Subject : EU-AU Partnership - Urgent need for a regional fisheries management organisation in West Africa

Dear Sir,

CAOPA, PRCM and CFFA warmly welcome your commitment to make the future EU-Africa partnership "visible and tangible" for African and European citizens. Support to the African fisheries sector could help you achieve this objective. Especially at this time, when the pandemic is negatively affecting the economies and livelihoods of African citizens, we would like you to consider our proposal on sustainable fisheries in order to make your commitment concrete and useful for the citizens of both continents.

Indeed, we would appreciate your crucial voice in establishing a Regional Fisheries Management Organization (RFMO) covering the waters off West Africa. This RFMO would represent the first fisheries management framework in this region. This RFMO is absolutely necessary to ensure that fisheries resources are assessed, managed and exploited in a sustainable manner, for the benefit of sustainable artisanal fisheries and local populations.

Artisanal fisheries in Africa contribute greatly to food security by providing animal protein to the poorest at an affordable cost. The sector provides employment for about eleven million people in Africa. For each artisanal fisher, between 1 and 4 onshore jobs are created. In the artisanal fish processing sector, most workers are women. This sector also provides a large part of the catches that are exported and consumed on the European market.

Our organisations believe that there is scope for better management of the shared fisheries resources in the West African region, including small pelagics which are essential for the food security of African citizens. An operational management framework would pave the way for the creation of sustainable employment in West African artisanal fisheries value chains. The conservation and sustainable exploitation of the resources on which these fishing communities depend for their livelihoods are essential elements to enhance the resilience of coastal communities facing various threats such as overexploitation of resources, climate change and the impact of the pandemic.

Recently, the Ministerial Conference on Fisheries Cooperation among African States bordering the Atlantic Ocean (ATLAFCO/COMHAFAT) discussed common interests and modalities for the establishment of an RFMO that would establish a binding international legal framework. This is a good step forward, but a real political impetus and EU involvement are needed to establish this new RFMO.

The EU should encourage this initiative, in order to help African countries achieve the objective of sustainable development in the oceans (SDG14) in the framework of the 2030 agenda. This would also confirm the EU's leadership in the global promotion of international ocean governance.

We would be happy to meet you and discuss our proposal in more detail.