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Mr Iván López  
LDAC Chairman

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Dear Mr Lopez,

Thank you for your letter dated 16 May 2018 in which you share the concerns of the members of the Long Distance Advisory Council regarding the EU's commitment towards International Ocean Governance in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. I would first of all like to reassure you that the EU remains strongly committed to promoting ocean governance within the EU waters and beyond.

Let me at the outset state that your premise that the EU is not appropriately involved in the promotion of good governance in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans is not a fair reflection of the reality. The EU is at the forefront in both the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) and the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) not only in terms of the number and quality of proposals submitted but also in terms of our involvement in the discussions. At the same time, the EU is one of the largest contributors to the scientific work of these organisations and to the capacity building they undertake in developing countries. We also cooperate actively with many countries in these regions under the EU IUU Regulation. The EU has a proven track record of actively supporting ocean governance in all fora where it is active and this is internationally recognised.

We are committed to the promotion of ocean governance, not only in the Atlantic and Indian oceans but in all oceans. We are deeply engaged in different fora where we have a positive impact. These fora include not only Regional Fisheries Management Organisations but also Regional Governance bodies such as the Indian Ocean Commission. We seek synergies between EU development and fisheries policies. Good examples of this are the recently adopted PESCAO Program for the West Africa Region and the ECOFISH Program being developed for the Indian Ocean Region. To be successful in our efforts and to ensure that our partners see these efforts as sincere it is however important that the performance of the relevant EU operators is consistent with our approach and reflect the highest standards.

It is unfortunate that our services could not attend the COMHAFAT meeting in Rabat to which you refer. But I am sure that there will be other opportunities to engage with this relevant interlocutor for the EU and link its activities to the important work being carried out under the PESCAO Program in order to avoid duplication of efforts.

The EU continues to promote the Port State Measures Agreement at bilateral, regional and multilateral level, and to encourage its ratification by all third countries. Along these lines, the EU has a very active role in promoting rules in line with the PSMA in the various RFMOs, and these efforts had already resulted in significant progress, even before its entry into force. In this regard, we welcome the studies you shared in your communication on the regional observer and inspection programs in the Atlantic Ocean, which we will carefully consider.

My services will remain at your disposal to discuss any further possible way forward on the Atlantic and Indian Oceans in the context of improving International Ocean Governance.

Yours sincerely,



Karmenu Vella