

MEDITERRANEAN REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL – MRAC

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REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL – MRAC

Rome, 2 April 2009

Chair: Mourad Kahoul

List of participants : see annexe:

1. The Chairman Mourad Kahoul opened the session. The agenda was adopted without amendments.
2. Regarding the recruitment of the Secretary-General and Assistant, Executive Committee members confirmed that the Selection Committee (corresponding to the Presidency of the RAC) would take it upon itself to interview the shortlisted candidates. Some delegates suggested that the Commission representative be included on the selection committee, but others were of the opinion that it was not for the Commission to interfere in matters concerning the internal operation of the RAC. Regarding the nationality of staff, Mr Papaioannou said that the RAC could not demand that they be from EU Mediterranean countries. On the other hand, knowledge of Mediterranean fisheries was a legitimate condition. Regarding the closing date of 15 May 2009 for submission of candidatures, he hoped that this date would be maintained to allow sufficient time for circulation of the notices of vacancies and for candidates to send in their CVs. The Commission should not be involved in the decision-making but could provide advice if necessary. Regarding the recruitment of the assistant, the list of qualifications in the profile included a knowledge of how the European institutions work. While not essential, this was a valuable asset.
3. Regarding the review of applications for membership of the RAC General Assembly sent in by certain organisations, Ms Celestini presented Penelope-Aktea, which represents women in the industry and is part of Aktea network representing 11 European countries, and of which she is also a vice-president. Women in fisheries have no visibility at the moment. With the modernisation of production technologies, the responsibilities of fishermen's wives have also evolved in order to properly manage the on-shore side of the family business. Member States have since 1986 been able to give associate status to the wife in the family business, as exists in agriculture,

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but few do at this stage and in any case, no Mediterranean Member State. In this way there is a disparity in the treatment of fishermen's wives in Europe. Aktea, the European network is trying to gain such recognition. Women also want to be able to transmit the knowledge and traditions of the fishing communities that are fast disappearing with the constant reduction in the number of undertakings. This loss of heritage would be a very bad thing. It is women who act to conserve this heritage, in which they have played an important role since time immemorial.

The representative of 'Big Game Italia' presented his federation which is active in different countries of the Adriatic Sea. The current system within their sport fishing federation is to release the fish, which is compatible with the life cycle of the fish. The federation is working with research institutions to assess catch opportunities. A selective shark fishing programme has, for example, been carried out to assess shark reproduction in the Adriatic. The federation has also worked on an American shark-tagging programme. The federation's aim is to avoid any impact on the species. The federation has always imposed self-limits in bluefin tuna fishing.

Ms Yolanda Piedra then presented the activities of IVEA Empa, now called 'Federación de Empresarios del mar', which was created in 2004 and includes organisations active in tourism, the cleaning of the seabed, women working in sea-related occupations and professional divers. Many European projects had been conducted on the status of women. The organisation wishes to belong to the RAC, with a seat in the last third under diversification activities.

Mr Mirette presented the syndicate 'Coordination des pêcheurs de l'Etang de Berre'. This is a syndicate of fishermen who fish for bluefin tuna with thonaille nets, that are currently banned under European regulations. The syndicate is also defending the small businesses of the region. Concerned about the topical issue of bluefin tuna, Mr Gil de Bernabé asked that procedures be respected to prevent having a multitude of little groupings as RAC members. He asked how many boats the syndicate represented and whether it was a member of the Comité National des Pêches et des Elevages Marins de France. While respecting the work of this syndicate, he said that its joining the RAC would set a precedent for the membership of large number of Spanish micro-associations active in the field of bluefin tuna, for example. Such a situation would not be viable for the RAC.

Mr Mirette confirmed that the syndicate wanted to be part of the two thirds, that it had existed for 10 years and that it was now active in the conversion of small businesses to long lines, lines and rod fishing, to prevent boats leaving the industry. The syndicate represents about forty boats.

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The French National Committee representative added that the union does not sit in the National Fisheries Committee. The RAC Vice-Chairman, Mr Gil de Bernabé, confirmed that it was impossible to accept an organisation representing 40 or 50 professionals. For him, the union was not sufficiently representative and he recommended that small groups seek membership of larger regional or national structures (French National Committee or Regional Committees) which already exist in France and be represented via them on the RAC. The FNCP is creating an association of auction bodies that will also shortly be applying for membership, but this association is active right along the Spanish Mediterranean coast.

The representative of Federop-it not being present, the presentation made to the General Assembly the day before would be taken into account. In conclusion, the Executive Committee considered it inappropriate that non-representative organisations sit on the RAC and that they should rather be represented via larger existing national federations which are already RAC members.

4. Regarding the provisional calendar of RAC meetings in 2009, Ms Martinez said it reflected the meetings scheduled at ACFA, where many RAC members sit, and that it contained several alternative dates. It was submitted for discussion and also at the same time to check the availability of the European Commission. The purpose of this agenda item was also to set the priority topics for future meetings. Mr Lamplmair (Commission) informed delegates that an initial meeting on the Green Paper would be opportune (with further meetings to follow since the reform process would be long). He hoped that a meeting could be devoted in May/June to the ‘Mediterranean Regulation’ and the status of its implementation, as well as to national management plans. The idea was to promote within the RAC an exchange of experiences and knowledge about neighbouring countries’ plans and to better understand the specificities of each, especially as these management plans will certainly lead to more broad-based Community plans, given that the 6-12 mile limit in the Mediterranean is not sufficient to ensure proper conservation of resources. It would therefore be good to speak about this rather quickly.

For the Commission, the dates proposed in the draft calendar posed no problems, except for the end of May, which Mr Papaioannou described as saturated (Maritime Week and Council of Ministers).

Mr Buonfiglio then proposed examining the proposed regulation on control, which is currently in advanced discussion with the European Parliament and which the Council should be voting on before the end of 2009, in order for it to come into force on 1/1/2010. He said that the European associations had already taken a position in Brussels and a further technical meeting with DG Mare was taking place the next day. He was interested to know whether the other RACs had also reacted on this issue, and

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if they had, to know their opinions. Regarding management plans and the Mediterranean regulation, some measures of which will come into force in May 2010, he did not see the importance of tackling the issue at present. He wished to address the regulation on illegal fishing with the European Control Agency in view of its entry into force on 1.1.2010, in order to assess the implications for Mediterranean fisheries. Other topics of interest he mentioned were the situation of scientific opinions (situation, validation, sources, etc.), the EFF and fleet reduction (situation in the various Member States, development of the fleet in third countries).

The European Control Agency representative informed delegates that the Agency's fields of activity were 'capacity building' (training), data monitoring and analysis, and the implementation of deployment plans (4 or 5 right now - cod and bluefin tuna). Regarding the regulation on illegal fishing, this item should be tackled primarily with the Commission which is responsible for the implementation of this dossier. However, the Agency could take part in the work and present its work programme on the same occasion. Ms Viallon informed delegates that a seminar was being held in Brussels in May on the implementation of the IUU regulation, to which the RACs would be invited.

Regarding Mr Buonfiglio's concerns about the fleet, Mr Lamplmair confirmed that the GFCM is very useful for limiting fishing effort in third countries and for monitoring fleet development. The GFCM's efforts had resulted in the establishment of a fleet register for the Mediterranean and Black Sea.

Finally, as regards control, Ms Viallon informed delegates that RACs had received a 'non-paper' and that four RAC's had given their opinion at that time. The 'North Sea' RAC, NWWRAC and SWWRAC had formulated opinions on the proposal for a regulation published in 2009. With discussion already well advanced, there was little time to come out with a position.

In addition, Mr Buonfiglio said it would be a good idea to link up with Medisamak to ensure dialogue with the countries of the southern rim. The Commission had not provided financial support to Medisamak, whereas it was supporting the other professional organisations and the RACs today. Medisamak was, however, an essential gateway for third countries. Medisamak was a useful and strategic tool that the Commission had not yet begun to exploit. With regard to work inside the GCFM, the MRAC asked to be consulted on the proposals that the Commission will be submitting upstream of the working meetings within this RFO.

Mr Taoultzis (PEPMA) wanted to see a discussion of the problem of Turkey, which is taking advantage of the present situation: Greek fishermen are reducing their boats and production, and Turkish producers are extending their activities and snatching market

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share. Turkish fish arrives on the European market without meeting any rule, which is unacceptable.

Mr Oriol Ribalta confirmed that the timetable seemed appropriate and that in general he supported Mr Buonfiglio's work priorities. He indicated that his organisation was keen to see a harmonisation of the rules for recreational fishing and that organisations other than those of fleet-owners and fishermen would certainly be shortly formulating their own work priorities. Ms Martinez reminded delegates that the question of recreational and sport fishing was tackled in the control regulation and in the regulation on measures in the Mediterranean, and that in the process of tackling these two global themes, recreational/sport fishing would also be closely examined.

Mr Oikonomidis asked that the problems of the Black Sea which have a definite impact on the Mediterranean also be discussed in the RAC. It was not just the south rim that impacted the state of resources.

4. On the question of the budget, which had been addressed at length at the General Assembly the day before, Ms Martinez drew the Executive Committee's attention to the fact that she had not yet received the bank guarantee papers necessary for releasing the Community grant. Until the grant was paid, it would be impossible to operate correctly. For now, membership fees paid in totalled approximately 20,000 euros. Some organisations had encountered difficulties in carrying out the transfer of their subscriptions because the bank account which had been initially communicated had had to be reserved exclusively for the grant for administrative reasons (precise accruing of interest). A second bank account had been created and then closed due to carrying the wrong name. Finally, the Italian delegation had provided the third bank account that should not pose any problems and will be devoted to the income (other than the Community grant) and expenditure of the RAC.
5. On the status of observer within the GFCM and ICCAT, Ms Martinez informed delegates that the steps for obtaining this status would be taken shortly even if it was not known with certainty whether the response would be positive. The fact is that the requests of certain RACs for membership of other RFOs had not been successful. Ms Viallon confirmed that certain RACs had been told that, being an emanation of the European institutions, RACs could take part in RFO meetings, but only as part of the European delegation. That said, as not all RFOs have the same policies, Mr Lamplmair confirmed that the Commission would support steps taken by RACs in this direction.
6. The meeting then turned to the matter of the future logo and graphic identity of the RAC. The idea was to gather some instructions to give to a graphics agency, and Committee members' preferences. Mr Romiti would like to see the symbol of the

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entire Mediterranean, or even a symbol of Rome, where the headquarters are. Mr Gil de Bernabé proposed using a lighthouse together with the silhouette of the Mediterranean. Various logo projects would be sent to the Presidency for a first view, once the grant was available and costs could be incurred.

7. Regarding the creation of the website, Ms Viallon indicated that there were no specific guidelines to follow. She advised taking a look at other RAC sites. Only one RAC site included a discussion forum for its members. The site needs to be clearly structured because it is an important tool for accessing working papers and information on the RAC's activities. In conclusion, the site plan to be proposed would include the best features of other existing models. The project would be submitted to the Office for its opinion once the budget became available and allowed the expenditure to be incurred.

Concluding the work, Mr Papaioannou wished the RAC every success in its work and confirmed the support of the European Commission. He expressed satisfaction with the two days of meetings and the willingness to work together that was tangible during this time. Mr Garat especially thanked Francisca Martinez for her work in recent years to successfully create the RAC and launch its activities

The Chair closed the session work by thanking the participants, the Commission and the interpreters.

(260 lines original text)
