

15 May 2003 - For Immediate Release

**Attn:** NEWS DESKS  
POLITICAL & FISHERIES CORRESPONDENTS

## **SNP SEEKS CROSS-PARTY SUPPORT ON RETENTION OF SCOTTISH WATERS**

### **"HISTORICAL RIGHTS MUST BE PROTECTED"**

The SNP is seeking cross-party support in a campaign for the retention of Scotland's historical fishing rights. SNP Euro-MP **Ian Hudghton MEP** has written to the leaders of all parties represented in the Scottish Parliament seeking their support for the retention of the principle of relative stability - the principle whereby fishing quotas are allocated to countries on the basis of their historical shares. The principle is due to be reviewed by the Commission in coming months and is likely to come under attack from countries such as Spain wanting to gain full access to Scottish fishing opportunities.

Mr Hudghton commented:

*"The long-term retention of Scotland's fishing rights is essential for our fishing industry - an industry which is already facing a great deal of uncertainty. Fishermen who are suffering under the current whitefish restrictions must be assured that they will benefit from any future recovery in stocks. They must not take the blows just now only for skippers from Spain to reap the benefits in the future.*

*"I have written to the leaders of all Scotland's parliamentary parties seeking their support for the retention of the principle of relative stability. The principle is due to be reviewed before the end of the year and is likely to come under renewed attack from countries eager for access to Scottish fishing grounds.*

*"If we can show that politicians from every political persuasion in Scotland - one of Europe's most important fishing nations - are committed to the retention of Scotland's historical rights, the Commission will sit up and take notice. A show of political unity will give our coastal communities some hope in these worrying times."*

#### **Notes for editors**

- Relative stability is the principle whereby fishing quotas are distributed to EU Member States on the basis of the same proportions each year. Accordingly, because countries such as Spain have never had historical fishing rights in the North Sea, under relative stability they cannot gain such rights.

- Relative stability, along with all other rules concerning access to resources and waters, is to be reviewed by the Commission by the end of 2003 under Article 19 of the main CFP regulation. Changes to existing rules must be made by the end of 2004.
- Mr Hudghton has written to Parliamentary Leaders Jack McConnell, Jim Wallace, David McLetchie, Robin Harper, Tommy Sheridan and John Swinburne seeking cross-party backing for the retention of relative stability. Copies of the letter are available from Mr Hudghton's office.