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Dear Mr Aguiar Machado,

The Pelagic AC warmly welcomes the opportunity to comment on the “Consultation on the fishing opportunities for 2016 under the Common Fisheries Policy”.

As you are well aware developing multiannual management plans is one of the core activities of the Pelagic AC which has a long record of successfully providing such plans. Consequently, we were pleased to read that the Task Force has concluded with a framework that will facilitate the development and introduction of multiannual management plans under the CFP. We were, however, exceedingly surprised that a multiannual management plan for the pelagic stocks in the Atlantic is under consideration. The Pelagic AC has never been informed about any such plan although it is the main stakeholder body to consult in this respect. Therefore, we strongly urge the Commission to coordinate efforts in this respect and to share its information with the Pelagic AC in order to avoid a duplication of effort as well as the development of a management plan that falls short in regards to stakeholder needs.

The Pelagic AC also welcomes the Commission’s intention to set TACs in 2016 in line with MSY and to only accept delays beyond 2016, and in no case later than 2020, where otherwise the social and economic sustainability of the fleets involved would be seriously jeopardized. At the same time a progression of the scientific advice in regards to data-limited stocks is being observed often leading to reduced TAC advice. However, it is unclear from the consultation document how the Commission intends to deal with such progression.

For stocks lacking scientific advice the Commission intends to apply the precautionary approach in a systematic, predefined and transparent way. However, no information is provided on how such an application will be defined and the Pelagic AC would like the Commission to present more details on the application of the precautionary approach. When warranted, it is essential to actually reduce fishing mortality and not only fishing opportunities.



TAC adjustments, to reflect catches instead of landings, are a crucial aspect of implementing the landing obligation. However, there is a risk that such TAC adjustments might unintentionally lead to changes in relative stability, especially where only part of a fishery targeting that stock is covered by the landing obligation. According to the consultation document TAC adjustments must also take into account particular provisions in the applicable discard plans, e.g. *de minimis* exemptions. In case of pelagic stocks this could create a problem where the same stock is under a *de minimis* exemption in one area, but not the other or where the exemption applies only to certain parts of the fishing fleet, but not others. Unfortunately, the consultation document does not provide any information on how to handle these situations.

As already stated last year, the Pelagic AC welcomes the Commission's efforts to facilitate development and implementation of multiannual plans. We can only express our hope that the current and difficult negotiations of the Baltic Sea multiannual plan do not stall the process. Instead, it is absolutely necessary that multiannual management plans are adopted as soon as possible. We agree that these plans should provide a robust and lasting management framework ensuring both the sustainable exploitation of fish resources as well as high and stable yields for the industry.

Finally, we would like to remark that the role of the Advisory Councils is hardly mentioned in the consultation document, despite them being the main stakeholder body providing advice on the management of fish stocks exploited by the EU fleet and their enhanced role in the new CFP. We therefore would like to see their role acknowledged more explicitly in the next consultation document on fishing opportunities.

In case you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact the Secretariat.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Ian Gatt' with a small flourish underneath.

Ian Gatt
Chairman Pelagic AC