

Ms Charlina Vitcheva

Director General
Directorate General Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
Rue de la Loi 200
1049 Brussels
BELGIUM

Date: 7 October 2024

PelAC reference: 2425PAC02

Subject: Urgent action needed following ICES Advice on Northeast Atlantic Mackerel Stock

Dear Ms. Charlina Vitcheva,

The Pelagic Advisory Council (PelAC) would like to reiterate to the European Commission the critical importance of immediate action following the publication of the recent ICES advice regarding the Northeast Atlantic mackerel stock, which recommended a 22% reduction in catches.

As PelAC warned in previous years, the persistent lack of a comprehensive and sustainable sharing arrangement among Coastal States continues to put undue pressure on the mackerel stock. If urgent action is not taken, we fear that the continued unsustainable exploitation of the mackerel stock will have long-term detrimental impacts on the EU fishing industry and the marine ecosystem in which mackerel plays a vital role.

The latest ICES advice confirms our concerns and, considering the upcoming benchmark, places serious risks for the stock, the fleets that depend on it and the ecosystems in which mackerel plays a crucial role. In light of this, PelAC calls for the European Commission to take action immediately, to ensure the stock does not fall below safe biomass limits triggering zero catch advice from ICES.

PelAC welcomes the Commission proposal amending Regulation (EU) 1026/2012¹ that allows for actions to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, including the possibility of restricting access to the European market for those engaged in unsustainable fishing practices. Additionally, the application of customs duties would further serve as a deterrent to stop unsustainable practices and breaches of international agreements.

¹ Regulation (EU) no 1026/2012 of the European parliament and of the council of 25 October 2012 on certain measures for the purpose of the conservation of fish stocks in relation to countries allowing non-sustainable fishing





PelAC also urges the Commission to intensify its diplomatic efforts, particularly through the high-level dialogue group between the European Union and Norway. A firm and coordinated diplomatic stance will be essential to reach an agreement that halts the trend of third countries setting excessive unilateral quotas, entering into partial agreements using their inflated self-declared quotas as currency and restores balance in the management of this crucial stock.

We appreciate your immediate attention to this matter and look forward to the European Commission's response and decisive action.

Kind regards,

Esben Sverdrup Jensen
Chairman Pelagic Advisory Council

