External dimension of the common fisheries policy

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PURPOSE: to present new orientations which govern the external dimension of the reformed Common Fisheries Policy (CFP).

BACKGROUND: the CFP reform aims to ensure sustainable exploitation of marine living resources while working towards robust economic performance, inclusive growth and enhanced cohesion in coastal regions.

The new orientations for the external dimension of reformed CFP intend to **project these principles at the international level and contribute to more responsible international fisheries governance**, delivering sustainable exploitation of fish stocks globally by achieving mortality levels compatible with Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) by 2015, while mitigating the impact of fishing activities on the marine ecosystem. This ultimately means a viable future for both European and third-country fishermen alike.

These orientations will also feature greater synergies with the EU's Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP), which will enable the EU to take a more ecosystem-oriented approach to fisheries management as well as to address overarching issues of impact on international fish stocks, such as climate change and pollution.

The EU is one of the very few major players with a strong presence in all of the world’s oceans through its fleets and investments, bilateral agreements with third countries and participation in most relevant Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs).

It is also a main market for fishery products in terms of consumption and imports. **The EU consumes 11% of the world fishery resources in terms of volume and imports 24% of fishery products in terms of value**. This confers a heavy responsibility on the EU to further engage in the tasks of conservation and sustainable management of international fish stocks. Almost 85% of the world fish stocks for which information is available are reported as being either fully exploited or overexploited, according to the most recent assessment made by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation1. The EU must strive to reverse

this situation, through swift and bold initiatives.

CONTENT: the Commission believes the new guidelines that will govern the external dimension of the reformed Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) should contribute to the long-term sustainability at international level while improving bilateral relations on fisheries.

Contributing to long-term sustainability worldwide: to ensure sustainable management and conservation of fisheries resources and enhance performance of RFMOs, the EU should seek to:

- **drive forward the global and multilateral agenda promoting sustainable fisheries worldwide** while transforming its dialogues into working partnerships to address crucial issues such as eradication of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing or reduction of overcapacity;
- lead the process of **strengthening the performance of RFMOs** to better enable them to conserve and manage marine living resources under their purview through: delivery of more reliable data and science to underpin the decision-making; increased compliance and control; reduction of capacity to

levels commensurate with resources; more effective functioning of the RFMOs through improved decision-making; introduction of fees for access to high seas by the members of the RFMO;
- **better integrate** the fisheries, development, environment, trade and other policies to further advance the objectives of sustainable and responsible governance.

Bilateral fisheries agreements: in order to promote long-term resource conservation, good governance of bilateral fisheries relations, and sustainable development of partner countries' fisheries sector, in future fisheries agreements the EU should:

- base the agreements on the **best available scientific advice** and information on the cumulative fishing effort in the waters concerned;
- conduct scientific audits on multi-species ("mixed") agreements;
- make the **respect of human rights** an essential condition for concluding and maintaining fisheries agreements;
- move towards an increased **contribution of ship-owners to the cost of access rights**;
- ensure that fisheries agreements support **better governance** of the fisheries sector in the partner country, notably in terms of surveillance, inspection and administrative as well as scientific capacity;
- ensure **sound and efficient financial management of sectoral-support funds** under the agreements, and foresee the suspension of payments if results are not obtained.

Some of these elements should already be integrated into transitional agreements negotiated before the adoption of the CFP reform. Once the reform is in place, all negotiations will reflect the new orientations.

Amongst the **main actions proposed**, it is necessary to mention the following:

- a working partnership with key counterparts aiming at development of a common approach against IUU fishing;
- a high-level conference to discuss ways of reducing capacity will be called for by the EU by 2013 to pave the way for a process aimed at addressing overcapacity at a global level;
- to reinforce support for the development of international instruments for the conservation and management of fish stocks in the context of the FAO;
- to encourage the review of RFMOs' performance, aiming at all Organisations completing their first reviews by the end of 2013 and subsequently undertaking them at regular intervals (3 to 5 years);
- to systematically launch scientific audits to assess the stocks before negotiating new protocols to multi species agreements;
- to make a proposal by 2012 to revise the Fishing Authorisations Regulation to simplify the management of fishing authorisations;
- seek to introduce in bilateral agreements provisions to prevent abusive reflagging.

The Commission will:

- develop and implement oceans- and sea-based regional strategies for sustainable fisheries, e.g. in the Pacific and Indian Oceans as well as in the Mediterranean Sea;
- by the end of 2011, adopt a proposal for a legal framework, including trade related measures, to ensure sustainability of fisheries resources.