

Draft speech of Mr. Buonfiglio - Seminar on the Five-Year Independent External Evaluation of the European Fisheries Control Agency

20 June 2017

Dear Executive Director Mr Savouret and Chair of the Administrative Board, colleagues,

First and foremost, I would like to thank you for inviting MEDAC, the Advisory Council for the Mediterranean / It's a great pleasure for me to be here representing MEDAC.

MEDAC is actually composed by 43 associated members, professional fisheries associations, recreational fisheries organisations, NGOs and fishermen trade unions from 8 European Union Member States, Italy, France, Spain, Greece, Croatia, Malta, Slovenia and Chypre.

MEDAC has always shown great interest in EFCA activities and policies and that point clearly emerges from the Independent External Evaluation you are presenting today as you can see from the very high attendance of MEDAC to the Advisory Board meetings (10 out of 11 during 2012-2016 period) on one hand.

On the other hand, EFCA has always participated to MEDAC working groups on big pelagics, in particular about Bluefin Tuna, to present the results of the BFT campaigns and the Joint Deployment Plans and we are grateful for the EFCA involvement in sharing their data. Moreover, EFCA attended almost all the meetings of the MEDAC WG related to the LO issues and gave its contribution to the debate.

In the framework of this independent external evaluation, MEDAC has participated in the survey addressed to the Members of the Advisory Councils, ACs, and we have stressed the importance of strengthening cooperation between relevant Member States authorities, enhancing compliance with the rules of Common Fisheries Policy for the Mediterranean countries.

Bluefin Tuna campaigns, Landing Obligation and the fight against IUU fishing are the main subjects on which EFCA and MEDAC are strongly involved. In this framework, cooperation is the key-word and stakeholders' awareness is the main challenge.

As far as IUU is concerned, MEDAC suggests improving and encourage the exchange of information and experiences on control implementation between MS and operators; to properly implement, harmonize and simplify the access to the electronic tools (AIS, VMS, etc.); and to encourage a more regionalized approach with bottom-up consultation procedure to achieve greater compliance.

Moreover, MEDAC has made to the Commission specific proposals to enhance the operational role of the EFCA in carrying out more activities related to fight against IUU Fishing and in assisting MSs to promote a culture of compliance by increasing their capacity building in order to assist third countries coastal states to improve their control capacities in terms of training for inspections at sea and at ports both in EU and non-EU Coastal States. The improvement of working on training material and courses is essential.

Furthermore, MEDAC has recently supported a Joint opinion proposed by LDAC (Long Distance) and MAC (Markets) concerning the improvement of the implementation of the regulation to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing.

ACs recommend that the EC establishes a mechanism within the new IT system for the proactive sharing of intelligence and results of verifications and inspections, to ensure a steady flow of relevant information between Member States and in the context of the IUU dialogues with third countries, we feel that more efforts need to be focused to ensure the data provided by third countries on catch certificates are accurate, reliable and verifiable.

Referring to the Landing Obligation (LO), MEDAC in its Working Group 1 meetings, that started on 2014 for small pelagic, and continued with the demersal ones, during the last meeting held in Rome on 6th June 2017, continued the debate on the moment when LO will enter into force for all the demersal species listed in Annex III of the EU Reg. n.1967/2016. As you know the entry into force is scheduled for January 2019.

The MEDAC WG1 discussion went also through the aspects surrounding the feasibility, or not, of implementing supply chains on land, still keeping in mind the requirement to respect the spirit of the regulation, which specifies reducing or avoiding capture of undersized specimens through increased gear selectivity and/or reduced activity in sensitive marine areas due to the presence of juvenile life stages of the species concerned.

In other words, according to this approach, it has been decided to check where it is technically and economically possible to apply the LO it and where it is not for the lack of feasibility conditions.

The WG1 therefore outlined a series of factors affecting the feasibility of placing storage stations in ports or adjacent areas. This is now being processed by all the MEDAC member organisations, whose feedback will make it possible to prepare a map on the applicability of art.15 of the Basic Regulation, in the Mediterranean Sea, in the eight Member States affected. This will provide a reply to the requests received by the MEDAC from PESCAMED (IT, FR, ES) and will be useful in the future for other MSs who will be facing the same issues in the coming months.

Another key element of the EFCA activities in the Mediterranean Sea are the Joint Deployment Plans which are a good tool of control and inspection at sea in ICCAT and GFCM areas, EU waters and ashore, based on a risk assessment approach as they promote:

- uniformity and effectiveness of control;
- an increased transparency;
- level playing field for the fishing industry
- an efficient use of inspection and control resources also pooled by the MSs.

In conclusion, MEDAC calls for:

- an increased mandate and resources of EFCA not only in relation to control the EU waters, but also to contribute to control in non-EU waters in order to ensure adequate operational coordination of the national means of control and inspection through a tripartite working arrangement between EFCA, the future European Border Control Agency (ex Frontex) and the EMSA (European Maritime Safety Agency) on coastguard functions;
- more training of EU MS and Third countries inspectors, promoting the harmonization of inspection procedures;
- a better communication between the EFCA Advisory Board and its Administrative Board;
- an improved stakeholders' information and involvement.

We are confident that MEDAC and EFCA could continue to collaborate in the name of a sustainable and viable fisheries in the Mediterranean Sea.

Thank you very much for your attention.