

GREENPEACE

Defending Ocean Life:

Deep Sea Fisheries

**Statement to the 26th Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries
on Deep Sea Fisheries (COFI/2005/6)**

7-11 March 2005 Rome, Italy

Yesterday, numerous states recognised the vulnerability of deep sea biodiversity to destructive fishing practices. On Monday, states focussed on the need to address IUU fishing without delay. As Greenpeace stated then, across most of the high seas, bottom trawl fishing is unregulated fishing – the second “U” in IUU. Paragraph 6 of COFI/2005/6 explicitly recognises this. The time to address this issue is now. Not through setting up processes to further talk about the need to discuss developing technical guidelines or codes of practice. UNCLOS, the UN Fish Stocks Agreement and the FAO Code of Conduct on Responsible Fishing already provide such guidelines. What is needed is action: the adoption and implementation of short-term measures by all states to ensure that the biodiversity of the high seas is immediately protected. This would then provide scientists with the time to assess the extent of this biodiversity, and politicians the space to negotiate longer-term measures to ensure that the biodiversity of these vulnerable deep sea ecosystems is protected and that any future deep sea fisheries are effectively regulated and sustainably and equitably managed on the basis of the ecosystem approach and precautionary principle.

In the discussion on this agenda item, several states recognised the role of RFMOs in deep sea governance. Greenpeace believes that for RFMOs to be effective actors they need to be fundamentally changed so that they become ecosystem management organisations, shifting their focus from single-species management to ecosystem management based on the precautionary principle. Greenpeace

reminds those present that RFMOs are made up of member states. It is those member states who have to act to develop and then implement adopted measures for them to be effective. RFMOs could play a useful role in the sustainable management of marine biodiversity, but changing the competence of RFMOs and getting them to adopt new conservation measures is a lengthy process. Hence the need for immediate, comprehensive interim measures to protect deep sea biodiversity while such changes are put in place. Without such interim measures, there will be little high seas biodiversity left to protect by the time RFMOs have the competency to do so.

The FAO has a role to play in this process if it is mandated by COFI to:

- **Collect, collate, and make publicly available, comprehensive information** on the locations, ecological impacts, countries involved and catch, including by-catch, of **high seas bottom trawl fisheries;**
- Assess and identify information gaps that must be filled in order for such bottom-trawl fisheries to be managed sustainably;
- **Provide information on the role and mandate of RFMOs**, identifying where assistance is needed and push for states to review their performance and assess for **compliance with Articles 5 & 6 of the FSA and FAO Code of Conduct; and**
- Invest significantly **more research and then publicise the effects of fishing practices on deep sea ecosystems.**

COFI must also:

- **Require States to** provide detailed information to the FAO on deep sea catches on the High Seas.
- Call on all states to **immediately prohibit their vessels from bottom trawl fishing on the high seas** until such time as medium and long term measures have been adopted that protect deep sea biodiversity and fully regulate these fisheries in a sustainable and equitable manner;
- Call on states to **extend the applicability of the Fish Stocks Agreement to discrete high seas fish stocks.**