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Commissioner for Environment
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Honourable Members,

Thank you for your letter of 5 March 2020 concerning the critical situation of the Mar Menor addressed to Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans and to me. I am replying on behalf of both.

The Commission recognizes the high ecological value of the Mar Menor lagoon, belonging to the Natura 2000 network, and is aware of the sensitive situation the lagoon is experiencing after the first and second eutrophication episodes occurred in 2016 and 2019. Since then, the Commission has been reporting regularly to the European Parliament on its findings related to the Mar Menor, be it through replies to Petitions you transmitted to us or oral updates provided to the Petitions committee, be it through replies to parliamentary questions you and many other Members tabled.

With regard to Spain, the Commission opened two horizontal infringement procedures in relation to the shortcomings detected in the implementation of the Nitrates and Habitats Directives^{1,2}, which also specifically address the Region of Murcia, and in particular the Mar

¹ Council Directive 91/676/EEC, of 12 December 1991 concerning the protection of waters against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources O.J. L 375 of 31.12.1991.

² Council Directive 92/43/EEC, of 21 May 1992, on the protection of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora. O.J. L 206 of 22.07.1992.

Menor area. In addition, the Commission is also monitoring the implementation of the Water Framework Directive³ in the Segura River Basin.

The primary objective of Commission's infringement procedures is to ensure that Member States comply with their obligations under EU law by adopting effective measures to redress the situation of non-compliance. To support the Spanish authorities in identifying and putting in place the measures needed in the Mar Menor, the Commission has discussed this matter with regional and national authorities on several occasions, and has met the petitioners and civil society. We are aware of the recent roadmap and measures adopted by the competent authorities to address the situation of the Mar Menor and consider that their speedy implementation by Spain is crucial.

In line with the Communication on the European Green Deal, that aims to ensure that all EU policies contribute to preserving and restoring Europe's nature, including strengthening the implementation and enforcement of existing legislation, I would like to reiterate our willingness to work with the competent national and regional authorities to resolve the problems that this unique area faces, including through the use of EU funding to support science-based measures. The good cooperation of the different authorities, at national, regional and local level, as well as the involvement of the stakeholders concerned will be necessary.

Rest assured that the Commission will not hesitate to further deploy all the tools at its disposal to secure compliance by Spain with its obligations on this matter.

Yours sincerely,



Virginijus Sinkevičius

³ Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy (*OJ L 327, 22.12.2000, p. 1–73*).