



***Joint statement on behalf of European Union and Norway regarding the  
management of the Fisheries in the Teno Watercourse***

A new Agreement between Norway and Finland on the Fisheries in the Teno Watercourse came into force in 2017. There are multiple genetically unique salmon stocks in the river, with variable stock status, and fishing regulations under the agreement aim to reduce the fishing mortality in order to rebuild the weakest stocks.

Despite the reduced exploitation rates since 2017, the salmon catches in 2020 were at a historical low level. Low catch numbers were confirmed by fish counts derived with various techniques (sonar, video, snorkeling). Monitoring, which includes smolt counting one year versus number of returning 1 SW salmon the year after, indicates that the survival rate at sea has decreased dramatically in recent years, with low pre-fishery abundance as a result. In the latest annual reports from the Norwegian-Finnish bilateral working group for monitoring and research on the salmon stocks in the river Tana, the group concludes there has been no exploitable surplus from the river in 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022, and the prognosis says this situation probably will continue in 2023. Taking this into consideration, the yearly process of adjusting fishing regulations led to a joint conclusion by Norway and Finland to close the salmon fisheries completely in 2021, 2022 and again this year. As a result, the number of salmon left for spawning in the river has increased significantly, but it takes time before the stocks recover and these year-classes recruit back to fishery.

In 2020, Finland and Norway started negotiations to renew the periodic fishing rule for years 2022-2028, with the objective to secure the recovery of the weak salmon while also promoting Sami fishing rights. The recent knowledge about the stocks implies that the assumptions for recovery need to be re-assessed. To ensure recovery, the new fishing rules must incorporate a new and more restricted baseline rule for when salmon fishing can take place.

Local stakeholders are involved in the management processes as well as in the process of negotiating the new fishing rule. However, Finnish local representatives left the bilateral negotiations on the fishing rule in late 2022, because they had a different opinion concerning how to deal with Sami fishing rights in this very difficult situation, when fishing in the river needs to be closed while some fishing for Tana-salmon remain in some coastal areas in Norway. Norwegian local right holders recently decided to no longer take part in the negotiation, for the same reasons. The process of negotiating new fishing rules is now in the final stages, and the parties expect to send a proposal on public hearing in late July.