

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND MARKETS
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, LAW OF THE SEA AND REGIONAL FISHERIES ORGANISATIONS

Brussels,
MARE B1/AC

Ms Christine Chan A Shing
WECAFC Chairperson
Union Nations House
Marine Gardens, Hastings, Christ
Church
BB11000- BARBADOS

Subject: Strategic Re-orientation of WECAFC

Ref.: Your letter dated 20 May 2016

Dear Ms Shing,

Thank you for the letter referred to above requesting the EU preliminary opinion of the way forward with regard to the Strategic Re-orientation of WECAFC.

The EU has carefully analysed the results of the independent study on cost and benefits of the three re-orientation options as well as the first draft of the CLME+ additional study on the assessment of the recent achievements and collaboration between the Regional Fisheries Bodies in the Regional (CRFM, OSPESCA and WECAFC).

With regard to the discussion paper on the costs and benefits of the different options for the future of WECAFC the EU considers that, despite the limited information available, this is a relevant document that has served as a basis for the discussions held in the Trinidad and Tobago Workshop (1-2 December 2015). In this regard the EU appreciates that WECAFC took into consideration the comments provided by the EU.

Concerning the draft document on the CLME+ study, it contains valuable background information regarding the different regional fisheries bodies (RFB) operating in the region, their collaboration as well as on the status and management of the main shared stocks. There are however elements in this draft requiring revision and further consideration. The EU is confident that the discussions ahead in Guadeloupe will allow refining the document in order to remedy a number of apparent inconsistencies.

In the light of the above and in response to your letter, the EU's preliminary position regarding the way forward for WECAFC is as follows:

1. The fact that the most emblematic stocks in the region are considered to be overfished or fully exploited suggests that remedial actions have to be taken as soon as possible. In

this regard the EU is in favour of launching the process to convert WECAFC into an RFMO with a mandate to make legally binding decisions in the WECAFC Region.

2. This new organisation should support the integration of other fisheries bodies (CARICOM-CRFM and OSPESCA) in order to avoid any overlapping mandates and, as a first step, focus on straddling stocks in the whole WECAFC Region. In parallel, progress in the knowledge of deep-sea fisheries and stocks would be needed before envisaging any enlargement in WECAFC scope. Stocks under the purview of other RFMOs (e.g. ICCAT) should not be within the scope of WECAFC.

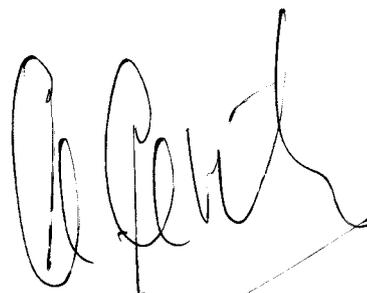
3. In view of the good experience the EU has with independent RFMOs, our preference is to have an independent body outside the FAO umbrella. This would lead to higher cost-efficiency and less contribution from parties since no fees would be charged for FAO's standard servicing. In this context it is important to know that also independent RFMOs, such as ICCAT, entertain formal relationships with FAO (e.g. Article XI of ICCAT Convention) to their mutual benefit.

Notwithstanding the final decision by WECAFC Members on the strategic re-orientation, according to the draft roadmap provided by WECAFC, the process to become an independent RFMO could last around 7 years. In the meantime, WECAFC should address a number of issues for its improvement at short notice, in particular concerning the data collection and statistical systems in force in the region.

We share your views that working together towards the improved management of stocks in the region in line with the global commitments at Rio+20 and the SDG on Oceans under the Agenda 2030, will contribute to achieve sustainable fisheries and food security.

Looking forward to meet you in Guadeloupe.

Yours sincerely,



Antonio Cervantes

Head of the EU Delegation to
WECAFC

c.c.: Mr Raymon VanAnrooy (WECAFC Secretariat); M. Guillaume Perrin (Directeur de la Mer, Guadeloupe); M. Benoît Archambault (Direction de la Pêche et de l'Aquaculture); Mme Chstiane Laurent Monpetit (Outre-Mer); Mme Gelare Nader (Department of Sustainable Fisheries); M. Pieter Van Baren (Rijkdienst Caribish)