



VIRGINIJUS SINKEVIČIUS
Commissioner for Environment
Oceans and Fisheries

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Ms Caroline Roose
Member of the European Parliament
European Parliament
Rue Wiertz 60
1047 Bruxelles
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Dear Ms Roose,

I thank you for your letter of 28 April 2021 asking me to support and actively promote a total and permanent ban of bottom fishing in the Fishing Recovery Area (FRA) in the Gulf of Lions.

We are very conscious of the dire state of the Western Mediterranean stocks and the need to improve monitoring and management in the region, especially in its emblematic FRA, the Gulf of Lions, set up at the level of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM).

Years of continuous efforts from the Commission services have allowed the establishment of nine FRAs in the Mediterranean Sea. As stated in the reply to your written question in December 2020, the Commission services are now continuing their work at GFCM level to develop a horizontal recommendation providing Mediterranean countries with a clear toolbox for conservation, monitoring and management. Its aim is the adoption of additional FRAs and securing their efficiency for the protection of marine ecosystems.

In addition, the Commission services are working on a recommendation to be adopted at the GFCM annual session in 2021 that would perpetuate the Jabuka/Pomo Pit as a permanent FRA. Regarding the existing FRAs and the reinforcement of their conservation measures, the Commission will follow the evaluation and recommendations from the GFCM scientific advisory committee, based on the assessment launched in 2020 with all contracting parties to evaluate the conservation, monitoring and enforcement of all Mediterranean FRAs, including the Gulf of Lions.

Following this assessment and the scientific advice, the EU will discuss a new proposal for the Gulf of Lions FRA that would improve its conservation, monitoring and enforcement standards.

I would also like to take the opportunity to mention the new GFCM Strategy 2021-2030 to be adopted in the next few weeks. This ambitious Strategy will establish the framework of the GFCM activities for the next decade in order to face the numerous challenges (e.g. overfishing, threats to marine environment, climate change etc.). Under this Strategy, the implementation of new FRAs and the better monitoring of existing ones has been identified amongst the priorities for action.

This work goes hand in hand with the implementation of the EU Western Mediterranean multiannual management plan's objectives to achieve Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY), secure recovery of stocks in the region, thus improving the fishing sector's viability.

It was clear during the plan's adoption that ambitious actions entailing a reduction of the fishing effort and technical measures to reduce the bycatch of juveniles would need to be implemented urgently to allow for recovery of stocks and the achievement of MSY, a legal obligation under the Common Fisheries Policy.

As I mentioned on several occasions, "without fish, there can be no fishermen". If we do not implement the Western Mediterranean plan and the GFCM recommendations, the stocks will very likely collapse and so will the whole sector's viability.

I am looking forward to a close cooperation with you on this matter.

Yours sincerely,



Virginijus Sinkevičius