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Answer given by Ms Roswall
on behalf of the European Commission
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The Commission remains fully committed to the aspirational targets of the Marine Action Plan¹. Yet, fisheries management measures are regulated under the common fisheries policy (CFP)² and decisions to prohibit or limit certain fishing techniques, including to comply with EU environmental legislation, must be taken in that context and consider the type of fisheries, the characteristics of the area and the impact on marine ecosystems. The Marine Action Plan does not legally bind Member States, but the Commission welcomes that three Member States announced banning the most damaging fishing gears from their marine protected areas by 2030. The Commission will continue supporting the implementation of the Marine Action Plan through the joint special group of Member States.

The Ocean Pact³ encourages Member States to accelerate efforts to meet the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030⁴ targets of legally protecting 30% and strictly protecting 10% of their seas. For Natura 2000 sites⁵, implementing necessary conservation measures and limiting the use of fishing techniques to those that are compatible with the conservation objectives of such site is already a legal requirement. The Nature Restoration Regulation⁶ also requires Member States to gradually put in place necessary restoration measures and, where the restoration of coastal and marine habitats requires that fishing or aquaculture activities be regulated, the CFP applies. These legal obligations should help reach the aspirational target of the Marine Action Plan which is recalled in the Ocean Pact.

¹ https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/policy/common-fisheries-policy-cfp/action-plan-protecting-and-restoring-marine-ecosystems-sustainable-and-resilient-fisheries_en.

² https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/policy/common-fisheries-policy-cfp_en.

³ https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/european-ocean-pact_en.

⁴ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/strategy/biodiversity-strategy-2030_en.

⁵ Guidance document 'European Commission: Directorate-General for Environment, Natura 2000 and fishing – Application of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive and Article 4 of the Birds Directive to marine fishing activities – Commission notice', <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2779/1449747>.

⁶ Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2024 on nature restoration and amending Regulation (EU) 2022/869, OJ L, 2024/1991, 29.7.2024.