

Stockholm & Brussels, October 12, 2009

To: The Fisheries Ministers of EU Member States

**Re: Input to the EU Fisheries Council Meeting, 19–20 October 2009**

Dear Minister,

This letter is the first of what we expect to become a permanent input to the EU Fisheries Council meetings. Our intent is to provide you with recommendations on key issues from an environmental perspective, together with more detailed background information. The aim is to encourage a more sustainable utilisation of our common marine resources, and we hope that our views will be taken into consideration in your deliberations at the Council meeting.

On behalf of the Fisheries Secretariat (FISH) and Seas At Risk (SAR), we offer you our views and key messages on two of the issues on the agenda at the forthcoming EU Agriculture and Fisheries Council.

**1. Council Regulation fixing the fishing opportunities and associated conditions for certain fish stocks and groups of fish stocks applicable in the Baltic Sea for 2010 (COM(2009)439)**

The main Baltic cod stock – the so called Eastern stock – has continued to build up after the management plan was put in place and the widespread illegal fishing for cod has to a significant extent been tackled. The current challenge is the high by-catch of juveniles and in some cases very high levels of discarding. Today, it is the pelagic stocks in the Baltic that show some decline and the scientists advice severe cuts for all of them. The situation of Baltic salmon populations continues to be highly variable in the region.

Regarding the fishing opportunities in the Baltic Sea for 2010, FISH and SAR call on you to:

- adhere to the management plan and support the Commission's proposal for both cod stocks, resulting in a 15 % increase in Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for the Eastern stock and a 9 % increase for the weaker Western stock;
- consider further measures to deal with the increasing levels of by-catch and discards, such as increased selectivity and landing quotas – decreasing the minimum landing size is not a viable option; and
- agree catch levels for the pelagic stocks and salmon, which currently lack long-term management, that are in line with the scientific advice for sustainable exploitation. If this is not possible, not to go beyond the Commission's proposal.

*See Annex 1 for more detailed comments on this proposal.*

2. A Council Regulation establishing a Community system for inspection, monitoring, control, surveillance and enforcement applicable to the Common Fisheries Policy (COM(2008)721)

There is general agreement that unreported catches and landings are a significant threat to the sustainability of EU fisheries resources. Among other things, they make scientific assessments more difficult, distort market prices and have a negative effect on consumer confidence. Unreported catches and landings need to be eliminated or at the least minimised, and the current Commission proposal for a new control regulation would, if adopted, be a significant step in the right direction.

The debate on some of the key aspects of this proposal is still ongoing. FISH and SAR call on you to overcome the political, legal and administrative obstacles and support the Commission's proposal, in particular:

- the harmonisation of surveillance procedures, inspection standards and enforcement procedures, such as sanctions, without which the conservation and management objectives of the CFP cannot be fulfilled (articles 61–64, 65–80, 82 and 84);
- the measures enabling the Commission to make sure that Member States are fulfilling their obligations towards the EU and to take swift action to ensure better implementation (articles 27, 45, 70, 88–94 and 96–101);
- article 95, which provides for the suspension of up to 18 months of EU fishing aid when a Member State fails to meet its obligations under the Regulations – when there is a breach so grievous as to seriously affect the conservation of marine resources. This proposal has been challenged but would be a first step towards use of cross-compliance measures in the CFP – something which is already an established practice under the Common Agriculture Policy.

*See Annex 2 for more detailed comments on this proposal.*

Yours sincerely,



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