



Joint statement of NGOs on the mission letter addressed to the Commissioner-designate for Environment and Oceans

The environmental organisations BirdLife, BLOOM, ClientEarth, Seas At Risk and WWF, actively advocating for the elimination of harmful fisheries subsidies in the European Union (EU), welcome the release of the mission letter addressed to Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner-designate for Environment and Oceans. We are indeed extremely worried about the current negotiations on the future EU policy on fisheries subsidies, i.e. the future European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF). This fund will determine the allocation of more than 6 billion euros of public subsidies to the fisheries and aquaculture sectors and to the protection of the marine environment for the period 2021-2027. Last April, the former European Parliament agreed on a position introducing and maintaining harmful subsidies at EU level. The Council adopted in June a partial general approach that goes even further. Both institutions wish to introduce, among other things, disguised subsidies for the construction of fishing vessels, which were banned 15 years ago in the EU. If the EMFF is adopted on this basis, this will dramatically increase the overcapacity of the EU fleet and overfishing in EU waters and beyond.

Furthermore, the reintroduction of harmful subsidies in the EMFF will severely undermine EU international credibility and jeopardise negotiations currently taking place at the World Trade Organisation to ban these subsidies, as mandated by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14.6. This could put the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development into question. Given the overarching goal to “ensure the delivery of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals” and the explicit mission to “work with the Commissioner for Trade to ensure that Europe leads discussions in the World Trade Organisation on finding a global agreement to ban fisheries subsidies that contribute to overfishing, illegal fishing and overcapacity” stated in the letter, we are confident that Commissioner-designate Virginijus Sinkevičius will take strong and robust action to make sure that no harmful fisheries subsidies are allowed in the EU. He can count on the support of BirdLife, BLOOM, ClientEarth, Seas At Risk and WWF to succeed.

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