

Traductions of the note Ares(2019)4705300 of the 2019/07/19 of the European Commission.

Brussels, 17/09/2019
MARE/D.3/PC/mbe/Ares (2019)

M. Aurelio Bilbao Barandica
President du CC SUD
6, rue Alphonse Rio
56100 Lorient
France

**Subject: Your Opinion 129 on the exploitation of gas and petroleum resources
and mining in the South Western Waters**

Dear Mr. Bilbao

Thank you for your opinion 129 of 28 May 2019. We note your concerns about the increasing number of economic activities, some of which are new in sea basins such as the south-western waters, and their impact on fishing.

Your experience in this field is backed up by the economic data available to us: the EU maritime economy is a high value-added sector that will continue to grow. According to the latest annual report on the blue economy, this sector supports more than 4 million jobs and has a turnover of 658 billion euros. We must do what we can to support such a dynamic part of our economy.

Promoting the blue economy does not only mean making greater use of the sea and its resources. It also means using marine resources in a sustainable manner. Creating the conditions for implementing a sustainable blue economy is a key element of our agenda. It is against this background that the EU has adopted strict legal rules. Fish stocks must be managed in a sustainable manner by 2020, and must achieve the Maximum Sustainable Yield by that date. The environmental impact of investments in the oceans must be assessed, and the use of maritime space must be planned. In parallel, we have also launched initiatives in many policy areas related to Europe's oceans, seas and coasts, in order to facilitate cooperation between the maritime sector, public authorities working across borders and sectors, and stakeholders.

Directive 2014/89/EU, which you mentioned, establishes a framework for planning the maritime space. It provides for systematic and coherent spatial planning, in coordination with neighbouring countries and regions. With regard to its implementation in the countries covered by CC-Sud, let me inform you of the situation in each of them. The French authorities have just concluded their consultation on "seafront strategic documents", which includes the South Atlantic coast.

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In Spain, the competent authorities held a first public consultation with stakeholders in March 2019, and they are planning a series of workshops throughout the summer of 2019 to define the objectives pertaining to maritime spatial planning in respect of Spanish territorial waters. Portugal held an online public consultation on its maritime spatial planning between December 2018 and January 2019. Member States are required to adopt plans arising from their maritime spatial planning by 31 March 2021 at the latest. The Commission is closely monitoring these developments and will submit a progress report to the European Parliament and the EU Council by 31 March 2022 at the latest, setting out the progress made in the implementation of this Directive.

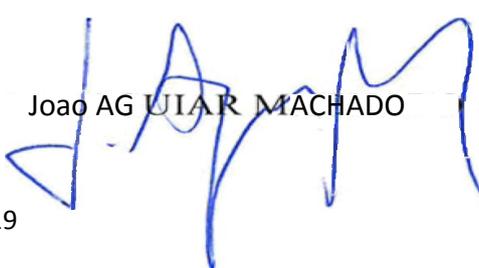
With regard to deep-sea mining, the Commission has focused on activities to ensure that the practice is fully in line with the European Union's commitment to sustainability, and has adopted a precautionary and ecosystem approach.

In addition, through the 7th Research Framework Programme and Horizon 2020, the European Union has supported research aimed at increasing knowledge of mineral and environmental systems in deep waters, assessing environmental impact and defining measures to protect the environment. This includes ecological risk assessments of deep-sea ecosystems and the vulnerability of deep-sea biodiversity in the face of increasing human stressors. With the latest project on deep seabed mining funded by the European Sea and Fisheries Fund, we are helping the International Seabed Authority to develop a regional environmental management plan for the Mid-Atlantic Ridge¹. This should lead to the development of a network of sites deemed to be unique marine ecosystems and therefore protected from potentially disruptive human activities.

Please rest assured that we will continue our efforts to create healthier, cleaner and better managed oceans, in accordance with our interests and as a prerequisite for a sustainable blue economy.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank CC-Sud for this recommendation and the work they have accomplished, and to invite you to contact Mrs Pascale Colson, Coordinator of the Advisory Councils (pascale.colson@ec.europa.eu, +32 22 95 62 73) for any further information with the regard to this response.

With kind regards


Joao AGUIAR MACHADO

¹ Please see call for tender EASME / EMFF / 2017/019