

Conservation International

Response to *Moving from Words to Actions*

St. John's, 5th May 2005



**CONSERVATION
INTERNATIONAL**

As one of the world's leading biodiversity conservation organizations, with on-the-ground presence in over 40 countries, Conservation International is familiar with the challenges facing States in their efforts to protect economies and improve the state of human welfare, while at the same time ensuring the continuance of the natural resources and biodiversity on which human societies depend. With this knowledge we understand that moving from *Words to Actions*, especially when multiple States are involved, can be a difficult task.

However, the oceans are in crisis and there is an urgent need for States to take action now. We have a fleeting, but precious, opportunity to make much-needed changes before we witness further ecological collapse, the irreversible destruction of global fisheries and the permanent loss of biodiversity – the extinction of species.

On this theme, Conservation International wishes to recognize two particular countries for their contributions over the past week. First of all, Canada – our organization is not a regular visitor to your land and we thank you for the warm welcome that we have received and we applaud your call to arms. Although the participants at this Conference often question the “how”, the “where”, and “in what timeframe”, no one questions the “why” – we are in unanimous agreement with the sense of urgency that you have conveyed. To the rest of the States here, we call on you to focus on the “why” and indeed move from *Words to Action* by answering the remainder of these questions.

The next State that Conservation International wishes to recognize is Spain. Spain, as the largest high seas bottom trawling nation in the world, we applaud the various statements that you have made over the past weeks in respect to the fact that they recognize the destructive nature of the deep sea bottom trawling fishery, especially to seamounts and other sensitive benthic habitats. Your recognition and your willingness to restrict your vessels from fishing on these areas is an enormous leap in the right direction and this acknowledgement of the importance of biodiversity, both intrinsically and to human society, is a credit to your nation.

However, at the dawn of this important step, we urge you to take one further, to recognize that urgent action is needed to protect these important areas. If we are now all in agreement on the destructive nature of this fishery, as your statements suggest, then we call on States to take immediate action, not invoke more words and call for more reviews on the nature of this fishery. In order to pinpoint the exact areas of the seafloor in need of PERMANENT PROTECTION, detailed scientific review IS needed. HOWEVER, this review must be sheltered by an **interim prohibition on high seas bottom trawling** in order to accurately fulfill the commitment your State, as well as the global community, has made to operate under the precautionary principle. To not do so, would revoke the strong commitment to protect biodiversity and ecosystems associated with fisheries as outlined in the U.N. Fish Stocks Agreement. In short, not doing so would move us from *Actions to Words*.