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## Position statement – July 2011

# Joint UK NGO position on the Common Fisheries Policy

The UK based NGOs WWF, Greenpeace, the RSPB, the Marine Conservation Society (MCS), ClientEarth, nef (the new economics foundation) and OCEAN2012 – a broad alliance of organisations, including development and environment organisations, divers, commercial and recreational fisher organisations as well as research institutions and aquariums – seek to promote a reformed Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) which is built on the following guiding principles.

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### The reformed CFP must:

- **Prioritise ecological sustainability.** The CFP must give clear legal primacy to the principle of ecological sustainability, so that Europe can meet both its environmental commitments and its social and economic objectives in the long term.
- **Be integrated with other European marine and environmental policies, in particular the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), the Habitats and Birds Directives and the Water Framework Directive.** In order to do so the CFP should incorporate clear commitments to meeting MSFD objectives and tools that allow the proper management of fishery resources taking into account the marine, and, where relevant, aquatic or terrestrial ecosystems. These will include the creation of Marine Protected Areas and Marine Reserves which should be incorporated into the fisheries management strategies.
- **Require the application of the ecosystem approach to fisheries management in all fisheries management scenarios/contexts.** In practical terms, it should require Member States to take into account multi-species interactions and minimise the impacts of fishing on wider ecosystem functions and conditions. This must include any habitat degradation and mortality of non-target species (other fish species, birds, marine turtles, etc.). Management measures should be taken in the context of fisheries level long-term management plans that take account of the MSFD requirements to co-ordinate strategic management of European marine regions.
- **Ensure achievement of at least Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) by 2015.** This must be seen as an intermediary goal, with a target to restore and maintain populations of harvested species above levels which can produce MSY, not later than 2015.

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- **Be an evidence-led policy.** This will require there to be an absolute and legally binding obligation for fishing to be set at sustainable levels which may not be exceeded, based on the best scientific advice. The policy must also place a clear requirement on all decision-makers to apply the Precautionary Principle.
- **Address the issue of overcapacity.** The CFP must introduce adjustment goals for the fishing fleet that are legally binding, at the national or regional level, and these goals shall be delivered through long-term plans for each fishery. The CFP should clearly face up to the problem of fishing overcapacity and set a vision for balancing capacity with available resources.
- **End the wasteful practice of discarding and minimise by-catch.** The CFP should set fishing mortality limits as total catch limits rather than landings. This would eliminate the incentive to high-grade (to throw back marketable fish when larger more valuable ones are caught) and would act as a disincentive to non-selective fishing and catch of unwanted species.
- **Establish a new way to distribute access to fishery resources that is fair and encourages low environmental-impact fishing.** Ecological sustainability criteria should be used to rank access to resources, favouring those more sustainable fisheries which have less impact on the marine environment. These include a higher level of selectivity, lower fuel consumption, lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and better employment and working conditions. Access criteria should also be conducive to achieving the best quality product for human consumption and delivering compliance with legislation. These criteria should be applied under a clear long-term management framework in order to meet central objectives. Where such a framework is absent, ecological sustainability criteria should be used by Member States to allocate access. Such criteria should also be taken into account in the implementation of fishing funds.
- **Recognise that small scale operators are an important part of the European fishing community.** The CFP should ensure that communities who depend on fishing have access to fisheries resources that continues to allow them a sustainable subsistence from the sea. Small scale artisanal fishers must also be adequately represented in decision making processes. To facilitate this participation financial support might be needed.
- **Apply the same principles to all fishing activities undertaken by EU vessels/nationals.** The conclusion of any Fisheries Partnership Agreement (FPA) should be based on the proven existence of a surplus. Support must be given to improving scientific knowledge of fisheries resources in countries with which the EU establishes FPAs, and the scientific advice on which the agreement is based must be available for public scrutiny. FPAs must be compatible with the CFP and European environmental and development policies. Financial contributions should ensure the favouring of the development of the local industry and market. The EU should play a more active and prominent role advocating sustainability in world fisheries, for example, through Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs).
- **Strengthen transparency and participation, both in the treatment of data and in the decision-making process.** Legal requirements should be included so that a publicly accessible record is created and maintained of, respectively, offences, projects and beneficiaries of fisheries subsidies, catch and landings data, including long-distance fishing fleets, environmental impact assessments, capacity assessments as well as social policies and fisheries agreements. Provisions should also be included to enable stakeholders to challenge any failure by Member States or operators to comply with the rules of the CFP.
- **Ensure that future funding is based on new priorities and criteria.** Public financial resources should be used primarily to preserve public goods, and therefore go to support the achievement of conservation goals, to improve knowledge of the marine environment, to develop proper management and conservation policies, and to ensure a proper level of monitoring and inspection of the policies. Public funding will only be available to beneficiaries who meet the principles, objectives, standards and rules of the EU fisheries and environmental legislation. Environmentally harmful subsidies must be phased out.

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