



Australian government urged to support an end to bottom trawling on the high seas

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More than 100 international scientists, conservationists and marine experts have signed a letter to the Federal Minister for Environment and Heritage, Senator Ian Campbell, and the Federal Minister for Fisheries, Senator Ian MacDonal, urging them to take global action to end bottom trawling on the high seas.

The 107 signatories to the letter are in Australia attending the International Marine Protected Areas Congress in Geelong. Their letter urges the Australian government to provide leadership for global action to end the aggressive and damaging fishing practice of bottom trawling on the high seas.

Dr Sylvia Earle, renowned marine scientist and explorer, said that deep-sea bottom trawling should have no place in 21st-century ocean use and management.

“Bottom trawling is simply not sustainable. The trawl nets are stripping the seabed of life, trashing ancient corals and destroying entire ecosystems. There is much that we are still to learn about life in the oceans. Sadly, much of it will be gone before we get the chance if we don’t act now.”

“The Australian Government, especially Senators Campbell and Macdonald, have been working hard to tackle illegal fishing, but much more remains to be done.”

“We have written to them urging the Australian government to help build international support with its Pacific neighbours and the United Nations for an immediate moratorium on high seas bottom trawling.”

Achim Steiner, Director General of IUCN, said recently that: “deep sea bottom trawling is an act of insanity and should become subject to prosecution.”

Professor Callum Roberts, marine conservation biologist from the University of York, said that bottom trawling is like clearfelling old growth forests and throwing away the trees simply to catch a few birds.

“Bottom trawling is environmental vandalism, but also economic madness. By destroying the very marine communities that support the fish being targeted, the trawl fishers are wiping out their own livelihoods,” Professor Roberts said.

“The moratorium is needed urgently to give us time to find out what is in the deep sea and whether we can use it sustainably. If bottom trawling continues, soon there will be nothing left down there to find.”

Conservation International, Greenpeace International and the Australian Conservation Foundation are among the 50 members of the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition, which is working around the globe to protect marine life in the world’s deep oceans.

Media comment: Dr Sylvia Earle, Conservation International and National Geographic
Professor Callum Roberts, University of York

Media enquiries: Lyn Goldsworthy, Deep Sea Conservation Coalition, phone 0412 300 642
Chris Smyth, Australian Conservation Foundation, phone 0438 123 536
Karli Thomas, Greenpeace International, phone +31 646 055 298

Letter attached.