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Mikhail Durkin, Executive Secretary, Coalition Clean Baltic  
Conrad Stralka, Director BalticSea2020  
Jan Isakson, Director of the Fisheries Secretariat  
Pascale Moehrle, Executive Director, Oceana in Europe  
Rebecca Hubbard, Program Director of OurFish  
Monica Verbeek, Executive Director of Seas at Risk  
Sten Frohm, Secretary General, Swedish Anglers Association  
Päivi Lundvall, Executive Director Finnish Society for Nature Conservation  
Karin Lexén, Secretary General, Swedish Society for Nature Conservation

Dear Madams and Sirs,

Thank you for your letter of 14 February 2019 in which you ask the Commission to take emergency measures pursuant to article 12 of Regulation (EU) 1380/2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy. You suggest putting the Eastern Baltic cod fishery under an immediate 6-month moratorium, reconsidering the TAC for 2019 and relocating the sprat fisheries from subdivisions 25-26. You argue that these immediate emergency measures are required because the Eastern Baltic cod stock is on the verge of collapse according to recent scientific observations and the discussions held during the ICES benchmark meeting of 4-8 February 2019.

The stock has indeed been in a difficult situation for several years and the Commission is aware of the worrying indications presented during the Baltic Sea Advisory Council meeting on 29 January 2019.

However, emergency measures under article 12 need to be supported by strong scientific evidence showing that there are justified imperative grounds of urgency relating to a serious threat to the conservation of a stock or the ecosystem. ICES is in the course of preparing its assessment of the stock's situation, which is expected to be released by end of May. I understand that the outlook seems to be dire, but as you rightly point out the results of ICES' analysis cannot be prejudged, and without scientific evidence, it is legally not possible for the Commission to consider adopting emergency measures.

Let me assure you that the Commission is taking this situation very seriously and I thank you for having reached out to me with your analysis and suggestions. The Commission will continue to monitor the situation very closely. Moreover, my services have already contacted the Member States concerned and the Baltic Sea Advisory Council to discuss possible avenues and to prepare a possible swift reaction should the ICES advice confirm the current indications.

I would like to thank you again for your concern on this important matter and I am looking forward to our continued constructive cooperation.

Yours sincerely,



Karmenu Vella