



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

Fisheries Policy Mediterranean and Black Sea
Director

Brussels,
MARE/D4/RC/MM (2020)

Ms Beatrice Gorez
Coordinator
Coalition for Fair Fisheries
Arrangements (CFFA)

Email: cffa.cape@gmail.com

Subject: Complaint (reference CHAP (2019) 00315) for alleged failure by Italian authorities to adopt measures to monitor their vessels in the waters of Sierra Leone

Dear Ms Gorez,

Thank you for your letter, dated 1 July 2020¹, concerning the complaint² lodged by your organisation for alleged failure by the Italian authorities to adopt measures to monitor their vessels in the waters of Sierra Leone.

The Commission attaches particular importance to the conduct of the EU's external fleet and has already taken action to include this matter in the scope of an EU Pilot, as mentioned in your letter.

As regards your allegation that DG MARE is dragging its feet regarding your complaint, let me reassure you that full implementation and enforcement of the rules is one of the priorities of our Commissioner's mandate. My services have been and will be devoting the highest priority to the matters raised by your complaint as well as to any other issues of potential or established non-compliance by the Member States.

My services are currently following closely the investigations being made by Italy as the flag state of the vessels indicated in the complaint and they will be ready to take any necessary action as afforded by EU law. In this regard, in your letter you referred to the adoption of a hypothetical action plan by the Commission. Let me clarify that there is no such action plan being adopted for the case at hand. The Commission has at its disposal several compliance tools and any decision on which one to be used is carefully considered on a case-by-case basis, also depending on the evidence available.

¹ Our ref. Ares(2020)3459458

² Our ref. CHAP(2019)00315

Reference is also being made to the action for redress indicated in our previous letter³ dated 9 December 2019. Allow me to clarify that this was addressed to the fact that you seem to represent the interests of small-scale fisher(wo)men operating in Sierra Leone's Inshore Exclusion Zone (IEZ) through the African Confederation of Artisanal Fisheries Professional Organizations (CAOPA) which forms part of the coalition putting forward the complaint. Within this context, it is in the interest of local fisher(wo)men who feel aggravated to bring the matter to the attention of their national authorities as managers of the fish stocks occurring in their EEZ.

In this respect, it is highlighted that the fishing licences are issued by Sierra Leone as the coastal state and it is within its power to withdraw or deny fishing licences and to take enforcement measures where it deems that its national laws have been breached. In this context, whilst the Commission should take up the matter with any Member State, as we did, it cannot coerce coastal states to apply their national laws.

On another note let me assure you that the Commission appreciates your work and that of other NGOs in bringing forth potential problems and breaches.

I look forward to a continued and fruitful cooperation to reach our mutual goals for healthy seas and sustainable fish stocks.

Yours faithfully,

Veronika VEITS
Acting Director

³ Ares(2019)7556443