

Attn:
News desks
Fish correspondents

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Immediate Release

EUROPEAN COMMISSION MUST PUT ITS WORDS INTO ACTION AND STOP THE RHETORIC

Speaking Brussels during a key debate of the European Parliament Plenary on the Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy and the cod crisis looming over the North Sea, SNP-Euro MP Ian Hudghton has condemned the European Commission for going against the grain of its own proposals. Mr Hudghton said:

“With respect to the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, the Fisheries Committee has voted unequivocally in favour of retaining the principle of relative stability, installing the coastal zones as a permanent feature of the CFP and strengthening the role of the proposed Regional Advisory Councils.

“But all of this is in vain if the European Commission is not willing to listen to those affected by fisheries policy. Fisheries policy must be understood and not be arbitrarily imposed from outside; and that means that it must be based on up-to-date, verifiable and independent scientific advice, which is reliable and not subject to such sweeping changes from year to year.

“Cod crisis measures have been looming over the North Sea for almost two years, and fishermen have already been subject to real time closures, swingeing cuts in fleet size and a variety of technical measures including an increase in mesh size. Their efforts have borne fruit and cod stocks have seen some improvement.

“The Commission must take into account the specific nature of this crisis and not tie its hands with political deadlines. The December Fisheries Council will be the forum for finalising the reform proposals, not for rushing through panic measures as part of ill-conceived recovery plan.

“The Commission has gone against the whole grain of its intentions as outlined in the reform package. It must now show that its proposals for involving the fishing industry in the decision-making process are more than mere rhetoric.

“I urge the Commission to put its words into action by urgently establishing the first – pilot - Regional Advisory Council, or Management Council, as I would prefer. Such a Council would allow stakeholders to be part of the solution, ensuring that the specific needs of the North Sea are catered for and fully understood, with contributions from fishermen, scientists and others, and the

measures already taken by fishermen to protect cod stocks are taken into account.”