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**WWF PRIORITIES ON
FISHERIES & MARINE ISSUES
FOR 2009-2014**

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- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY -

Tackling new threats to marine life

The world's oceans are sitting on a knife-edge, with EU waters among the worst in the world for depleted fish stocks and destroyed habitats. The Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) has seen billions of euros sunk in a cycle that pushes fish stocks and the industry to the brink of collapse, while destructive fishing gear lays waste to marine ecosystems.

Five years after a reform intended to shift fishing to a sustainable pathway, the combination of quotas continually being set above sustainable limits and the growth in illegal fishing has proved deadly for marine resources and undermined other elements of the reform. Europe is supposed to be an example of good fisheries governance informed by scientific advice, but the CFP has become a caricature of itself, the model of what not to do, since the advice is routinely ignored. If quotas applied not just to fish landed but to fish caught, fishermen would make far greater effort to avoid catching fish that they later go on to discard.

With the European Parliament (EP) becoming a co-legislator on Fisheries issues and the CFP being possibly reviewed, there is a critical opportunity for the Parliament within its next term to be greater engaged in delivering a sustainable management for Europe's oceans and seas.

During that time, there needs to be a reduction in bycatch and discard levels in European fisheries, and a move by the industry towards eliminating these wasteful practices. The same period will also be crucial for gaining agreement on recovery plans capable of safeguarding the future of Europe's iconic species, such as cod.

What is out of sight should never be far from minds, as some of the greatest threats to sea life now occur in deep waters far offshore. One consequence of years of overfishing has been the rapid recent growth in deep sea fisheries, targeting vulnerable species with low reproductive and growth rates. There should be agreement that there will be no fishing for deep-sea species in the absence of long-term management plans that can demonstrate the regime is sustainable.

Illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing is thought to exceed reported catch levels by more than 40% in the Barents Sea and the bluefin tuna fishery of the Mediterranean. As the world's largest fishery market and importer of fisheries products, the European Union must prevent the products of illegal fishing being imported into the EU. The new Parliament should support efforts to make the names of offenders public and exclude convicted vessels and operators from benefiting from subsidies. The plight of the bluefin tuna in the Mediterranean illustrates the urgency of the problem caused by IUU. The tuna fishery's fleet overcapacity is extreme: some 283 large purse seine vessels alone would need to be decommissioned to bring capacity in line with today's recommended catch levels.

The management of Europe's seas to date has focused heavily on short-term results and proved largely incapable of delivering the long-term sustainability that is essential to build healthy ecosystems. The potential for this to change lies within the proposed EU Maritime Policy and Marine Strategy Directive. The forthcoming Parliament will need to encourage all member states to complete the Natura 2000 network of offshore sites of Community importance, and adopt measures to ensure the protection – especially from destructive fishing practices – of vulnerable ecosystems in both Community waters and the high seas.

WWF welcomes the proposal to establish the Baltic Sea as a pilot area to achieve sustainable management of activities affecting the marine environment, and has called on the next EU Presidency countries – in particular, Sweden – to ensure that the Baltic can indeed become a showcase for an ecosystem-based approach to marine management, drawing experience and inspiration from projects such as the Great Barrier Reef.

- WWF KEY DEMANDS & RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE NEXT EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT -

For a sustainable management of Europe's fish stocks:

- WWF asks the European Parliament to put political pressure on the Commission and Member States to follow the scientific advice when setting quotas and take account of fishing effort to allow fish stocks to recover
- WWF asks Parliament to particularly follow the situation of deep sea & sharks species and to put pressure on Commission and Member States to follow the scientific advice when setting quotas and ensure that exploitation of these species is only allowed if sustainable management plans are in place
- WWF urges the Parliament to take measures to ensure the recovery of bluefin tuna and encourage fishermen to use EFF funds to switch from their destructive fishing practices to sustainable ones

To stamp out destructive fishing inside and outside Europe's waters:

- WWF urges the next Parliament to support the implementation of effective EU measures to reduce bycatch across EU fisheries, including effective temporal and spatial closures and use of more selective gear
- WWF urges the Parliament to ensure vulnerable marine habitats and ecosystem in the high seas as well as in European waters are protected from harmful human impacts, particularly from destructive fishing

To engage in the fight against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing (IUU):

- WWF calls on Parliament to support the following measures to fight illegal fishing (IUU):
 - To make the list of IUU offenders publicly accessible, to allow market actors to adapt their sourcing policy and governments to adapt their granting of access rights and subsidies accordingly;
 - To exclude vessels and operators convicted for illegal activities from benefiting from any EU subsidies;
 - To address the over-shoot of quotas

To make sure that our oceans have a healthy future:

- WWF urges the next Parliament to support every effort to pave the way for Member States' full and timely implementation of the Marine Strategy Directive

- FISHERIES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION -

Throughout the European Union waters, fish stocks are in crisis: the North East Atlantic, the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea are identified by the FAO as three of seven global marine regions with fish stocks in greatest need of recovery¹. Once thought of as a never ending supply, fish is becoming scarce due in large part to overfishing. In the EU waters, eighty per cent of commercial fish stocks are below safe biological limits or classified as being at risk of overfishing².

The Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) was created to manage the fisheries sector in the European Union. Its result has been less than impressive. Fish stocks have been steadily declining, with most stocks now on the verge of collapse. One of the latest analyses by leading marine scientists concludes that, by 2048, stocks of all of the major species currently fished for food will collapse³. By then, thousands of fishermen will have lost their jobs while hundreds of millions of Euros will have been wasted in building up Europe's fishing fleet only to scale it back down again.

Fishing activities also damage the marine environment through habitat destruction caused by gears that catch marine species indiscriminately. This not only damages sensitive and ecologically important marine ecosystems, but also leads to the capture of vast quantities of unwanted marine life. This 'bycatch' causes the death of many key species, such as turtles, harbour porpoises and sea birds and also catches huge amounts of juvenile fish and invertebrates, most of which are discarded dead.

This section addresses WWF's key concerns regarding the current state of the European Union's Fisheries and highlights WWF's recommendations to secure sustainable Fisheries in Europe, supported by healthy marine ecosystems.

¹ FAO, 2005. State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture, 7 March 2005.

² ICES (International Council for the Exploration of the Sea): www.ices.dk

³ Worm Boris (2006) Impacts of biodiversity loss on ocean ecosystem services. Science 314:787-790.

1. Implementing and Reforming the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)

In 2007, WWF assessed the EU's progress in implementing the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), since the reform that took place in December 2002 and half-way through the CFP's mandate⁴. Introduced to ensure that European fisheries are managed in a sustainable way, the new regulation (2371/2002/EC) entered into force on 1 January 2003 and it may be reviewed before the end of 2012. WWF's mid-term review of the CFP concludes that, five years from its next reform, the EU Common Fisheries Policy still fails to achieve sustainable management of European fish stocks, mainly because the way fisheries quotas are set is fuelling the chronic problem of overfishing in Europe. Whilst the CFP framework may be sound, its operation by the Commission and the Council distorts the original legislative intent, especially when it comes to the core issues of setting TACs and quotas and of applying the precautionary principle.

a. TACs and quotas

TACs and quotas agreed by the Fisheries Ministers, very often exceed the scientific advice given by the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES). Due to quotas being set too high, effort not being in line with available resources and the apparent rising practice of illegal fishing, there has been little sign of improvement of the EU fish stocks since 2002. This has led to the current situation where Europe's fish stocks have continued to deteriorate, with 80% of EU fish stocks outside safe biological limits in 2007. This constitutes a continued delay of the implementation of an ecosystem-based management in fisheries – a key commitment made by Member States under the reformed Common Fisheries Policy (CFP).

One of the principles of good governance outlined in the basic Regulation of the Common Fisheries Policy⁵ is “(...) *decision-making process based on sound scientific advice which delivers timely results*” (Art.2(2)(b)). However, Europe has become a case study for what **not** to do in fisheries management due to the watering down and lack of implementation of scientific advice.

For instance, the North Sea cod fishery is currently facing a large mismatch between the fishing effort and current TAC level in favour of fishing effort. According to ICES⁶, a fishing effort reduction of 76% is needed to bridge this mismatch in the North Sea. However, in 2007 fishing effort reductions of only 10-18% were adopted.

In the case of Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna, although the EC is largely contributing to scientific research on the species, it has not always been supportive of the scientific recommendations made by the ICCAT (International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas) scientific committee when setting TACs and closed season measures. EC implementation and compliance with ICCAT recommendations since the reform of the CFP appear to be lacking. This unveils the systematic failure of the EU management and decision-making structure for fisheries.

- WWF asks the European Parliament to put political pressure on the Commission and Member States to follow the scientific advice when setting quotas (during the Fisheries Councils and other Regional Fisheries Management Organisations meetings) and take account of fishing effort to allow fish stocks to recover -

⁴ WWF (2007) Mid-Term Review of the EU Common Fisheries Policy:
http://assets.panda.org/downloads/wwf_cfp_midterm_review_10_2007.pdf

⁵ COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 2371/2002

⁶ ICES (International Council for the Exploration of the Sea)- Advice for North Sea cod, October 2007-2007, Cod in Subarea IV (North Sea), Division VIIId (Eastern Channel), and Division IIIa (Skagerrak): <http://www.ices.dk/committe/acfm/comwork/report/2007/oct/cod-347d.pdf>

b. EU multi-annual Management and Recovery plans

The set-up of EU multi-annual Management and Recovery plans, even if adequate, has been too slow and their success often hindered by the EU's reluctance to cut quotas. In fact, no stock has yet recovered through the direct intervention of an EU recovery plan because of the quotas issue. In the case of cod, the Council has only rarely adopted reductions in TACs that are consistent with the cod recovery plan, and therefore the stock is still showing little sign of recovery in many areas. This problem is exacerbated by the bycatch of cod juveniles in fisheries targeting other fish. Long Term Management Plans and Recovery Plans need to be assessed by ICES before they are proposed to Council. Neither the Plaice and Sole Long Term Management Plan nor the Southern Hake Recovery Plan have been assessed by ICES, for instance. Presently, these plans are not delivering conservation measures needed to recover the stock.

- WWF asks Parliament to press Council to agree appropriate management or recovery plans for all fisheries based on best available scientific advice -

c. Reduce bycatch and discard levels

The reliance on TACs as the main management instrument in mixed fisheries has led to discarding when "above-quota" quantities of some species are taken onboard while there are still quotas left over for other species. The fishing industry believes that increasing quotas is one way to solve the discard problem in the North Sea fisheries. WWF is firmly of the opinion that increasing quotas is not an effective way to improve the condition of stocks such as cod – a major bycatch species. Instead, limiting fishing effort and implementing more selective fishing methods or gear alterations must be at the heart of the management of such stocks. Using this approach, fishermen will avoid catching cod in the first instance, rather than catching and discarding it.

One of the main problems with the TACs and quotas system is that it only limits landings. As a result, discard levels can and do remain high in many fisheries. If we are to achieve sustainable fisheries management, it is essential that serious efforts are made to reduce levels of bycatch and subsequent discards. The use of more selective gear and area avoidance needs to be mainstreamed.

Mandatory use of bycatch reduction measures, such as square mesh panels in the nephrops fishery in the case of North Sea cod, must be adopted as well as additional measures to protect juveniles, such as appropriate area closures. Bycatch quotas should be considered and the deployment of onboard observers must become standard practice in all fisheries under recovery and long-term management plans. The comprehensive use of observers in fisheries that are bycatching cod (e.g. flatfish, whitefish and Nephrops) and in fisheries where discarding, high-grading, slipping and unaccounted-for catches are significant, would provide the data needed to conduct thorough stock assessments and improve management of these fisheries. The gathering of such knowledge is critical to the implementation of an ecosystem-based management of Europe's fisheries.

- WWF urges the next Parliament to support the implementation of effective EU measures to reduce bycatch across EU fisheries, including effective temporal and spatial closures and use of more selective gear -

d. Reduce overcapacity

According to the European Commission's estimates from 2002, the European fleet operates with about 40% overcapacity⁷. In other words, there are still far too many vessels chasing too few fish. Most Member States still have to reduce their fleet capacity to solve the EU's chronic problem of over- and illegal fishing.

A recent report from the European Court of Auditors⁸ emphasizes that the overcapacity of the Community fleet is an incitement to non-compliance with catch limitations and also affects the quality of the data submitted. The Community's current approach, based essentially on reducing the fishing effort, is unlikely to resolve the problem of overcapacity, as concludes the report.

Despite the fact that there is an agreement that the European fleet operates with large overcapacity, there is still little detailed information about how much overcapacity there is. However, to tackle the overcapacity issue, the EU should first be able to assess the current fleet's capacity in Europe. Up to now, the majority of the Member States' reports to the European Commission have not described their fishing fleets⁹ in a manner allowing the Commission to analyse the efforts made to achieve a balance between the capacity of the fishing fleet and the available fishing opportunities. A throughout assessment of the European fleets' capacity is the pre-requisite to any serious plan to tackle and solve the problem of overcapacity.

- WWF urges the Parliament to call for Member States to provide all necessary information on their fishing fleets to support a full assessment of the European fleet's capacity -

EU subsidies have played a major role in building up this overcapacity, and it is clear that a reform of fisheries subsidies is needed to reduce fleet capacity, improve selectivity and, in turn, to promote stock recovery and a more sustainable fisheries sector. In the context of the EU budget for 2007-2013, it is crucial that future financing instruments for fisheries exclude the most harmful subsidies, such as aid for engine replacement, and better target aid to adapting the EU fleet's capacity to existing resources. In addition, support should primarily be aimed at issues of common concern, such as monitoring and enforcement instead of supporting individual operators. Next to direct aid, other environmentally harmful subsidies, in particular fuel tax exceptions or other fuel aid, must be abolished.

e. Integrated management

In 2007, the Environment Round Table in France¹⁰, called "Grenelle de l'Environnement"¹¹, made a pledge for a specific effort to halt the decline of the seas' biodiversity¹². For the next five years, the French government has committed to follow and apply a plan that will ensure the restoration of the marine ecosystem, including specific measures to better manage fisheries.

The "Grenelle" acknowledges that fisheries should be organised in a more coherent and consultative manner through the creation of a network of "concerted exploitation and

⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/publications/information_notes/archives/magp_iv_2000_en.htm

⁸ European Court of Auditors (2007) Special Report No 7/2007 on the control, inspection and sanction systems relating to the rules on conservation of Community fisheries resources:

<http://eca.europa.eu/portal/pls/portal/docs/1/673627.PDF>

⁹ as required by Article 13(1)(a) of Regulation (EC) No 1438/2003.

¹⁰ On 25 October 2007, the conclusions of the Round Table were presented by the French President

¹¹ For more information on the "Grenelle", check: <http://www.legrenelle-environnement.gouv.fr/grenelle-environnement/>

¹² Report of the third part of the Roundtable "Halting the erosion of biodiversity" : http://www.legrenelle-environnement.gouv.fr/grenelle-environnement/IMG/pdf/gb_mini_ecole_JL_8_biodiversity.Grenelle.pdf

management units” that seek to broaden consensus between the fishing sector and other stakeholders.

Each unit would manage its fishing ground, or “territory”, with access restricted to its “members” and would regulate the type of fishing techniques and gears used. This collaborative management system is built around territories and products and would fix objectives on a scale from 5 to 10 years.

This new approach to fisheries management is aimed at better fighting pollution, introducing non-fishing zones, developing a framework for land-based recreational fishing and eradicating illegal fishing in French waters.

- WWF asks the European Parliament to take principles of integrated management into account when deciding on measures to improve the sustainability of the CFP -

f. Focus on deep sea species and sharks

Deep-sea fisheries are expanding rapidly, a consequence of mismanagement of shelf waters that has forced expansion into offshore areas for previously untapped resources. The deep sea is an extremely vulnerable ecosystem. Because most deep-sea species are long-lived, have low fecundity and a slow growth rate, these stocks are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and are becoming rapidly depleted. Although inshore stocks may recover in a few years or decades, deep-sea stocks may take a few centuries to recovery, and there is no guarantee recovery would occur at all.

For the Northeast Atlantic, ICES has repeatedly, and consistently with the precautionary approach, recommended an immediate reduction in established deep-sea fisheries unless they can specifically be shown to be sustainable. The orange roughy population has been practically wiped out from European waters in 20 years, argentinines have crashed in the Irish deepwater fishery in 1990, roundnose grenadiers suffer very high levels of juvenile mortality in trawls, monkfish catches are now composed of juveniles, and for many other species the state of the stocks is unknown.

In order to minimize the impact of fishing activities on marine ecosystems and with consideration given to the basic regulation of the Common Fisheries Policy¹³, the application of the precautionary approach would mean that deep-sea fish stocks whose stock status is not known should not be targeted.

In addition to affecting vulnerable deep-sea fish stocks, deep-water fisheries often have contact with the seafloor, causing damage and/or destroying important deep-water habitats such as cold-water coral reefs and associated benthic habitats. At seamounts and at relatively shallow offshore banks like the Rockall and Hatton Banks off the UK and Ireland, a very high fishing intensity coincides with a particularly rich and sensitive fauna.

Effective management and conservation efforts to conserve deep-sea species are urgently needed. Lack of adequate management and problems with enforcement have to date made the exploitation of these fisheries problematic. To manage the fisheries in accordance with the precautionary approach and to minimise impacts on deep-water habitats fishing effort in most of these fisheries needs to be radically reduced as well as effectively monitored with data collection systems in place.

The trend toward fishing deeper and deeper has to be reversed. Morato *et al.* (2006) showed that the mean fishing depth is increasing in the North Atlantic, as fishermen are fishing deeper and deeper to target species at unsuitable levels due to their inability to withstand fishing pressure. Currently there are discussions regarding the expansion of some of the deep-water fisheries. WWF does not support the establishment of new deep-water fisheries or spread to new areas (expansion), unless the current deep-water fisheries can be demonstrated to be managed

¹³ Council Regulation 2371/2002

effectively using the ecosystem-based approach, which would require demonstrating that the effects on the ecosystem due to commercial exploitation is minimal or negligible.

WWF urges the Parliament to press Council

- **To further cut the quotas and fishing effort for deep sea stocks according to scientific advice;**
- **To have a comprehensive use of onboard observers on all deep sea fisheries within the European Community in order to implement effective monitoring and data collection programmes which in turn will improve stock assessment of these vulnerable species;**
- **To further restrict the fishing activities beyond 1000 miles both in Community and outside Community waters, unless regional/area specific environmental and ecological impact assessments show that such activities can occur safely**

For Sharks¹⁴, the European Commission has started a consultation process for the development of the International Plan of Action on Sharks, as the EU has committed to develop a Community Plan of Action (CPOA) for sharks in 1999 with the adoption of the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization International Plan of Action (IPOA) for the Conservation and Management of Sharks.

According to ICES, the majority of shark and ray populations (especially those assessed in the North Sea, Skagerrak and Eastern English Channel areas) are in decline. Although most shark and ray stocks are yet to be assessed, the situation is probably already dire for most of them, due to their biological vulnerability to over-exploitation.

WWF recommends that the Community Plan of Action (CPOA) for sharks takes into account management, monitoring and research needs for both target and non-target species within Community and regional waters.

WWF urges the Parliament to press Council

- **To ensure that effective bycatch reduction measures are adopted by fisheries that are incidentally catching sharks and rays;**
- **To ensure that exploitation of sharks and rays is only allowed when sustainable management plans are in place**

¹⁴ The term “shark” is used here to describe all cartilaginous fishes, incl. sharks, skates, rays and chimaeras.

2. Fighting Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IUU)

Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing (IUU) represents a significant threat to virtually all fisheries, causing serious economic, social and environmental problems. It further prevents the achievement of sustainable fisheries in Europe. For cod in the Baltic Sea, the amount of illegal fishing is estimated to account for an additional 35-45% above the legally reported catches¹⁵. In the Mediterranean, bluefin tuna catches are more than 40% higher than the quota set by ICCAT¹⁶. In the Barents Sea, the illegal catch of cod for 2005 is estimated to be more than 100,000 tons, which represents almost 300 million Euros¹⁷. In 2006 and 2007, efforts undertaken by several States in the region, such as banning all transshipment vessels flying flags of convenience, implementing the NEAFC port control regime, concluding several new bilateral port control agreements, and encouraging voluntary initiatives by the seafood industry, have led to significant improvement of the situation. However, illegal fishing continues to be a problem and there is a risk that this positive trend may not continue, as IUU fishing can take new shapes and IUU products can find new ways to the market.

Illegal fishing does not only affect marine biodiversity, but it also deprives coastal populations from their main source of protein, particularly in non-EU waters. The Marine Resources Assessment Group estimates the yearly losses in sub-Saharan Africa due to pirate fishing at 1 billion US Dollars¹⁸.

The European Union is the world's largest fisheries market and importer of fisheries products. In 2005, fisheries imports amounted to nearly 14 billion Euros. WWF therefore believes that the European Community has a specific responsibility to ensure that the European fleets do not contribute to the global illegal fishing activities and that its markets are not used by illegal operators to launder their catches. In October 2007, the Commission tabled a proposal for a Regulation that aims to prevent illegal fishing products from entering the EU market. This Regulation is expected to be adopted in 2008 when the Commission also reviews the existing control and enforcement Regulation (2847/93).

In this context, it is of particular importance that the European Parliament takes up a leadership role on fighting IUU during its upcoming term.

For WWF, the public "blacklist" of vessels caught in illegal activities and their subsequent banning from EU ports as foreseen in the proposed legislation are key measures.

To better fight IUU fishing and to ensure transparency and responsibility of the fisheries sector, the following is needed:

- The Commission should create and maintain lists of vessels authorized to fish in European waters as well as blacklists of vessels found to be in violation of EU, coastal state or Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (RFMO) conservation and management measures (on the model of the A-List in the NEAFC regime). Together, these lists would help identify "suspected vessels", "offenders" and "repeat offenders" and allow for enhanced but differentiated coastal state, port state and market state

¹⁵ ICES, 2006 Baltic Fisheries Assessment Working Group.

¹⁶ WWF (2006) The plunder of bluefin tuna in the Mediterranean and East Atlantic in 2004 and 2005 - Uncovering the real story, http://assets.panda.org/downloads/wwfbtreportfinaleditionreducido_final.pdf

¹⁷ Norwegian Directorate of Fisheries, Status Report for 2006 – Russian fishing of cod and haddock / transshipment at sea.

¹⁸ MRAG (2005) Review of IUU fishing on developing countries-Synthesis report (p.8): <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/illegal-fishing-mrag-report.pdf>

measures to be applied. The Community Fisheries Control Agency could run these schemes. Establishing a transparent database of all EU vessels authorized to fish both within and outside Community waters, including areas and species being authorized to fish, identification of beneficial ownership, history of violations of fisheries regulations and penalties, and ongoing infringement procedures.

- The database should be accessible to the public, particularly to distributors of seafood products.
- Harmonising reporting standards with respect to definitions and reporting periods to facilitate data comparisons among Member States.
- Development of a harmonised and mandatory (i.e. minimum required) penalties for infringements of sufficient severity to act as a deterrence. Next to financial fines, this should include more widespread use of confiscation of catches, gear and vessels and/or of shipments of fish and fish products and the revocation of the license to fish or trade in fish products. At present, penalties in many Member States are inadequate to deter IUU fishing. In some cases, a 400-fold difference exists on the penalty imposed between Member States for the same infringement.
- Excluding vessels, companies and individuals who have been convicted for IUU activities from benefiting from public aid. Moreover, aid granted in the past should be recovered from EC nationals found to have been involved in IUU fishing.
- Excluding Member States who systematically fail to ensure compliance with Community laws from benefiting from Community funds to the fisheries sector.
- Applying Article 23(4) of Council Regulation 2371/2002 and Article 5.2 of Council Regulation 847/96 on offending EU fleets to ensure payback of over-harvests.

These steps are essential to the effectiveness of the fishing system. They would benefit fish stocks, EU fishermen as well as fishermen and populations of developing countries.

WWF calls on Parliament to support the following measures:

- **To make the list of IUU offenders publicly accessible, to allow market actors to adapt their sourcing policy and governments to adapt their granting of access rights and subsidies accordingly;**
- **To exclude vessels and operators convicted for illegal activities from benefiting from any EU subsidies;**
 - **To address the over-shoot of quotas**

3. Ensuring a future for Mediterranean Bluefin Tuna

The situation of the bluefin tuna is particularly dire in the Mediterranean. Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing (IUU) is widespread. Most fleets targeting bluefin tuna openly operate in contravention of ICCAT rules, contracting parties often deliberately fail to implement these rules, and catch figures are often deliberately under-reported at the official level. Total actual catches of Mediterranean bluefin tuna stock are thus some 50% higher than the TAC set by ICCAT.

Overcapacity of fishing fleets is also a key issue for the bluefin tuna. A report recently published by WWF¹⁹ has revealed that the Mediterranean bluefin tuna purse seine fleet alone has twice the fishing capacity of current quotas, and three and a half times the catch levels recommended by scientists to avoid stock collapse. These figures do not yet take into account the catch capacity of the rest of the bluefin tuna fleet (i.e. longliners, traps, bait boats, pelagic trawlers, hand line boats, etc.). The report also reveals that fleet overcapacity is greatest in Turkey, Italy, Croatia, Libya, France and Spain, and that 283 large purse seine vessels need to be decommissioned to reduce fishing effort to scientifically recommended levels.

The loss of the bluefin tuna fishery would be both an economic and a socio-cultural disaster (given the importance of tuna in coastal communities in the Mediterranean since ancient times) – as well as an ecological disaster. As bluefin tuna is a key top predator in the Mediterranean ecosystem, its ecological extinction would have knock-on effects and entail unexpected consequences to many other species in the food web (including possible negative effects on related fisheries).

The 2007 fishing season saw a massacre of the Mediterranean bluefin tuna population, as ICCAT failed to impose effective management measures. In November 2007, WWF thus requested drastic management measures, by calling for an immediate 3-year closure of the fishery. Sadly, only Canada and the USA supported the proposal, while other countries involved in the fishery even succeeded in getting an increased overall quota for the 2008 fishery.

2008 and the following years are thus important in the fight for the Mediterranean bluefin tuna fishery.

WWF calls for the European Commission to support an in-depth review of the current management plan of the Mediterranean bluefin tuna stock, during the mandatory amendment of the ICCAT management plan in November.

WWF urges ICCAT to reduce catch possibility of the stock by extending the closed fishing season from June to August (currently from mid-July to mid-August), to adopt a management plan sticking to scientific advice, and to once and for all gain control over the fishery. Further,

WWF urges Member States to take responsibility and ensure their fleet capacities are reduced.

¹⁹ WWF (2008) Race for the last bluefin – Capacity of the purse seine fleet targeting bluefin tuna in the Mediterranean Sea and estimated capacity reduction needs, http://panda.org/about_wwf/where_we_work/europe/what_we_do/mediterranean/about/marine/bluefin_tuna/bluefin_tuna_news/index.cfm?uNewsID=126820

Joe Borg, European Commissioner for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs, commented²⁰, "(...) *Member States (...) need to go much further to tackle the root of the problem (...) by ensuring the necessary scrapping of vessels till a sustainable balance is found between fishing capacity and fishing possibilities. Public funding is available under the European Fisheries Fund for vessel owners and crews affected by such scrapping. Financial support is also available to the fishing communities concerned to help them diversify their economies.*"

- WWF urges the Parliament to take measures to ensure the recovery of bluefin tuna and encourage fishermen to use EFF funds to switch from their destructive fishing practices to sustainable ones –

²⁰ EC press release, 14 March 2008:
<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/448&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=fr>

- THE SEA AND THE EUROPEAN UNION -

The status of Europe's seas has been deteriorating for decades. Over-exploitation of fish stocks and the impact of fishing gears, diffuse sources of pollution such as agricultural run-off, and climate change are recognised as the most serious causes of degradation today. Today, in the Baltic Sea, the input of nutrients from human-origin in the sea is the major factor harming biodiversity and fish stocks.

The current framework of policy and regulation in Europe for the protection and management of marine resources is not delivering the level of protection envisaged under international commitments. Up to now, the management of Europe's seas was looking at short term results and did not seek to aspire to the long term sustainability that is essential to build healthy ecosystems.

The newly proposed EU Maritime Policy together with the Marine Strategy Directive will be the key framework for the evolution of this situation towards an ecosystem-based approach and a sustainable use of marine resources.

This section addresses WWF's concerns over the state of the European Union's marine ecosystems and highlights WWF's recommendations for the sustainable future of Europe's seas and oceans.

1. A Maritime Policy for the EU

The 2007 Commission's Blue Paper for a European Maritime Policy has outlined important actions for the period 2008-2009 which deserve the next Parliament's particular attention and support on the longer term, including:

- Guidelines for national integrated maritime policies,
- Steps towards the development of maritime spatial planning by Member States in a regionally-coordinated way,
- Guidelines on the application of environment legislation to port development,
- A communication on the ecosystem approach in fisheries,
- A strategy for adaptation to climate change,
- A strategy for the protection of marine biodiversity on the high seas.

With a view to implementing the 2006 UN General Assembly Resolution on Sustainable Fisheries, the Commission has already tabled a strong proposal to regulate bottom trawling and other destructive fishing practices for EU vessels operating on the high seas, with a focus on areas where Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) are not established yet. The EU must take a proactive role to prevent damage to vulnerable marine ecosystems in those areas where existing RFMOs to which the Community is contracting party make poor progress. Furthermore, such action on the high seas must not exclude the urgent need for additional measures to control destructive fishing practices in EU waters.

The years 2008-2009 will be a crucial deadline for Member States to nominate marine candidate sites of Community importance according to the Habitats Directive.

WWF has called on the forthcoming EU Presidencies to actively facilitate this process by encouraging Member States to complete the Natura 2000 network of protected areas in their offshore waters. The EU must speed up the process in order to deliver on the international commitments to establish coherent and representative networks of marine protected areas it has signed up to at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, under the Convention on Biological Diversity, and under Regional Seas Conventions (e.g. OSPAR, HELCOM).

True and consistent integration between the provisions of the EU Habitats and Birds Directives and the Common Fisheries Policy is overdue. The EU must roll out comprehensive criteria and generic procedures, and ensure the adoption of pertinent regulations to enable the application of fisheries management measures in marine Natura 2000 sites in the years to come.

- **WWF urges the Parliament to ensure vulnerable marine habitats and ecosystem in the high seas as well as in European waters are protected from harmful human impacts, particularly from destructive fishing -**

2. The EU Marine Strategy Directive

Integration and spatial protection measures will also be instrumental to achieve the objectives of the Marine Strategy Directive which forms the environmental pillar of the EU Maritime Policy. The Member States must start the process of implementing this Directive so as to advance the achievement of the goal of “good environmental status” for the marine environment by 2020 at the latest.

- WWF urges the next Parliament to support every effort to pave the way for Member States’ full and timely implementation of the Marine Strategy Directive -

The Baltic Sea has been proposed as a pilot area under the EU Marine Strategy Directive, for a regional implementation of the Directive and to achieve sustainable management of the human-induced activities affecting the marine environment. WWF supports this proposal and has also called the forthcoming EU Presidencies to agree on a strong Baltic Strategy that will set a solid foundation for integrated sea use management of the Baltic Sea. As the Helsinki Commission’s Baltic Sea Action Plan fell short of its original praiseworthy intentions, the need to introduce a holistic and ecosystem-based approach is greater than ever. The Baltic Sea provides a fantastic opportunity to showcase a truly integrated approach to conservation and sustainable development. An ecosystem-based approach to integrated management of human activities, based on transnational spatial planning, can be a strong tool to achieve this. The work done in other parts of the world, such as at the Great Barrier Reef, can provide experience and inspiration on how to achieve it.

- WWF supports the proposal to make the Baltic Sea a pilot area under the EU Marine Strategy Directive. WWF has also urged the next EU Presidencies to take a holistic and integrated approach in the planning and management of the Baltic Sea and agree on a strong Baltic Strategy. WWF would welcome Parliament’s support on this-

WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by:

- conserving the world's biological diversity
- ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable
- promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption



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