Mr President, Distinguished Representatives of the Parties, Observers, colleagues!

I am pleased to be here in London representing the European Union, for the 37th Annual Meeting of the NEAFC. I hope we can continue our cooperation during this Annual Meeting in the same positive vein as it has been done in the past year’s, and also during the year in other NEAFC-related meetings.

I take the opportunity to highlight the main priorities for the European Union at this week’s Meeting.

- On the management measures for the important stocks, we look at a series of challenges. Let me first recall that we have been able to commonly agree to a new long-term management strategy for Atlanto-Scandian herring and to apply it to the total catches for 2019 and agree on it. In addition, for blue whiting, we have also reached an agreement following the long-term management strategy agreed in 2016 and in line with the ICES advice.
- However, we have not been able to conclude on the fishing opportunities for 2019 for other stocks. For the mackerel stock, after three round of discussion it is regrettable that we have not conclude our discussion despite a very clear ICES advice highlighting the critical state of the stock. The EU regrets that we will not be in a position to adopt any NEAFC recommendation for this stock this week. While we are all committed to continue the negotiations in the coming day, I would like to reiterate that for the EU it is essential to base our decision on science and to ensure that Coastal States are in the future all fully involved in the management of this key stock.
- For the redfish stocks, this year has been challenging. On the one hand, we have not yet received any ICES advice for the deep and shallow red fish stocks in the Irminger Sea, which has prevented the organization of a Coastal States meeting. While the EU welcomed the latest advice for red fish in INT 1 & 2, we regret that no Coastal State meeting was organized. The EU is convinced that responsible management of the stock requires an effort by all parties (both Coastal States and fishing parties concerned) and that Coastal States consultations, even if we might not agree, are the best place to discuss on management measures for the stock. This Annual Meeting might indeed be the opportunity to start talks and to pursue an agreement. We are ready to work with other Parties to agree on measures for 2019. The EU hopes that all parties work constructively on agreeing the appropriate measures.
- On the deep-sea species the EU will adopted measures for both 2019 and 2020. For deep-sea fisheries, we are pursuing the same overall approach as NEAFC in adopting the

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measures targeting individual deep-sea stocks, covering both EU and international waters. The measures were taken in line with MSY advice where available, and with the precautionary approach.

- Finally, as regards the management measures, the EU has tabled a proposal to reflect the submission of data from the European Union on bottom fisheries during the period 1987-2007. We look forward to receive the support of other parties as these are no new data submitted by the EU, but data submitted on time which were not included previously.
- For the control and compliance, the second large pillar of the NEAFC cooperation, we hope to endorse the productive work of the Permanent Committee on Monitoring and Compliance done in 2018. We particularly welcome the proposal on the introduction and implementation of the electronic reporting system in NEAFC. The EU is convinced that NEAFC should take all possible measures to ensure a true level playing field among parties. We hope to finalize the work done so far and to bridge the outstanding gaps. We have to ensure that countries are granted the status of cooperating non-contracting parties if they are able to comply with the NEAFC and international measures. We will also be looking how to address shortcomings in the NEAFC port state control.
- I would like now to turn to the inter-sessional work that took place this year in particular in the context of the ad-hoc working group on VMEs. The EU has been participating in a very open and constructive manner to this exercise, we would like to thank the Chair for allowing all parties to express their views on the matter. While we remain committed to continue to contribute to this exercise in the future, we consider that some of the issues raised would be better address in other fora.
- With regards to the ad-hoc working group on criteria allocation which has been put on hold last year. The EU considers that the work of this WG has been finalized and that there is no need to relaunch this WG.

Mr President, distinguished Representatives, Observers, colleagues, the European Union is committed to working constructively with all parties to ensure a successful 2019 Annual Meeting.

Thank you.