



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **RESPONSE TO: SPANISH POSITION ON HIGH SEAS BOTTOM TRAWLING MORATORIUM**

Responding to the Spanish Fisheries Ministry's position statement on a proposed UN General Assembly moratorium on high seas bottom trawling, the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition (DSCC) welcomed Spain's recognition that bottom trawling is a destructive fishing practice which needs to be addressed, but rejected their proposal for doing so as a stalling tactic.

DSCC Coordinator Kelly Rigg said: "The Spanish are now on record as accepting that bottom trawling is extremely detrimental to the fragile habitats of the deep oceans. It is therefore curious that their proposal would not require a single Spanish high seas bottom trawler to immediately stop fishing."

The Spanish proposal would require that vulnerable areas be identified on a case by case basis before being subject to a halt in fishing. Kelly Rigg: "The suggestion that protection measures can be taken on a case by case basis, is absurd considering we do not even know where all the seamounts in the world are, let alone understand the ecosystems they support. From those deep sea ecosystems that HAVE been studied, however, we know that they are fragile and irreplaceable."

It is for this reason that scientists have called for a full high seas moratorium to enable proper research to be conducted and have argued that the only scientific basis for action in this case is the precautionary approach.

The Spanish position paper was issued in response to a proposal by the Dutch Government for a moratorium on high seas bottom trawling and supports the prohibition or suspension of destructive fishing practices in areas regulated by Regional Fisheries Organisations and the temporary suspension of bottom trawling on seamounts and cold water corals in the unregulated high seas areas of the Atlantic Ridge and the Indian and Eastern Pacific ridges.

Scientific research has indicated that continental margin areas and other underwater features are equally vulnerable, as are other areas of the high seas and the DSCC has called on the international community to consider all such vulnerable areas in their deliberations.

Kelly Rigg: “The detail of the Spanish position is unworkable. The scientific evidence is already overwhelming and the only real measures which can be taken to preserve the biodiversity of the high seas, in the short term are very clear. Now that Spain has acknowledged the threat which bottom trawling poses, the detail of their position is indefensible.”

ENDS

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