Major interpellation for written answer with debate O-000077/2017
to the Commission
Rule 130b
Alain Cadec
on behalf of the Committee on Fisheries

Subject: Major interpellation - EU-Norway dispute on snow crab fisheries in Svalbard

The right to equal access to Svalbard's resources is guaranteed by the non-discriminatory clause of the 1920 Paris Treaty to which most EU Member States are a party. However, EU trawlers fishing for snow crab under valid EU licences in Svalbard are prevented from operating by Norwegian authorities. One Latvian vessel was detained for months and fined EUR 200 000.

The decision to create a segment for snow crab fisheries in Svalbard was taken by the Council based on recommendations by the Legal Service, and Member States were authorised to issue fishing licences. Trusting EU legislation, vessel owners have invested heavily, but are now unable to fish as Norway does not recognise these EU licences.

We deplore the fact that the Commission's negotiating efforts over the past months have not been resolute enough. They have not yielded any results for the affected EU fleet which faces bankruptcy and the loss of hundreds of jobs.

1. How does the Commission intend to proceed in order to obtain a fair solution allowing EU vessels to fish for snow crab in Svalbard?

2. What action will the Commission recommend to the Council for 2018?

3. Will the Commission include snow crab fisheries in the annual EU-Norway consultations as a separate sub-protocol excluded from the fish quotas, but traded against access rights? If not, why not?