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**Speaking points for the press
conference**

Check Against Delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort

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I would like to thank Minister President Kris Peeters for the excellent way in which he chaired the Council this morning and led us to the productive conclusions he just presented.

Allow me to make some additional remarks from my side.

I have taken the initiative to discuss with the ministers today the mackerel quota sharing dispute between the Coastal States in the North East Atlantic, an issue of extreme importance for our mackerel fishing industry.

The actions by Iceland and the Faroe Islands in setting unilateral quotas for themselves is nothing short of unacceptable. The EU and Norway have built up the stock in the North East Atlantic to a good and sustainable level. The amount of mackerel which Icelandic and Faroese vessels have taken out of the sea this year goes way beyond what they have ever fished before. These actions also defy all the hard efforts of our own industry in trying to protect this stock.

We concluded today that we want to resolve this untenable situation, to avoid that our fishermen would be even worse off in the future.

The Commission has ensured the continuation of the dialogue with the Faroe Islands and Iceland over recent weeks and this process will continue while we are discussing the way ahead with Norway.

We must get the best for our fishing industry while preserving sustainable fish stocks. The Commission considers that we should seek a balanced and fair result for all parties concerned in the form of a long term sharing agreement on mackerel between all Coastal States. In such a long term sharing agreement we should take the migration of mackerel into more northern waters into account. Such an arrangement would have the advantage of delivering stability and certainty on future fishing possibilities for the Union's mackerel industry, because without an agreement we don't know what the situation may be next year.

But we will not seek an agreement at any cost. If we are met with continuing exaggerated quota expectations from either Faroe Islands or Iceland, then the EU will be ready to act, in particular, in relation to our annual fisheries arrangements with those countries.

Now we have to focus on results, on finding a long term agreement on quota shares between the Coastal States that can deliver a good and sustainable outcome.