

Dear Ms Coers,

Thank you for your letter of 20 August last expressing your understandable concern at the decision taken by the Faroe Islands and Iceland in setting unilateral measures for mackerel in the North-East Atlantic. The level of fisheries decided by the Faroe Islands and Iceland is entirely unjustified.

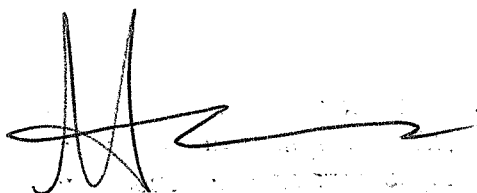
In response to this action, on 9 August, the Commission issued a strongly worded press release expressing our concern at the unilateral action of the Faroe Islands. Following this, I also sent a personal letter to the Faroese Minister expressing my own strong reservations at the Faroese action.

As you know, in early August, the Commission convoked separate meetings with the Member States on 3 August and with the EU pelagic industry on 4 August in Brussels. At both meetings, a number of possible measures, which the European Union might take, were considered in detail. Amongst those measures were the possible invoking of the IUU Regulation; trade sanctions; other interventions under the International Tribunal of the Law of the Sea; and the suspension of the bilateral fisheries agreement or arrangements. Whilst there was a deal of frustration at the perceived inability of the European Union to react both rapidly and strongly towards what are acknowledged to be real threats to EU interests, I consider that all the options discussed with Member States remain very much on the table at this stage.

Our next step was a meeting with the Faroe Islands on 9 and 10 September, at which time their action and its implication for EU / Faroe Islands bilateral cooperation was discussed. While this meeting has not yet yielded a turnaround in the Faroese position, we have made our concerns crystal clear to them. A similar meeting took place in Iceland yesterday.

In view of the imperative nature of the situation, I am continuing to work proactively with all Member States in order to ensure that we are able to find a solution, which works in the interests of us all. To this end I have taken the initiative to discuss this point at the next Fisheries Council on 29 September. Let me at the end also thank you for the continued support you are giving me on this matter.

Yours sincerely



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