

press release



deepsea
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For immediate release:

Date 19th September 2005

NAFO'S FAILURE POINTS TO URGENT NEED FOR MORATORIUM ON HIGH SEAS BOTTOM TRAWLING

The jewel in the crown of Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) is failing, the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition (DSCC) said at today's opening of the NAFO annual general assembly in Estonia.

NAFO (Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization), one of the oldest and most elaborate high seas fisheries management regimes in the world, is so ineffective that it should be replaced, according to a report issued by the Canadian Advisory Panel on the Sustainable Management of Straddling Fish Stocks in the Northwest Atlantic.

Matthew Gianni of the DSCC said, "These fisheries are now collapsing too. Even more alarming is the fact that there are no regulations in place to even document, much less protect, deep-water corals and other unique species that are increasingly being found throughout the North Atlantic and which are known to be highly vulnerable to destruction from bottom trawl fishing."

"NAFO was supposed to be the model for international fisheries management, yet it is so ineffective at protecting the biodiversity of the deep oceans that the Advisory Panel has called for its closure – how much worse are the other RFMOs?"

The DSCC is working for a moratorium on the practice of bottom trawling on the high seas, which destroys ancient deep-sea coral ecosystems. The failure of NAFO and other high seas treaty organizations charged with protecting the high seas areas is yet further proof of the urgent need for the United Nations to take action to ensure the conservation of the world's global oceans commons.

"A UN General Assembly moratorium is the only way to effectively protect the high seas whilst issues like the failure of RFMOs are sorted out. These problems will not be solved quickly, reform will take time, but time is something the deep oceans are quickly running out of," said Gianni.

Scientists believe that at current levels of fishing, deep sea target species will be commercially extinct in 20 years and the loss to biodiversity caused by the fishing is

likely to be irreplaceable.

Calling on the UK, Canada and other Governments within the NAFO area to support a moratorium on bottom trawl fishing on the high seas in the NAFO area and at this year's United Nations General Assembly, Matthew Gianni said: "Most of the high seas are devoid of any effective regulation to protect deep-sea biodiversity and must be protected from bottom trawling. Even those areas such as the North Atlantic Ocean which are covered are so poorly served that the biodiversity is at serious risk despite that cover. Governments must take this action swiftly or it will be too late."

Notes to Editors:

The NAFO AGM will be held in Estonia, 19-23 September.

In 2004 the UN asked NAFO and other RFMOs to urgently address the destruction of deep sea biodiversity from fishing practices such as bottom trawling. They failed to do so.

NAFO is one of the older and more established RFMOs and considered a model for other areas but of the six straddling deep sea fish stocks under its care, four are under subject to moratoria due to over fishing.

The Canadian report is available at:

http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/overfishing-surpeche/documents/advisory_e.htm

The DSCC is a coalition of over 50 international environmental and conservation organizations.

For further information please visit www.savethehighseas.org

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