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Signed by: Vanya Atanasova Ivanova

POSITION

Subject: Providing updated information on the implementation of the United Nations General Assembly resolution 76/71 of 9 December 2021 on sustainable fisheries

The Republic of Bulgaria, as a member state of the European Union and a contracting party to the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) complies with all regulations and recommendations on the conservation of marine biological resources, protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems and sustainable fisheries, in order to preserve or restore fish stocks at a sustainable level. We actively participate in the discussions of the Working Groups on Fisheries Policy at the European Commission, in the annual sessions of the GFCM and in meetings of the GFCM subsidiary bodies - the Working Group for the Black Sea, the Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries, the Scientific Advisory Committee on Aquaculture and the Compliance Committee.

We appreciate the significant work of the Food and Agriculture Organization, the United Nations, related to the management of deep-sea fisheries in the high seas and the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems, as well as the development and adoption of Guidelines in this area.

Bulgaria's fishing fleet is composed mainly of small-scale fishing vessels (95% of the vessels have a total length of less than 12 m), which rarely fish beyond the territorial waters and the adjacent sea area of Bulgaria. The fishing trip usually does not exceed 24 hours and is not related to deep-sea fisheries. In addition, Bulgarian fishing vessels do not fish in the high seas.

In the European Parliament resolution of 12 April 2016 on Fisheries aspects within the international agreement on marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (2015/2109(INI)), emphasizes that the impacts of fisheries on marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction will have to be part of the mandate of the Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs).

In this regard, we appreciate and support the work of RFMOs on fisheries management in areas beyond national jurisdiction and the impacts of fisheries on marine biodiversity. The role of RFMOs in this area should be leading and more unifying the countries involved in fishing in the respective fishing areas.

The scope of implementation of the 2008 United Nations International Guidelines for the Management of Deep-Sea Fisheries on the High Seas includes fishing that takes place in areas beyond national jurisdictions. Pursuant to paragraph 209 of General Assembly resolution 76/71, the review of actions taken by States, RFMOs and relevant arrangements is in accordance with paragraphs 113, 117 and 119 to 124 of General Assembly resolution 64/72; paragraphs 121, 126, 129, 130 and 132 to 134 of General Assembly resolution 66/68; and paragraphs 156, 171, 175, 177 to 188 and 219 of General Assembly resolution 71/123. They apply to areas beyond national jurisdictions.

Bulgaria has not participated in research and collection of scientific and technical information on the impact of deep-sea fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks in areas beyond national jurisdictions. However, Bulgaria supports the implementation of the Guidelines and the implementation of the above-mentioned provisions within regional organizations and the relevant fisheries management arrangements. In this sense, our country cooperates and makes efforts within the Working Group for the Black Sea at the GFCM, expressing readiness to participate in other relevant regional organizations or arrangements competent in regulating deep-sea fishing in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

As a Member State of the European Union, Bulgaria is fulfilling its obligations under Council Regulation (EC) No 734/2008 of 15 July 2008 on the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems in the high seas from the adverse impacts of bottom fishing gears. Pursuant to the provision of paragraph 12 of the same regulation, our country sends a report on fishing activities with bottom fishing gears in the high seas twice a year to the Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of the European Commission. In these reports, Bulgaria informs that Bulgarian fishing vessels have not carried out fishing activities with bottom gears in the high seas.

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X Hristo Panayotov

Signed by: Hristo Plamenov Panayotov

HRISTO PANAYOTOV
Executive director