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European Commissioner
for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

Mr. Karmenu Vella

Dear Mr. Vella,

Thank you for a very constructive meeting held on April 24, 2018 at the European Commission, during which we were able to discuss some important issues of cooperation between the Russian Federation and the European Union in the field of fisheries.

In accordance with our agreements reached after the discussion of the question of cooperation in the Baltic Sea region, in particular with regard to the possible construction of a navigation canal through the Vistula spit on the territory of the Republic of Poland, I am writing to bring to your attention the position of the Federal Agency for Fisheries on this issue.

Vistula Lagoon is a basin of the highest fishery category in which Russia and Poland on a bilateral basis within the framework of the sessions of the Joint Commission on fisheries exercise fisheries management. Every year here is being caught up to 4.7 thousand tonnes of aquatic biological resources.

In this regard, the Russian side has serious concerns about the potential negative environmental effects to aquatic biological resources and their habitat as a result of the above mentioned works.

However, due to lack of project documentation we can only tentatively talk about possible negative consequences, which include the following:

1. Increase of water salinity, which can lead to a significant deterioration in conditions for spawning and the reduction of catches of freshwater fish species.
2. Increased concentrations of suspended matters in the water. The main reason is dredging, which could adversely affect planktonic and benthic community, that make up food supply for fish in the Lagoon.
3. The flow of pollutants from bottom deposits and from ships can contribute to water pollution with petroleum products and other pollutants from increased ship traffic in the Lagoon.
4. Eutrophication of the habitat could lead to an abundance of phytoplankton, including potentially toxic species and deterioration in water quality.

Taking into account the transboundary nature of the specified basin and its stocks of aquatic biological resources, this construction may affect the habitat of aquatic bioresources and the fishery in the Russian part of the Lagoon.

In this regard, according to our agreement, please consider these factors, as well as a comprehensive analysis of possible consequences in order to make a deliberate decision on construction of a navigation canal through the Vistula spit and, if necessary, to implement a set of measures to compensate the damage to water biological resources and their habitat.

I'm looking forward to continuing our fruitful discussions in the future, including the framework of the forthcoming North Atlantic Fisheries Ministers' Conference to be held in August 2018 on the Faroe Islands.

Deputy Minister of Agriculture
of the Russian Federation – Head of the Federal
Agency for Fisheries

Ilya Shestakov