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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Council

Subject: **Small-scale coastal fisheries and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund**
- Information from the Slovenian delegation.

Delegations will find attached a note from the Slovenian delegation on the abovementioned subject to be dealt with under 'any other business' at the session of the Council (Agriculture and Fisheries) on 18 March 2019.

Small-scale coastal fisheries and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund

Request by Slovenia to include an additional AOB point on the agenda of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council meeting on 18 March 2019

Slovenia would like to draw the attention of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council to the importance of small-scale coastal fisheries in the future European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF).

Small-scale coastal fisheries represent the majority of fishing vessels and 40% of employment in the fishing sector of the EU. They are related to a number of other key areas of coastal economies (such as tourism and aquaculture). They shape the life of the coastal communities and contribute to the continuation of cultural heritage of local communities. Therefore, a focused approach is needed for how small-scale coastal fisheries can be fostered in the future, in order to maintain their role as one of the key drivers of the EU coastal economies.

Slovenia believes that a debate on how to support small-scale coastal fisheries would be beneficial for the discussion on the proposal for the EMFF Regulation post-2020 (Commission proposal COM(2018) 390 final). In this regard a Joint statement of a group of Member States has been issued (enclosed).

Small-scale coastal fisheries and the EMFF

COMMON VIEWS OF BULGARIA, CROATIA, CYPRUS, GREECE, MALTA, POLAND, PORTUGAL and SLOVENIA

Small-scale coastal fisheries (SSF) are an emblematic form of fisheries in many EU countries, anchored in European coastal communities and related to numerous other activities that provide added value to local economies. The SSF represents 85% of all fishing vessels and 40% of employment in the fishing sector. Overall catches of the SSF are generally low, but have a high unit value and the product is often destined for local or other EU markets with high purchasing power. Fishing is conducted relatively close to shore and fishing operations last usually one day or less. The SSF shapes the socio-economic life of coastal communities and contributes to the continuation of the cultural heritage of local communities. It is typically a family-based fishery, where owners are directly involved in the fishing activity. Together with other maritime activities, it represents a significant share in local economies, providing multiplying affects other areas of economic activity, in particular tourism. Thus it secures jobs and maintains families and coastal communities. It provides consumers with healthy food and in some countries it is an essential part of food security.

The crucial role of the SSF in maintaining coastal communities, traditions and contributing to food security has been recognized on international, regional and EU levels. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development specifically mentions the SSF in Sustainable Development Goal 14 which relates to the sustainable use of oceans and seas. The 2018 General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) Ministerial Declaration on a Regional Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea underlines that the SSF merits adequate attention and financial support. Also the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) acknowledges the importance of the SSF under its Objectives in Article 2 of the Regulation (EU) No. 1380/2013.

However, many coastal areas that depend on the SSF and aquaculture are facing the prospect of gradual disappearance of the SSF due to a generational change, lack of attractive employment opportunities, particularly for young fishers, and **increased economic hardship and risks**. Their precarious situation therefore requires particular attention and additional concrete action. The regional and socio-economic specificities of the SSF, such as the seasonality and diversity of their activities, their nature of micro and small-sized enterprises as well as the variability of their income need to be taken into account in the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) Regulation post 2020 (Commission proposal COM(2018) 390 final).

In particular, the future EMFF should be a key instrument of support to address this situation. Considering the central role of the SSF in many European coastal communities, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Malta, Poland, Portugal and Slovenia are of the opinion that a sustainable future for the SSF in many coastal areas strongly depends on the funding possibilities of the EMFF. Whilst acknowledging that much has been accomplished for the benefit of the SSF in previous programming periods, the Member States concerned believe that now is the time to **enhance the efforts to support the SSF by making access to funding easier and under a higher aid intensity rate, including for investments in fishing vessels**.

This could be done for example through the inclusion of possibilities to **modernise the SSF fleets and vessels**, which represent the primary source of income for small-scale fishers and their families. Due to the nature of their work and their knowledge of the sea, small-scale coastal fishers are important custodians of fisheries resources, as has been recognised by the UN and regional fisheries management organisations. The future EMFF should reflect this and allow for support for young fishers and early retirement schemes, for investments such as acquisition of a new or second-hand vessel, improving safety and working conditions on board and replacement or modernisation of a vessel's engine to improve energy efficiency. This would allow fishers to carry out fishing in the most efficient and sustainable way in terms of preserving the environment **without leading to increased fishing capacity**.

With the average age of many fishers increasing, this much needed support would foster generational renewal and diversification of the SSF activities and thus ensure that the future EMFF contributes to the preservation of traditional environmentally friendly fishing activities, knowledge and techniques in EU coastal areas. In turn, this would ensure that the future EMFF contributes to the continuation of livelihoods and populations of European coastal communities in the coming financial perspective. As demonstrated in the previous and current financial perspectives, Community-led local development (CLLD) has been a very important and successful tool in addressing the Common Fisheries Policy priorities for the SSF. Therefore, its successful work should be continued.

Since most the SSF enterprises are SMEs and/or family enterprises, simplification is crucial in order to preserve the tradition of the SSF in EU coastal areas. In addition to a simplified delivery system for the SSF, this should include promotion of access to and use of new technologies among others with the aim to improve safety and traceability, as well as to **reduce the administrative and financial burdens of data collection, monitoring, control and surveillance.**