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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Permanent Representatives Committee

Subject: Proposal for a COUNCIL REGULATION fixing the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks and groups of fish stocks applicable in the Mediterranean and Black Seas for 2024
- Political agreement

I) INTRODUCTION

1. The Commission submitted to the Council the above-mentioned proposal, based on Article 43(3) TFEU, on 10 October 2023¹. The proposal aims at setting fishing opportunities for 2024 in the Mediterranean and Black Seas, in line with the multiannual plan for demersal stocks in the western Mediterranean and the recommendations of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM). The Commission updated the proposal with a non-paper submitted on 24 November 2023².
2. The Working Party on Fisheries Policy examined the proposal at its meeting on 12 October. Members of the Working Party on Fisheries Policy examined the non-paper in an attachés meeting on 27 November 2023. Delegations entered scrutiny reservations. Delegations considered reductions proposed for the western Mediterranean Sea to be too high and compromising the profitability of the sector, and called for a more flexible compensation mechanism.

¹ ST 13860/23 + ADD 1

² ST 15785/23

3. A consolidated version of the proposal was issued on 1 December 2023³.
4. In general, the Presidency believes that the following principles should guide the discussions and the final decision:
 - a strong commitment to the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) as laid down in art. 39 of the TFEU and art. 2 of the CFP⁴;
 - the compliance with the provisions of the multi-annual plan for demersal stocks in the western Mediterranean⁵, including the achievement of MSY by 2025;
 - decisions based on the best available scientific advice.
5. The Presidency organised technical trilaterals on 29 November with the Commission and delegations in order to clarify the outstanding issues. These issues are presented in part II below.

II) OUTSTANDING ISSUES

6. The main outstanding issue is the reduction in fishing effort for demersal stocks in the western Mediterranean Sea provided for in Annex III. Delegations call for a more gradual approach than the 9.5% for trawlers proposed by the Commission in order to take into account the socio-economic impact of such measures.
7. In this context, delegations welcome the continuation of the compensation mechanism that has given good results in 2023, but argue for a higher percentage of compensation so that additional fishing effort could then be allocated to the vessels if certain conditions are met, also to recognise the efforts fishers have invested in past years.
8. Another element under discussion is the proposed 7% reduction of the maximum allowable catch limits for deep-sea shrimps in geographical subareas 8, 9, 10 and 11. One delegation calls for a roll-over of 2023 TACs without further reductions.

³ ST 15715/23 + ADD1

⁴ Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC (OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 22).

⁵ Regulation (EU) 2019/1022 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 establishing a multiannual plan for the fisheries exploiting demersal stocks in the western Mediterranean Sea and amending Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 (OJ L 172, 26.6.2019, p. 1)

III) CONCLUSION

1. The Permanent Representatives Committee is invited to address the outstanding issues outlined under point II above, with a view to reaching a political agreement at the AGRIFISH Council scheduled for 10-11 December 2022.

