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Commissioner for Environment
Oceans and Fisheries

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AKTEA
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Dear,

Thank you for the statement of AKTEA at the occasion of the International Women's Day on 8 March 2022.

Your continuous work to strengthen the voice of women in European fisheries and aquaculture is essential. We must steer attention away from any limiting perceptions of women's role in the sector towards a greater recognition of their contribution all along the value chain.

Within local communities, in particular, women are present in all productive segments. They contribute in an essential way to the generation of wealth and employment, as well as to the sustainable use and conservation of aquatic resources. Despite this, their contribution to the fisheries and aquaculture sector comes often through hidden, unpaid labour. The lack of consideration for their work puts women at a disadvantage in many ways and ultimately prevents their full and balanced participation in the industry. As you pointed out, women holding a management or decision-making position are still too few, and their appointment in professional bodies, trade unions and workers' councils is still too low.

The European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) 2021-2027 supports actions to address this situation, in line with the EU Gender Equality Strategy¹. Financial support under the EMFAF takes into account the gender dimension and builds on actions to enhance the contribution of women to the sector under the previous EU fisheries structural funds². In the context of the ongoing programming of resources, Member States are encouraged to support projects with women as beneficiaries as well as initiatives to ensure equal opportunities within the sector. Similarly, they are called to tackle occupational hazards by way of financing investments on board to increase safety and improve working conditions, which are essential to put women on an equal footing with men as regards access to the fisher

¹ COM/2020/152 final.

² In total, for the period 2014-2020, EUR 46 136 992, 53 have been committed by Member States to supporting projects specifically with women as beneficiaries, for an estimated 2 556 operations out of the total 68 413 operations reported in Infosys.

profession. In addition, Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) will continue to play a key role in promoting women's role in blue economy communities and incorporating their voices into the industry.

To complement this ongoing work and further mainstream support for equal opportunities in all maritime sectors, I am very happy and proud to announce also the imminent launch of a specific call for proposals under the EMFAF to support women in the blue economy. The objective of this initiative is precisely to increase the visibility and participation of women in all activities and sectors related to the sustainable use of our oceans, seas and coasts; as well as to facilitate women's access to funding and networking opportunities.

Finally, I can inform you that, as part of our preparations for the report on the functioning of the Common Fisheries Policy due by 2022, we are stepping up our efforts in the collection, consolidation and analysis of social data, including on women working in the sector. This should prove particularly important in identifying possible gender data gaps and preventing the quantitative and qualitative underestimation of women's contribution to the sector, including its decision-making processes.

In the framework of all these initiatives, we look forward to your continued cooperation and support in enhancing women's role within a sustainable blue growth across all EU's regions.

Yours sincerely,



Virginijus Sinkevičius