characteristics of the ORs are fully reflected in EU policy. He concluded by stating that he would continue to fight for specific and robust measures that provide fishers and aquaculture producers with the tools they need to remain competitive and to grow sustainably. He concluded by stating that the future of local markets and the competitiveness of operators in the ORs should be a European priority and encouraged collaboration with policymakers, so that messages would remain coherent and, consequently, stronger.

Summary:

Mr Gabriel Mato thanked those present for the opportunity to intervene, underlining the value of the Advisory Councils and advocating the strengthening of their role. He highlighted the importance of fisheries and aquaculture in the Outermost Regions, the specific challenges they face, and the need for tailored measures. He reiterated his support for the creation of a POSEI for fisheries, warned of the risks posed by the European Commission's proposal for the new Multiannual Financial Framework, and defended the continuation of European-level funding. He insisted on the renewal of fleets and the need to ensure competitiveness in relation to imports. He concluded by reaffirming the European Parliament's commitment to defending the specific characteristics of the ORs and called for close collaboration with policymakers.

8. Actions of the EFCA in the Waters of the ORs – European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA)

– Susan Steele;

Ms Susan Steele (European Fisheries Control Agency – EFCA) underlined the importance of the Advisory Councils, referring to them as the “eyes and ears on the ground”, and highlighted the relevance of the work carried out by the CCRUP and the visits to the Outermost Regions, which she considered highly productive. She addressed EFCA’s activities in the Outermost Regions, recalling that the agency was celebrating its 20th anniversary that year. During this period, the fisheries sector had undergone major transformations, with increased harmonisation and coordination among European Union countries, particularly in the areas of fisheries inspection, surveillance and control. She stated that EFCA worked closely with coast guards and other bodies to promote the highest standards of control and compliance, with the aim of ensuring an economically efficient approach. She reported that, in the previous year, EFCA had coordinated almost 50,000 inspections through Joint Deployment Plans. They had also carried out, for the first time, inspections in the Indian Ocean, implemented training actions, institutional capacity-building initiatives and inspector exchange programmes. Activities were also developed in the field of coast guard cooperation, an area of high complexity, through the implementation of a specific cooperation project involving 182 participants. The interventions also covered the international dimension of cooperation. With regard to the work carried out, she highlighted the importance of *Joint Deployment Plans*, which ensured a harmonised, effective and coherent application of the rules of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), through the coordination of Member States’ national control and inspection assets. She informed that EFCA had coordinated 45,734 inspections, with the detection of 4,823 infringements. In addition, missions had been carried out to monitor fishing activities, including tuna fisheries in the Indian Ocean and inspections in the Azores, Madeira and the Canary Islands. She reported that the Agency was also involved in international projects such as the *West African Sustainable Ocean Programme* (WASOP), aimed at the sustainability of the West African Ocean, and the *Sustainable Western Indian Ocean Programme* (SWIOP) for the Indian Ocean. The use of satellite imagery and radar had been fundamental in monitoring fishing activity, particularly in more remote regions such as the Azores, Madeira and French Guiana. With regard to inspector training, the EFCA had cooperated with countries such as: France, Spain and Italy, ensuring that control operations were aligned with international policies, including those of ICCAT and the IOTC. Training and information-sharing with partner countries had been essential to strengthening the fisheries control system, with the use of innovative technologies such as space-based observation. She concluded her intervention by reaffirming EFCA’s commitment to the sustainability of fisheries in the outermost regions and to supporting Member States in the development of control capacities. She stressed the need to continue implementing international control programmes, expand their geographical scope and work closely with the European Commission and

other stakeholders.

Summary:

Ms Susan Steele thanked the representatives present and highlighted the importance of the Advisory Councils, in particular the CCRUP, as key instruments of proximity. She referred to EFCA's 20 years of existence, underlining the progress achieved in the harmonisation and coordination of fisheries control within the European Union. She highlighted EFCA's activities in the outermost regions, international cooperation, and the conduct of almost 55,000 inspections, with nearly 5,000 infringements detected. She referred to the strengthening of operations in the Indian Ocean and the use of technologies such as satellites and radar for remote monitoring. She further emphasised the importance of inspector training and cooperation with Member States. She concluded by reaffirming EFCA's commitment to fisheries sustainability and the continuous strengthening of control capacities.

9. Value Chain of Fisheries Products: a Special Focus on the ORs – University of La Laguna

– José J. Pascual-Fernández;

Mr José Pascual-Fernández stated that, in research carried out over recent years, they had sought to understand the dynamics of the fisheries market in the Canary Islands, also covering the outermost regions more broadly. The main focus had been on small-scale fisheries, a sector which in the Canary Islands was characterised by a fleet in which 93% of vessels were under 12 metres in length, a crucial factor for understanding the limitations and challenges faced by this activity. This study formed part of a broader research project on small-scale fisheries in 25 countries along the European coastline, examining the sector's constraints and how it has evolved over time. He reported that, in the Canary Islands, fish marketing had traditionally been heavily focused on fresh consumption, while at the same time a high volume of exports was observed, particularly of tuna species, to both national and international markets. Although the Canary Islands were major exporters of fishery products, local consumption was extremely low. The data showed that, despite the availability of high-quality fishery products, consumption on the islands was below the national average, raising questions about the local use and valorisation of fishery resources. One particularly concerning finding was that most of the fish consumed in the Canary Islands, especially fresh and frozen products, originated outside the region. Local fish consumption on the islands was minimal, with virtually no locally caught fish entering frozen seafood markets. Exports of locally caught fish far exceeded consumption within the islands themselves, suggesting a breakdown in the value-adding and processing chain for local fishery

products. However, the lack of adequate infrastructure made it difficult to make effective use of the available fishery resources. He noted that fish consumption in the Canary Islands also reflected demographic and social trends. The data indicated that people over the age of 65 consumed, on average, 32 kilograms of fish per year, whereas those under 35 consumed only 7 kilograms, with young families with children being the lowest consumers. This consumption pattern, characterised by a sharp decline among younger consumers, was particularly worrying, given that fish is essential for health and development, especially due to its omega-3 and fatty acid content, which is crucial for growth and wellbeing, notably during pregnancy. With regard to trade flows, he observed that more than half of the fresh and frozen fish consumed on the islands came from outside, while locally caught fish was largely exported. This situation reflected the lack of adequate facilities for processing local fish, a structural weakness that limited marketing opportunities for local fishery products and hindered their integration into the local market. He stated that, although the Canary Islands faced significant challenges, there were some promising initiatives aimed at reversing this situation. Several companies had demonstrated that it was possible to process local fish and distribute it in an integrated way alongside other products, showing that there was scope to add value to local catches through appropriate processing. Nevertheless, most processing facilities continued to work predominantly with imported products, highlighting the need for greater investment in local processing infrastructure. In addition, since 2018, a pilot project had been developed to integrate locally caught fish into schools in the Canary Islands, with the aim of replacing imported products with local fish. Through ultra-freezing, efforts were made to distribute lower-value fish species, such as skipjack tuna (*Katsuwonus pelamis*), in a manner that was price-competitive with imported products. The project involved fishers, chefs, producer organisations and local institutions, with the aim of increasing the visibility of local fish and educating younger generations to value and consume locally caught seafood. The future vision for the fisheries sector in the Canary Islands centred on the establishment of small-scale processing facilities on all islands, enabling more efficient use of local fishery resources and facilitating their rational integration into the market. This would require significant investment in infrastructure, professional training and the promotion of initiatives to raise public awareness and increase local fish consumption. He noted that, more broadly, the Canary Islands and other outermost regions faced similar challenges regarding the utilisation of local fish, the lack of adequate processing infrastructure and the need to develop greater competitiveness in local markets. However, there were successful examples, such as small enterprises in the Madeira and Azores regions, which had developed local fish processing activities, demonstrating the existence of a potential market for processed fishery products, including canned goods.

The data indicated a significant opportunity to improve the way local fish was valorised in the

Canary Islands and other outermost regions, with an emphasis on developing processing infrastructure, increasing local consumption and integrating marketing and certification initiatives to enhance product value. The challenge was considerable, but the initiatives under way showed that it was possible to create a more sustainable and competitive local market.

Summary:

Mr José Pascual-Fernández presented a study on small-scale fisheries in the Canary Islands and other outermost regions, highlighting the sector's structural limitations and the low valorisation and local consumption of fish, despite its high quality and strong export orientation. He referred to the lack of processing infrastructure and declining consumption among younger generations as key challenges. He highlighted pilot initiatives, such as the introduction of local fish in schools, and advocated the creation of small processing units as a pathway to strengthening the sector. He concluded that there was growth potential through investment in infrastructure, training and the valorisation of local products.

10. Questions and Answers:

Mr Pedro Melo (*Association of Fish Traders of the Azores*) thanked the speakers for their presentations, with particular emphasis on the final one, which he considered to reflect especially accurately the reality of fish trade and markets. He noted that many of the issues raised also applied to the Azorean context, albeit with certain specificities. He highlighted that, in the Azores, fish exports accounted for a significant share, as domestic consumption was insufficient to absorb total production. He further added that product valorisation was often higher in external markets than in the regional market. He informed that, in the Autonomous Region of the Azores, there was no recent study on fish trade and markets, with the last one having been carried out in 2002 and presented in 2003, as part of a socioeconomic study covering the entire fisheries sector.

Mr Javier Ojeda (*Federation of European Aquaculture Producers – FEAP*) stated that he wished to make a brief comment highlighting the complexity associated with the creation and consolidation of collective brands, a reality not limited to the Canary Islands but also present across Spain and the wider European context. He noted that, although financial support was available under the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF), enabling such brands to be launched and sustained for a period of time, their long-term viability remained challenging due to the complexity of value chains and distribution networks. Nevertheless, he expressed the conviction that, with perseverance, success could be achieved.

Mr José Pascual-Fernández shared a concrete finding from a study conducted in 2014, which analysed approximately 80 attempts to establish collective brands in Spain, of which only two or three remained active. It was concluded that the success of such brands required time and, above all, the involvement of strong organisations. Without a solid structural foundation, success proved extremely difficult. He concluded by advocating greater unity within the sector, suggesting that, rather than dispersing efforts across multiple brands, it would be preferable to invest in a single strong and representative brand.

Ms Yobana Bermúdez stated that she wished to pose a question to Ms Susan Steele regarding the approximately 4,000 sanctions applied by EFCA in the current year, asking whether those infringements were repetitive, committed by the same vessels and originating from the same operators. She requested clarification on how EFCA addressed such recurring situations and how the European Commission used this information to support legislation or policies to be implemented in the sector.

Ms. Susan Steele stated that the infringements were not repeatedly committed by the same vessels. This was due to European legislation on serious infringements, which assigns points to repeat offenders, including captains or vessels. The accumulation of these points can lead to the detention of vessels. Thus, although there were vessels classified as high-risk, it was not always the same one or two vessels that committed the infringements.

11. Speech by the Regional Minister for Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food Sovereignty of the Government of the Canary Islands – Narvay Quintero;

Mr Narvay Quintero greeted all those present and those following the meeting online and welcomed participants to *Gran Canaria*. He thanked the organisers for the opportunity to take part in the meeting, underlining the interest and relevance of the discussions held, particularly given the pertinence of the topics addressed in the context of the Outermost Regions. He highlighted the crucial role played by the Advisory Councils, notably the MAC and the CCRUP, in the socio-economic development of these territories, by improving governance, fostering the sharing of technical knowledge and experience, and promoting solutions tailored to the specific realities of each region. He stressed that treating unequal contexts in the same way was, in itself, a form of injustice. He emphasised the importance of marketing and adding value to fishery products, noting that sustainable fishing was only part of the equation; it was equally necessary to process and add value to the product and to ensure its effective placement on the market under proper conditions. He recalled that small-scale fisheries in the ORs had historically played a central role in the development of coastal communities, representing a way of life, a culture and a relationship with the ocean that shaped those communities. In that regard, he argued that the ORs

could serve as testing grounds for innovative policies, given their specific characteristics and close connection to the marine environment. He also addressed the urgent need for renewal of the fishing fleet in the ORs, not only for environmental and efficiency reasons, but also to ensure safer and more attractive working conditions for new generations of fishers. He argued that the EMFAF should provide specific support for this renewal in the ORs, as investments in fleets were currently misaligned with today's social and economic realities. He called for greater recognition of these practices by the European Commission within the quota system. In the field of research, he pointed to a gap between the available scientific data and the political decisions affecting fishing opportunities in the ORs. With regard to the European Commission's new Multiannual Financial Framework, he expressed concern over the possible disappearance of the EMFAF as an autonomous financial instrument, fearing that the fisheries sector would be forced to compete with areas such as housing, migration or social services, thereby diluting the visibility and specific needs of the Common Fisheries Policy. It was therefore suggested that a common position be adopted by the three countries represented and by the sectors involved, in defence of maintaining a robust Common Fisheries Policy with dedicated funding for the ORs. In the case of the Canary Islands, he referred to the absence of a sufficiently structured processing industry to ensure the supply of locally caught fish, particularly to school canteens, as was already the case for fruit and vegetable products.

He concluded his intervention by thanking the CCRUP and MAC Advisory Councils for having chosen the island of Gran Canaria to host the event, reiterating his wish that the contributions gathered there would be duly taken into account by the European Commission. He underlined the importance of listening to the sector and of adapting policies to the concrete realities of the ORs, in light of the growing challenges related to climate change, consumption patterns and sustainability.

Summary:

Mr Narvay Quintero welcomed participants to Gran Canaria and highlighted the importance of the Advisory Councils for the ORs, particularly in promoting policies tailored to their specific realities. He argued in favour of adding value to locally caught fish, renewing the fleet and developing processing infrastructure as a means of ensuring sustainability and attractiveness for new generations. He expressed concern over the potential disappearance of the EMFAF under the new European Union financial framework and called for the defence of a robust Common Fisheries Policy with dedicated funding for the ORs. He concluded by thanking participants for choosing Gran Canaria as the venue for the event and by calling on the European Commission to take the contributions into consideration.

12. Other Matters:

As there were no further interventions or requests to speak, Mr David Pavón declared the meeting closed.

Conclusions/Recommendations:

The agenda items were completed.

CCRUP Participants:

Amanda Pérez	<i>DGMARE</i>
Anne-France Mattlet	<i>Europêche</i>
Bruno Dachicourt	<i>European Transport Federation</i>
Bruno Langlade	<i>Association Réunionnaise Interprofessionnelle de la Pêche et de l'Aquaculture</i>
Carlos Gonçalves	<i>DGRM</i>
Charlina Vitcheva	<i>DGMARE</i>
David Pavón	<i>Federación Regional de Cofradías de Pescadores de Canarias</i>
Élie Touzé	<i>Collectivité Territoriale de Saint Martin</i>
Esteban Reyes Hernández	<i>Dirección General de pescas de España</i>
Fabiana Nogueira	<i>Cooperativa de Pesca Açoriana</i>
Felipe Fuentes	<i>Federación provincial de cofradías de pescadores de Santa Cruz de Tenerife</i>
Fernando Duarte	<i>DGRM</i>
François Herman	<i>SYPAGUA</i>
Gérard Zitte	<i>Comité Regional des Pêches Maritimes et des Élevages Marins de La Réunion</i>
Guerin Benoît	<i>BG Sea Consulting</i>
Isabel Artime	<i>Secretaria General de Pesca de Espanha</i>
Isabel Alonso Cabezas	<i>Secretaria General de Pesca de Espanha</i>
Jacinto da Silva	<i>Coopescamadeira</i>
Jean-Michel Cotrebil	<i>Comité Regional des Pêches Maritimes et des Élevages Marins de Martinique</i>
Jorge Gonçalves	<i>Associação de Produtores de Espécies Demersais dos Açores</i>
José Basílio Otero Rodrigues	<i>Federación Nacional de Cofradías de Pescadores</i>

José Carlos Santos	<i>Secretaria de Estado das Pescas de Portugal</i>
José Pascual Fernández	<i>Universidad de la Laguna</i>
Juan Carlos Martin	<i>OP ANACEF</i>
Juan Jose Rodríguez Verdu	<i>Federacion Provincial de Cofradías de Pescadores de Las Palmas</i>
Julio Moron	<i>OPAGAC</i>
Langlade Bruno	<i>Association Réunionnaise Interprofessionnelle de la Pêche et de l'Aquaculture</i>
Léonard Ragnauth	<i>Comité Regional des Pêches Maritimes et des Élevages Marins de Guyane</i>
Lisandra Sousa	<i>Coopescamadeira</i>
Luís Rodrigues	<i>Lotaçor</i>
Mar Fernández Merlo	<i>Secretaria General de Pesca de Espanha</i>
María de las Mercedes García	<i>Asociación Tinerfeña de Amigos de la Naturaleza</i>
Michel Nalovic	<i>Trans Océans Tortues Marines</i>
Mirella Meraut Laurence	<i>Collectivité Territoriale de Saint Martin</i>
Montserrat Gimeno Ortiz	<i>Grupo de Acción Costera de Gran Canaria</i>
Narvay Quintero	<i>Consejería de Agricultura, Ganadería, Pesca e Soberania Alimentaria</i>
Nicolas Blanc	<i>Sciaena</i>
Pedro Capela	<i>Associação de Produtores de Atum e Similares dos Açores</i>
Pedro Galache	<i>European Fisheries Control Agency</i>
Pedro Melo	<i>Associação dos Comerciantes do Pescado dos Açores</i>
Pierre Goetz	<i>Association des Marins-Pêcheurs Saint Martin</i>
Rafael dos Santos Martins	<i>Associação dos Produtores de Amêijoa da Fajã de Santo Cristo</i>
Ruben Farias	<i>Federação das Pescas dos Açores</i>
Rui Catarino	<i>International Council for the Exploration of the Sea</i>

Salvador Malheiro	<i>Secretaria de Estado das Pescas de Portugal</i>
Susan Steele	<i>European Fisheries Control Agency</i>
Xavier Leduc	<i>Orthongel</i>

MAC Participants:

Alen Lovrinov	<i>Producer Organisation Omega 3</i>
Alessandro Manghisi	<i>Aquaculture Stewardship Council</i>
Alonso Abreu Lozano	<i>Asociación de Armadores de Punta del Moral (OPP80)</i>
Angela Pécurto	<i>ALIF</i>
Anna Rokicka	<i>Polish Association of Fish Processors</i>
Benoît Thomassen	<i>FEAP</i>
Carlos Gonçalves	<i>Direção-Geral de Recursos Naturais, Segurança e Serviços Marítimos</i>
Christine Absil	<i>Good Fish Foundation</i>
Cristina Borges	<i>Direção-Geral de Recursos Naturais, Segurança e Serviços Marítimos</i>
Daniel Voces	<i>CEPESCA</i>
Elena Ghezzi	<i>COPA COGECA</i>
Fernando Carlos Chagas Duarte	<i>Direção-Geral de Recursos Naturais, Segurança e Serviços Marítimos</i>
Gaetane Le Breuil	<i>European Fishmeal</i>
Gerd Heinen	<i>DG MARE</i>
Grace Howe	<i>The Nature Conservancy</i>
Guus Pastoor	<i>Visfederatie / AIPCE</i>
Janne Posti	<i>Conxemar</i>
Javier Ojeda	<i>FEAP</i>
Jennifer Reeves	<i>Marine Stewardship Council</i>

Jérémie Souben	<i>FEDOPA</i>
Joanna Zurawska-Lagoda	<i>Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Poland</i>
John Lynch	<i>Irish South and East Fish Producers Organisation</i>
José Carlos Escalera Aguilar	<i>Federación de Cofradías de Pescadores de Cádiz</i>
Juan Manuel Trujillo Castillo	<i>European Transport Federation</i>
Jules Danto	<i>EAPO</i>
Julien Lamothe	<i>ANOP / EAPO</i>
Juliette Margueritte	<i>ESSA</i>
Justyna Radzewicz	<i>Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Poland</i>
Linda Zanki Duvnjak	<i>Ribarska Zadruga Friska Riba</i>
María Luisa Álvarez Blanco	<i>FEDEPESCA</i>
Mariano García García	<i>FACOPE</i>
Marine Cusa	<i>Oceana</i>
Nicolás Fernández Muñoz	<i>OPP72</i>
Paulien Prent	<i>Visfederatie</i>
Pedro Casado	<i>Asociación de Armadores de Punta del Moral</i>
Pierre Commère	<i>PACT'ALIM / AIPCE</i>
Pim Visser	<i>NOVA</i>
Rosalie Tukker	<i>Europêche</i>
Sergio López García	<i>OPP7 Burela</i>
Vanya Vulperhorst	<i>Oceana</i>
Yannis Pelekanakis	<i>Hellenic Aquaculture Producers Organisation</i>
Yobana Bermúdez	<i>AIPCE</i>