Atlantic Arc Commission
Declaration on Brexit and Fisheries

The Atlantic Arc Commission (AAC) Regions met in Porto (Norte, Portugal) on 14 November 2019 as part of the 30th CAA General Assembly to convey key messages about the future of EU-UK fisheries relations. Given the disadvantages peripheral regions already face, the members of the Atlantic Arc Commission made the reasonable request to be fully included in the discussions on the future EU-UK governance of the economically vital fisheries sector. These messages reiterate the unity of the CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission, an organisation, which includes Atlantic regions from both side of the Channel.

On behalf of its members, the CRPM's Arc Atlantic Commission wishes to convey the following messages:

I. On the future EU-UK relationships on fisheries, the Atlantic Arc Commission:

1. Urges negotiations to aim for the highest recognised standards for the preservation of natural ecosystems, and sustainable fisheries economies.

2. Calls for a flexible transition period to support the United Kingdom’s orderly exit from the European Union. Extending the transition period beyond 2020 may be required if negotiations on the framework for future relations and the capacity of administrations to adapt to the proposed frameworks are not ready by the end of 2020.

3. Invites the UK Government to provide clarity on the future direction of the international aspects of British fisheries policy and to develop a dialogue with coastal communities from both sides of the Channel in this respect. An equitable implementation of the landing obligation in both the UK and EU waters and ports must be considered.

4. Reminds the EU Institutions of the increased social and economic challenges faced by fishers, in the context of immediate and longer-term Brexit uncertainties, particularly in implementing the landing obligation, and calls for the development of sustainable and more flexible approaches within the Common Fisheries Policy to respond.

5. Calls more generally for the implementation of structured cooperation on fishing opportunities and access to markets at the bilateral and international level for the sustainable exploitation of maritime resources and the maintenance of communities dependent on fishing revenues. It should include the local and regional authorities from regions that depend on the Atlantic fishing sector.

6. Expresses the need to maintain the regional supply chains, which depend on market stability and sanitary standards. The impact of Brexit on the fishing sector will affect not only the sector itself but also supply chains and consumers.

Underlines the existence of the Atlantic Strategy, which allows for third country participation, as a tool for governance and dialogue between national and regional Atlantic authorities, and calls for strengthening its fisheries dimension in the context of future EU-UK fisheries relations.

7. Is satisfied with the date of 1 July 2020, set for the ratification of new fisheries agreements, guaranteeing the visibility on fishing opportunities required by the sector.
**Asks nevertheless** that the rapid pace of the negotiations should not exclude a structured dialogue with concerned local and regional authorities to ensure transparency around the impact of the negotiations on the sector.

8. **Appeals to** the European and British authorities to have a deep and joint reflection on the desired fishing model and the risk of the decline of small-scale fishing.

9. **And Recalls** in this sense that the fishing sector is vital for regional Atlantic communities and contributes not only to the food security of the population, but also to European maritime culture.

II. **Regarding the implementation of tools to support the sector, the Atlantic Arc Commission:**

10. **Calls** for the UK government and the EU institutions to involve closely the regions, devolved governments and local authorities in the creation of mechanisms to support coastal communities to mitigate the impacts of Brexit.

11. **Welcomes** the European Union's effort to put in place contingency measures, which include actions to mitigate the impact of Brexit on the fishing sector in the list of activities eligible for support from the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF). Reallocating unused EMFF resources to Brexit mitigation actions could be an option to be explored.

12. **Cautions** the EMFF emergency measures to finance temporary stoppages of activity are not ideal, leading to a potential imbalance in markets and a possible exit of vessels from fleets.

13. And finally **recommends** an additional complementary budgetary mechanism dedicated to addressing both the immediate and longer-term impacts of Brexit.

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ANNEX: Status of negotiations between the United Kingdom and the EU as of 21 October 2019

Context:

On 17 October 2019 in Brussels, the European Council concluded a revision of the terms of the protocol, which focus on the status of Ireland, the last sticking point in the negotiations on the United Kingdom’s exit from the European Union.

As of 21 October, at the time of drafting this document, several steps are required before the entry into force of the new exit agreement. It must be validated by the European Union and the United Kingdom. For the European Union, the Council of the European Union must authorise the signature of the agreement before sending it to the European Parliament for its approval. For the United Kingdom, it must ratify the agreement according to its own institutional arrangements, i.e. with the agreement of the British Parliament.

On Saturday 19 October, the British Parliament rejected the agreement negotiated by Prime Minister Boris Johnson, forcing him to request a three-month extension for the date of the United Kingdom’s exit (31 January 2020). Boris Johnson nevertheless stated that he would not comply with this decision. Labour and Liberal Democrat Members of Parliament (MP) urged Boris Johnson to request an extension from the President of the European Council. Boris Johnson urged the MPs who voted against the agreement to support it. A de facto extension will be put in place if the British Parliament rejects the agreement again in the following days.

For its part, the European Commission expects the British government to clarify the next steps. In its plenary session on 21 October, the European Parliament did not decide on the outcome and will consider the agreement, if approved by the House of Commons during an extraordinary sitting.

In Paris, a statement from the French President stated that a delay in the Brexit was "in nobody's interest". If the two parties do not agree on an extension, the United Kingdom will trade with the EU pursuant to the terms of the World Trade Organisation following 31 October.

Challenges regarding the new agreement:

1) The Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland Protocol

The revised Protocol aims to provide a legally operational solution that avoids a hard border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, protects the economy of the whole island but also the Good Friday Agreement (Belfast) and the integrity of the Single Market.

All other elements of the withdrawal agreement remain unchanged in substance, in accordance with the agreement concluded on 14 November 2018.

The withdrawal agreement provides legal certainty on citizens’ rights, financial regulation, transition period until at least the end of 2020, governance, protocols on Gibraltar and Cyprus, as well as one of the other separation issues.

The revision of the Protocol allows Northern Ireland to remain aligned with a limited set of EU single market rules in order to avoid a hard border: goods legislation, health rules for veterinary controls, rules on agricultural production/marketing, VAT and excise duty on goods and rules on State aid.

Northern Ireland remains part of the United Kingdom’s customs territory. It will therefore be able to benefit from any future free trade agreements (FTAs) that the United Kingdom may conclude with third countries.

EU customs duties will apply to goods entering Northern Ireland if they are likely to enter the EU’s single market. Customs duties will not be charged if goods entering Northern Ireland from the rest of the United Kingdom are not likely to enter the EU’s single market.

A Joint Committee will be established to determine the risk of further displacement of this property. The Committee will establish, by the end of the transition period, the criteria for risk assessments.
The EU and the United Kingdom have agreed to create a new "consent" mechanism, which will give members of the Northern Ireland Assembly a decisive voice on the long-term application of relevant European law in Northern Ireland. The Assembly will be invited to give its continued support to the Protocol 4 years after the end of the transition period and every 4 years thereafter. This consent mechanism addresses issues of regulatory alignment on goods and customs, the Single Electricity Market, VAT and State aid.

2) Revision of the Political Declaration on the future of EU-UK relations

The basis for future relations between the EU and the United Kingdom, according to the new political declaration revised on 17 October, is a free trade agreement (FTA).

The Political Declaration provides for an ambitious FTA with zero tariffs and quotas between the EU and the United Kingdom. It affirms that future relationships will ensure open and fair competition and will take into account the economic connectivity and geographical proximity of the United Kingdom.

Namely, guarantees to ensure a level playing field that respects ambitious common standards in the areas of State aid, competition, social and employment standards, the environment, climate change and taxation, in order to avoid unfair competitive advantages for the EU or the United Kingdom.

On fisheries, the Political Declaration between the United Kingdom and the EU sets out the following guidelines:

**Article 71.** The Parties should cooperate bilaterally and internationally to ensure fishing at sustainable levels, promote resource conservation, and foster a clean, healthy and productive marine environment, noting that the United Kingdom will be an independent coastal State.

**Article 72.** While preserving regulatory autonomy, the Parties should cooperate on the development of measures for the conservation, rational management and regulation of fisheries, in a nondiscriminatory manner. They will work closely with other coastal States and in international fora, including to manage shared stocks.

**Article 73.** Within the context of the overall economic partnership the Parties should establish a new fisheries agreement on, inter alia, access to waters and quota shares.

**Article 74.** The Parties will use their best endeavours to conclude and ratify their new fisheries agreement by 1 July 2020 in order for it to be in place in time to be used for determining fishing opportunities for the first year after the transition period.