

April 30, 2019

Re: World Trade Organization Fisheries Subsidies Negotiations

Excellency:

This year will be pivotal for the world's ocean.

We urge you to fulfil the December 2017 ministerial mandate for WTO members to agree to “comprehensive and effective disciplines that prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, and eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing” by the end of 2019. The months ahead will be critical to realizing this commitment and achieving UN Sustainable Development Goal target 14.6 by 2020, universally agreed to in 2015.

Though not all subsidies are harmful, comprehensive estimates of global fisheries subsidies show that as much as \$20 billion¹ is spent by governments globally on capacity-enhancing subsidies – harmful payments that offset fishing costs such as fuel, gear, and vessel construction, and allow fishers to travel farther for longer— which risk leading to fishing above sustainable biological limits. Applying economic theory to the fisheries sector reveals that in an open-access fishery, a revenue-enhancing or cost-reducing subsidy increases marginal profits at each level of fishing effort, and therefore leads to an increased overall fishing effort.²

In 2018, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture estimated that a third of all fish stocks are exploited at unsustainable levels and another 60% have no room for increased fishing without jeopardizing sustainability.³ Decades of overfishing have taken a significant toll on ocean health, contributing to poverty, food insecurity, ecosystem imbalances, distorted markets, and unemployment. This is compounded by harmful subsidies, leading to serious social, environmental and economic impacts for the more than 1 billion people who depend on seafood as a main source of protein, and the more than 40 million people who rely directly on fishing for their income.³

There is now a brief window in which WTO members can achieve transformative change for the world's ocean and the livelihoods of many coastal communities by addressing one of the drivers of global overfishing. If negotiations reach a successful conclusion, members will reignite confidence that multilateral cooperation can achieve global outcomes. In the wake of many rounds of fisheries subsidies negotiations dating back to the Doha Ministerial Conference in 2001, there is now an opportunity to not only demonstrate the vitality and effectiveness of the WTO, but to serve as leaders for an issue of shared global importance.

We, the 59 undersigned organizations, support members' efforts to reach an ambitious agreement to end harmful fisheries subsidies by December 2019, and ensure a sustainable future for our ocean and the livelihoods that depend on it.

Sincerely,

¹ Sumaila, U. Rashid, et al. “A Bottom-up Re-Estimation of Global Fisheries Subsidies.” *Journal of Bioeconomics*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2010, pp. 201–225., doi:10.1007/s10818-010-9091-8.

² Porter, G. *Fisheries Subsidies and Overfishing: Towards a Structured Discussion*, Geneva: United Nations Environmental Programme. 2001. (http://www.unep.ch/etu/etp/acts/capbld/rdtwo/FE_vol_1.pdf)

³ FAO. 2018. *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2018 - Meeting the sustainable development goals*. Rome.

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ANA: Asociación Asturiana de Amigos de la Naturaleza



Archipelagos Institute of Marine Conservation



BirdWatch Ireland



BLOOM



ClientEarth



Coalition Clean Baltic



Colectivo Ecologista de Avilés



Coordinadora Ecologista d'Asturies



Depana



Deutsche Umwelthilfe e.V. (Environmental Action Germany)



DSCC



Ecologistas en Acción



EcoTrust Canada



El Chorlitejo Plataforma para la defensa del litoral del sureste de Gran Canaria



Environmental Pillar



European Environmental Bureau (EEB)



FishAct

FishAct



Forum Umwelt und Entwicklung (Forum for Environment and Development)



Fundació ENT



Fundación Lonxanet para la pesca sostenible



GEOTA



Gesellschaft zur Rettung der Delphine (Society for the Rescue of Dolphins)



Global Fishing Watch



GLOBAL OCEAN TRUST

Global Ocean Trust



Green Budget Europe



Humane Society International (HSI)



International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW)



International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)



International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)



Landsforeningen Levende Hav (Living Sea Denmark)



LPN: Liga para a Protecção da Natureza



Marine Conservation Institute



MEER e.V.



Mission Blue



NATURSCHUTZINITIATIVE eV (NI)



Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc. (NRDC)



Ocean Conservancy



Ocean Unite



Oceana



OceanCare



Oceanografica



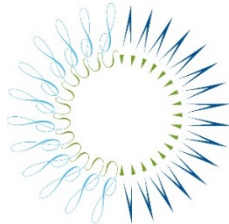
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Our Fish



Pechethique



The Pew Charitable Trusts



PONG-Pesca



Posidonia Green Project



Pro Wildlife



Quercus - Associação Nacional de Conservação da Natureza (ANCN)



Sciaena



SeaChoice



Sea First Foundation



Sea Shepherd France



Seas at Risk



Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves (SPEA)



Submon



The Nature Conservancy (TNC)



Whale and Dolphin Conservation



World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF)