

P R E S S R E L E A S E**Parliament provides early Christmas for Fisheries**

Brussels, 18th December 2012. Christmas has come early this year for European fish stocks as the European Parliament's fisheries committee voted on the most important file of the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy. On the key topics such as restoring fish stocks to healthy levels, setting fishing limits according to scientific advice, and ending discards, MEPs have expressed their will to lead European fish stocks to a more sustainable future.

Monica Verbeek, Seas At Risk Executive Director said: "This vote shows recognition of the fact that a prospering fisheries sector can only be based on sustainably managed fish stocks. Where the Council opted for status quo, the parliament presses ahead with a more sustainable reform, raising hopes that 2013 will see the adoption of a new regulatory framework that will provide for healthy fish stocks and thriving coastal communities."

MEPs voted to ensure fishing limits will be set according to scientific advice, rather than through political deals. They agreed to set sustainable fishing limits by 2015 at levels that should allow fish stocks to recover by 2020 to healthy levels above Maximum Sustainable Yield. And they made access to funding conditional upon compliance with the rules set under the CFP to ensure fewer infringements.

While the gradual introduction of a discard ban was agreed upon, provisions for potential exemptions from the obligation to land all catches are reason for some concern.

The fisheries committee also wants to see a more regional approach to fisheries management, and paved the way for additional Advisory Councils to the ones already existing such as for aquaculture, the Black Sea and markets. How inclusion of inland fisheries in the remit of the proposed aquaculture Advisory Council, and separation of markets from regional issues will pan out for the effectiveness of the relevant ACs, remains to be seen.

Once the plenary session of the European Parliament has adopted its final position early in 2013, based on today's vote of the fisheries committee, negotiations with the Council will start and ultimately lead to a new CFP by 2013 or 2014.

END

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Notes:

- 1) Seas At Risk is a European association of non-governmental environmental organisations working to protect and restore to health the marine environment of the European seas and the wider North East Atlantic.

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