



**VIRGINIJUS SINKEVIČIUS**  
Commissioner for Environment  
Oceans and Fisheries

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Dear Mr Weiss,

Thank you for your letter dated 25 January, sent on behalf of several NGOs, in which you raise the participation of NGOs in the consultations between the European Commission and the United Kingdom and Norway. The issue of transparency and equal treatment of stakeholders is very important to me and I am glad to see that we have made good progress on this issue over the past year.

While this progress is positive, there is always room for improvement. I have been disappointed to see that in the recent consultations process with Norway and the United Kingdom, no NGOs have been included in the Member States' delegations. I definitely wish to change this and we are considering how to ensure in the future access to plenary meetings and information for all stakeholders. I have asked my services to engage with our partners on this issue and am happy to see that last week, during the second formal round of EU-UK negotiations, a number of Member States decided to include NGO representatives in their delegation.

I would however also take the opportunity to recall that, from our perspective, we have continuously engaged with NGOs during the recent consultations and have provided you with an ongoing and detailed debriefing of the consultations. This has been mutually beneficial for both the Commission Chief Negotiators and for your NGO colleagues. It has allowed for better dialogue, common understanding of our respective positions and very importantly, the development of a good working relationship. Irrespective of the attendance to the consultations, we will continue with this practice, not only for transparency reasons, but also because we consider your views as key in shaping the position of the Union.

On the broader issue of sustainability and the European Green Deal initiative, we will continue to set our position for our bi-lateral and tri-lateral negotiations based on the best available scientific advice and on our MSY objectives. Avoiding overfishing is one of the key elements in supporting sustainable marine ecosystems.

I look forward to continuing our close and constructive cooperation.

Yours sincerely,



Virginijus Sinkevičius