

To: Iratxe García Pérez, President of Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats parliamentary group (S&D)

Copy: Vice-Presidents of the S&D group

**Subject: NGO Meeting Request - The Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats acting against UN Sustainable Development Goals within the European Parliament's Fisheries Committee**

Dear Ms. García Pérez,

BirdLife Europe, BLOOM, ClientEarth, Seas At Risk and WWF are highly concerned with the position of the Socialists & Democrats (S&D) in the European Parliament to end harmful subsidies and implement the Sustainable Development Goals. We would therefore like request a meeting to understand the position of the S&D.

The S&D have at the core of their program<sup>1</sup> the implementation of the UN's Sustainable Development Agenda and Goals (SDGs) and it was a core focus of the S&Ds during the recent European elections. However, decisions taken and position expressed by S&D MEPs in the Fisheries Committee of the European Parliament in relation to the next European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) seriously hinder the achievement of SDG 14 'Life below water' as well as SDG 10 'Reduced Inequalities' and SDG 12 'Responsible Consumption and Production'.

The recent UN global assessment on the state of biodiversity pins **harmful fisheries subsidies** as one of the main drivers of the ecological collapse of marine biodiversity and the mismanagement of fisheries. These harmful subsidies, as defined by international scientific experts<sup>2</sup>, include any public subsidy to the operational costs of the fishing sector – including support to vessel construction, to modernise the vessels such as engine replacement, or compensation to fishers during fishing closures because of overfishing. The European Parliament can play a crucial role in eliminating these subsidies to the future and to ensure a vibrant, biodiverse, and healthy ocean that is resilient to climate change.

Furthermore, the international scientific community keeps ringing the alarm bell on the need to ban harmful fisheries subsidies<sup>3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> A New Social Contract for Europe PES Manifesto 2019: [https://www.pes.eu/export/sites/default/galleries/Documents-gallery/PES-Manifesto-2019\\_EN.pdf\\_2063069299.pdf](https://www.pes.eu/export/sites/default/galleries/Documents-gallery/PES-Manifesto-2019_EN.pdf_2063069299.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Sumaila, U. Rashid, et al. "Updated estimates and analysis of global fisheries subsidies." *Marine Policy* 109 (2019): 103695.

<sup>3</sup> U. Rashid Sumaila, Sebastian Villasante & Frédéric Le Manac. *Fisheries subsidies wreck ecosystems, don't bring them back* <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-02054-0>

<sup>4</sup> Clara Ulrich. DTU AQUA. Fisheries Committee 24 September 2019

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Pauly <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vngvBGb6yvw>

<sup>6</sup> Megan Bailey, Andres Cisneros-Montemayor, Robert Costanza, Sjur Didrik Flåm, Håkan Eggert, Rudolf de Groot, Rosamond L. Naylor, Charles Perring, Rashid Sumaila, Thomas Sterner, Sebastián Villasante, Pascal Lamy, Unai Pascual, Geneviève Pons, "Choisir entre la protection des océans ou sa destruction" *Le Parisien*, 31 mars 2019; <http://www.leparisien.fr/economie/choisir-entre-la-protection-des-oceans-ou-sa-destruction-31-03-2019-8043246.php>

<sup>7</sup> World Bank. *The Sunken Billions, 2009*:

<https://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTARD/Resources/3366811224775570533/SunkenBillionsFinal.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Martini, R. and J. Innes (2018), "Relative Effects of Fisheries Support Policies", OECD Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Papers, No. 115, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/bd9b0dc3-en>.

<sup>9</sup> European Court of Auditors Special Report No 12 "Have EU measures contributed to adapting the capacity of the fishing fleets to available fishing opportunities?", 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Didier Gascuel : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LpfPbGnT8fI>

The world is watching the EU. Specifically, the current negotiations at the World Trade Organization (WTO) on a multilateral agreement to end such types of harmful fisheries subsidies are seriously being undermined due to the current developments of the future EU fund. The EU puts its credibility and leadership on this issue on the international stage at risk, with likely negative effects as regards the likelihood to achieve an ambitious agreement in the WTO context.

Last April, the former European Parliament agreed on a position re-introducing or maintaining harmful fisheries subsidies at EU level including subsidies for new fishing vessels, which were banned 15 years ago in the EU<sup>11</sup>. These capacity-enhancing subsidies will dramatically increase the overcapacity of the EU fleet, leading to overfishing and ocean destruction in EU waters and beyond. Officials from DG TRADE, DG ENVI and DG MARE at the European Commission publicly and repeatedly expressed their deep concerns over a series of harmful amendments adopted by the Parliament<sup>12</sup>.

The recently elected European Parliament has the right to revise its position under the Rules of Procedure<sup>13</sup>. However, the S&D group in the Fisheries Committee has opposed to this possibility by embracing the position taken by the former Parliament without question. For example, MEP Manuel Pizarro, the S&D shadow rapporteur said: *"I think this mandate is a good mandate (...) it would be a big mistake if we were to abandon it"*. Likewise, MEP Clara Aguilera, S&D coordinator of the Committee of Fisheries stated, *"the shadow rapporteur of our group has made our position clear"*. The S&D members of the Fisheries Committee are ignoring the pledge made by the EU when adopting SDG 14, in particular SDG 14.6. Now the question is: does the rest of the S&D group agree with the reintroduction of harmful fisheries subsidies in the EU, which clearly goes against the party objective to achieve and implement the UN SDGs?

We would therefore like to have an urgent meeting with Ms García Pérez to understand if the S&D group will be standing up against harmful fisheries subsidies and support building resilience of our ocean ecosystems against climate change and restoring and protecting marine biodiversity.

Yours sincerely,



Monica Verbeek  
Executive Director  
Seas At Risk



Doug Ruley  
Chief Counsel  
ClientEarth



Ariel Brunner  
Senior Head of Policy  
BirdLife Europe and Central Asia



Sabine Rosset  
Director  
BLOOM



Samantha Burgess,  
Head, European Marine Policy  
WWF European Policy Office

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<sup>11</sup> Vessel Construction, Renewal and Modernisation is a capacity enhancing subsidies, hence, harmful. *Updated estimates and analysis of global fisheries subsidies, Marine Policy, Volume 109, November 2019:*

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0308597X19303677?dgcid=author>

<sup>12</sup> Director General João Aguiar Machado at the exchange of views with the Fisheries Committee 23 July 2019; Elisa Roller Head of Unit D3 DGMARE at the exchange of views with the Fisheries Committee 2 October 2019.

<sup>13</sup> Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament Title II Chapter 3 Art 61 and 68.