

Mr Fernando FLORINDO GIJON  
Head of Unit  
Information Services Unit/Transparency  
General Secretariat  
Council of the European Union  
[access@consilium.europa.eu](mailto:access@consilium.europa.eu)

Rue du Trône 60  
3ème étage  
1050 Bruxelles  
Belgique

+32 (0)2 808 34 65  
[info@clientearth.org](mailto:info@clientearth.org)  
[www.clientearth.org](http://www.clientearth.org)

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**Subject: transparency and accountability in setting the 2020 fishing opportunities**

Dear Mr Florindo Gijon,

On the 25 of October 2019, the European Ombudsman issued a recommendation to the Council regarding transparency in the decision-making process leading to the adoption of total allowable catches (TACs) (case 640/2019/FP). Specifically, she recommended that:

**"The Council should proactively make public documents related to the adoption of the TAC Regulation at the time they are circulated to Member States or as soon as possible thereafter".**

I am therefore writing, on behalf of ClientEarth and the supporting organisations, to request you to implement the Ombudsman's recommendation as a matter of urgency.

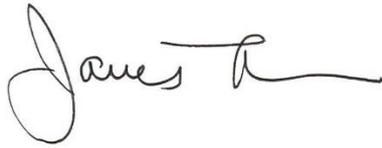
In fact, negotiations on the total allowable catches in the Northeast Atlantic for 2020 are currently ongoing in the Council's preparatory bodies. These negotiations are taking place within the framework of the common fisheries policy and, in particular, the 2020 maximum sustainable yield deadline.

Accordingly, the TACs for 2020 are instrumental to achieving the EU's commitment to sustainable fisheries next year and to setting a precedent for every year thereafter. It is therefore more important than ever that all stakeholders - including EU citizens - can exercise their right to participate in the decision-making process leading to the adoption of the 2020 fishing quotas. However, the Ombudsman's findings confirm that past processes leading to the adoption of fishing opportunities have been neither transparent nor participatory. Indeed, environmental organisations did not have timely access to the various options and positions that were being discussed; and the relevant documents were systematically classified as LIMITE.

We therefore respectfully urge you to ensure public access to this environmental information in a timely manner. Concretely, and as a first step to implementing the Ombudsman's recommendation, **we request that your services make 'the bible' on the Northeast Atlantic negotiations publicly available on the Council's documents register, duly tagged with inter-institutional code 2019/0235 (NLE), at the time that it is circulated to Member States.**

We thank you for your kind consideration and respectfully request a response that sets out the Council's position on the points raised.

Yours sincerely,



**James Thornton**  
Chief Executive Officer, ClientEarth

This letter is endorsed by:



A copy of this letter has been sent to:

- Mr Risto Lampinen, Head of the Fisheries Unit, Finland's Presidency of the Council.
- Ms Inga Rosinska, Director of Information and Outreach of the Council.
- Ms Marta Arpio, Director of Fisheries, Food and Health of the Council.