

April 30, 2019

Re: World Trade Organization Fisheries Subsidies Negotiations

Excellency:

This year will be pivotal for the world's ocean.

We urge you to fulfil the December 2017 ministerial mandate for WTO members to agree to “comprehensive and effective disciplines that prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, and eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing” by the end of 2019. The months ahead will be critical to realizing this commitment and achieving UN Sustainable Development Goal target 14.6 by 2020, universally agreed to in 2015.

Though not all subsidies are harmful, comprehensive estimates of global fisheries subsidies show that as much as \$20 billion¹ is spent by governments globally on capacity-enhancing subsidies – harmful payments that offset fishing costs such as fuel, gear, and vessel construction, and allow fishers to travel farther for longer— which risk leading to fishing above sustainable biological limits. Applying economic theory to the fisheries sector reveals that in an open-access fishery, a revenue-enhancing or cost-reducing subsidy increases marginal profits at each level of fishing effort, and therefore leads to an increased overall fishing effort.²

In 2018, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture estimated that a third of all fish stocks are exploited at unsustainable levels and another 60% have no room for increased fishing without jeopardizing sustainability.³ Decades of overfishing have taken a significant toll on ocean health, contributing to poverty, food insecurity, ecosystem imbalances, distorted markets, and unemployment. This is compounded by harmful subsidies, leading to serious social, environmental and economic impacts for the more than 1 billion people who depend on seafood as a main source of protein, and the more than 40 million people who rely directly on fishing for their income.³

There is now a brief window in which WTO members can achieve transformative change for the world's ocean and the livelihoods of many coastal communities by addressing one of the drivers of global overfishing. If negotiations reach a successful conclusion, members will reignite confidence that multilateral cooperation can achieve global outcomes. In the wake of many rounds of fisheries subsidies negotiations dating back to the Doha Ministerial Conference in 2001, there is now an opportunity to not only demonstrate the vitality and effectiveness of the WTO, but to serve as leaders for an issue of shared global importance.

We, the 59 undersigned organizations, support members' efforts to reach an ambitious agreement to end harmful fisheries subsidies by December 2019, and ensure a sustainable future for our ocean and the livelihoods that depend on it.

Sincerely,

¹ Sumaila, U. Rashid, et al. “A Bottom-up Re-Estimation of Global Fisheries Subsidies.” *Journal of Bioeconomics*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2010, pp. 201–225., doi:10.1007/s10818-010-9091-8.

² Porter, G. *Fisheries Subsidies and Overfishing: Towards a Structured Discussion*, Geneva: United Nations Environmental Programme. 2001. (http://www.unep.ch/etu/etp/acts/capbld/rdtwo/FE_vol_1.pdf)

³ FAO. 2018. *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2018 - Meeting the sustainable development goals*. Rome. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.



**ANA: Asociación
Asturiana de
Amigos de la
Naturaleza**



**Archipelagos Institute
of Marine
Conservation**



BirdWatch Ireland



BLOOM



ClientEarth



Coalition Clean Baltic



**Colectivo Ecologista de
Avilés**



**Coordinadora Ecologista
d'Asturies**



Depana



**Deutsche Umwelthilfe
e.V. (Environmental
Action Germany)**



DSCC



Ecologistas en Acción



EcoTrust Canada



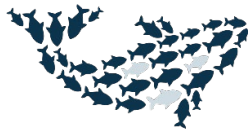
**El Chorlito
Plataforma para la
defensa del litoral del
sureste de Gran
Canaria**



Environmental Pillar



**European Environmental
Bureau (EEB)**



FishAct

FishAct



**Forum Umwelt und
Entwicklung (Forum
for Environment and
Development)**



Fundació ENT



**Fundación Lonxanet para
la pesca sostenible**



GEOTA



**Gesellschaft zur
Rettung der Delphine
(Society for the
Rescue of Dolphins)**



Global Fishing Watch



Global Ocean Trust



**Green Budget
Europe**



**Humane Society
International (HSI)**



**International Fund for
Animal Welfare (IFAW)**



**International Institute for
Environment and
Development (IIED)**



**International
Institute for
Sustainable
Development
(IISD)**



**Landsforeningen
Levende Hav (Living
Sea Denmark)**



**LPN: Liga para a
Protecção da Natureza**



**Marine Conservation
Institute**



MEER e.V.



Mission Blue



**NATURSCHUTZINITIATIVE eV
(NI)**



**Natural Resources
Defense Council, Inc.
(NRDC)**



Ocean Conservancy



Ocean Unite



Oceana



OceanCare



Oceanografica



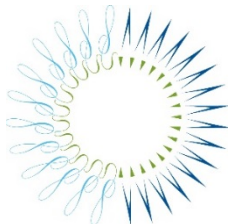
Ondarroa 12 Milia



Our Fish



Pechethique



**The Pew Charitable
Trusts**



PONG-Pesca



Posidonia Green Project



Pro Wildlife



Quercus - Associação Nacional de Conservação da Natureza (ANCN)



Sciaena



SeaChoice



Sea First Foundation



Sea Shepherd France



Seas at Risk



Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves (SPEA)



Submon



The Nature Conservancy (TNC)



Whale and Dolphin Conservation



World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF)