

Opening remarks at the signing of the U.S.-EU Joint Agreement on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated "IUU" Fishing

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U.S.-EU IUU FISHING AGREEMENT

I am delighted to share the podium with Commissioner Damanaki today. She is a true visionary, a courageous woman, and a strong partner who is committed to an ambitious but achievable vision that I share: productive and sustainable fisheries from healthy oceans.

Commissioner Damanaki's presence here in Washington sends two powerful messages: (1) pirate fishing poses a grave threat to international security, global prosperity and sustainable fisheries and (2) defeating pirate fishing and achieving sustainable fisheries will require sustained international partnerships.

Commissioner Damanaki and I stand here today as partners - the EU and U.S. – committed to working together to eradicate pirate fishing and end unsustainable fishing practices. The agreement we sign today is a major step forward in strengthening the global effort to combat pirate fishing. The film you just viewed shows the real threats of pirate fishing to the safety and livelihoods of fishermen as well as the impacts on fishing economies and the health of the oceans.

IUU FISHING

Formally known as 'illegal, unreported, or unregulated fishing', or 'IUU fishing' for short, pirate fishing hauls in between 11 and 26 million tons of seafood annually and may represent as much as 40% of the total catch in some fisheries.

Pirate fishing is a global problem, one that undermines efforts to achieve healthy oceans and sustainable fisheries.

Illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing is a global problem and international cooperation is critical to combating these activities. As an example of how such cooperation plays out, let me describe an incident that occurred a few months ago.

On July 22, the *Seta 70*, a fishing vessel owned by a Korean multinational company, was chased down and seized off the coast of Liberia after it was caught fishing illegally in inshore waters and destroying the nets of local fishermen. A Liberian observer aboard the ship, trained by NOAA Fisheries tipped off officials. The ship was seized by the Liberian Coastguard with the assistance of Liberia's Bureau for National Fisheries and the U.S. Coast Guard.

It's no coincidence that Liberian waters were targeted for illegal fishing activities. Developing countries often are victimized by this activity because of their limited capacity to respond.

Seta 70 is one of a number of vessels reported by the Environmental Justice Foundation to have been fishing illegally in Sierra Leone earlier in the year. The Environmental Justice Foundation apprised EU authorities of these ships' illegal fishing activities, and, in April 2011, approximately \$650,000 of fish were seized in a Spanish port – the largest seizure since the EU instituted new illegal fishing regulations. I congratulate Commissioner Damanaki and her team for this significant accomplishment.

Our goal is to make successes like this a norm, not the occasional exception.

We recognize that pirate fishing endangers the economies of all nations that import and export fish. We recognize that pirate fishing is also a threat to food security. With 3B people depending on seafood as their primary source of protein, we can no longer ignore activities that undermine access to nutritious sources of food. Pirate fishing endangers fishermen's safety and livelihoods.

And, as these other activities show, pirate fishing harms the environment and undermines efforts to manage fish sustainably – often taking away from legitimate fishing operations whose adherence to sustainable practices and stewardship need to be encouraged and replicated – such as the large scale commercial operations off the coast of Alaska that have been instrumental in putting U.S. sustainable fisheries on the map.

With the document Commissioner Damanaki and I are signing today, we are committing our countries to combat illegal fishing, to strengthen our monitoring and enforcement of management measures in our role as parties to regional fishery management organizations, and to prevent those engaged in pirate fishing from benefiting from their activities.

TOWARD SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES

The joint EU-U.S. efforts to combat illegal fishing are a down payment on the larger shared commitment to sustainable fisheries.

Just because fishing might be legal, does not mean it is sustainable.

Our commitment is to ensure that good management and enforcement measures are in place so that fishing is both sustainable and legal. In Europe, Commissioner Damanaki has proposed the Common Fisheries Policy Reform – innovative and timely modifications to ensure that its fisheries are sustainable. Here in the U.S., we are finally turning the corner on fisheries management and reaping the benefits of the landmark legislation, the Magnuson-Stevens Act, which revolutionized fishery management.

For far too long, fisheries have been thought of as an inexhaustible resource. Thirty-five years ago, the U.S. Congress recognized that fisheries were not inexhaustible and passed and later strengthened the landmark Magnuson-Stevens Act, which lays out the broad framework under which US fisheries are managed today.

As recently as the 1960s, well-respected marine scientists were touting the virtually limitless capacity of the world's oceans to feed humanity. By early 1980s some of our nation's iconic stocks were in trouble, and by late 1980s and early 1990s many of them had collapsed.

Thanks in large part to a strengthened Magnuson-Stevens Act, the 230 most economically important fish stocks have improved steadily over the last decade. Now, during this 35th anniversary year of the

original passage of that bold legislation, and after decades of overfishing, we are now turning the corner on sustainable management of U.S. fisheries.

The lesson? Ending overfishing and rebuilding depleted fisheries takes time, persistence and sacrifice, but is possible, and brings significant economic and social benefit.

The Magnuson-Stevens Act set strict goals and timetables, requires adherence to scientific information, and values precaution when uncertainty exists.

Let me be clear: Implementation of these tough measures has not been quick or easy for fishermen – commercial and recreational – nor has it been easy for regulators. We are making excellent progress in achieving the goals of the legislation, but we still have quite a way to go. Nonetheless, most fishermen and regulators alike share the goal of healthy fisheries that can be sustained for generations and generations. Without tough rules and commitment by all parties and enforcement, it is all too easy for short-term pressures to continually undermine good intentions and stymie progress.

Sustainable fisheries is about a better future – a time when fishermen can rely on fishing as a stable income for their families, a time when grandparents and grandkids spend a day out on the water fishing, and a time when fishing communities can count on fishing to help their local economies recover and thrive.

And thanks to past and recent efforts, the sacrifices and discipline are paying off.

I've talked with fishermen around the U.S. who are seeing the positive difference that fishery reforms can make. They're seeing it their pocketbooks, their communities, and their hopes for the future.

When I was in Morro Bay, CA three weeks ago, I talked with young Rob Seitz, a groundfish fisherman who recently moved to Morro Bay. He's the face of a new generation of fishermen. Although he comes from a long line of fishermen, Rob almost left fishing behind. But when he learned about the new West Coast trawl catch share program, he saw light at the end of the tunnel. Rob said that, in the past, a lot of fish were damaged – fish he couldn't sell, fish that weren't in the sea - because he'd been trying to catch it fast. He is now fishing smarter, not harder and is optimistic about his future as a fisherman because of this new management program.

I talked with another fisherman in Morro Bay, who is part of an experimental program, in which he's fishing hook-and-line instead of trawling. Trawling, he used to get about \$1.80 a pound for black cod. After he made the switch to hook-and-line, he's getting \$5 a pound! He's not catching as many fish, but chefs are clamoring for his superior product. He's fishing hook-and-line because of an innovative experimental program to see if fishing hook-and-line would increase value and quality. He doesn't catch as many fish, but these trade-offs are paying off. This strategy allows black cod populations to recover because they're not as many fish taken, yet gives fishermen a better return for their effort. Like Rob, this fisherman is fishing smarter, not harder too.

From these two Morro Bay fishermen and others I've spoken with in Cape Cod, the Carolinas, the Gulf, and Alaska, what I'm hearing is that there are fishermen out there who are benefiting from what NOAA and fishermen have done together to change the dynamics and to change the incentives of fishing, enabling profitable fishing now and profitable fishing tomorrow.

Just like money in a checking account, we can't withdraw more than is renewed or we'll run out altogether. Healthy fish populations and healthy habitats are necessary if withdrawals are to be made on a sustainable basis.

FISHERIES OF THE U.S. REPORT

One of NOAA's jobs is to keep a close eye on the Nation's fisheries accounts. Every year NOAA publishes a tally of the nation's fisheries.

Today, we are announcing the release of its Fisheries of the U.S. Report for 2010. This is the annual statistical yearbook. Two highlights provide a snapshot:

- 1) Three fisheries stocks from the Northeast – Georges Bank haddock, Atlantic pollock and spiny dogfish – have now been rebuilt to healthy levels, bringing to 21 the number that have been rebuilt nationwide since 2000.
- 2) In 2010, 84 percent of the 253 stocks investigated were fished at a sustainable rate, and 77 percent of the 207 stocks with known population levels were abundant enough to be fished sustainably.

These numbers illustrate encouraging progress, but we have considerable work to do before all U.S. fisheries are fully rebuilt and fished at sustainable levels.

BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE TOGETHER

Rebuilding is a joint effort. Together, with fishermen, we are building a better future. A better future because fishermen have good, stable jobs in good, stable fisheries. A better future because commercial fishermen, charter boat operators, regional fishery councils, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations are building relationships based on trust. A better future because good science guides the management of healthy oceans and sustainable fisheries. And a better fishery because where uncertainty in information exists, we err on the side of caution, preferring to favor healthy fisheries over collapses.

But building this better future is not easy, especially in tough economic times. It takes courage, hard work, good partners and continual evaluation and adjustments.

CLOSING

With the work that Commissioner Damanaki has done to put forward a proposal for Common Fisheries policy reform and in our future work together to clamp down on pirate fishing, the U.S. is pleased to be standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the EU.

The reforms to the Common Fisheries Policy proposed by Commissioner Damanaki will benefit not only fisheries in the EU, but fisheries globally.

I congratulate Commissioner Damanaki for having the courage and vision to put forward such a proposal.

If adopted, these reforms will require some sacrifice, but I believe, as has been the case in the United States, these sacrifices will be repaid by much greater rewards. Pulling out of a downward spiral, reversing direction and making steady progress upward is not easy, but it's worth it.

We still have a long, long way to go on sustainable management of the fisheries on a global scale. Targeting IUU fishing brings us a step closer.