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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
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Subject:	Council Regulation fixing for 2020 the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks and groups of fish stocks applicable in the Baltic Sea and amending Regulation (EU) 2019/124, as regards certain fishing opportunities in other waters - Statements

Statement by Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden and the Commission on the mitigation of the socio-economic effects of the crisis in the Baltic fisheries

The Council has decided on necessary and unprecedented fishing restrictions for the eastern cod stock whilst also setting severe limits for the western cod stock and the western herring stock. Especially the eastern cod stock is at unprecedentedly low levels and suffers from many harmful man-made environmental and ecosystem influences in addition to fishing pressure.

The agreed objective is to support the recovery of the stocks towards sustainable levels, as envisaged in the Baltic Sea multi-annual management plan. However, a recovery cannot be expected for several years.

This situation will therefore lead to redundant fishing fleet capacity and to adverse socio-economic consequences for communities and fishing businesses in the Member States that are affected. The Member States in the Baltic Sea and Commission therefore emphasize the importance of ensuring proper management of the crisis and effective control measures of fisheries to avoid spillover effects into fisheries of other species.

The Baltic Sea Member States and the Commission recognise that the alarming situation in the Baltic Sea ecosystems requires urgent, joined-up and comprehensive action to tackle the root causes of that situation. The Member States concerned therefore declare that they:

- recognise the need to effectively and urgently address at source the key environmental pressures in the Baltic Sea area (such as pollution, eutrophication, habitat degradation), through the implementation of the relevant EU legislation and, where appropriate through additional measures, e.g. innovative measures. Those measures will also be included in an integrated way in the update of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan.

- if they need to reduce fleet capacity to manage the adverse socio-economic consequences of the decline of the fisheries, they will present to the Commission a plan in accordance with Article 22 of the CFP regulation[1] that ensures that their fleet will achieve and maintain a balance with fishing opportunities.

The Member States of the Baltic Sea therefore invite the Commission to urgently put forward a proposal for an amendment of the EMFF Regulation (Regulation (EU) No 508/2014) to allow support for permanent cessation (art 34) and temporary cessation (art 33) of fishing vessels. Proper management of the crisis in the Baltic fisheries requires mitigation of the adverse socio-economic consequences without delay. Given the urgency of this crisis, these measures should be available as soon as possible in 2020.

[1] Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy

The Commission will therefore urgently consider all possible initiatives in order to achieve the economic, social and sustainability objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy, of the Baltic MAP and the EMFF and in particular to achieve and maintain a balance between the fleet and fishing opportunities. The necessary restructuring of these fleets will be an immediate priority in this context, including through funding support.

The Commission will urgently assess the action plans Member States will adopt pursuant to Article 22 of the CFP Regulation, in order for their swift implementation.

The Member States concerned recognise that in view of the need to reduce fleet capacity, it is important to avoid public aid for investments in additional fishing capacity.

The Commission has a positive view to the use of Member State´s national financing to alleviate negative socio-economic effects in the Baltic fisheries provided that these national schemes are in line with the Commission guidelines on state aid to the fishery and aquaculture sectors. The Commission is prepared to process swiftly the notifications of these national schemes in accordance with applicable rules and, if found compatible by the Commission, the costs incurred by the beneficiaries in compliance with the rules on incentive effects can be found eligible as from the date on which the aid application was submitted by the beneficiary to the national authorities.

To improve the scientific information on the weakening of cod and herring stocks, and assist in the development of long-term action plans for the recovery of those stocks, funding for scientific studies may be available from the work programme 2020 under EMFF direct management.

The relevant Member States in the Baltic Sea will explore possible joint measures to reduce the impact of a large seal population on the fish stocks and fisheries such as on the parasites infesting cod.

Statement by the Commission on Western cod and Western herring stocks

In case of new scientific advice concerning the conservation reference points of western herring, the Commission will consider appropriate proposals to amend the fishing opportunities for western herring for 2020.

In case of new scientific advice concerning the TAC level for western cod, the Commission will consider appropriate proposals to amend the fishing opportunities for western cod for 2020.

Statement by Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden on the application of Article 15(9) in the Basic Regulation for Eastern cod in 2020

Given that the biomass of the stock of Eastern Baltic cod is below B_{lim} and that only by-catch and scientific fisheries will be permitted in 2020, in order to ensure the recovery of the stocks in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/1139, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden undertake not to make use of inter-annual flexibility under Article 15(9) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 with regard to this stock in 2020. This undertaking is a response to the current exceptional circumstances for the Eastern cod stock.

Joint Statement by the Commission and Germany on the option of support for the temporary cessation of fishing activities by the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)

Point (b) of Article 5(4) of Regulation (EU) 2016/1139 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 July 2016 establishing a multiannual plan for the stocks of cod, herring and sprat in the Baltic Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks allows the Member States to adopt emergency measures in accordance with Article 13 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy. Germany confirms its intention to make use of this provision, by introducing additional closure periods for the Western Baltic Cod and the Western Baltic Herring stocks in sub-divisions 22-24.

The Commission and Germany agree that this emergency measure under point (a) of Article 33(1) of Regulation (EU) No 508 /2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 May 2014 on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 2328/2003 is eligible for funding from the EMFF.