



Brussels, 23.5.2017  
COM(2017) 243 final

2017/0101 (NLE)

Proposal for a

**COUNCIL IMPLEMENTING DECISION**

**amending Implementing Decision 2014/170/EU, establishing a list of non-cooperating third countries in fighting illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, as regards Saint Vincent and the Grenadines**

## EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

### 1. CONTEXT OF THE PROPOSAL

#### **Grounds for and objectives of the proposal**

This proposal concerns the application of Council Regulation (EC) No 1005/2008 of 29 September 2008 on establishing a Community system to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU fishing), amending Regulations (EEC) No 2847/93, (EC) No 1936/2001 and (EC) No 601/2004 and repealing Regulations (EC) No 1093/94 and (EC) No 1447/1999<sup>1</sup> (the IUU Regulation).

#### **General context**

This proposal is made in the context of the implementation of the IUU Regulation and is the result of investigation and dialogue procedures which were carried out in line with the substantive and procedural requirements laid out in the IUU Regulation foreseeing *inter alia* that all countries should discharge the duties incumbent upon them under international law as flag, port, coastal or market State to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing.

#### **Existing provisions in the area of the proposal**

Commission Decision of 12 December 2014 (OJ C 453, 17.12.2014, p. 5) notifying a third country that the Commission considers as possible of being identified as non-cooperating third countries pursuant to Council Regulation (EC) No 1005/2008 establishing a Community system to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

Commission Implementing Decision of 23 May 2017 (OJ C XXXX, XX.XX.2017, p ...) identifying Saint Vincent and the Grenadines as a non-cooperating third countries in fighting illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

#### **Consistency with other policies and objectives of the Union**

Not applicable.

### 2. RESULTS OF CONSULTATIONS WITH THE INTERESTED PARTIES AND IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

#### **Consultation of interested parties**

Interested parties concerned by the proceeding have had the possibility to defend their interests during the investigation and dialogue procedures, in line with the provisions of the IUU Regulation.

#### **Collection and use of expertise**

There was no need for external expertise.

#### **Impact assessment**

This proposal is the result of the implementation of the IUU Regulation.

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 286, 29.10.2008, p. 1.

The IUU Regulation does not contain provisions for a general impact assessment but contains an exhaustive list of conditions that have to be assessed.

### **3. LEGAL ELEMENTS OF THE PROPOSAL**

#### **Summary of the proposed action**

On 12 December 2014 the Commission, by Commission Decision, **notified** Saint Vincent and the Grenadines that the Commission **considers as possible of being identified** as non-cooperating country pursuant to the IUU Regulation.

The Commission initiated démarches in respect of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. These démarches consisted *inter alia* of actions providing reasons of its actions, opportunity for the country to respond and refute, right to ask for and provide additional information, proposed actions plan to remedy the situation as well as adequate time to answer and reasonable time to remedy the situation.

On 23 May 2017 the Commission, by Commission Implementing Decision, **identified** Saint Vincent and the Grenadines as a third country that the Commission **considers as a non-cooperating** third country pursuant to the IUU Regulation.

The attached proposal for a Council Implementing Decision is based on the findings which have confirmed that Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has failed to discharge the duties incumbent upon it under international law as flag, port, coastal or market State.

It is therefore proposed that the Council adopts the attached proposal for a Decision.

#### **Legal basis**

Council Regulation (EC) No 1005/2008 of 29 September 2008 on establishing a Community system to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing.

#### **Subsidiarity principle**

The proposal falls under the exclusive competence of the European Union. The subsidiarity principle therefore does not apply.

#### **Proportionality principle**

The proposal complies with the proportionality principle for the following reasons:

The form of action is described in the IUU Regulation and leaves no scope for national decision.

Indication of how financial and administrative burden falling upon the Union, national governments, regional and local authorities, economic operators and citizens is minimised and proportionate to the objective of the proposal is not applicable.

#### **Choice of instruments**

Proposed instruments: decision.

Other means would not be adequate for the following reason:

Other means would not be adequate because the IUU Regulation does not provide for alternative options.

#### **4. BUDGETARY IMPLICATION**

The proposal has no implication for the Union budget.

Proposal for a

## COUNCIL IMPLEMENTING DECISION

### **amending Implementing Decision 2014/170/EU, establishing a list of non-cooperating third countries in fighting illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, as regards Saint Vincent and the Grenadines**

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

Having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 1005/2008 of 29 September 2008 establishing a Community system to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, amending Regulations (EEC) No 2847/93, (EC) No 1936/2001 and (EC) No 601/2004 and repealing Regulations (EC) No 1093/94 and (EC) No 1447/1999<sup>2</sup>, and in particular Article 33 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal submitted by the European Commission,

Whereas:

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

- (1) Regulation (EC) No 1005/2008 (the IUU Regulation) establishes a Union system to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.
- (2) Chapter VI of the IUU Regulation lays down the procedure with respect to the identification of non-cooperating third countries, *démarches* in respect of countries identified as non-cooperating third countries, the establishment of a list of non-cooperating third countries, removal from the list of non-cooperating third countries, publicity of the list of non-cooperating third countries and any emergency measures.
- (3) On 24 March 2014, the Council adopted Implementing Decision 2014/170/EU establishing a list of non-cooperating third countries in fighting IUU fishing pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1005/2008 establishing a Community system to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.
- (4) In accordance with Article 32 of the IUU Regulation, by Decision of 12 December 2014 ('Decision of 12 December 2014')<sup>3</sup>, the Commission notified Saint Vincent and the Grenadines of the possibility of being identified as a country which the Commission considers as non-cooperating third country.
- (5) In the Decision of 12 December 2014, the Commission included the information concerning the essential facts and considerations underlying such possible identification.

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<sup>2</sup> OJ L 286, 29.10.2008, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Commission Decision of 12 December 2014 notifying a third country that the Commission considers as possible of being identified as non-cooperating third countries pursuant to Council Regulation (EC) No 1005/2008 establishing a Community system to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (JO C 453 17.12.2014, p. 5).

- (6) The Decision was notified to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines together with a letter suggesting Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to implement, in close cooperation with the Commission, an action plan to rectify the identified shortcomings.
- (7) The Commission invited Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in particular (i) to take all necessary measures to implement the actions contained in the action plan suggested by the Commission; (ii) to assess the implementation of the actions contained in the action plan suggested by the Commission; and (iii) to send every six months a detailed report to the Commission assessing the implementation of each action as regards, *inter alia*, its individual and/or overall effectiveness in ensuring a fully compliant fisheries control system.
- (8) Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was given the opportunity to respond to the Decision of 12 December 2014 as well as to other relevant information communicated by the Commission, allowing it to submit evidence refuting or completing the facts stated in the Decision of 12 December 2014. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was assured of its right to ask for, or to provide, additional information.
- (9) By its Decision and letter of 12 December 2014, the Commission opened a process of dialogue with Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and highlighted that it considered a period of six months as being sufficient in principle for reaching an agreement.
- (10) The Commission continued to seek and verify all information it deemed necessary. The oral and written comments submitted by Saint Vincent and the Grenadines following the Decision of 12 December 2014 were considered and taken into account. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was kept informed, either orally or in writing, of the Commission's deliberations.
- (11) The Commission however took the view that the areas of concern and shortcomings as described in the Decision of 12 December 2014 had not been addressed sufficiently by Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Moreover, the Commission concluded that the measures of the plan of action had not been fully implemented. As a consequence the Commission adopted Implementing Decision [2017/xxx/EU](#)<sup>4</sup>, identifying Saint Vincent and the Grenadines as a non-cooperating third country in fighting IUU fishing.
- (12) Based on the investigation and dialogue procedures carried out by the Commission, including the correspondence exchanged and the meetings held, and the reasons underlying the Decision of 12 December 2014 and Implementing Decision [2017/xxx/EU](#), it is appropriate to place Saint Vincent and the Grenadines on the list of non-cooperating third countries in fighting IUU fishing.
- (13) Pursuant to Article 34(1) of the IUU Regulation the Council, acting by qualified majority on a proposal from the Commission, is to remove a third country from the list of non-cooperating third countries if that country demonstrates that the situation that warranted its listing has been rectified. A removal decision is also to take into consideration whether the identified third countries concerned have taken concrete measures capable of achieving a lasting improvement of the situation.

## **2. PROCEDURE WITH RESPECT TO SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**

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<sup>4</sup> Commission Implementing Decision [2017/xxx/EU](#) of 23 May 2017 identifying Saint Vincent and the Grenadines as a non-cooperating third country in fighting illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing ([OJ L xx, dd.mmmm.2017, p. x](#)).

- (14) On 12 December 2014, the Commission notified Saint Vincent and the Grenadines pursuant to Article 32 of the IUU Regulation that it considered the possibility of identifying Saint Vincent and the Grenadines as a non-cooperating third country and invited Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to implement an action plan in close cooperation with its services to rectify the shortcomings identified in the Decision of 12 December 2014. Since that Decision, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines made written submissions making its views known and met the Commission to discuss relevant points. The Commission provided Saint Vincent and the Grenadines with relevant information in writing. The Commission continued to seek and verify all information it deemed necessary. The oral and written comments submitted by Saint Vincent and the Grenadines following the Decision of 12 December 2014 were considered and taken into account, while Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was kept informed either orally or in writing of the Commission's deliberations. The Commission took the view that the areas of concern and shortcomings as described in the Decision of 12 December 2014 had not been addressed sufficiently by Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Moreover, the Commission concluded that the measures suggested in a plan of action had not been fully implemented.

### **3. IDENTIFICATION OF SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES AS A NON-COOPERATING THIRD COUNTRY**

- (15) In the Decision of 12 December 2014, the Commission analysed the duties of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and evaluated its compliance with its international obligations as flag, port, coastal or market State. For the purpose of that review, the Commission took into account the parameters listed in Article 31(4) to (7) of the IUU Regulation.
- (16) The Commission reviewed the compliance of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in line with the findings of the Decision of 12 December 2014, and having regard to relevant information provided thereon by Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the suggested plan of action, and the measures taken to rectify the situation.
- (17) The main shortcomings identified by the Commission in the suggested plan of action were related to several failures to implement international law obligations, linked in particular to the failure to adopt an adequate legal framework, the lack of an adequate and efficient monitoring system, the lack of an observer scheme and the lack of a deterrent sanctioning system. Other identified shortcomings relate, more generally, to compliance with international obligations, including Regional Fisheries Management Organisations recommendations and resolutions, and the conditions for registration of vessels according to international law. A lack of compliance with recommendations and resolutions from relevant bodies such as the International Plan of Action against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing and the Guidelines on Flag State Performance of the United Nations were also identified. However, the lack of compliance with non-binding recommendations and resolutions was considered only as supporting evidence and not as a basis for the identification.
- (18) In Implementing Decision [2017/xxx/EU](#), the Commission identified Saint Vincent and the Grenadines as a non-cooperating third country pursuant to the IUU Regulation.
- (19) With respect to the possible constraints upon Saint Vincent and the Grenadines as a developing country, it is noted that the specific development status and overall performance of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines with respect to fisheries are not impaired by its general level of development.

- (20) Having regards to the Decision of 12 December 2014 and Implementing Decision 2017/xxx/EU of 23 May 2017, and to the dialogue process with Saint Vincent and the Grenadines held with the Commission and its outcome, it can be concluded that the actions undertaken by Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in light of its duties as flag State are insufficient to comply with Articles 63, 64, 91, 94 and 117 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, Articles 7, 18, 19, 20 and 23 of the United Nations Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (UNFSA), and Article III(8) of the Agreement to promote compliance with international conservation and management measures by fishing vessels on the high seas of the United Nations.
- (21) Thus, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has failed to discharge its duties under international law as flag State to take action to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing.

#### **4. ESTABLISHMENT OF A LIST OF NON-COOPERATING THIRD COUNTRIES**

- (22) In view of the conclusions reached with regard Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, that country should be added, in accordance with Article 33 of the IUU Regulation, to the list of non-cooperating third countries established by the Implementing Decision 2014/170/EU. Implementing Decision 2014/170/EU should therefore be amended accordingly.
- (23) The inclusion of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in the list of non-cooperating countries in the fight against IUU fishing entails the application of the measures laid down in Article 38 of the IUU Regulation. Article 38(1) of the IUU Regulation provides for the prohibition of importation of fisheries products caught by vessels flying the flag of non-cooperating countries. In the case of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines that prohibition should cover all stocks and species, as defined in Article 2(8) of the IUU Regulation, since the lack of appropriate measures adopted in relation to IUU fishing leading to the identification of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines as a non-cooperating third country is not limited to a given stock or species.
- (24) It is noted that IUU fishing, *inter alia*, depletes fish stocks, destroys marine habitats, undermines the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources, distorts competition, endangers food security, puts honest fishermen at an unfair disadvantage and weakens coastal communities. In view of the magnitude of the problems related to IUU fishing, it is considered necessary for the Union to expeditiously implement the actions in respect to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines as a non-cooperating country. As a consequence, this Decision should enter into force on the day following that of its publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.
- (25) If Saint Vincent and the Grenadines demonstrates that the situation that warranted its listing has been rectified, the Council, acting by qualified majority on a proposal from the Commission, is to remove Saint Vincent and the Grenadines from the list of non-cooperating third countries in line with Article 34(1) of the IUU Regulation. Any removal decision should also take into consideration whether Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has taken concrete measures capable of achieving a lasting improvement of the situation.

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

*Article 1*

"Saint Vincent and the Grenadines" shall be added in the Annex to Implementing Decision 2014/170/EU.

*Article 2*

This Decision shall enter into force on the day following that of its publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

Done at Brussels,

*For the Council  
The President*