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MEDIA RELEASE

Australian support for protection of deep sea life from high seas bottom trawling

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The Deep Sea Conservation Coalition has welcomed today's announcement by the Australian Government that it will support interim measures at this year's United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to stop unregulated destructive fishing practices such as bottom trawling on the high seas.

Deep Sea Conservation Coalition Australia Coordinator, Ms Lyn Goldsworthy, called the decision an essential first step towards protecting deep sea biodiversity saying "that high seas bottom trawling continues to wipe out the undiscovered worlds of our deep seas".

"Today's announcement is very significant as Australia has been wavering on this issue for quite some time. The Government is now clearly acknowledging the destructive environmental impacts of high seas bottom trawling on vulnerable marine ecosystems, the need for immediate action and the need for long-term protection and sustainable management," she said.

Australia has indicated it will advocate for an immediate prohibition on high seas bottom trawling in unregulated areas. In areas where Regional Fisheries Management Organisations are under negotiation will call for prohibitions from 1 August 2007. In areas where existing management regimes are in place, Australia will call for a prohibition from 1 January 2008 unless and until management authorities can satisfactorily demonstrate they have appropriate conservation controls in place. Australia is proposing strong criteria for lifting of the prohibitions and strong compliance measures.

"We are particularly pleased that Australia will take a leadership role at the United Nations negotiating table on this issue" said Mr Danny Kennedy Campaigns Manager Greenpeace Australia Pacific. "But there are hurdles. The Australian position still leaves areas of the high seas open to plunder for another six months to a year and the devil will be in the detail of mechanisms and criteria to lift the interim prohibitions to ensure they do protect deep sea ecosystems."

The Deep Sea Conservation Coalition has been calling for an immediate global moratorium on all high seas bottom trawling to allow time for scientific research of deep sea habitats and until sustainable management measures are implemented.

Negotiations around measures to address the destructive impacts of high seas bottom trawling will start at the UNGA on 4-5 October prior to formal decisions in November.

For further information contact:

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Background information available at www.savethehighseas.org

The Deep Sea Conservation Coalition is an alliance of over 50 international organizations, representing millions of people in countries around the world. It is calling for a moratorium on high seas bottom trawling until the nations of the world can establish strong management measures for deep-sea fisheries and protect biodiversity on the high seas.

Australian Members: Australian Conservation Foundation,
The Wilderness Society and Greenpeace Australia Pacific.