

PRESS RELEASE

Attn: News desks & Fish correspondents For Immediate Release – 10 July 2002

SNP CALLS ON DANISH PRESIDENCY TO REOPEN DEEP SEA FISHERIES DEBATE

SNP Euro-MP Ian Hudghton today called on the Danish Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, Mrs Fischer-Boel, currently President-in-Office of the Council of Ministers, to press for a rethink on the deal that was struck in relation to deep sea fisheries at the last meeting of the Fisheries Council. Challenging Mrs. Fischer-Boel today at the European Parliament's Fisheries Committee in Brussels, Mr Hudghton stressed:

“The so-called compromise deal on deep sea fisheries was arrived at after great pressure from the Spanish Presidency. But this was done on the basis of scant scientific evidence and without any real consultation and negotiation. Significantly, there was no consultation with the North East Atlantic Fisheries Council, meeting that same week, and most importantly, the fishing industries of those Member States which partake in deep sea fishing were kept in the dark. This flies in the face of the EU's commitment to involve the stakeholders more; here, their involvement was reduced to zero.

“I therefore urge the Danish Presidency to reopen this debate and rethink the regulation of deep sea fisheries. How can total allowable catches be allocated where there is no clear scientific advice and the records of landings are unreliable to say the least, with Member States even changing submissions? Surely a regime of effort limitation would have been more appropriate given these factors? Such a regime would also provide an opportunity for proper scientific data to be collated.

“In addition, this scandalous example of closed door decision-making has inherent dangers and there is a very real danger that the fishermen affected, especially the Scottish fishing industry, may have lost total confidence and trust in the EU regulation of fisheries. At such a crucial time in the discussions not only with regard to deep sea fisheries, but crucially the overall reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, this must be rectified. The Presidency must take a stance on this issue.”

Mr Hudghton then went on to emphasise to the Danish Minister the importance of having an independent Fisheries Council and the need to have the debates on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy in public:

“With regard to the reform of CFP, I welcome the Danish commitment to ensure that the reforms are pushed through by the end of this year. But I must stress to the Minister that the merging of the Fisheries and the Agriculture Councils will not facilitate such a commitment. That is why I cannot understand the Danish support for the merger. Clearly, the distinctive needs and requirements of fisheries and the fishing industry cannot be left to play second fiddle to agriculture, but that is what will inevitably happen. Fisheries is a special case when it comes to its regulation and cannot be dumped in the same category as agriculture. Its special needs must be recognised. This decision must be reconsidered.

“On the other hand, I welcome the Danish commitment to openness, including access to documents and open debates. Clearly the place for debating the reforms of the CFP, given their highly sensitive nature and the socio-economic impact they will have on fragile fisheries dependent communities, is in public, with scope for the fishing industry and other interested parties to have a voice. I therefore hope that the Danish Presidency will ensure that its policy of openness will include fisheries and look forward to an end to crucial debates being held behind closed doors.”

- Ends