

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release – 30 May, 2002

SNP WARNS AGAINST CFP COMPLACENCY

Following a two hour debate yesterday in the European parliament on the European Commission's proposals for reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, SNP MEP Ian Hudghton warned against any complacency in Scotland as to the outcome of the reform. Mr Hudghton made particular reference to equal access to waters and resources, and the retention of the principle of relative stability. His comments came after Fisheries Commissioner Mr Franz Fischler failed to give guarantees as regards future access to fisheries resources.

Mr Hudghton said:

"In my speech during the debate, whilst welcoming many aspects of the Commission's proposals, I expressed concern and sought reassurance about the weakness in the wording in the document relating to access to waters and resources, and the fundamental principle of relative stability.

"The Commission document states "Community fishing vessels shall have equal access to waters and resources in all Community waters" other than up to the 12 mile limit. All other access arrangements, including the Shetland Box, appear to be open for review during 2003-04.

"In Commissioner Fischler's summing up of the debate, he failed to answer my specific questions on these matters, whilst confirming that the Spanish and Portuguese fleets will automatically gain access to the North Sea as of 1st January 2003. I specifically sought the Commissioner's reassurance on access to resources as opposed to access to waters, but was concerned when he failed to address my questions.

"Whilst Scottish fishermen can give a cautious welcome to many aspects of the proposals, I urge the Scottish Fisheries Minister to make sure that complacency does not set in and lead to disaster when final decisions are made in the Council of Ministers."

ENDS-

Please find attached a full copy of Ian Hudghton's speech

Points for editors

- Article 17 (2) of the proposed regulation on the conservation and sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources allows for the continuation of the 12 mile zones, whilst Article 18 allows for the continuation of the Shetland Box. Article 19, however, states that:

"By 31 December 2003 the Commission shall present to the European Parliament and the Council a report on the rules concerning access to resources laid down in Community legislation other than those referred to in Article 17 (2), assessing the justification for these rules in terms of conservation and sustainable exploitation objectives."

This means that, whilst the 12 mile zones are not up for review next year, the Shetland Box is.

- Press reports (29 May 2002) have quoted Spanish Fisheries minister Arias Canete as saying that the Commission's proposals are "nothing more than a draft text" and that the "real battle" is about to begin.