

Senate support for “urgent action” to protect deep sea life

Canberra: Tuesday 11 October 2005

Greenpeace today welcomed the Senate’s recognition of the environmental destruction caused by destructive fishing practices such as high seas bottom trawling and the need for urgent action to protect deep sea life.

“The success of the Senate motion today demonstrates there is broad concern about the environmental impacts of bottom trawling” said Lyn Goldsworthy, Oceans Advisor for Greenpeace Australia Pacific. “The Government now needs to take a strong position and support a global moratorium on deep sea bottom trawling at discussions underway in the United Nations”.

“Australia has been a leader on illegal fishing and whaling. It’s time for them to become a champion of the deep seas” she said.

“The Senate vote highlights the leadership role that Australia should play in protecting deep sea life currently being damaged by the destructive fishing practise of bottom trawling on the high seas. Bottom trawling is destroying seamounts – underwater mountains – and in the process wiping out marine ecosystems and species – even before we discover them” she said.

The debate arose in response to a motion put forward by Greens Senator Siewert which noted the damage that may be caused by destructive fishing practices and which also supported the need for urgent action by nation states. The motion was supported by the Government. (A copy of the full motion is attached)

“There is no doubt that deep sea bottom trawling is destructive. This was clearly demonstrated earlier this year when the Rainbow Warrior captured images of massive endangered black and red corals being hauled aboard a trawler in international waters near Norfolk Island” said Ms Goldsworthy. (* images are available)

In November the United Nations General Assembly will consider recommendations on the conservation and management of the oceans. A growing number of countries support a moratorium as the only responsible way to immediately protect deep sea biodiversity.

Minister for the Environment, Senator Campbell, has received accolades for his position on whaling, and the Government has been strong on tackling illegal fishing. However, Australia has not yet publicly indicated support for a moratorium on bottom trawling on the high seas.

“If we want to show international leadership, Australia should now join the growing number of countries seeking a UN moratorium on bottom trawling in international waters” concluded Ms Goldsworthy.

Contact:

Clare Henderson 0419 266 110

* The images were taken in June 2005 on the West Norfolk Ridge, just over 200 miles off the coast of northern New Zealand. Quality visual images [stills and video] are available from Michelle Thomas on 0404 096 556
or view at http://www.greenpeace.org.au/oceans/save_deep_sea_life/index.html