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PROPOSAL

From:	Secretary-General of the European Commission, signed by Mr Jordi AYET PUIGARNAU, Director
date of receipt:	8 March 2019
To:	Mr Jeppe TRANHOLM-MIKKELSEN, Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union
No. Cion doc.:	COM(2019) 112 final
Subject:	Proposal for a COUNCIL DECISION concerning the position to be taken on behalf of the European Union in the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean and repealing Decision 9389/1/14 REV 1

Delegations will find attached document COM(2019) 112 final.

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Proposal for a

COUNCIL DECISION

concerning the position to be taken on behalf of the European Union in the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean and repealing Decision 9389/1/14 REV 1

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

1. SUBJECT MATTER OF THE PROPOSAL

This proposal concerns a Decision establishing the position to be taken on the Union's behalf at meetings of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean for the period 2019-2023 in connection with the envisaged adoption of conservation and management measures.

2. CONTEXT OF THE PROPOSAL

2.1. Agreement establishing the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean

The Agreement establishing the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean ('the GFCM Agreement') aims to ensure the conservation and sustainable use, at the biological, social, economic and environmental level, of living marine resources, as well as the sustainable development of aquaculture in the Agreement area. The GFCM Agreement entered into force in 1952. Amendments to the GFCM Agreement were approved in 1963, 1976, 1997 and 2014.

The European Union is a contracting party to the GFCM Agreement, having accepted it pursuant to Council Decision 98/416/EC[1]. Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Romania, Slovenia and Spain are also contracting parties to the GFCM Agreement.

2.2. General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) is the body established by the GFCM Agreement to ensure the conservation and sustainable use, at the biological, social, economic and environmental level, of living marine resources, as well as the sustainable development of aquaculture in the Mediterranean, Black Sea, and connecting waters. It adopts conservation and management measures to manage the fishery resources under its purview.

As a member of the GFCM, the Union has participation and voting rights. There is a declaration of Union competence for the GFCM Agreement. The Union exercises the voting rights of its Member States that are contracting parties: where the Union votes, no Union Member States vote and vice-versa. The GFCM takes its decisions by two-thirds majority of GFCM members present and voting.

2.3. GFCM decisions

The GFCM has the authority to adopt conservation and management measures for the fisheries under its purview, which are binding on the contracting parties.

In accordance with Article 13.3 of the GFCM Agreement, the measures enter into force 120 days after the date on which the contracting parties are notified of them by the GFCM. Contracting parties that object to measures adopted by the GFCM within 120 days from the date of the notification are not bound by that measure. Where more than one third of the contracting parties submit an objection, the other contracting parties are not obliged to implement the contested measure.

[1] OJ L190, 4.7.1998, p. 34.

3. POSITION TO BE TAKEN ON THE UNION'S BEHALF

The position to be adopted on behalf of the Union at the annual meetings of regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs) is currently established according to a two-tier approach. A Council Decision sets out the guiding principles and orientations of the Union's position on a multiannual basis and it is subsequently adjusted for each annual meeting by Commission non-papers to be discussed in the Council Working Party.

For the GFCM, this approach is implemented by Council Decision 9389/1/14 REV 1 of 8 May 2014, which sets out the Union's position in the GFCM for the period 2014-2018. The Decision contains general principles and orientations, but also takes into account to the extent possible the specificities of the GFCM. In addition, it sets out the standard process for establishing the Union's position year by year, as requested by Member States.

Decision 9389/1/14 REV 1 provides for a review of the Union's position before the 2019 annual meeting. Therefore, this proposal sets out the Union's position in the GFCM for the period 2019-2023, thereby replacing Decision 9389/1/14 REV 1.

Decision 9389/1/14 REV 1 incorporated the principles and orientations of the new common fisheries policy (CFP), as laid down in Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council[2], also taking into account the objectives set in the Commission Communication on the external dimension of the CFP[3]. Moreover, it adjusted the Union's position to the Lisbon Treaty.

The current revision takes account, in connection with impacts of fishing, of the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a *European strategy for plastics in a circular economy*[4], the Joint Communication by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European Commission on *International ocean governance: an agenda for the future of oceans*[5], and the Council conclusions on that Joint Communication[6].

The current revision also takes into account the commitments made by the Union at international level on the Mediterranean and the Black Sea in the Malta MedFish4Ever Ministerial Declaration[7] and the Sofia Ministerial Declaration[8].

4. LEGAL BASIS

4.1. Procedural legal basis

4.1.1. Principles

Article 218(9) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) provides for decisions establishing 'the positions to be adopted on the Union's behalf in a body set up by an agreement, when that body is called upon to adopt acts having legal effects, with the exception of acts supplementing or amending the institutional framework of the agreement.'

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2 Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council 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).

3 COM(2011) 424, 13.7.2011.

4 COM(2018) 28 final, 16.1.2018.

5 JOIN(2016) 49 final, 10.11.2016.

6 7348/1/17 REV 1, 24.3.2017.

7 https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/inseparable/sites/inseparable/files/2018-01-26-declaration-malta.pdf

8 https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/sites/fisheries/files/docs/2018-06-07-sofia-declaration_en.pdf

'Acts having legal effects' include acts that have legal effects by virtue of the rules of international law governing the body in question, and instruments that do not have a binding effect under international law, but are 'capable of decisively influencing the content of the legislation adopted by the EU legislature'[9].

4.1.2. Application to the present case

The GFCM is the body set up by an agreement, namely the GFCM Agreement.

The acts that the GFCM is called upon to adopt constitute acts having legal effects. The envisaged acts are to be binding under international law in accordance with Article 13 of the GFCM Agreement and are capable of decisively influencing the content of EU legislation, including:

Council Regulation (EC) No 1005/2008 establishing a Community System to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing[10];

Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009 establishing a Community control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the CFP[11]; and

Council Regulation (EU) 2017/2403 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2017 on the sustainable management of external fishing fleets[12].

The envisaged acts do not supplement or amend the institutional framework of the GFCM Agreement.

Therefore, the procedural legal basis for the proposed Decision is Article 218(9) TFEU.

4.2. Substantive legal basis

4.2.1. Principles

The substantive legal basis for a Decision under Article 218(9) TFEU depends primarily on the objective and content of the envisaged act in respect of which a position is taken on the Union's behalf. If that act pursues two aims or has two components, and if one of those aims or components is identifiable as the main one, whereas the other is merely incidental, the Decision under Article 218(9) TFEU must be founded on a single substantive legal basis, namely that required by the main or predominant aim or component.

4.2.2. Application to the present case

The main objective and content of the envisaged act relate to fisheries. Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 is the legal basis setting out the principles to be reflected in this position.

Therefore, the substantive legal basis of the proposed Decision is Article 43(2) TFEU. The Decision is to replace Decision 9389/1/14 REV 1, which covers the period 2014-2018.

4.3. Conclusion

The legal basis of the proposed Decision should be Article 43(2) TFEU, in conjunction with Article 218(9) TFEU.

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9 Judgment of the Court of Justice of 7 October 2014, Germany v Council, C-399/12, ECLI:EU:C:2014:2258, paragraphs 61 to 64.

10 OJ L 286, 29.10.2008, p. 1.

11 OJ L 343, 22.12.2009, p. 1.

12 OJ L 347, 28.12.2017, p. 81.

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THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Article 43(2), in conjunction with Article 218(9) thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the European Commission,

Whereas:

(1) By Council Decision 98/416/EC[13], the European Union concluded the Agreement establishing the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM Agreement). Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Romania, Slovenia and Spain are also Contracting Parties to the GFCM Agreement.

(2) The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) is responsible for the adoption of measures designed to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of the fishery resources and the sustainable development of aquaculture in the GFCM Agreement area. Such measures may become binding upon the Union.

(3) Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council[14] provides that the Union is to ensure that fishing and aquaculture activities are environmentally sustainable in the long-term and are managed in a way that is consistent with the objectives of achieving economic, social and employment benefits, and of contributing to the availability of food supplies. It also provides that the Union is to apply the precautionary approach to fisheries management, and is to aim to ensure that exploitation of living marine biological resources restores and maintains population of harvested species above levels, which can produce the maximum sustainable yield. It further provides that the Union is to take management and conservation measures based on best available scientific advice, to support the development of scientific knowledge and advice, to gradually eliminate discards and to promote fishing methods that contribute to more selective fishing and the avoidance and reduction, as far as possible, of unwanted catches, to fishing with low impact on marine ecosystem and fishery resources. Besides, Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 specifically provides that those objectives and principles are to be applied by the Union in the conduct of its external fisheries relations.

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13 Council Decision of 16 June 1998 on the accession of the European Community to the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (OJ L190, 4.7.1998, p. 34).

14 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).

(4) As stated in the Joint communication by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European Commission on *International ocean governance: an agenda for the future of oceans*[15] and the Council conclusions on that Joint communication[16], the promotion of measures to support and enhance the effectiveness of regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs) and, where relevant, improve their governance is central to the Union's action in these fora.

(5) The Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a *European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy*[17], refers to specific measures to reduce plastics and marine pollution as well as the loss or abandonment at sea of fishing gear.

(6) As stated in the conclusions of the Ministerial Conference on the Sustainability of Mediterranean Fisheries, which adopted the Malta MedFish4Ever Ministerial Declaration on 30 March 2017 and of the High Level Conference on Black Sea Fisheries and Aquaculture, which adopted the Sofia Ministerial Declaration on 7 June 2018, the promotion of measures to support and enhance data collection and scientific evaluation, ecosystem based fisheries management, a culture of compliance to eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, sustainable small scale fisheries and aquaculture, greater solidarity and coordination, is central to the Union's action in the GFCM.

(7) It is appropriate to establish the position to be taken on the Union's behalf in the meetings of the GFCM for the period 2019-2023, as the GFCM conservation and management measures will be binding on the Union and capable of decisively influencing the content of Union law, namely, Council Regulation (EC) No 1005/2008[18]; Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009[19]; and Regulation (EU) 2017/2403 of the European Parliament and of the Council[20].

(8) Currently the position to be taken on the Union's behalf in the meetings of the GFCM is established by Council Decision 9389/1/14 REV 1[21]. It is appropriate to repeal Decision 9389/1/14 REV 1 and to replace it by a new Decision for the period 2019-2023.

(9) In view of the evolving nature of fishery resources in the GFCM Agreement area and the consequent need for the position of the Union to take account of new

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15 JOIN(2016) 49 final of 10.11.2016.

16 7348/1/17 REV 1 of 24.3.2017.

17 COM(2018) 28 final, 16.1.2018.

18 Council Regulation (EC) No 1005/2008 establishing a Community system to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, amending Regulations (EEC) No 2847/93, (EC) No 1936/2001 and (EC) No 601/2004 and repealing Regulations (EC) No 1093/94 and (EC) No 1447/1999 (OJ L 286, 29.10.2008, p. 1).

19 Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009 of 20 November 2009 establishing a Union control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the common fisheries policy, amending Regulations (EC) No 847/96, (EC) No 2371/2002, (EC) No 811/2004, (EC) No 768/2005, (EC) No 2115/2005, (EC) No 2166/2005, (EC) No 388/2006, (EC) No 509/2007, (EC) No 676/2007, (EC) No 1098/2007, (EC) No 1300/2008, (EC) No 1342/2008 and repealing Regulations (EEC) No 2847/93, (EC) No 1627/94 and (EC) No 1966/2006 (OJ L 343, 22.12.2009, p. 1).

20 Regulation (EU) 2017/2403 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2017 on the sustainable management of external fishing fleets, and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1006/2008 (OJ L 347, 28.12.2017, p. 81).

21 Council Decision of 8 May 2014 on the position to be taken on behalf of the European Union in the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM).

developments, including new scientific and other relevant information presented before or during the meetings of the GFCM, procedures should be established, in line with the principle of sincere cooperation among the Union institutions enshrined in Article 13(2) of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU), for the year-to-year specification of the Union's position for the period 2019-2023.

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Article 1

The position to be taken on the Union's behalf in the meetings of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) is set out in Annex I.

Article 2

The year-to-year specification of the Union's position to be taken in the meetings of the GFCM shall be conducted in accordance with Annex II.

Article 3

The Union's position set out in Annex I shall be assessed and, where appropriate, revised by the Council upon a proposal from the Commission, at the latest for the annual meeting of the GFMC in 2024.

Article 4

Decision 9389/1/14 REV 1 of 8 May 2014 is repealed.

Article 5

This Decision is addressed to the Commission.

Done at Brussels,

For the Council
The President