

Stockholm & Brussels, 6 December, 2013

To: The Fisheries Ministers of the EU Member States

**Re: Input to the EU Fisheries Council Meeting, 16–17 December 2013**

Dear Minister,

On behalf of the Fisheries Secretariat (FISH) and Seas At Risk (SAR) we send you our recommendations for the upcoming Fisheries Council regarding the European Commission's proposal for fixing for 2014 the fishing opportunities in EU waters (COM(2013)753). We ask you to support our recommendations in your deliberations at the Council meeting in order to ensure more sustainable utilisation of our common marine resources.

We would like to state our general support for the Commission's proposal and its underlying approach. Therefore, we urge you to base your decisions for the 2014 fishing opportunities on the following general principles:

- that catch limits are in line with scientific advice from ICES and STECF, applying  $F_{MSY}$  for stocks for which this mortality level has been established;
- that existing long-term recovery/management plans are applied when they have been assessed by the respective scientific bodies and provided that they are consistent with the MSY framework;
- that catch limits are reduced for stocks of which the status relative to (proxies of) MSY is unknown.

We re-iterate the need to align EU fisheries management areas with the ICES assessment areas and functional units, in order to enable better application of scientific advice to management. This is especially important in the case of nephrops in southern waters, where both ICES and STECF have stressed the need for such an alignment. Further, given the increased need for discard data in implementing the agreed landing obligation under the reformed CFP, we want to emphasise once more the need to improve data availability and quality.

Due to the large number of stocks covered by this proposal, we have chosen to limit our detailed recommendations to a few species which in our opinion require particular attention.

- For **cod**, we call on you to close the targeted fishery in the Irish Sea (VIIa), the Kattegat (IIIa East), West of Scotland (VIa), as well as the Faroe Plateau (Vb1) and Faroe Bank (Vb2). A reduction of the high levels of bycatch of juvenile cod is also crucial for the recovery of the cod stocks, so we urge you to adopt complementary management measures such as mandatory use of the most selective gear available and real time closures, as well as closures of mixed fisheries as soon as one of the TACs has been exhausted.

- For **haddock**, we ask you to follow the Commission proposal and set a TAC of 3 988 tonnes for West of Scotland (VIa) but to ensure that no directed fishery takes place in Faroese waters (Vb), as well as a TAC of no more than 3 602 tonnes for divisions VIIb-k. We also ask Ministers to consider a lower TAC than the Commission proposal of 951 tonnes for the Irish Sea (VIIa), closer to the scientific advice, but the key issue is to reduce the discard rate. We urge you to facilitate improved selectivity, particularly in the nephrops fisheries, in all of these areas.
- For **anglerfish**, we urge you to agree on a TAC of no more than 2 629 tonnes for the two species, as proposed by the Commission, and which is consistent with the scientific advice of both ICES and STECF.
- For **southern hake** in divisions VIIIc and IX, X and CECAF 34.1.1, we urge you to follow scientific advice in line with the transition to MSY framework and set a TAC of no more than 12 025 tonnes.
- For **nephrops**, we ask you to follow the scientific advice and set the TAC to 3 200 tonnes in VIIIabde and to zero in areas VIIIc, IX and X, until the current management units have been aligned with the functional units used in the scientific advice. In addition, we ask you to consider the mandatory use of the most selective gear available in order to minimise the bycatch of juveniles and other commercial species.

[See Annex 1 for more detailed comments on fishing possibilities in EU waters for 2014.](#)

Yours sincerely,



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