

## PRESS RELEASE

Attn: Newsdesks & Fish Correspondents

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### **HUDGHTON WARNS OF OPEN ACCESS THREAT**

Speaking today during a meeting of the European Parliament's Fisheries Committee in Brussels, SNP Euro-MP Ian Hudghton questioned the Commission's proposals on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy and accused the Commission of bowing to Spanish pressure. During an exchange of views with MEPs, the Spanish Fisheries Minister Mr Arias Canete argued that from 1 January 2003 all EU waters would be open to equal access by all Member State fishing fleets and that the preservation of 12 mile limits should be temporary. At the same meeting, Commission official Mr. John Farnell made it clear that a major review of all access arrangements beyond 12 miles would be undertaken, including new Council decisions on the allocation of stocks through relative stability.

Commenting Mr Hudghton said,

"Fundamental amendments have been made to the original draft proposals. For example, the 6-12 mile zones were originally to be continued "without any time limitation", but the references to permanently installing the coastal zones into the CFP regime were deleted outright in final draft.

" Moreover, new text which did not appear in any form, directly or impliedly, in the earlier version of the proposals was added which unambiguously supports the Spanish view, with references to free access to waters and resources being strengthened and the future of access restrictions such as the Shetland Box being questioned.

"Crucially, the principle of relative stability and the preservation of historical fishing rights was undermined: previously relative stability was to form the basis of stock allocation, as determined by the Council; the final proposal qualifies relative stability, claiming that there is uncertainty in its application and, later in the proposals, expressly calls for its elimination.

"Finally, the February draft actually gave powers to the Regional Advisory Committees, with powers to prepare and submit to the Commission fisheries management plans and to monitor the implementation of legislation; their role has been downgraded to the submission of "suggestions" and to "comment on and recommend improvements" on legislation; the references to Regional Advisory

Committee “proposals” were also removed, being changed to “recommendations” in the later version. Not wholly surprising, given the Spanish opposition to regional or zonal management.

“The Scottish Executive must fight these threats to our fishing communities. The ball is in their court to demonstrate that they are fully committed to protecting Scotland's fishing rights and preserving the essential access rights in the Council of Ministers debate on the new CFP.”

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