

newsletter

deepsea
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What Will It Be? Action or Inaction?

Negotiations on the Oceans and Fisheries Resolutions are supposed to wrap up sometime in the next week, but the discussion on the protection of deep-sea biodiversity has proved to be a topic of major controversy at the UN this year. The DSCC believes that the need to protect the biodiversity of the high seas is clear. Delegates cannot breeze through another year of inaction. The public demand for a moratorium on high seas bottom trawl fishing continues to grow and leadership from the UNGA is needed now.

Compromises on the Table

Compromises on the moratorium text proposed by Costa Rica are being tabled by various states – most of whom are engaged in high seas bottom trawling in some way themselves. Makes you think, doesn't it...

Norway:

Norway's suggested text calls on States to prohibit vessels entitled to fly their flag to engage in bottom-trawling in those high seas areas currently not covered by a Regional or Subregional Fisheries Management Organization with a mandate to regulate bottom trawling, until such an organisation or similar arrangements are established. This is a welcome step in the right direction, though it does not attach conditions for lifting the moratorium other than the act of establishing an RFMO. Also, those areas within RFMOs - where most bottom trawling takes place - are not afforded any protection at all. Competent RFMOs have largely neglected to act to protect deep-sea biodiversity in the past. Simply transferring the responsibility to these organisations without requiring that they take concrete action that is reviewable by the UNGA does not answer the call from the CBD for the UNGA to take urgent action, and does not effectively address the issue of the destruction of deep-sea biodiversity.

Transferring the issue to RFMOs will not make it go away.

The EU:

The language proposed by the EU on the issue of deep sea biodiversity protection is significantly weaker than that already agreed by the EU in the Northeast Atlantic. It also fails to reflect the fundamental commitments and obligations of the European Union and its member States as parties to the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement (FSA), the Law of the Sea Convention (UNCLOS), and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

For example Article 6.2 of the FSA states that "***The absence of adequate scientific information shall not be used as a reason for postponing or failing to take conservation and management measures***". In contrast, and in abrogation of this agreement, the EU proposed that "states by themselves or by regional fisheries management organisations, where these are competent to do so, to urgently implement, on a case-by case basis and **where justified on a scientific basis**, including the application of precaution, an interim prohibition of destructive practices by vessels under their jurisdiction that have an adverse impact on vulnerable marine ecosystems ..." [OP62ter].

A detailed analysis of why the EU's proposed compromise text is a violation of its commitments and obligations under a variety of international agreements has been provided to delegates and can be found at: http://www.savethehighseas.org/publicdocs/DSCC_EU_critique.pdf.

Jean-Michel Cousteau: Protect the "Orphan Oceans"

Jean-Michel Cousteau has called on the UNGA to declare a moratorium on high seas bottom trawling in order to protect the "Orphan Oceans". For the full story see: http://www.savethehighseas.org/news_10.25.04_cousteau.cfm. Cousteau's organisation, the Ocean Futures Society, has formally joined the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition. Cousteau is promoting support for the moratorium during his European tour this week, and will continue to do so in the weeks and months to come.

DSCC at Easter Island

DSCC representatives from Oceana and WWF attended the APEC meeting on Oceans Governance at Easter Island, Chile last week, hosting a dinner for delegates and emphasising the need to protect deep-sea biodiversity. To see the full story, go to http://www.savethehighseas.org/ecoceanos_news_10.20.04.cfm.

Focus on the Southern Ocean

DSCC member organisation ASOC (Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition) is currently attending the CCAMLR Commission meeting in Hobart, Australia. ASOC has tabled a paper arguing that CCAMLR must act now to halt the impacts of bottom trawl fishing in the Southern Ocean.

Deep Sea Defenders tackle Deep Sea Destroyer

The Greenpeace ship *MV Esperanza*, currently patrolling the high seas of the North Atlantic, has encountered another vessel from the EU bottom trawling fleet. A huge, bright orange spider crab, black sharks with luminescent green eyes and other rarely seen creatures were found, dumped from the nets of the Spanish trawler.



©Greenpeace/Kate Davison
Greenpeace crew member holds a large spider crab that has been caught and killed by an EU bottom trawler, the *Playa de Menduina*, fishing in Hatton Bank, NE Atlantic.

Greenpeace crew used magnets to attach a banner to the hull of the trawler, labelling the vessel a 'Deep Sea Destroyer'. Read the full story and see what is really going on by visiting the 'Latest News' section of the DSCC website: www.savethehighseas.org

Help Us Protect the High Seas

A UN Ambassador told us last week that as a representative of his country's position, he could not support the moratorium. As a member of the public, however, he hoped we would succeed. If you feel the same way, we invite you to take action at the sites of our member organisations. Become a Wave-Maker and help Oceana convince the US Government to support the moratorium: <http://takeaction.oceana.org/campaign/highseastrawling>. Or Vote for Squid http://activism.greenpeace.org/voteforsquid/squid_msg.htm and send a message to your Foreign Minister. Tens of thousands of global citizens have already done so and Greenpeace will be delivering 30,000 letters to the UN Secretary General on this issue today!

For More Information

For further information on why a high seas moratorium is needed now, how it can be implemented, and why the action recommended by UNICPOLOS V in June is simply not good enough, visit our website at www.savethehighseas.org.

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