



To: Representatives of the European Parliament, Council, and Commission

December 2015

Re: Priorities for trilogue negotiations on a regulation for deep-sea fishing in the northeast Atlantic

We welcome recent progress towards agreeing a regulation to protect a uniquely vulnerable environment, three years after the European Commission issued its proposal and nearly two years since the European Parliament's first reading was adopted.

As the European Parliament, Council and Commission prepare for the second formal trilogue negotiation meeting, we write to set out our proposed way forward on some key differences between the Council and Parliament positions.

In particular, we strongly recommend that you agree measures that:

- ***Eliminate the most destructive practices by establishing a depth-limit for deep-sea bottom trawling***

We welcome the Council support for measures that would limit deep-sea bottom trawling to areas no deeper than 800 metres. While recent scientific research confirms that bottom trawling should be prohibited below 600 metres to best protect vulnerable deep-sea ecosystems and conserve deep-sea species, we recognise the very tight vote on this issue in the last Parliament and call on you to support, as a compromise, a depth limit for deep-sea bottom trawling below 800 metres as well as the other measures previously supported by the Parliament and outlined further down. This would go a long way towards the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems.

- ***Ensure that measures to limit adverse impacts on vulnerable ecosystems apply to all significant EU deep-sea fisheries in the northeast Atlantic, including those in international waters***

The Commission proposal and Parliament position cover both EU waters and the international waters of the northeast Atlantic – the Regulatory Area of the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC). The Council is proposing removing the NEAFC Regulatory Area from the

scope of the regulation, considerably reducing its scope. It is important that international waters adjacent to EU waters - where EU vessels are fishing for straddling deep-sea fish stocks - are included, consistent with the EU's obligations for the management of straddling fish stocks under the 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement.

We also recommend that you support provisions to stipulate a rigorous process for identifying and closing areas to bottom fishing where vulnerable marine ecosystems are known or likely to occur; to establish a strictly delineated footprint; to require impact assessments for deep-sea bottom fisheries; to require observer coverage on deep-sea trawlers; and to establish a strong sanctions regime to deter non-compliance. Finally, the need to end the overfishing of deep-sea stocks and measures to avoid or prevent the bycatch of non-target deep-sea species, in particular the most vulnerable, should be reflected in the regulation.

The current regulation for the management of EU deep-sea fisheries in the northeast Atlantic has failed to protect vulnerable deep-sea marine ecosystems from highly destructive fishing practices, maintain most deep-sea stocks inside safe biological limits and restore some of the most vulnerable and depleted fish populations in the region.

We join over 300 scientists and hundreds of thousands of EU citizens in urging limits to damaging deep-sea bottom trawling and rely on you to conclude negotiations for a regulation that ensures sustainable deep-sea fisheries and the protection of the marine environment.

Sincerely,

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