



19 October 2006

The Prime Minister
The Rt. Hon. Helen Clark
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Dear Prime Minister,

Proposed South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation

In the second week of November New Zealand will be represented at a meeting in Hobart to consider interim measures for the proposed South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO). We are writing to you on behalf of the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition (DSCC) which represents more than 60 environment and conservation organizations worldwide, including in New Zealand Greenpeace, ECO, and the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand Inc. The DSCC asks New Zealand to take a leadership role at the November consultation in Hobart in support of the strongest possible interim conservation and management measures for the proposed SPRFMO, including an interim prohibition on all bottom trawl fishing on the high seas of the region.

The most constructive way for New Zealand to exhibit leadership would be to announce its intention to pull its bottom trawling fleet out of the international waters covered by the proposed SPRFMO pending the entry into force of the RFMO and implementation of conservation and management measures to protect vulnerable marine ecosystems. This act would be an unambiguous statement of New Zealand's commitment to addressing the problem of bottom trawling and would be consistent with the Government's *in principle* support for a moratorium on bottom trawling on the high seas.

Approximately 90% of the high seas bottom trawling carried out in the area of the proposed SPRFMO is done by New Zealand-flagged vessels. The remainder is conducted by a few Australian bottom trawlers and a couple of rogue vessels. By agreeing to immediately withdraw New Zealand vessels until effective, long term measures to protect biodiversity are in place, you would be removing most of the problem of deep-sea biodiversity impacts in the area of the proposed SPRFMO.

New Zealand's bottom trawling fleet in international waters comprises fewer than two dozen vessels fishing on a part-time basis of limited economic value to New Zealand. The value of the catch is \$15 million per year, compared to overseas returns of over NZ\$1 billion from fishing generally.

Withdrawing New Zealand's bottom trawling fleet from the area of the SPRFMO would also allow your Government to act decisively against other unregulated (IUU) bottom trawling vessels such as the Belizean flagged Chang Xiang, which is serviced by New Zealand ports. Such action would be consistent with the principled position taken by New Zealand, Australia and Pacific Island nations on high seas driftnet fishing vessels in the 1989 Wellington Convention.

By withdrawing its high seas bottom trawling fleet, New Zealand would gain enormous respect for its commitment to biodiversity protection from the international community and conservationists around the world. This action would strengthen New Zealand's position at the SPRFMO in relation to your stated objectives by showing restraint and commitment. Likewise, it would send a strong signal to other nations at the UN General Assembly involved in current negotiations on high seas bottom trawling and destructive fishing practices that New Zealand can be a leader in action over critical biodiversity protection issues.

The DSCC looks forward to New Zealand taking a strong, constructive and pro-active stance at the SPRFMO negotiations and the UN General Assembly on high seas bottom trawling this year.

Yours sincerely,



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