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NGO preliminary response to the draft Report on:

The Common Fisheries Policy – Basic Regulation

Rapporteur: Ulrike Rodust

BirdLife Europe, Greenpeace, Oceana, OCEAN2012 and WWF work together for an ambitious reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) which should:

- restore fish stocks to healthy levels;
- end overfishing by shifting to environmentally sustainable fishing practices; and
- reduce damage to marine ecosystems.

These priorities are vital in order to recover the health of our seas and rebuild an economically and socially viable EU fishing sector which can deliver a rich variety of locally-caught fish and employment based on a sustainable and fair distribution of marine resources.

The Commission's proposal for a reformed CFP Regulation sets out some useful new directions, but does not go far enough in setting clear targets and deadlines for priority actions to end overfishing and protect fish stocks and their marine habitats. We therefore urge members of PECH Committee to take their responsibility for a healthy future for fish, our seas and fishermen by voting in support of amendments to the CFP Regulation which fully reflect these principles.

We welcome the draft Report prepared by Ulrike Rodust and wish to highlight a number of key amendments that we urge MEPs to support. In addition, we recommend ways to complement Ms. Rodust's report to achieve a further strengthening of the Commission proposal, as follows:

1. Prioritising environmental objectives and fish stocks recovery

We welcome:

- the prioritisation of sustainability and recovery of fish stocks as a pre-condition to provide long term sustainable economic and social benefits (AM 28);
- the clear commitment to recover fish populations to levels above those capable of producing the Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) by 2015, including management scenarios where MSY cannot be determined (AM 29, 79, 118 and 119);
- wording to ensure that the CFP contributes to achieving and maintaining Good Environmental Status (GES) of marine waters and objectives of other Union environmental legislations (AM 31);

- the strengthening application of good governance principles (AM 39);
- new and strengthened provisions on protected areas (AM 51, , 71, 72, 93);
- the reference to minimising and, where possible, eliminating impacts of fishing activities on the wider ecosystem (AM 27, 63, 76, 96, 97, and 98); and

We recommend:

- setting specific indicators of healthy fish stocks, such as the age and size distribution within fish populations and the relevance of stock levels in the context of food webs, consistent with requirements under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive to restore and maintain good environmental status of marine waters by 2020; and
- establishing scientifically recommended catch limits as a legal cap on quotas, thereby ensuring that fishing opportunities will not exceed the recommended limits.
- including a need to demonstrate that any designated Fish Stock Recovery Area is capable of contributing effectively to the objective of stock recovery.

2. Multi-Annual Plans (MAPs)

We welcome:

- the inclusion of a deadline for Member States to produce MAPs (AM 73);
- the adaptation of fishing mortality rate set by the MAPs to levels that restore and maintain stocks above levels capable of producing MSY by 2015 (AM 79);
- the extension of the scope of MAPs to include measures:
 - a. to minimise impacts of fishing activities (AM 76);
 - b. to be consistent with the objective of achieving the GES targets and the objectives of nature conservation legislation (AM 82) and,
 - c. to adjust fishing capacity to available fishing resources (AM 81, 85-86);
 - d. to include provisions of improving selectivity of fishing activities (AM 95).

We recommend:

- tightening the deadline for Member States to produce MAPs (AM 73) to less than 4 years;

3. Fishing selectivity and the discards ban

We welcome:

- the commitment to minimise and where possible eliminate all unwanted catches (AM 34), including undersized fish (AM 96, 97);
- the application of provisions on discards to apply to all commercially exploited species (AM 101);

- the inclusion of provisions to ensure that all landed catches are subtracted from the quota (AM 108); and
- the protection of essential fish habitats (AM 71, 72).

We recommend:

- opposing the provision for of exemptions for some commercial species (AM 110);
- extending the principle of recording catches to ALL catches, including non-commercial species which are not covered by the landing obligation;
- the adoption of the discard approach on a fishery by fishery basis (Am 101); and
- including clear provisions to ensure that the revenues resulting from the sale of discards shall revert to fisheries management and be used for the purpose of research, control and enforcement activities.

4. Access to fisheries

We welcome:

- the principle of preferential access to fisheries as incentive for the use of more selective and low-impact fishing methods (AM 64);
- the principle of fishing concessions being understood as an allocation system which is not automatically transferable (AM 142, 143);
- the inclusion of provisions to ensure preferential access of artisanal and small scale fishermen to fishing grounds (AM 156); and
- the principle of allocating fishing concessions based on minimum criteria of eligibility (AM 157).

5. Fishing Capacity Management

We welcome:

- provisions to assess fleet capacity and obligation to achieve an effective balance between available fishing opportunities and fishing capacity (AM 178); and
- the requirement to assess fleet capacity and the implementation of capacity reduction plans where there is no effective balance (AM 85, 179-181).

We recommend:

- including provisions to make financial assistance to Member States conditional on reaching an effective balance between their fishing capacity and fishing opportunities.

6. External Dimension

We welcome:

- the promotion of active EU participation in international negotiations in line with existing EU environmental, social and development legislations (AM 193);
- a greater emphasis on EU fishing within the surplus capacity of a 3rd country (AM 197); and
- provisions to ensure that Sustainable Fisheries Agreements (SFA) are conditional on the respect of human rights by 3rd countries (AM 200).

We recommend:

- adding the reference to achieve stocks levels above those capable of producing MSY by 2015 in external waters;
- including references to good governance, transparency, control and enforcement in third country fishing agreements;

7. Aquaculture

We welcome:

- the inclusion of the principle of an environmental, social and economic sustainable aquaculture (AM 206).

We recommend:

- to oppose cutting legislation to promote its development (AM 209) – since aquaculture does not reduce the pressure on marine resources; and
- including provisions to ensure that the development of aquaculture activities shall not increase the fishing pressure on wild stocks.

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