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Immediate Release

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Fish correspondents

HUDGHTON CALLS FOR HISTORICAL FISHING RIGHTS TO BE RESPECTED: NO FREE-FOR-ALL IN THE NORTH SEA

SNP Euro-MP, Ian Hudghton, has called for unqualified support of the principle of relative stability and the protection of Scotland's fisheries dependent communities. In advance of the European Parliament's vote tomorrow on the Future of the Common Fisheries Policy, Mr Hudghton said today in Strasbourg:

"In tomorrow's vote on the Commission's Green Paper on the Future of the CFP, it is imperative that the promotion of sustainable fisheries resources and the needs of fisheries dependent communities are at the fore. That is why I am pressing for the rejection of a Spanish amendment to delete a key paragraph which I authored at committee stage.

"The paragraph concerns the aims and objectives of the CFP and calls for fisheries policy to be based on rational and responsible management of resources which has as its rationale the preservation of fish stocks and the maintenance of the way of life of those traditionally dependent on the sea and preserves the fundamental principle which derives from these objectives, namely relative stability - a policy which facilitates a fair and equitable regime for distributing fisheries resources tailored to the specific needs of fisheries dependent regions.

"My concern is that the proposed Spanish amendment seeks to delete all of this text, replacing it with softer language which already appears earlier in the report, and ignores the need to preserve historical fishing rights. It is clear that the Spanish are seeking to remove this explicit reference to the principle of relative stability as it impinges on their calls for open and free access to fisheries resources. But there can be no free-for-all in the North Sea. Relative Stability must be maintained.

Continuing on the subject of equal access, Mr Hudghton maintained:

"I am also lobbying hard to ensure that a recital which amounts to calling for equal access to resources and threatens the already decimated stocks of the North Sea, and the future existence of the Shetland Box, is rejected by Parliament. Clearly, the provision does not take into account derogations which exist to sustain historical fishing rights and the very survival of fisheries dependent communities.

“Whilst there should be no discrimination in the application of EU laws and policies, laws that seek to preserve finite fisheries resources and fragile communities must be in place, and these necessarily do not always equate to equal access. I have therefore tabled an amendment along these lines, in the hope of ensuring that no loopholes calling for open and free access remain in the report.”

- Ends.