

**Mr. Virginijus Sinkevicius,
Commissioner of the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries
European Commission
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Belgium
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Dear Commissioner,

As a Chairman of the Governing Council of both the Ministerial Conference for Fisheries Cooperation among African States bordering the Atlantic (ATLAFCO) and the Intergovernmental Organization for Marketing Information and Cooperation Services for Fishery Products in Africa (INFOPÊCHE), I would like to convey my greetings.

Following the conclusions of the joint ATLAFCO and INFOPÊCHE seminar, held on March 16 and 17, 2023 in Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire) and Europêche consultation meeting Tuna Group and the ICCAT representatives of the interested ATLAFCO Member States held in Rabat (Morocco) on April 12, 2023, I would like to draw your attention to the situation of unfair competition in which some of our States encounter, concerning the export of tuna loins to the European Union.

Indeed, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Senegal are all economic partners of the European Union under preferential trade regimes¹. Three of them have also signed partnership agreements for sustainable fishing (SFPAs)². Within the framework of these agreements, the ACP countries and in particular those of Africa, are required to respect international law in terms of human rights, labor law, good governance and environmental protection. Our countries have also agreed to gradually open their markets to imports from the European Union. Finally, we open our waters to European fleets and process their tuna products in our canneries and processing industries based in Abidjan, Mindelo, Tema and Dakar.

Our products of loins, pieces and canned tuna offer strong guarantees in terms of environmental, economic and social sustainability. However, they have to face competition from Asia which is all the stronger as they are subjected each year to the system of autonomous tariff quotas.

¹Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana have concluded Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) with the European Union, Senegal benefits from the special incentive scheme for the least developed States or the "everything but arms" scheme, under the European Generalized System of Preferences (GSP+) and Cabo Verde is also the only African country benefiting from a total exemption from customs duties under the GSP+ thanks to compliance with international conventions on human rights, labor law, good governance and environmental protection.

²Ghana, currently on a yellow card, is working to improve its fisheries management to qualify for an SFPAs as well.

The 35,000 tons of tuna loins exempt from customs duties when entering the European market represent around a quarter of the European Union's annual tuna imports. They essentially benefit China and other Asian states which provide no guarantee as to the fishing conditions of their fleets and the working conditions of their seamen and workers. And yet it is them who benefit from quotas of tuna loins without customs duties, which are exhausted from the first days of January each year. Not only their products are therefore much cheaper than ours, but their massive influx at the start of the year also creates a general collapse in the price of tuna loin throughout the year.

Under these conditions, our industries have no possibility of accessing the European market for tuna loins, despite the partnership agreements they benefit from and the rules and standards they respect, unlike Asian processors.

As a result, on behalf of the Member States, I would like to request the European Union to take into consideration the possibility of gradually reducing the granting of autonomous tariff quotas on tuna loins, in order to allow the long-standing partners that we are, to gradually gain access to this market with products meeting the requirements of the European consumer.

In addition, I would also like to request a careful examination of the current conditions, in particular with regard to origin, in order to facilitate, as far as possible, the entry of tuna loins from African countries into the European Union market.

Remaining open to any suggestions from you to study together all the possible solutions to restore a situation that favors more balanced competition.

Sincerely yours,

Sidi Tiémoko TOURE



**Minister of Animal and Fishery Resources
of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire
President of ATLAFCO
Chairman of the Board of Directors of INFOPÊCHE**

Copy:

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