



Ms. Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission

11 January 2021

Subject: European Union fishing interests in the Svalbard arctic archipelago

Madam President,

As you will be aware, relationships between the EU and our neighbouring coastal states have become increasingly complicated over the past years and following Brexit they are poised to become even more strained. We face for the first time in the history of the EU a genuine and significant threat to our interests that requires the highest level of political attention and intervention.

You have witnessed first-hand in the Brexit negotiations how the link between foreign trade and fisheries has come to the forefront and how this link is increasingly relevant for the EU's foreign policy. Of primary concern are the recent developments in the North East Atlantic region and more particularly in the waters surrounding the Svalbard archipelago. By making use of the uncertainty and recalibration following Brexit, Norway has unilaterally decided to decrease the share for the EU in the Svalbard cod quota by 10,631 metric tonnes in 2021. A move that, if left unchallenged, will cost the EU fishing industry €800 million over the next 20 years.

The post-Brexit 2021 cod quota for the EU (excluding UK) in fishing zones 1 and 2b (commonly referred to as Svalbard cod quota) amounts to 28,516 metric tonnes. Norway however has issued a unilateral regulation on 19 December 2020 proclaiming that the EU will be allocated 37% less Svalbard cod quota (leaving more quota for Norway). There is no legal basis under international law for Norway to regulate the amount of quota EU flagged vessels may fish in the Svalbard zone, as these are international waters under the Svalbard Paris Treaty.

Our question is how you intend to react, in coordination with the Member States concerned, to respond to this flagrant violation of international law by Norway? We would be very much obliged if we could receive further information on this as soon as possible.

Norway (and Russia) continue to play an important role in the administration of arctic waters and they have undoubtedly contributed to an improved management of fisheries in the Barents Sea. It must be said however, that Norway often also seeks to secure or even prioritize their own national interests, while completely ignoring historical track records of EU member states in the area.



The EU must seek to retain their quota allocation based on historical track records in the Svalbard zone. We are now facing a significant reduction of existing quota rights, fuelled also by the uncertainty that Brexit has created. Norway is clearly using the current uncertain climate to change the allocation keys to the detriment of the EU Member States. The EU must therefore respond quickly and strongly or otherwise a precedent will be set. We ask for your intervention and for the support of your services to address this.

Yours faithfully,

Diek Parlevliet, ENAFA

Javier Garat, Europeche

Pim Visser, EAPO

Cc:

Mr. Virginijus Sinkevičius, European Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries

Mr. Josip Borell Fontelles, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission for a Stronger Europe in the World

Permanent Representations to The European Union of Germany, Estonia, France, The Netherlands, Spain, Poland and Portugal