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Answer given by Executive Vice-President Šefčovič
on behalf of the European Commission
(30.8.2024)

While the Coastal States agree that the total catches of mackerel should be set in line with the best available scientific advice, the lack of a comprehensive sharing agreement means that the sum of all coastal States' quotas exceeds that level. This puts pressure on a stock that is in declining trend since 2020.

Coastal States consultations for a sharing arrangement are ongoing since 2022 with an active involvement from the European Union, represented by the Commission. Despite progress in these negotiations, the United Kingdom (UK), Norway and the Faroe Islands decided to set up a parallel track for the conclusion of a trilateral sharing arrangement, bringing the sum of their total quotas down compared to last year's, but legitimising the level of overfishing of mackerel in the North-East Atlantic. The Commission agrees with the Honourable Member that the remaining share of the quota (28,27%) neither reflects historical and recent fishing practices nor the genuine interests of the other parties, including the EU, whose traditional share of this fishery was set at 25,9% of the TAC (pre-transfers bilaterally to the UK under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement¹).

At this stage, and before looking into any other option, the Commission called on the three signatories to resume, in good faith, the consultations at multilateral level in view of reaching a comprehensive sharing arrangement, including all relevant parties, to allow for a sustainable management of this important fishery.

¹ OJ L 149, 30.4.2021, p. 10–2539: Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community, of the one part, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, of the other part.