

*"Protect the  
Ocean and You  
Protect Yourself."*



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
October 25, 2004

For further information, contact:  
Paul Zemitzsch (314) 725-5645

## **JEAN-MICHEL COUSTEAU CALLS FOR U.N. MORATORIUM ON BOTTOM TRAWLING OF THE "ORPHAN OCEAN"**

PARIS: Jean-Michel Cousteau and his Ocean Futures Society called on United Nations members Monday to support a global moratorium on bottom trawling of the high seas which is having a devastating effect on deep ocean habitats and marine life.

"Unless the United Nations and its members take action swiftly on pending resolutions for a moratorium on deep sea bottom trawling, irreversible damage will continue to erase one of the most vulnerable places on the planet," Cousteau said in announcing OFS has joined the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition, a worldwide effort to prevent deep ocean destruction. "We must step forward and protect the 'orphan ocean'—this amazing expanse of the world's unexplored, and potentially most promising, waters beyond the legal boundaries of nations."

Cousteau said critical compounds found in sponges, corals and other marine life may be lost or never discovered if the ravages of deep sea bottom trawling are allowed to continue unchecked. The practice also will further deplete dwindling fish species, like orange roughy, that suffer the impact of the wasteful method. Some of the affected deep sea habitats took thousands of years to grow and many species are very slow growing, limiting the prospects of recovery.

"This is akin to clear cutting an old growth forest," Cousteau said. "This reckless plunder by marauding deep sea trawlers will inevitable drive species to extinction, pulverize ancient seamounts and other habitats, and obliterate potential cures for human illness."

The founder of OFS and the son of the legendary ocean explorer, Jacques Cousteau, said bottom trawling currently represents only a small fraction of the global marine catch, but imperils many species that live in the underwater wilderness that covers 50 percent of the Earth.

"This 'scorched seabed' approach not only indiscriminately plows the ocean floor, but worsens the already precarious condition of the ocean's shrinking fish population," he said. The huge bottom trawling nets and weighted plates crush seamounts and coral and drag up tons of eventually discarded bycatch.

(more)

Ocean Futures Society  
325 Chapala Street  
Santa Barbara,  
California 93101 USA

TEL 805.899.8899  
FAX 805.899.8898

Ocean Futures Europe  
13 Rue de Tocquerville  
75017 Paris FRANCE

TEL 33 1 42 27 26 67  
FAX 33 1 42 27 28 82

Noting that recent reports indicate 11 countries are responsible for 95 percent of the high seas bottom trawling, Cousteau said the UN should act immediately to halt “maritime mercenaries” and prevent the practice from expanding around the globe.

“Because the high seas has no nation, no capital, no voters and no military, it is imperative that the UN show its resolve by standing up for a moratorium,” Cousteau said. “We need a strong political will to meet this challenge. The public cannot easily see the deep ocean and the impact of bottom trawling. But, our world leaders have seen the irrefutable evidence and must act. Is an atrocity beyond most people’s vision any less tragic?”

Cousteau said the DSCC effort is a “clarion call for biodiversity on our planet.”

“As my late father and I have said, ‘You cannot protect what you do not understand,’” Cousteau. “There is so much of the high seas that we have yet to explore and discover that we may never know what we have lost until it’s too late.”

During a tour of European nations this week, Cousteau said he urges leaders of the European Union and countries across the globe to join in global protection initiative for the high seas.

“This tide can be stemmed only if the world family adopts the safety of the orphan ocean as its own,” he said.

The mission of Ocean Futures Society is to explore the global ocean, inspire and educate people throughout the world to act responsibly for its protection, documenting the critical connection between humanity and nature, and celebrating the ocean’s vital importance to the survival of all life on our planet. Ocean Futures Society is based in Santa Barbara, CA, USA, and has offices in Paris and Lucca, Italy. For more information about Jean-Michel Cousteau and OFS, visit our website at [www.oceanfutures.org](http://www.oceanfutures.org).

###