



Declaration of support: Protect the deep sea from destructive fishing

We, the undersigned, represent the concerned public and include artisanal fishers, development and environmental organisations, and other stakeholders. We share a common interest in restoring Europe's deep-sea fish populations and ensuring the long-term conservation of deep-sea ecosystems. To that end, we support the prevention of adverse impacts on deep-sea ecosystems, which can be accomplished in large part by phasing out destructive fishing practices and requiring impact assessments for all deep-sea fisheries.

The European Union (EU) has one of the world's largest deep-sea fishing fleets. There is already widespread evidence that deep-sea bottom trawling has significantly damaged **deep-sea ecosystems, including coral reefs, sponge gardens and seamounts**, and caused **serious declines in deep-sea fish populations**. We urge EU decision makers to take a strong and constructive role in protecting deep-sea ecosystems both within and outside EU waters.

We seek a clear mandate from EU policymakers for sustainable management of deep-sea resources. To date, legislation enacted by EU Member States has been **insufficient to protect the vulnerable marine ecosystems** of the deep sea from the adverse impacts of destructive fishing gear, primarily deep-sea bottom trawling. Despite the introduction of new regulations to curb overfishing, **deep-sea fish populations are seriously depleted** in the Northeast Atlantic and the catch of most species continues to be unregulated.¹

We applaud the European Commission's July 19, 2012 proposal to reform the deep-sea access regime – specifically the provision that requires a phase-out of bottom trawling and bottom gillnet fishing for deep-sea species within two years.² The proposal rightly integrates EU commitments to protect the deep sea made over the past decade at the United Nations General Assembly and at the June 2012 Rio+20 Earth Summit.³ We urge the EU Council and Members of Parliament to honour those commitments by supporting the Commission proposal to overhaul its deep-sea fisheries.

We also support the current proposal which allows **artisanal fishers who use selective fishing methods and gear to target species at levels that do not exceed scientific advice to continue to fish** the deep sea sustainably and profitably. Artisanal fishers make important contributions to the social, economic and cultural fabric of Europe's coastal communities in some of Europe's outermost and deep-sea fishery dependent regions.

We call on European Union decision makers to transform deep-sea policy by:

1. ending destructive fishing practices through a mandatory phase-out of bottom trawling and bottom gillnet fishing for deep-sea species within two years;
2. requiring prior impact assessments for all deep-sea fisheries;
3. ensuring that fishing be permitted only if the catch, including any bycatch, can be limited to sustainable levels based on a clear scientific understanding of the species impacted, and that deep-sea fisheries are managed to minimise or prevent the catch of vulnerable, threatened, or endangered species;
4. ensuring that all deep-sea fisheries are managed to prevent adverse impacts on deep-sea ecosystems such as deep-sea coral, sponge and seamount ecosystems.

1. ICES. 2010. Status of fish stocks managed by the Community in the Northeast Atlantic. Book I I.

2. Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing specific conditions to fishing for deep-sea stocks in the North-East Atlantic and provisions for fishing in international waters of the North-East Atlantic and repealing Regulation (EC) No 2347/2002. Brussels, 19.7.2012 COM(2012) 371 final 2012/0179 (COD).

3. UNGA Resolution 61/105 (2006), 64/72 (2009) and 66/88 (2011). Sustainable fisheries resolutions, including through the 1995 Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, and related instruments. United Nations General Assembly.