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## REPORT OF THE INTER-RAC MEETING ORGANISED BY DG MARE, 21 FEBRUARY 2012, BRUXELLES

### AGENDA (DRAFT Agenda in annex1):

- 1. Presentation of the main conclusions on Mrs Pascale Baelde's evaluation on the work of the SWW RAC, followed by an exchange of views on the functioning of the RACs and possible areas for improvement*
- 2. Presentation and discussion on EMFF, with Ms Flaminia Tacconi, MARE A3*
- 3. Presentation and discussion on "regionalisation" with Ms Rikke Nielsen, MARE A2*
- 4. Presentation on the new EU Multi-Annual Programme 2014-2020 for data collection by Ms Amélie Knapp, MARE C3*

The MED RAC was represented by the Vice-President José Manuel Gil de Bernabé, Rosa Caggiano and Erika Monnati, the President Mourad Kahoul didn't attend as we was ill.

The meeting started with the intervention of Ernesto Penas Lado, Director of Policy development and coordination of DG Mare. He reminded that the RACs major complain concerning the fact that "the EC listen but doesn't reply" has to take into account that with the CFP Reform the RACs will have a new role and so the EC should strengthen consulting them but this is a process and it takes time to learn from each other.

Penas affirmed that over time RACs have been consolidated and the quality of the dialogue has been constantly improving. At the very beginning people came to the EC very frustrated, complaining but over time the confrontation became more constructive. Now the EC is trying to strengthen regionalization and whatever reform would come up it would definitely stress the importance of the RACs. The RACs will be consolidated even if there will be a change in names as they will not end up reflecting any region. Penas underlined that the EC will not consult the RACs on a compulsory base, leaving the advisory role unchanged. The RACs will not be a decision making body.

Referring to "regionalization" he informed us that it will be limited by what is called co-decision and there is no alternative to it. There is no way that a group of Member States can take legal decision at the EU level. All Ministers of the EU and Parliament together are legitimate to take legal decisions. The only way regionalization can go forward



is through a new system where Parliament and Ministers will limit their activity to macro aspects and leave the definition of technical elements to the different stakeholders. Member States will deal with the micro aspects and RAC will come into the scene as advisors, not as decision makers, as facilitators of the dialogue in the decision making process. How RAC intervention will take place it hasn't been decided yet. Regionalization is not just to replace bureaucracy in Brussels, regionalized decision making will have to take practical management, bringing decision making closer to the fishing grounds.

Penas concluded his speech by saying that in the future the EC will go under serious cut to reduce its costs. Furthermore Penas informed us that Commissioner Damanaki expressed her decision to modify ACFA that will be subject to an initiative of the EC by its own. We have an interest to avoid duplication between RACs and ACFA dossiers'.

After Penas' intervention the LDRAC asked him if it would be possible to modify certain aspects of the Council Decision that created RACs, and how the LDRAC could work on LTMP not being an RFMO. To this he suggested LDRAC to work on producing LTMP like in ICCAT.

BSRAC expressed concern about the legal framework that could result in different implementation in different Member States, overall quality might be different.

SWWRAC said that they still need to know in practical terms how it is going to work, it seems that regionalization will be implemented on a voluntary basis. There seems to be a risk of excessive centralization on EC and Member States side. To this Penas replied by saying that many Member States will have to undergo decision making where they think that would work. Decentralized decision will be defined underway as the process will start to go by.

José Manuel Gil de Bernabé expressed that the MED RAC members are not satisfied by the replies of DG MARE on Med RAC's opinions often adopted by consensus. Furthermore he underlined the difficulty of DG MARE in sending qualified people to discuss issues at the meetings organized by RACMED. He asked why RAC advice is not binding if it is supposed to be a consultation body. Gil de Bernabé closed his intervention by talking about the micro management and asked if there is any study referring to the establishment of fishing hours in different countries and how in the Mediterranean things can be improved if we have to face behaviors considered illegal for the EU but legal in third countries. He wondered how fishermen can be motivated and if the RAC could play a more active role concerning third countries.

Penas replied that in the past EC has made mistakes by saying that if an advice had been reached by consensus it would automatically be accepted by the EC. DG MARE is trying to involve the most qualified people as possible, but it is not always easy to find someone with all the necessary qualifications. RAC's advice are not legally binding. Penas concluded by saying that the RACs have rights to invite third countries representative to come and talk with them and the only regional management organization is the GFCM.

PELRAC intervened by saying that they don't feel regional, they have discussed on "regionalization" but they couldn't reach consensus. There are members more reserved. Their problems is that they have to work with shared stocks and whatever they do has to be negotiated between the EC and third countries. They also have to face with third countries such as Iceland, Norway and Russia.

Penas replied that Member States were worried that a decision would have the same effect once implemented in each MS. Ideally MS should agree on the same set of rules, if that doesn't happen the EC would have to regulate it.



**Penas informed us that by the beginning of June position on regionalization would need to be submitted, so the RACs' contributions are welcomed at that dates.**

1. Pascal BAELDE: performance assessment of SWWRAC: "Learn about mistakes and difficulties to improve things in the future"

Baelde started its PowerPoint presentation by saying that it is widely agreed that consultation process has improved relationships between stakeholders, increased legitimacy and produced tangible results. Referring to the RAC there is a lack of strategic vision and clear objectives it tends to work in response to actualities. To improve the quality of advice it is important to back up statements with scientific data. Too much energy is spent in administrative and organizational tasks. The RAC has to improve communication and visibility.

Baelde underlined that there is no consensus over what sustainability and sustainable management means, there is also confusion on what participation of stakeholders in this process means. RACs are advisory bodies and advice are not taken into account by the EC on a compulsory basis, but there is high expectations on both sides: RAC to influence the EC, and the EC to help RACs clarify the consultation framework, and procedures (timeframe, objectives). The EC should be more precise on its request to help the RACs and for any advice should explain clearly how the advice was taken into account and if not why.

2. Presentation and discussion on EMFF, with Ms Flaminia Tacconi MARE A3

Tacconi presented the new EMFF designed to accompany the CFP reform. To simplify the process only one fund has been designed. Bottom up process, more important to finance projects that helps create more jobs and local community involvement, fund social sustainability, health conditions on board.

After the Tacconi presentation LDRAC proposed the wish of the 7 RACs to organize a joint seminar on EMFF but he would like to have the EC help in organizing this.

Gil de Bernabé intervened on behalf of MEDRAC underlining that the MEDRAC opinion on the CFP Reform already contemplates some aspects related to the EMFF, and that next week there will be a Working Group on the EMFF. One of the main aspect pointed out in the opinion was the reopening of the discussion on the definition of artisanal fishery that cannot be identified only considering one parameter: 12 m from the coast. He is skeptical on the EMFF reform creating more jobs but rather pushing fishermen out of the sector. Moreover, MEDRAC members hope that current contribution provided for scrapping would not suddenly be abolished. Tacconi replied that with reference to demolition the EC Court of Auditors declared that this represented a "loss of money".

3. Presentation and discussion on "regionalisation" with Ms Rikke Nielsen, MARE A2

Rikke Nielsen informed the participants that regionalization is a possibility and the EC is trying to figure out the right measures to achieve its target. It is still an ongoing process shaped also by all the concerns and questions expressed by stakeholders. Many of the concerns are about finding a way on how to institutionalize coordination mechanism and division of workloads.

LDRAC pointed out that the process of regionalization for LDRAC makes it hard to identify where are the borders of MS activities. They are wondering how they can have a more active role and transmit the ideas to the EC in terms of position so that their scientific knowledge can be used.



NSRAC expressed its concern on EC participation in RACs meetings. In some cases MS are encouraged to participate because it is in line with their interest, how much work MS are going to do will depend on each MS. He concluded by saying that technical measures should be adopted either in LTMP or through regional framework.

SWWRAC declared that the new basic regulation seems to have established the socioeconomic objective but if it is not done at the EC level, would it be left to MS? Can the EC ensure that there is coordination among MS?

Nielsen replied declaring that the most relevant aspect of regionalization is technical measures, socio economic aspects are only a consequence and they are going to be taken into account into LTMP.

4. Presentation on the new EU Multi-Annual Programme (MAP) 2014-2020 for data collection by Ms Amélie Knapp, MARE C3

Amélie Knapp presented the new EU MAP composed by data collection of each MS that has its national data collection program. The data collection format (dcf) works through regional coordination meetings, that meet once a year. The major weakness of data collection format (dcf) is that it is not possible to choose data. The attempt to simplify rules and better flexibility, simplify data formats used by EC and of the users to avoid duplication, need to harmonize formats to comply with Eurostat, regional coordination meetings has been really useful to identify which data are most significant and what the most important survey are needed to carry out. They provide a list of most important *métiers* each year. They create regional databases like the one put in place by Baltic sea and North sea supported by the EC. In the Mediterranean it is totally voluntary so far. Input and feedback are going to be asked in the following weeks. She concluded by saying that by the end of 2012 she hopes everything will be put in place to comply with the CFP reform.

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