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DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

Fisheries Policy Atlantic, North Sea, Baltic and Outermost Regions
The Director

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Mr Esben Sverdrup-Jensen
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Dear Ms Colliander,

Dear Mr Sverdrup-Jensen,

I am contacting you as Chairpersons, respectively, of the Baltfish Group of Member States and the Baltic Advisory Council, regarding the situation of Eastern Baltic cod. As you know preoccupying information was presented during the Baltic Sea Advisory Council on 29 January 2019. Furthermore, it seems that similar indications emerged during the meeting of the ICES benchmark group on Eastern Baltic cod of 4-8 February 2019. The risk of a very serious situation requiring drastic decreases of the TAC seems to be real.

Based on these developments several NGOs asked the Commission in mid-February to adopt immediate emergency measures at EU level. I understand that some Member States are contemplating the possibility to adopt national measures already applicable under the current fishing season.

As you know, pursuant to article 12 of the basic regulation 1380/2013 on the CFP emergency measures need to be supported by 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. Until ICES releases its advice such evidence is not available. The advice is expected for end of May, and ICES indicated that its internal process was held by this timeline.

Given the potential need to act as very quickly once ICES has released an advice confirming the seriousness of the situation, I would invite you to start already now

discussing and thinking about possible measures with the members of your groups, taking into account that a large part of the fishing occurs before the summer. Measures could entail a reduction of the TAC for 2019 and a longer closure season in 2019. Some measures could be taken at national level others at EU level, namely by the Council or by the Commission. Since the fishery is shared by all Baltic Member States a swift joint action at national level would be the most appropriate way forward.

Let me assure you that the Commission is taking this situation very seriously and will continue to monitor the situation very closely. Obviously, the Commission proposals for the 2020 Fishing Opportunities in the Baltic will reflect the latest ICES advice, be it on the level of TACs or on closure periods.

I am looking forward to hearing from you on this important issue.

Yours faithfully,



Hélène Clark