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

Let me start by thanking the President and the Parties for the good cooperation this last year. Let me also thank the Secretary and his staff for their collaboration and excellent work throughout the year.

I am pleased to be here in London representing the European Union, for the 38th 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 years. I take the opportunity to highlight the main priorities for the European Union at this week’s Meeting.

On the management measures for the pelagic stocks, which are particularly important stocks for all the NEAFC parties, we will be facing a series of challenges. At coastal States level, we have been able to reach an agreement for the mackerel stock, in line with the ICES MSY advice. We also reach an agreement on the blue whiting stock, which is in line with the ICES advice for MSY and the long-term management strategy agreed in 2016. Finally, we also reached an agreement on the Atlanto-Scandian herring stock, which is line with the long-term management strategy adopted last year.

But the challenges we face are related to the lack of sharing arrangements for these stocks. There is indeed a serious risk that unilateral quotas, which are unjustified, undermine the sustainability of these stocks. We believe that all these stocks should be subject to the same approach in NEAFC and that we need to establish coordinated management measures, including more control of what is being caught in the regulatory area. The EU has made a specific proposal in this context in relation to mackerel.
Regrettably, however, we have not been able to conclude on the fishing opportunities for 2020 for the redfish stocks. On the one hand, we have received ICES advices for the deep and shallow red fish stocks in the Irminger Sea for 2020 and 2021, but we could not reach a decision on how to approach the lack of agreement among coastal States. This will be another challenge for NEAFC this week. On the other hand, while the EU welcomed the latest advice for redfish in International waters 1 & 2, we regret that no coastal State meeting was organised. 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 2020 and we hope that all parties work constructively on agreeing the appropriate measures.

On the deep-sea species, the EU has adopted measures for both 2019 and 2020. For deep-sea fisheries, we are pursuing the same overall approach as NEAFC in adopting the 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.

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 2019. We particularly welcome the progress on the introduction and implementation of the electronic reporting system in NEAFC. I would like to thank the ad-hoc working group on ERS implementation for their hard work and commitment in 2019. I am now pleased to announce that the EU is in a position to start transmitting VMS transmissions using the new UN/FLUX standard. We hope to bridge the outstanding gaps so that we can launched the ERS in NEAFC in 2020. This is a clear indication of our commitment to fully implement the decisions taken in the 2018 Annual Meeting.

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 and required inspection presence at sea.

I would like also to conclude this brief statement on a positive note and indicate that the EU is fully committed to ensure that NEAFC continues to further improve its functioning in the near future. We welcome some of the proposals made
ahead of this meeting by some of the parties. We are ready to engage in such process and to contribute to a more efficient, modern, sustainable and agile organisation that should be in a position to address the challenges in the North-East Atlantic.

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.