109 Organizations Around the Globe Urge World Leaders to Reach a WTO Deal to Help Save Our Ocean

3rd March, 2020

This June, governments around the world must fulfil their commitment to curb the public money that supports overfishing and degrades our ocean. After nearly two decades of negotiations at the World Trade Organization (WTO), now is the moment for leaders to act to end harmful fisheries subsidies. Ahead of the WTO’s Ministerial Conference, which is scheduled to launch on World Ocean Day, 109 organizations from around the world urge world leaders to reach a meaningful agreement to stop these harmful subsidies as time has run out.

Despite the fact that a third of fish stocks are already exploited beyond sustainable levels\(^1\), governments continue to provide an estimated US$22 billion every year in harmful subsidies that increase fishing capacity.\(^2\) While these subsidies may be aimed at helping coastal communities, they can instead encourage fishing beyond profitable and sustainable levels in coastal waters and on the high seas, degrading the very resources on which these communities depend and jeopardising the future of the industry they set out to support.

In 2015, world leaders recognized the damage that harmful subsidies cause to fish stocks and the marine environment when they adopted the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. SDG Target 14.6 tasked governments with reaching a new agreement at the WTO to eliminate harmful subsidies by 2020. This deadline has mobilized the international community but makes the WTO’s Twelfth Ministerial Conference, this June, our last, best chance to achieve meaningful reform.

The final international agreement must trigger prompt and significant reductions by the largest subsidizers. Moreover, it must establish a binding framework that drives the phase out of all harmful subsidies that contribute to fleet overcapacity and overfishing, and eliminates subsidies to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing by all WTO member governments. Countries at all stages of development should be prepared to improve the health of their fisheries and support the livelihoods of their fishers by reforming their fisheries subsidies programs once an agreement is reached. Anything less would miss this generational opportunity to replot the course of global fishing fleets toward sustainability, improve the health of ocean ecosystems, and help ensure that the ocean will continue to provide for the many millions who depend on it, now and into the future.

A deal is possible. We call upon world leaders to work swiftly to find landing zones in order to successfully deliver on the SDG mandate by the 2020 deadline. An agreement would demonstrate not only that WTO members can cooperate to deliver an outcome of global importance, but also that the SDGs represent a real pathway toward a better future.

Now is the time for action.

Signees:

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Advocates for Public Interest Law (APIL)
ANA: Asociación Asturiana de Amigos de la Naturaleza
Animal Latitude
Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition (ASOC)
APECE
Archipelagos Institute of Marine Conservation
Associació de Naturalistes de Girona
Association Biom
Beta Diversidad
BirdLife Cyprus
BirdLife International
BirdLife Sverige
BirdWatch Ireland
BLOOM
Blue Marine Foundation
Blue Resources Trust
Centro Ballena Azul
Círculo de Políticas Ambientales
Citizens’ Institute for Environmental Science (CIES)
ClientEarth
Coalition Clean Baltic
Coalition for Fair Fisheries Agreements (CFFA)
CODEMAR (Coalición en Defensa de los Mares de México)
Colectivo Ecologista de Avilés
Conservation International
Coordinadora Ecoloxista d’Asturies
Cork Environmental Forum
CREMA
Danmarkus Naturfredningsforening
Deep Sea Conservation Coalition (DSCC)
Depana
Desmitificando Tiburones
Deutsche Umweltfreunde e.V. (Environmental Action Germany)
Earth Law Center
Earthjustice
ECO (Proazul Terrestre A.C.)
Ecologistas en Acción
Ecotrust Canada
El Chorlitejo Plataforma para la defensa del litoral del sureste de Gran Canaria
Elasmo Project
Environmental Justice Foundation
Environmental Management and Economic Development Organization (EMEDO)
Fauna & Flora International
France Nature Environment
Friends of the Mariana Trench Monument
Fundació ENT
Fundación Mar Adentro
Fundación MarViva
Fundación Terram
GEOTA
Gesellschaft zur Rettung der Delphine
Global Fishing Watch
Global Ocean Trust
Good Fish Foundation
Greenpeace
Humane Society International (HSI)
Iceland Nature Conservation Association (INCA)
Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)
International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)
International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW)
International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)
International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
Korean Federation for Environmental Movement (KFEM)
Ligue Pour La Protection des Oiseaux (LPO)
Lithuanian Ornithological Society (LOD)
LPN: Liga para a Protecção da Natureza
Manta Trust
Marine Conservation Institute
Marine Conservation Society
MedReAct
MEER e.V.
Mission Blue
Mundus Maris
Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc. (NRDC)
New Economics Foundation
Observatório do Mar dos Açores
Ocean Conservancy
Ocean Outcomes
Ocean Unite
Oceanic
OceanCare
Oceanosanos
Ondarroa 12 Milia
Our Fish
PONG-Pesca
Portuguese Society for the Study of Birds (SPEA)
Posidonia Green Project
Pro Wildlife
Qingdao Marine Conservation Society (QMCS)
Quercus - Associação Nacional de Conservação da Natureza (ANCN)
Sciaena
Sea First Foundation
Sea Shepherd Global
Seal Rescue Ireland
Seas At Risk
SHARKPROJECT International
Submon
Sunce
Sustainable Water Network (SWAN)
Swedish Society for Nature Conservation
The Environment and Conservation Organizations of New Zealand (ECO)
The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
The Pew Charitable Trusts
Whale and Dolphin Conservation (WDC)
Wildlife Conservation Trust (WCT)
WILDLTRUST
World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF)
World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) International
Zoological Society of London