



## French President's "special envoy for the planet" calls on France to support the European Commission's proposal on deep-sea fishing

Paris, 16 April 2013

At the conference on high seas governance organized by the French Consultative Assembly (The "CESE", Economic, Social and Environmental Council) on April 11 in Paris, Mr. Nicolas Hulot, recently named "Special Envoy for the Protection of the Planet" by French President François Hollande, **called on France to "take action" and urged French Fisheries Minister, Mr. Frédéric Cuvillier, to put an end to deep-sea fishing, which he called "an ecological and economic non-sense", typical of a "wasteful civilization"**. The ecological effects of French deep-sea fishing boats are disproportionate to the size of the industry, which involves less than ten unprofitable but largely subsidized ships. Yet, the gear they use, mainly in UK waters, destroys vulnerable marine ecosystems and organisms, some of which live several centuries.

**Nicolas Hulot expressed a "wish" that France, particularly Frédéric Cuvillier, adhere to the European Commission's proposal on deep-sea fisheries.** His speech was interrupted by thunderous applause. The fisheries minister, due to speak that evening at the CESE, canceled his appearance.

To see the video, visit: <http://www.bloomassociation.org/fr/nicolas-hulot-et-la-peche-profonde>

Last July, the European commission proposed a total overhaul of the deep-sea fishing regulation, as well as a phase out of the most destructive fishing methods for the deep-sea environment: deep-sea bottom trawls and bottom set gill nets. **While the proposal is fiercely combated by France, it was massively endorsed (58 votes in favor versus 1 against) by Members of the European Parliament's Environment Committee last March 20<sup>th</sup>.**

Mr. Hulot emphasized that France had great influence in maritime affairs, but that the country could be even more influential if it set the example. In June 2012, the newly elected French President Hollande declared an equivalent ambition at the Rio+20 Earth Summit, stating that France should be **"one of the nations to set the example"**. Three months later, during another speech in Paris, **François Hollande went even further, setting out the objective to "make France the Nation of environmental excellence"**.

Looking specifically at fisheries, **how has France performed since these promising speeches?**

- On February 6, 2013, **the French Socialist Members of the European Parliament voted** on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy with the French right wing **against all the European socialist delegations.**
- **France is currently using all of its diplomatic skill in an attempt to sink the European Commission's proposal on deep-sea fishing,** despite the fact that the main beneficiaries of this industry are six ships belonging to French supermarket giant Intermarché which are heavily subsidized by the French State and its people.

**"France has a powerful diplomatic tradition. It is distressing and disastrous that the best French talent from our public service is being used to protect the assets of a retail giant, namely Intermarché,"** commented BLOOM's founder, Claire Nouvian. **"France is causing lasting damage to its image and credibility."**

For almost ten years, scientists have been calling upon the political sphere to take strong action to protect deep-sea environments. This is why the European Commission proposed an ambitious text offering concrete ways of preserving these vulnerable species and organisms.

**"If France continues its perverse political venture, it will undoubtedly be responsible for stopping a historic proposal to save the deep ocean, which has the potential to redefine man's relationship with wild marine resources and to make fishing "sustainable" in both**



**environmental and financial terms. Is this what the President of the French Republic calls “environmental excellence”?** asked Claire Nouvian.

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### To find out more about deep-sea fishing

<http://www.bloomassociation.org/en/deep-sea-fishing>

- In international waters, only 285 ships carry out deep-sea fishing, and more than 80% of them are bottom trawlers flying the flags of a dozen different nations, including France.
- Today, deep-sea fishing in France is a residual activity: 98.5% of the French deep-sea catch is caught by nine ships, or 0.1% of the French fleet.
- The nine ships are owned by three companies. The biggest French deep-sea fleet (up to 85% of the French deep-sea catch) belongs to the supermarket group Les Mousquetaires/Intermarché (a French retail giant).
- None of these ships make their entire catch in the deep sea. Deep-sea catches represent between 25 and 40% of catches for each ship.
- Intermarché renewed its deep-sea fishing fleet in 2004, despite scientists warning about the need to reduce fishing efforts on deep-sea species.
- Direct employment is between 44 and 112 FTE seamen, or 0.2 to 0.5% of French seamen.
- From 2004 to 2011, Scapêche received four types of subsidies for a total amount of €9.34 million and a fuel subsidy of €2.8 million, paid back in 2011.
- Despite nearly €10 million of subsidies received between 2002 and 2011 and €20 million injected by the Intermarche group, Scapêche has accumulated more than €19 million of recurrent losses.<sup>1</sup>

### About BLOOM [www.bloomassociation.org](http://www.bloomassociation.org)

Founded in 2005, BLOOM is a non-profit organization working to protect the oceans and promote sustainable fishing through awareness-raising and scientific mediation, by producing independent scientific studies, as well as by participating in public consultations and institutional processes. Our actions target both political and economic decision-makers, as well as the general public.

BLOOM is a member of the **Deep Sea Conservation Coalition**, a coalition of over 70 NGOs striving to protect vulnerable deep-sea ecosystems: <http://www.savethehighseas.org/>

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<sup>1</sup> Current income is operating income to which are added financial products and subtracted financial losses.