

12 March 2003

## EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT BACKS SNP DEMAND FOR FISHERIES COMPENSATION

### "FINNIE MUST NOW DEMAND LONDON LABOUR ACTION"

SNP Euro-MP Ian Hudghton MEP today welcomed a vote in the European Parliament which called for the EU to allocate 150 million Euros to compensate fishing communities affected by December's catastrophic fishing decision. The Parliament overwhelmingly backed the call for additional EU cash – which was originally tabled in the Fisheries Committee by Mr Hudghton – despite a last minute attempt by the Lib Dems to scupper the plan. In order to access the cash it is now necessary for the UK to make a request to the EU Council, and Mr Hudghton has written a letter to Westminster Fisheries Minister demanding that he make such a request.

Mr Hudghton said:

*"This is a tremendous result which flies in the face of the Scottish and UK governments' attitude. Just a few weeks ago, Elliot Morley said he wouldn't go 'cap in hand' to Europe to get much needed compensation to help our fishing industry through the current crisis. Today, MEPs from all over Europe agreed that it is only fair that the EU should stump up the cash.*

*"It is particularly important that the Parliament made it clear that the extra money should come from EU coffers. I received almost unanimous backing for this call in the Parliament's Fisheries Committee – and it is absolutely shameful that the Liberals tried to block this. A huge majority of UK Lib Dems in the Parliament today voted to block this money – just the latest sell out which will not be forgotten around our coastal towns and villages.*

*"I will now be writing to Elliot Morley demanding that he takes steps to access this money. He doesn't need to go 'cap in hand' to anyone – the EU is offering the money. London Labour should do something innovative for a change – and do the right thing for Scotland's fishing interests".*

### Notes

- The call for the EU to specifically allocate the additional cash was made in a successful amendment from Ian Hudghton in the EP Fisheries Committee.

- The Liberal group amendment to scupper this call was defeated today by 377 votes to 65. Two-thirds of the UK Lib Dem delegation who voted were in favour of the wrecking amendment.
- In order to access the EU's Flexibility Instrument, a call must be made from both the Parliament and the Council. Following today's vote, it is now therefore necessary for a Member State to make the call in Council.