

Joint NGO position: Post-2020 European Maritime and Fisheries Fund

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The marine environment faces multiple challenges, including the impacts associated with fisheries and aquaculture activities, maritime transport, mineral extraction, energy production, and the effects of climate change. The European Union (EU) is committed to tackling these challenges. However, very little financing has been made available to manage these pressures in a way which ensures the conservation of the marine environment. The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) is the financial instrument to promote sustainable fisheries, protect the aquatic environment, and support sustainable coastal livelihoods.

We call on EU co-legislators to lead on the effective transformation of the post-2020 EMFF to ensure healthy and productive seas for present and future generations.

We call on decision-makers to support the Commission's proposal that enables:

- A results-based approach to the EMFF (where financing is linked to the results achieved);
- The possibility to finance the protection and restoration of marine biodiversity and ecosystems;
- The support for participation in decision-making and development of advice (e.g. co-management committees and Fisheries Local Action Groups);
- The participatory management of marine spaces, including Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) such as Natura 2000 sites;
- The support for control, enforcement and data collection, including electronic monitoring and reporting tools for small-scale fishing vessels;
- A fisheries governance framework that removes some harmful fishing subsidies which increase fishing capacity.

We call on decision-makers to amend the Commission's proposal to ensure that:

- At least 25% of the EMFF is ring-fenced to support the protection of the marine environment, including pilot projects to research innovative mitigation techniques for tackling incidental catches of sensitive species, implementing management measures in MPAs, and restoring protected habitats;
- There is an increase from 15% to 25% of the budgetary allocation dedicated to monitoring and control of fishing activities and data collection, putting special emphasis on data-poor fisheries;
- Derogations to the list of ineligible operations are removed where these contribute to overcapacity of the fishing fleet, such as the renewal of the fleet and the modernisation of engines for small-scale fishing vessels and extraordinary and permanent cessation;
- It is not possible to finance any operating costs, such as insurance (including for specific mutual funds), overheads, fuel or basic equipment of the fishing vessels that make it merely operational or even navigational.

INTRODUCTION

The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) is the financial instrument which aims to support the implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), the Integrated Maritime Policy, as well as environmental policy that is linked to the marine environment, such as the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), the Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive. While in the past, funding for the fisheries sector has fuelled overcapacity and overfishing, in recent years, efforts were made to enabling financing of management of the marine environment and to tackle challenges such as overfishing and bycatch of sensitive species. Little funding has, however, been actually spent on tackling these problems. On the contrary, EMFF funding is still focussed on trying to directly finance economic activity without any guarantee of public goods delivery. For this purpose, there are other European funds as well as national welfare programmes that support private sectors or individuals. Instead, the EMFF should support sectors such as fishing and aquaculture farming, by helping them develop sustainable practices.

The preparations for a post-2020 EU budget provide the opportunity for the EU to play a leadership role by eliminating the most harmful subsidies that persist and by redirecting all remaining funds to support rebuilding healthier marine ecosystems which enhance the benefits provided to society.

1. A FUND BASED ON GOOD GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES

- **Public money must be spent on generating public goods**

The marine environment lacks a clear ownership which can lead to resource depletion, unless strong public intervention is taken to preserve public goods. As a general principle, public resources should be invested into meeting public needs – from enabling sustainable fishing activities which reduce the footprint on the wider marine environment to preventing sea pollution. Therefore, public resources should be spent on gathering knowledge, finding solutions, effective planning and ensuring that rules are properly applied. Clear mechanisms must be established to verify and ensure that public money is in fact spent where it is most needed and thereby contributes to the sustainable management of the ocean.

- **Simplification should not be at the cost of strategic, accountable and transparent spending**

The current EMFF Regulation describes in detail which activities are eligible for funding under the EMFF. These rules have sometimes been described as unclear, inflexible, and have been used as an argument for the low uptake of the fund. The proposed post-2020 fund applies an approach which simply details "what cannot be supported". This approach applies the basic principle that any measures or activities which are not explicitly forbidden or restricted by the EMFF Regulation may be supported.

While we support the need for simple procedures for applicants when applying for funds, this should, however, not be confused with watering down the rules on how public funds should be spent, including the list of eligible measures and the conditions for receiving financial support. The fact that Member States are not spending their allocated resources is mainly due to internal administrative inefficiencies and insufficient support to applicants during the application phase at national and local level. Delegating the decision of what is eligible spending and who can access the fund to national governments will not reduce the administrative burden. Instead, it will create non-strategic spending, unequal access to funds across the EU, as well as the potential backlash of questionable use of EU taxpayers' money.

- **Enabling a thriving marine ecosystem**

The marine environment is facing unprecedented environmental degradation, whether through pollution, littering, unsustainable fishing, or seabed destruction. The extent of the problem is only now being understood and includes more than 275,000 tons of plastics entering the EU seas every year¹, 85% of Mediterranean fish stocks being overfished², more than 200,000 seabirds across Europe dying in fishing gear every year³, and more than 44,000 sea turtles in the Mediterranean drowning from being caught in fishing gear annually⁴.

There are many actions that must be taken to help turn the tide on the degradation of the marine environment, including to preserve nature at sea, tackle plastic pollution, fight against environmental crime, end accidental death of animals, prevent oil spills, and research ocean life.

The current EMFF allows for Member States to use the fund to finance activities under the MSFD, as well as activities which implement the Birds Directive and the Habitats Directives at sea. However, very little uptake from Member States was directed to these activities, in particular for the financing of Monitoring Programmes and the Programmes of Measures under the MSFD, as well as to support the management of the Natura 2000 network as was set out in the Prioritised Action Frameworks.

The European Commission's proposal, despite giving the opportunity to finance activities to support the marine environment, fails to ensure that funding is spent on these types of activities. Therefore, at least 25% of the EMFF budget per Member State should be ring-fenced for activities that protect and restore the marine environment.

- **Funding must be conditional upon compliance by Member States and operators with the rules of the CFP and of EU environmental law**

The current EMFF Regulation applies the 'conditionality' principle, where financial support under the EMFF is conditional upon compliance by Member States and by operators with the rules of the CFP and of EU environmental law.⁵ Conditionality is a fundamental mechanism to ensure that EU public aid is only available for and granted to those operators and Member States who respect and comply with their legal obligations.

Appropriate ex-ante conditionalities must be set for Member States, so as to ensure that there is direction to how the budget is spent. Member States should, for example, only receive funding under the EMFF if they have adopted strategic financial plans for delivering Good Environmental Status of their seas. Conditionality should also apply in case Member States violate environmental legislation, including the obligations under the Birds and Habitats Directive and the MSFD. Funds should be withdrawn where Member States are not establishing sufficient mechanisms to stop illegal activities.

¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/marine/good-environmental-status/descriptor-10/pdf/MSFD%20Measures%20to%20Combat%20Marine%20Litter.pdf>

² http://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC111924/2018-cfpinfographics_1.pdf

³ ICES. 2009. Report of the Working Group on Seabird Ecology (WGSE), 23-27 March 2009, Bruges, Belgium. ICES CM 2009/LRC:10.91

⁴ Casale (2011) Casale P. Sea turtle by-catch in the Mediterranean. *Fish and Fisheries*. 2011;12(3):299–316. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-2979.2010.00394.x.

⁵ Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 May 2014 on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, Articles 10, 99, 101 and 105.

If the EMFF is to tackle the challenges faced by our seas, in an effort to ensure their socio-economic and environmental sustainability, this should be done by enabling sustainable business models and contributing to the Good Environmental Status of marine waters, including operators. To achieve this, the conditionality rules established to get access to funds should be appropriate, and all the tools available must be used and interim payments suspended when the conditions are not being respected.

This means that an operator that does not respect environmental rules is not eligible for EMFF funding. Article 12 of the Commission's proposal introduces the conditionality rules that must be respected by operators. These conditionality rules are limited to non-payment to operators if the operator has committed any 'serious infringements', such as when the operator has been involved in illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing or has committed other environmental offences covered by the Environmental Crime Directive. However, other infringements that have negative impacts on the sustainability of fisheries should also be added to the list. For example, infringements that are related to fishers trying to get around the control system, such as turning off Automatic Identification System transmitters, and infringements related to the failure to fulfil obligations to mitigate against the accidental catches of sensitive species.

- **The fund should respect the principle of transparency**

Both Member States and the European Union need to respect the general EU financial principles, including the principle of transparency.⁶ Transparency in the EMFF Regulation ensures that citizens are able to access information about spending of EU funds, but also has the potential benefits of attracting beneficiaries and enabling a best practice approach. The post-2020 EMFF Regulation should foresee the publication of all relevant documents relating to its implementation (e.g. audit reports) on the website of the Commission.

Moreover, the post-2020 EMFF proposal requires Member States to report annually to the Commission on the implementation of the post-2020 EMFF Regulation. This reporting obligation of Member States towards the Commission enhances transparency. Annual performance reports of the Member States on the implementation of the post-2020 EMFF Regulation should be routinely published on the website of the Commission in line with the obligations set out in the Aarhus Regulation in terms of transparency and participation of civil society in the decision-making process.⁷

Information published at Member State level should be available in at least one of the working languages of the Commission, as well as the original language, in order to facilitate transparency for all EU citizens.

2. A FUND THAT DRIVES SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES

One of the purposes of the EMFF is to support the implementation of the environmental, social and economic objectives of the CFP, and the post-2020 fund should therefore avoid supporting aid that has an environmental or economic perverse effect. The EMFF should constitute structural aid that only

⁶ Chapter 8 of Title II of Regulation (EU, EURATOM) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and repealing Council Regulation (EC, EURATOM) No 1605/2002, OJ L298, 26.10.2012, p.26.

⁷ Regulation (EC) No 1367/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 September 2006 on the application of the provisions of the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters to Community institutions and bodies, OJ L264, 25.09.2006, p.13.

supports measures that contribute to a more economically viable (self-sufficient) and environmentally sustainable fisheries sector.

The Commission is, however, proposing aid for the renewal of the fishing fleet and aid that increases the ability of the vessel to catch fish or its fishing capacity. This type of support is not just damaging to the environment but also economically unsustainable, because it artificially inflates the short-term profitability of fishers and creates a culture of dependency rather than of entrepreneurship, innovation and self-sufficiency. Instead, the post-2020 fund should provide aid that helps achieve concrete CFP objectives, such as supporting the implementation of the landing obligation, identifying challenges and solutions to tackle fishing impacts on the marine environment, increasing the selectivity of fishing gears and practices, restoring impacted natural habitats, improving data collection and having a better fisheries control system.

- **Effective data collection, monitoring, control and enforcement**

Effective data collection, monitoring, control and enforcement are essential pre-conditions for responsible fisheries management. Yet, suitable data is missing for several of the stocks, as well as for understanding and minimising the impact of fisheries activities on the marine environment. Furthermore, many Member States have received scathing reports for their inadequate monitoring and enforcement.⁸ The Commission's proposal suggests only limited changes to the current spending pattern. The post-2020 EMFF must provide clear rules that prioritise the implementation of the fisheries control system and the collection of scientific data, especially in data-poor fisheries, while encouraging collaboration among fishers, research institutes and other stakeholders.

Furthermore, the proposed ring-fencing of 15% of the budget for effective control and data collection represents a small percentage of the budget for an area that should be considered the main priority of the fund. The lack of reliable data and information on the levels of discards in different fisheries is an important obstacle to overcome and therefore at least 25% of the budget should be allocated to enhance control and data collection. In particular, greater investments should be placed on:

- The purchase, installation and control of tracking devices and electronic reporting systems for small-scale coastal fishing vessels;
- Scientific observer programmes to collect data on board vessels. This includes training and supporting observers on boats;
- The installation and control of remote electronic monitoring technology using cameras and sensors, to address some of the shortcomings identified by inspectors with respect to the implementation of the landing obligation at sea and enforcement of bycatch measures for threatened and protected species.

- **Minimising the impacts of fishing activities on the marine environment**

Marine ecosystems are highly impacted by unsustainable fishing activities. This includes species of seabirds, sea turtles, sharks, rays and marine mammals incidentally caught by fishing gear as well as reef and coral habitats destroyed by trawling. The EMFF should support the management of fishing activities

⁸ ClientEarth, "Slipping through the net - The control and enforcement of fisheries in France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain and the UK (England)," published in September 2017, available at <https://www.documents.clientearth.org/library/download-info/slipping-through-the-net-the-control-and-enforcement-of-fisheries-in-france-ireland-the-netherlands-poland-spain-and-the-uk-england/>; Extract from Rigsrevisionen's report submitted to the Public Accounts Committee on support to the fisheries sector from the EMFF, published in October 2018, available at <http://uk.rigsrevisionen.dk/media/2104934/1-2018.pdf>.

to minimise, and where possible, eliminate the impact of fishing activities and support the restoration of species populations and habitats. This should include supporting the testing of solutions (e.g. testing night setting in the Baltic to minimise bycatch of seabirds) and monitoring the impact of fisheries on species populations, as well as restoration activities (e.g. restoring gravel beds for wild European oysters). The current EMFF regulation allows for financial support towards these activities. However, Member States have been spending less money on these activities, despite these activities being extremely important for ensuring the sustainability of the fishing sector.

The post-2020 EMFF must ensure that these types of activities will continue to be financed and that Member States will do so following strategic plans to ensure all fishing activities that have an impact on the marine environment are managed. Furthermore, through loans, guarantees or co-funding, fishers should be supported to roll out measures (e.g. to buy gears and equipment that minimise the incidental catch of vulnerable species).

- **Reducing unwanted catches of fish and facilitating the landing obligation by increasing selectivity**

The best way to eliminate discards is to avoid unwanted catches in the first place by promoting measures that support fishing selectivity at sea, for example, by ensuring that the mesh size of nets is appropriate for the size of the fish. To achieve a significant reduction in unwanted catches, EMFF funding should focus on pilot projects to test and improve gear selectivity and practices and the dissemination of knowledge on how to reduce unwanted catches through fishing techniques that eliminate discards.

Support to fishers to comply with legislation should be provided through loans, guarantees, or co-financing. In addition, the pursuit of these priorities should not result in an increase in the ability of the vessel to catch fish.

- **Avoiding perverse and effort enhancing subsidies**

The Commission has recognised on several occasions that overcapacity is one of the key drivers of overfishing in Europe and worldwide, and has acknowledged that subsidies have contributed to this imbalance through artificially maintaining excess fishing capacity.⁹ While the Commission has included subsidies that lead to overfishing and overcapacity in the list of ineligible operations in its proposal, it has also introduced an exception for small-scale fishers. The derogation introduced in the Commission's proposal that allows for **EMFF funding for the acquisition of fishing vessels and the replacement or modernisation of engines** undermines UN Sustainable Development Goal 14.6 under which fisheries subsidies contributing to overcapacity shall be eliminated by 2020 at the latest.¹⁰ Moreover, this contradicts the EU position in ongoing World Trade Organisation (WTO) negotiations including the run up to the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference in December 2017, where the EU has submitted a proposal asking for WTO members to no longer maintain subsidies that increase marine fishing capacity.¹¹

The use of fishing capacity ceilings (measured in terms of tonnage (GT) and power (kW)) do not capture the effective ability of a fleet to catch fish. As already highlighted by the 2011 European Court of Auditors' report, the capacity of the European fishing fleet in terms of GT/kW has been decreasing for

⁹ European Commission: GREEN PAPER Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, COM(2009)163 final, Brussels, 22.4.2009 <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2009:0163:FIN:EN:PDF>.

¹⁰ UNGA Res 70/1 (25 September 2015) UN Doc A/RES/70/1, see target 14.6.

¹¹ EU Proposal for WTO disciplines on fisheries subsidies, available [here](#). 06 July 2017.

years, while real ability to catch fish has increased due to technological progress.¹² Therefore, capacity ceilings have become an inadequate measure of restriction in terms of adapting fishing fleet capacity to available fishing opportunities.¹³ In practice, allowing subsidies for new vessels will only increase the pressure to allow fishing above sustainable levels.

In addition, the Commission has itself recognised the risk of increasing fishing capacity through the replacement or modernisation of engines for small-scale coastal fishing vessels and has included three conditions under which support may be granted. However, these conditions are unsatisfactory and difficult to verify. In its 2017 Special Report on fisheries controls, the Court of Auditors concluded that checks of Member States on fishing capacity were incomplete, that national fleet registers' information was not always accurate and that there were significant gaps in control requirements for small vessels.¹⁴ Even if authorities have adequate control systems in place that check whether new engines are less powerful, the replacement of old engines will not necessarily translate into a reduction of the vessel's ability to catch fish, since vessels using 'fuel efficient' engines still have an incentive to increase their fishing effort, for instance, by spending more hours at sea. Therefore, there should be no support for the replacement of engines, including for small-scale coastal fishing vessels.

Furthermore, the Commission has maintained the possibility to pay fishers while they are not fishing through "**extraordinary cessation**" (currently known as "**temporary cessation**"). Although money for cessation is often described as aid linked to conservation measures, in the past, these schemes have been poorly targeted for the purpose of conservation and there is evidence of damaging environmental and economic effects. In addition, cessation contributes to maintaining fishing effort by artificially increasing profitability in the short-term. As early as 1994, the Court of Auditors found that temporary cessation aid had been granted for periods where fishers would not have been fishing in any case.¹⁵ Where restrictions exist to restore fish populations caused by overfishing, it should not be allowed to pay fishers to not overfish. In these cases, support should be given to fishers for diversification of their sector.

Moreover, the Commission's proposal re-introduces the possibility for fishers to receive financial aid for the **permanent cessation** of their fishing activities. This type of subsidy is usually granted for fishers for the scrapping, decommissioning or retrofitting of their vessel. While the intended purpose of this aid is to support the exit of vessels from the sector and tackle overcapacity, the Court of Auditors identified this type of measure as one of the most controversial direct subsidies that, paradoxically, have the effect of encouraging fishers to stay in business.¹⁶

The EU has spent €2.73 billion from 1994 until 2013 to scrap fishing vessels, but despite this massive spending, the EU fishing capacity has still increased by about 3% every year.¹⁷ To avoid this, the Commission is proposing a results-based approach by only granting funding for permanent cessation

¹² European Court of Auditors, Special Report No 12 "Have EU measures contributed to adapting the capacity of the fishing fleets to available fishing opportunities?", 2011.

¹³ European Commission reply to the European Court of Auditors Special Report No 12 "Have EU measures contributed to adapting the capacity of the fishing fleets to available fishing opportunities?", 2011.

¹⁴ Court of Auditors, Special Report No 8/2017, "EU fisheries controls: more efforts needed" 30/05/2017, paragraphs 14-27.

¹⁵ Court of Auditors, Special Report No 3/93 concerning the implementation of the measures for the restructuring, modernization and adaptation of the capacities of fishing fleets in the Community, OJ C 2 , 04.1.1994, p. 48; Special Report No 12/2011 "Have EU measures contributed to adapting the capacity of the fishing fleets to available fishing opportunities?" 12/12/2011, point 76.

¹⁶ Court of Auditors, Special Report No 3/93 concerning the implementation of the measures for the restructuring, modernization and adaptation of the capacities of fishing fleets in the Community, OJ C 2 , 04.1.1994, p. 46; Special Report No 12/2011 "Have EU measures contributed to adapting the capacity of the fishing fleets to available fishing opportunities?" 12/12/2011, points 28 and 29.

¹⁷ European Commission, Non-Paper, "[CFP Reform – Transferable Fishing Concessions](#)".

once there is a reduction of fishing capacity. While we welcome the new approach, it is in practice very difficult to control how these premiums are spent. Fishers may, for example, reinvest this money in a new fishing vessel or in the modernisation of other vessels they own, which could lead to an overall increase of the fishing capacity, despite one vessel (often less efficient at catching fish to begin with) having been scrapped. The continued presence of such aid may actually contribute more to capacity problems by reducing investment risks and injecting funds into businesses. The post-2020 EMFF should therefore not reintroduce this type of subsidy until it can be proven and duly justified with solid evidence that control and check mechanisms exist to avoid that the money granted with these subsidies is re-introduced in the system, that all appropriate conditions are already being respected, and that it can be proven that fishing capacity will actually be reduced.

All the aforementioned measures have the potential to maintain the current high level of fishing capacity, to undermine management plans and to threaten the recovery of fish stocks.

- **Enhancing the role of Fisheries Local Action Groups**

The role of Fisheries Local Action Groups must be enhanced, so that they can provide adequate capacity and tools to encourage community-led sustainable development and management of local resources and ecosystems. Operations such as preparatory work, support to co-management schemes, running costs, cooperation and exchange activities, quality technical support to beneficiaries, poor-data fisheries monitoring and local fisheries and environment research should be specifically included under Article 26 (community-led local development) of the Commission's proposal.

3. AQUACULTURE

So far, support for the aquaculture sector in the last and current EMFF has focused on providing direct grants to individual operators to make them more profitable by, for example, enhancing product quality, helping them comply with legislation (to make their operations more energy efficient), or setting up new enterprises in aquaculture. It is not clear how much the public has gained as a result of these investments. Public support provided through the EMFF can crowd out private investments and lead to market distortions and overcapitalisation in aquaculture.

Although the concept of "sustainable aquaculture" is widely used in EU legislation, to date, there is no globally accepted definition because the aquaculture industry is diverse in terms of species, production methods and impacts. While the CFP calls for Member States to develop indicators for environmental, economic and social sustainability for aquaculture in their multiannual national strategic plans, the environmental aspect is often neglected. It is therefore essential to develop the defining principles of a sustainable aquaculture under EU law and ensure this definition is applied under relevant action plans.

The Commission's post-2020 EMFF proposal includes provisions to support the production, processing, promotion and marketing of "sustainable aquaculture" through financial instruments, in particular guarantees and loans. Similarly to supporting fishing activities, loans, guarantees, or co-funded support under the EMFF should not be used to help aquaculture producers comply with compulsory legislation as it is their legal obligation to do so. Although the Commission's proposal to introduce financial instruments is a step in the right direction, the support is still not conditional upon the sustainability of the sector. It is crucial that public funds do not support the expansion of aquaculture production methods that lead to negative environmental impacts and in turn result in poor long-term profitability. Furthermore, the lack of a clear definition of sustainable aquaculture, measureable targets and

indicators for environmental protection will further lead to an uneven development of the sector in the EU. Therefore, this kind of support through financial instruments should be linked to a common EU definition of sustainable aquaculture based on the three pillars of sustainable development and should have measurable targets and indicators for environmental protection.

Furthermore, public funds should support data collection and monitoring, research and advisory services focused on reducing the impact of aquaculture farms on the environment, balanced stakeholder engagement in a dedicated advisory council, monitoring, control and enforcement, and the establishment of a robust, comprehensive spatial planning framework as well as improving standards and consumer facing labels at point of sale. The testing and piloting of aquaculture techniques providing environmental services should continue to be financially supported to encourage alternative models of development that are environmentally and socially more desirable. Furthermore, the EMFF should co-fund projects for the conversion to eco-management, such as extensive aquaculture for the purpose of wetland restoration.

4. SETTING THE CONDITIONS FOR A SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY

Healthy marine ecosystems and the protection of vulnerable natural resources, goods and services are the foundation for the development of a sustainable blue economy. A sustainable blue economy may extract economic value from the marine environment, but in a way that preserves and protects the sea's resources and ecosystems. We believe that the allocation of funding for a sustainable blue economy should ensure environmental, social and economic benefits for current and future generations. However, any economic activity should always move within the boundaries set by the carrying capacity of the ecosystems in which they operate. The only path to sustainability is a transition to an economy that focuses on the well-being of both people and planet.

Moreover, the sustainable management of fish stocks through the correct implementation of the CFP and achieving Good Environmental Status by 2020 based on the MSFD should be considered as the framework of a blue economy strategy.

The post-2020 EMFF should therefore be based on a definition of a “sustainable blue economy” which includes environmental, social and economic benefits for current and future generations while restoring and protecting the diversity, productivity, resilience, and intrinsic value of marine ecosystems. It should ensure that local communities benefit from the opportunities offered by the blue economy in a truly sustainable way. It should also ensure that growth only takes place in those circumstances where the negative impact of economic activities on the marine environment is non-existent.

Therefore, in order to support a blue economy, the EMFF should finance the systematic monitoring of marine species and habitats to understand the impact of blue economy activities on the marine environment and to mitigate any negative consequences. It should finance activities that support the establishment of an ecosystem-based approach to spatial planning, in particular mapping the sensitivity of species and habitats to human activities at sea. It should also finance activities that test clean technologies and promote circular material flows.

5. INTERNATIONAL OCEAN GOVERNANCE

The EU is bound by and committed to international agreements, in particular the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, agreements under regional fishing management organisations, as well as the UN

Sustainable Development Goals and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity to support low income countries in protecting nature at sea. It is also committed to ensure that EU industries do not have environmental impacts in other non-EU countries, in particular its Distant Water Fishing Fleet.

The proposal on the post-2020 EMFF focuses mostly on improving maritime surveillance outside EU waters, improving cooperation between EU coastguards, and voluntary cooperation between EU and non-EU countries, in order to fulfil the EU's commitment to these international agreements. These important activities should be supported by the post-2020 EMFF. However, the EMFF should also ensure that low income countries are supported in controlling the EU's Distant Water Fishing Fleet to minimise its impact on the marine environment. This includes financing inspection programmes of the EU's Distant Water Fishing Fleet, training non-EU inspectors that board EU vessels, and ensuring inspectors have the needed equipment to carry out inspections.

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