

# Global calls for a **moratorium** on high seas bottom trawling ...we can make a difference

**DSCC** In calling for a moratorium on high seas bottom trawling, the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition (DSCC) reflects the views of a great many people, governments and organisations. Here is a miscellany of quotations from diverse sources – all united by their passionate plea for something to be done NOW, before it is too late.

## STATE CALLS FOR A MORATORIUM

*"We call upon the world to join us in declaring a moratorium on deep sea bottom trawling before this practice does any more irremediable damage."*

Sandra S Pierantozzi, Vice President of Palau

Source: [www.un.org/webcast/ga/59/statements/palaeng040923.pdf](http://www.un.org/webcast/ga/59/statements/palaeng040923.pdf)

Related DSCC news: <http://www.savethehighseas.org/display.cfm?ID=36>

*"Costa Rica is calling for a UN moratorium on deep sea trawling in international waters until we can learn to sustainably manage deep sea resources."*

Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, Minister of Environment and Energy for Costa Rica

Source: World Conservation Congress, November 2004, Bangkok, Thailand.

Related DSCC press release: <http://www.savethehighseas.org/display.cfm?ID=18>

*"The region of the Pacific contains literally thousands of seamounts, which scientists are finding to be extremely rich in biodiversity, holding great potential value to future generations. Yet, short-sightedly, too many are dragging trawl nets over these deep-ocean areas, unknowing and uncaring of the damage they cause to the seabed below."* Sebastian Anefal, the Federated States of Micronesia's Foreign Minister

Source: [http://www.fsmgov.org/fsmun/59ga\\_ple.htm](http://www.fsmgov.org/fsmun/59ga_ple.htm)

Related DSCC news: <http://www.savethehighseas.org/display.cfm?ID=36>

## POLITICIANS & KEY FIGURES COMMENT

*"The disaster of bottom trawling on the high seas threatens thousands of species and can mean a reversal in evolution of tens of thousands of years."*

Mikhail Gorbachev

Source: Letter from Mikhail Gorbachev to Mrs. Elena Espinosa dated 13 September 2004.

[http://www.savethehighseas.org/publicdocs/Gorbachev\\_letter.pdf](http://www.savethehighseas.org/publicdocs/Gorbachev_letter.pdf)

Related DSCC news: <http://www.savethehighseas.org/display.cfm?ID=39>

*"We have a unique opportunity to responsibly manage the biodiversity-rich last frontier of the deep sea."*

Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, Minister of Environment and Energy, Costa Rica. World Conservation Congress, November 2004, Bangkok, Thailand

Related DSCC press release: <http://www.savethehighseas.org/display.cfm?ID=18>

*"If at one time what happened on and beneath the seas was 'out of sight, out of mind', that can no longer be the case."* UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan

Source: *Protecting the deep seas*, article by Duncan E J Currie (pdf) published in the February newsletter (Vol 3, No 1) of the Global Forum on Oceans, Coasts, and Islands.

[http://www.savethehighseas.org/publicdocs/DCurrie\\_OceansForum.pdf](http://www.savethehighseas.org/publicdocs/DCurrie_OceansForum.pdf)

Related DSCC feature: <http://www.savethehighseas.org/display.cfm?ID=13>

*"Everyone must be aware [that] without intact coral reefs, warm and cold water reefs, you will not be able to restore fish stocks fully."* Dr Klaus Toepfer, UNEP Executive Director

Source: Reuters, 5 June 2004.

Related DSCC news: <http://www.savethehighseas.org/display.cfm?ID=1>

## QUOTE FROM A BOTTOM TRAWLER

*"But it's 1000m under the ocean. What harm is it doing if it's not absolutely wrecking it? Who's going to see? It's not hurting anything long-term."*

Gordon Kenton of Kenton Trawling Co

[From article in the NZ Herald:

<http://www.nzherald.co.nz/index.cfm?ObjectID=3598887>]

*"Bottom trawl fishing must be abandoned."* Ambassador Jorge Berguno, Chile's Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
 Source: <http://www.ecoceanos.cl/sitio/docs/cronicas.php?codCronica=260>  
 Related DSCC news: <http://www.savethehighseas.org/display.cfm?ID=22>

**SCIENTISTS SPEAK OUT**

**Scientists' statement**

In February 2004, 1,136 scientists from 69 countries, including the world's foremost marine biologists, released an unprecedented statement expressing profound concern over damage to the deep seas from high seas bottom trawling.

Source: full statement available on MCB's website:  
[http://www.mcbi.org/DSC\\_statement/sign.htm](http://www.mcbi.org/DSC_statement/sign.htm)

*"We urge the United Nations and appropriate international bodies to establish a moratorium on bottom trawling on the High Seas."*

*"The greatest human threat to coral and sponge communities is commercial fishing, especially bottom trawling."*

*"Scientific studies around the world have shown that trawling is devastating to corals and sponges."*

**Bottom trawling & destruction**

*"Towing a heavy trawl net through a cold-water coral reef is a bit like driving a bulldozer through a nature reserve. The only practical way of protecting these reefs is therefore to find out where they are and then prevent boats from trawling over them. We know that most fishing boat skippers would rather steer clear of coral reefs, as the reefs can damage their gear, so producing accurate maps will actually help them to avoid these areas."*

David Griffith, General Secretary of ICES  
 Source: <http://www.ices.dk/aboutus/pressrelease/coral.asp>

*"We can always resume trawling but we can not put back 1,000 year-old ecosystems."* Dr Elliott A Norse, President of Marine Conservation Biology Institute in Redmond WA  
 Source: [http://www.mcbi.org/DSC\\_statement/DSC\\_news\\_release.htm](http://www.mcbi.org/DSC_statement/DSC_news_release.htm)

*"It's ironic that billions are being spent searching for water that might once have supported life on Mars while we're destroying the dazzling diversity of life in waters here on Earth."* Dr Elliott A Norse, President of Marine Conservation Biology Institute in Redmond WA  
 Source: [http://www.mcbi.org/DSC\\_statement/DSC\\_news\\_release.htm](http://www.mcbi.org/DSC_statement/DSC_news_release.htm)

*"At present, scientists studying deep-sea corals are in an unfortunate race with commercial fishermen, who are trawling these corals into oblivion."*  
 Dr Martin Willison, Dalhousie University, Halifax  
 Source: [http://www.mcbi.org/DSC\\_statement/DSC\\_news\\_release.htm](http://www.mcbi.org/DSC_statement/DSC_news_release.htm)

*"Allowing trawling in coral 'forests' is the worst thing we are doing in the ocean today. It should be stopped immediately until scientists can determine whether trawling in the deep sea can be justified anywhere."*  
 Dr Daniel Pauly, of the University of British Columbia, in Vancouver, Canada  
 Source: [http://www.mcbi.org/DSC\\_statement/DSC\\_news\\_release.htm](http://www.mcbi.org/DSC_statement/DSC_news_release.htm)  
 BBC article: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/3719590.stm>

*"Today's deep sea scientists share the frustration of Egyptologists who, on discovering a new tomb find that it has been ransacked long ago. Touching down in their submarines on a newly discovered seamount, they flick on the lights only to find rubble and the remains of ancient life forms."* Professor Callum Roberts, professor of marine conservation at the University of York in England and a Pew Fellow in Marine Conservation  
 Source: direct

*"Deep sea ecosystems support bizarre and beautiful life forms, some of them hundreds or even thousands of years old. They are being clear-cut by bottom trawl fishing. Today's fisheries are squandering the riches of the deep sea and if they are not stopped we will lose them forever. No industry has the right to destroy the heritage of humanity."* Professor Callum Roberts, professor of marine conservation at the University of York in England and a Pew Fellow in Marine Conservation  
 Source: direct

**Fish & fisheries**

*"We hope that it will not be necessary for there to be a complete collapse of fish stocks for someone to recognise that something radical needs to be done."*  
 Professor Paul Ekins, UK Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution  
 Source: Independent article *Huge no-fishing zones 'offer only hope' of saving marine ecosystem from disaster* by Michael McCarthy, Environment Editor.  
<http://www.commondreams.org/cgi-bin/print.cgi?file=/headlines04/1208-08.htm>,  
<http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/environment/story.jsp?story=590871>

*"There is probably no such thing as an economically viable deep-water fishery that is sustainable... We must consider deep-sea stocks as non-renewable resources."*

**OCEAN EXPLORERS: FIRST HAND VIEWS**

*"A vast expanse of the planet's unexplored, and potentially most promising, ocean beyond the legal boundaries of nations is being exposed to the reckless plunder of marauding deep sea fishing trawlers."*  
 Jean-Michel Cousteau, Founder and President, Ocean Futures Society  
 Source: [http://www.oceanfutures.org/features/2004/dispatch\\_10\\_04\\_a.asp](http://www.oceanfutures.org/features/2004/dispatch_10_04_a.asp)

*"The deep ocean, ranging in depths up to 10,000 meters, is an amazing cradle for an estimated 500,000 to 10 million species, many of them still undiscovered."*  
 Jean-Michel Cousteau, Founder and President, Ocean Futures Society  
 Source: [http://www.oceanfutures.org/features/2004/dispatch\\_10\\_04\\_a.asp](http://www.oceanfutures.org/features/2004/dispatch_10_04_a.asp)  
 Related DSCC news: <http://www.savethehighseas.org/display.cfm?ID=29>

*"We are protecting less than one percent of our oceans. If we are to protect this priceless natural heritage for future generations, we must learn to value marine life less as commodities and more as part of the natural world on which we too depend."* Dr Sylvia Earle, Executive Director of Conservation International's Global Marine Division and Explorer-in-Residence at the National Geographic Society  
 Source: <http://www.iucn.org/congress/documents/press/2004-11-20-seas.pdf>

*"The least important thing that coral reefs deliver to humans is food."*  
 Dr Sylvia Earle, Executive Director of Conservation International's Global Marine Division and Explorer-in-Residence at the National Geographic Society  
 Source: [www.pbs.org/newshour/science/coralreefs/extended\\_sylvia-earle.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/science/coralreefs/extended_sylvia-earle.html)



**Left: Deep-sea Lophelia coral reef (untrawled), Norway. Right: Former deep-sea Lophelia coral reef (trawled), Norway.**

Callum Roberts, University of York  
 Source: *Reversing the Decline of Our Seas and Oceans – Marine Reserves and Timely Action Now!* Greenpeace briefing (pdf) to CBD/SBSTTA 10, Bangkok, February 2005.  
<http://www.savethehighseas.org/publicdocs/GPMarineReservesNow.pdf>  
 Related DSCC news: <http://www.savethehighseas.org/display.cfm?ID=3>

*“There is probably no such thing as an economically viable deep sea fishery that is also sustainable. The productivity of deep sea life is too low, and the expense of fishing in the deep sea too high for companies to make profits while also protecting fish stocks.”* Professor Callum Roberts, professor of marine conservation at the University of York in England and a Pew Fellow in Marine Conservation  
 Source: direct

*“Deep sea industrial fishing is mining. Fish stocks are being exploited only with short-term profit in mind, not long-term sustainability,”* Professor Callum Roberts, professor of marine conservation at the University of York in England and a Pew Fellow in Marine Conservation  
 Source: direct

*“Nothing could be dumber than destroying the habitats that depleted fish populations need to recover. Governments must stop pussyfooting around and do something useful.”* Dr Daniel Pauly, of the University of British Columbia, in Vancouver, Canada  
 Source: [http://www.mcibi.org/DSC\\_statement/DSC\\_news\\_release.htm](http://www.mcibi.org/DSC_statement/DSC_news_release.htm)  
 BBC article: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/3719590.stm>

**Richness of deep sea life**

*“About 98 percent of the oceans' species live in, on or just above the seafloor. Many of them – including ancient deep-sea corals and sponges – haven't even been discovered yet.”* Dr Elliott A Norse, President of Marine Conservation Biology Institute in Redmond WA  
 Source: [http://www.mcibi.org/DSC\\_statement/DSC\\_news\\_release.htm](http://www.mcibi.org/DSC_statement/DSC_news_release.htm)

**Corals, seamounts & new discoveries**

*“Deep-sea corals and sponges are crucial habitat elements for seafloor species,”* Dr Daniel Pauly, of the University of British Columbia, in Vancouver, Canada  
 Source: [http://www.mcibi.org/DSC\\_statement/DSC\\_news\\_release.htm](http://www.mcibi.org/DSC_statement/DSC_news_release.htm)  
 BBC article: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/3719590.stm>

*“We've measured the age of some of these [slow-growing cold water coral ecosystems] off Europe to 8,500 years old. If they're damaged heavily, they may take hundreds or thousands of years to recover – or may not recover at all.”*  
 Dr Alex Rogers, British Antarctic Survey (Bas)  
 Source: BBC article: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/3719590.stm>

*“On one seamount in the Tasman Sea, we found 850 species of which a third haven't been found anywhere else.”* Dr Alex Rogers, British Antarctic Survey (Bas)  
 Source: BBC article: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/3719590.stm>

*“On the Norfolk Ridge near New Caledonia, there are a dozen seamounts which have been explored. Here there were around 1,200 species, a half of them new to science.”* Dr Alex Rogers, British Antarctic Survey (Bas)  
 Source: BBC article: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/3719590.stm>

**REPORTS & MEETINGS: RECOMMENDATIONS**

*“Global fisheries authorities must agree to eliminate bottom trawling on the high seas by 2006 to protect seamounts and other ecologically sensitive habitats.”*  
 Task Force on Environmental Sustainability of the UN Millennium Project  
 Source: report of the Task Force on Environmental Sustainability of the Millennium Project (Jeffrey Sachs), Element 4 of chapter 4.  
<http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/documents/Environment-chapters4-6.pdf>  
 Related news: <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/>

*“Because of their extreme vulnerability, there is a need for urgent and precautionary action to conserve and sustainably manage cold water coral reefs.”*  
 Report on Status of Coral Reefs of the World: 2004  
 Source: <http://www.aims.gov.au/pages/research/coral-bleaching/scr2004/index.html>

*“We are particularly concerned about the status of vulnerable cold-water coral reefs, many of which are threatened with destruction.”* OSPAR Ministerial meeting, paragraph 12 of the Bremen Statement.

*“We shall take immediate measures to protect coral reefs from further damage due to use of active fishing gear on the reefs.”* OSPAR Ministerial meeting, paragraph 12 of the Bremen Statement

Left: Jan Helge Fosså, Statoil and Institute of Marine Research, Bergen, Norway. Right: Jan Helge Fosså, Institute of Marine Research, Bergen, Norway.

we cannot put back  
 1,000 years old  
 ecosystems



## DEEP SEA CONSERVATION COALITION

### Moratorium

*"We are advocating a short-term emergency moratorium until the international community comes to its senses and decides how to manage deep-sea fisheries."* Coalition coordinator, Kelly Rigg

Related news: Deep sea trawling's great harm, by Richard Black, BBC News, October 6, 2004. [http://www.mcabi.org/News/deep\\_sea\\_trawling.htm](http://www.mcabi.org/News/deep_sea_trawling.htm)

*"There is enough knowledge for states to take immediate action to ensure a vibrant, sustainable and equitable future for all of our oceans."* Karen Sack, oceans policy advisor, Greenpeace International

DSCC related news: Update to DSCC press release, 16 November 2004: <http://www.savethehighseas.org/display.cfm?ID=19>

### The destruction

*"One fifteen minute trawl can lay a deep seabed habitat to waste, destroying cold water corals which have taken millennia to grow. We may end up driving species as yet undiscovered by science to extinction."* Coalition coordinator, Kelly Rigg

Related DSCC press release: <http://www.savethehighseas.org/display.cfm?ID=20>

*"If you wish, you can go to the middle of the ocean and fish on a seamount for any species, and you are accountable to no one – even if that destroys all of the fish and all of the corals and all of the sea life."* Michael Hirshfield, Oceana's chief scientist and North America vice president for policy

Source: *US move signals hope for saving marine habitats*, Washington Times article by Marion Baillot. <http://washingtontimes.com/world/20050220-100703-7802r.htm>

### The tide is turning: paradigm shift

*"The tide is definitely turning. There is increasing concern within the international community over the destruction of deep sea biodiversity by fleets from a small number of countries."*

Matthew Gianni, DSCC political advisor

Related DSCC press release, 16 November 2004: <http://www.savethehighseas.org/display.cfm?ID=19>

*"[The decision to ban bottom trawling over more than 370,000 square miles off Alaska's Aleutian Islands] is a paradigm shift in how we treat the oceans."* Phil Kline, senior fisheries advisor, Oceana

Source: *US move signals hope for saving marine habitats*, Washington Times article by Marion Baillot. <http://washingtontimes.com/world/20050220-100703-7802r.htm>

### EU

*"The EU cannot in all conscience, ignore the devastation its fleets wreak on the high seas of the global commons."* Matthew Gianni, DSCC political advisor

*"The European Union has committed to taking immediate steps to halt the further destruction of deep-water corals. It is time to translate these commitments into concrete action."*

Matthew Gianni, DSCC political advisor

Related DSCC news: <http://www.savethehighseas.org/display.cfm?ID=16>

### Global commons

*"The high seas are the world's global commons and yet a few fleets benefit from the fisheries while destroying deep sea biodiversity to the detriment of all humankind."* Randall Arauz, Costa Rican Sea Turtle Restoration Program, World Conservation Congress, November 2004, Bangkok, Thailand

Related DSCC press release: <http://www.savethehighseas.org/display.cfm?ID=15>

*"It is high time that the high seas received more attention, and that countries take their responsibilities as the stewards of this global commons seriously."* Nathalie Rey, Greenpeace political advisor

Source: *High Time for the High Seas – the Wild, Wild West of the Oceans*, 11 February 2005, article by Nathalie Rey published in Volume 11, Issue 3 of ECO. <http://www.savethehighseas.org/display.cfm?ID=10>

### International law

*"The right to fish in international waters is subject to an obligation on States to conserve marine life and biodiversity."*

Duncan E J Currie, legal advisor to Greenpeace

Source: *Protecting the deep seas*, article by Duncan E J Currie (pdf) published in the February newsletter (Vol 3, No 1) of the Global Forum on Oceans, Coasts and Islands. <http://www.savethehighseas.org/display.cfm?ID=13>

*"There is a free-for-all mentality on the high seas areas beyond any national jurisdiction. Governments, collectively under the auspices of the UN General Assembly, must establish legal structures for protecting the high seas. The 'time out' afforded by an interim moratorium will ensure that there is something left to protect by then."* Alistair Graham, an advisor to WWF International

Above: Ancient coral ripped from the deep seabed by a high seas bottom trawler in the international waters of the Tasman Sea. June 2005.

**The Deep Sea Conservation Coalition, an alliance of over 50 international organizations, representing millions of people in countries around the world, is calling for a moratorium on high seas bottom trawling. For further information about the Coalition visit [www.savethehighseas.org](http://www.savethehighseas.org)**

**DSCC** for a moratorium, before it's too late