**Letter of intent on principles and working methods in the Adriatic Sea**

**(ADRIATICA)**

**1. Introduction**

(1) Fisheries administration of Croatia, Italy, and Slovenia (hereinafter - EU Member States’ fisheries administration) together with the EU Commission have a long-standing tradition of effective cooperation in fisheries management and science in the Adriatic Sea Region. In addition to cooperation at the level of science and administration, activities also included thorough consultations of thefisheries sector.

(2) A structured form of cooperation in the area of fisheries has been developed. The primary goal is to continue further strengthening of coordination and cooperation among EU Member States’ fisheries administrations, but also among other key stakeholders relevant for the Adriatic Sea fisheries. It is a forum for exchanging ideas, views and information and a forum that can facilitate joint efforts in various concrete projects aiming at achieving sustainable fisheries in the Adriatic Sea Region.

(3) The 2013 reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) of the European Union includes as a central element the regionalisation of the CFP. The activities are anchored primarily on the element of regionalisation as referred to in the Basic Regulation on the CFP.

(4) Within the framework of the above mentioned Basic Regulation, EU Member States’ fisheries administrations, undertake to work together, in Consultation with the Mediterranean Advisory Council and with the European Commission, to manage Adriatic Sea Fisheries. In particular, EU Member States’ fisheries administration will endeavour to develop ‘’Joint recommendations’’ in line with article18 of the CFP Basic Regulation.

(5) EU Member States’ fisheries administration work on two levels as follows:

- A **high-level coordination** (**HLC**) between the Directors-general for fisheries of Croatia, Italy, and Slovenia, and

- A **Technical Group** (**TG**) of representatives of Directorates general for fisheries of Croatia, Italy, and Slovenia, EU Commission and MEDAC officials as well as representatives from the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA), the FAO-AdriaMed and relevant stakeholders in the Adriatic Sea fisheries.

(6) This Letter of intent sets out the principles and working methods that will be applied in the HLC and TG. The Letter of intent expresses the willing of the Directors-general for fisheries of Croatia, Italy, and Slovenia to work in accordance with the principles and working methods as described under points 2 to 4. The Letter of intent does not form a legally binding instrument or document.

**2. Principles and working methods in the HLC and TG**

EU Member States’ fisheries administration, adhere to the provisions of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (hereinafter TFEU), the Basic Regulation and to respective national requirements relating to the Member States’ decision making procedures.

**2.1. HLC**

The following principles and working methods will apply for the work of HLC:

2.1.1. The Presidency of HLC rotates between Croatian, Italian, and Slovenian fisheries administration for a one year period starting every year on the 1st of January (IT 2021, HR 2022, SI 2023, repeating the cycle after the 2023).

2.1.2. The Presidency establishes dates and places for meetings, suggests to keep at least one meeting per year and proposes an indicative list of topics to be discussed. The default working language is English.

2.1.3. An official is identified in each of the EU Member States’ fisheries administration as responsible for the administrative work and communication (coordinator).

2.1.4. Stakeholders in Adriatic Sea fisheries may address their positions and proposals to the EU Member States’ fisheries administrations. Where appropriate, they will be put on the agenda for an incoming meeting of HLC or scheduled for the TG.

2.1.5. HLC can prepare positions and joint recommendations as proposals for consideration and possible follow-up by the EU institutions or, if so agreed, at national level without prejudice to national rules and procedures.

2.1.6. EU Member States’ fisheries administrations take due account of the views expressed by the EU Commission in preparing and discussing draft positions or joint recommendations.

2.1.7. EU Member States’ fisheries administrations base their views on the best available scientific as well as other information and thereby rely on good cooperation and information exchange with the relevant organisations in the Adriatic Sea Region. These relevant organisations are in particular MEDAC, European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA), FAO-AdriaMed and other relevant stakeholders in the Adriatic Sea fisheries as agreed by EU Member States’ fisheries administrations. The HLC may invite stakeholders that are deemed relevant to present positions or take part in discussions in the HLC meetings.

2.1.8. The deliberations of the HLC, will take into account the roles and responsibilities of EU Member States’ fisheries administrations and EU institutions with regard to negotiations with third countries, joining up with existing bilateral processes in a constructive and timely manner.

2.1.9. HLC may decide to establish ad hoc working groups on specific issues that need in-depth work of experts as well as to organize specific TGs and meetings.

**2.2. TG**

The following principles will be applied in organizing TG:

2.2.1. The HLC proposes dates and place for meetings of TG.

2.2.2. Draft positions, joint recommendations and other important topics for Adriatic Sea fisheries may be discussed within the TG with relevant stakeholders before any position is to be formulated by the HLC.

2.2.3. Discussions, consultations and presentations in the TG provide necessary feedback and stakeholders’ expertise to assist HLC in preparation of the positions and joint recommendations.

**3. Procedures for transposing positions or joint recommendations into legislation**

**3.1. Application of regional approach in the Adriatic Sea** **by a Commission delegated or implementing act (EU implementation)**

Where the HLC positions or joint recommendations in their nature comply with the provisions of delegated acts (non-essential elements, sunset clause, restricted and well defined scope) they may be forwarded by the Presidency to the EU Commission and, if relevant, to the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, to their respective consideration as a basis for drafting of delegated acts. The HLC positions or joint recommendations may also be forwarded to the EU Commission for consideration as a basis for implementing acts.

**3.2. Adriatic Sea** **regional harmonization by national legislation**

Where EU Member States’ fisheries administrations unanimously agree, they may decide to initiate the process of implementation of the HLC position or joint recommendation through national legislation, without prejudice of the national rules and legislative procedures. They can agree that the national measures come into force on a specific date that allows Member States to be informed of each other’s provisions and thereby to ensure a harmonized process of implementation.

The provisions implemented at national level would be formally notified to the EU Commission and other Member States in accordance with the procedures of the Basic Regulation on the CFP.

**4. Other initiatives**

HLC positions or joint recommendation may also be forwarded to the EU Commission or, through EC, to other relevant organizations as proposals on any subject that relates to the development of sustainable fisheries in the Adriatic Sea region.

The principles and working methods of the HLC and TG will be revised every four years.

This Letter of intent can be subscribed by any other EU Member States fisheries administration that has an interest in fishing activities in the Adriatic Sea.

This Letter of intent is drafted in English and in the case of divergence in interpretation, the English text is considered the original.

Signed in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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| Directors general for fisheries of: |  |  |
| Croatia  *(Ante Mišura)* | Italy  *(Riccardo Rigillo)* | Slovenia  *(Ana Le Marechal-Kolar)* |
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