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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
Subject:	Council Regulation fixing for 2023 the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks and groups of fish stocks in the Mediterranean and Black Seas - Statements

STATEMENT BY SPAIN on the Mediterranean Regulation

“Spain would like to state that there are two provisions on the regulation, related to the maximum limit of catches for blue and red shrimps and the fishing effort for longliners, against which the Kingdom of Spain has filed a lawsuit before the European Court of Justice that are pending of sentence yet.”

STATEMENT ON SPAIN'S NEGATIVE VOTE ON THE REGULATION ON FISHING OPPORTUNITIES FOR 2023 IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE BLACK SEA

‘Spain regrets having to vote against the Presidency’s final compromise proposal regarding the Regulation on fishing opportunities for 2023 in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea at the Agriculture and Fisheries Council of 11-12 December for the second year in a row.

Although the previous proposal has been improved upon, which we appreciate, these improvements were not sufficient to enable Spain to vote in favour, despite the efforts made and proposals put forward by Spain, which have not ultimately been accepted.

The European Commission and the Kingdom of Spain clearly have two different approaches to the implementation of the multiannual plan for demersal resources in the Western Mediterranean and to achieving that plan's objective of attaining the maximum sustainable yield for the various fishing stocks.

While the European Commission considers that it is still necessary to continue reducing the number of fishing days for towed gear in the Mediterranean, Spain, on the basis of the scientific reports available, both from the STECF and from other scientific bodies, continues to take the view that increasing the selectivity of towed gear is, from a socioeconomic perspective, the most appropriate and balanced way to make further progress in improving the biological status of the various stocks, which are already showing positive overall signs of recovery and reduced fishing mortality. In fact, there are STECF prediction scenarios that indicate that for red shrimp stocks in Spanish waters, if this selectivity measure were applied to half of the fleet, with no further reduction in fishing days in 2023, the maximum sustainable yield target would be reached in 2025.

However, in Spain's view, the final compromise proposal does not provide sufficient incentive for improving the selectivity of towed gear to operators in the fishing sector, who need this incentive in order to cope, in the short and medium term, with the loss of income that implementing this measure would entail due to the reduction in catch weight it would cause. Under the final compromise proposal, the fishing sector would see its fishing days reduced once again in 2023 – a reduction in fishing activity of almost three months net per vessel on average since the plan was first implemented in 2020, which means that Spanish fishing vessels will spend more days berthed in ports than fishing next year. This is seriously jeopardising the social and economic viability of these vessels and their fishing businesses, most of which are family-run, as well as the sustainability of the ports, markets and coastal communities of the Spanish Mediterranean which depend on this activity.

In any event, Spain will continue to work with the European Commission and the other Member States concerned by the multiannual plan and in achieving its objectives.’
