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EU must not dictate terms to Iceland on EU membership

Press release by SNP MEP Ian Hudghton

Hudghton calls for urgent talks on mackerel TACS!

SNP MEP **Ian Hudghton** has criticised moves to force Iceland to radically alter its approach to fisheries policy as part of its bid for EU membership. Mr. Hudghton also called for urgent talks between the EU and Iceland about current problems in the Mackerel fishery.

MEPs meeting in Strasbourg debated Iceland's EU membership application in detail. Whilst supportive of the bid, Mr Hudghton criticised a detailed resolution which sought to put pressure on Iceland to 'adopt Fisheries policy measures that will allow it to make the transition towards introduction of the Common Fisheries Policy' as part of its membership negotiations.

The Scots MEP criticised the 'contradictory' approach, arguing that the EU would do better to learn from Iceland's successful management of its marine resources rather than conforming with the current failed Common Fisheries Policy.

MEPs backed formal membership negotiations taking place with Iceland which has had a free trade agreement with the EU since 1973.

Commenting on the issue, Ian Hudghton said:

"There is broad support for Iceland's EU membership bid, which I'm sure will be successful, if that is the will of the Icelandic people. But it is certainly not for the EU to start dictating terms to Iceland, that kind of approach would be completely counter-productive.

"I hope that the membership negotiations will be constructive, and that the EU will keep an open mind. This is particularly true concerning the Common Fisheries Policy which has been a dismal failure. I suspect that Brussels has more to learn from Reykjavik about fisheries management than vice versa."

Speaking in the debate, Mr Hudghton said:

"There are two contradictory references to fisheries in the resolution.

"One which I will oppose "encourages Iceland to adopt Fisheries policy measures that will allow it to make the transition towards introduction of the Common Fisheries Policy".

"Surely not the current CFP! I doubt if Icelanders will volunteer to join the current CFP which has failed us and undoubtedly would fail Iceland!

"By contrast there is a further reference which "recognises the responsible and sustainable manner in which Iceland has managed its marine resources" and calls for constructive negotiations on fisheries "so that the outcome may be a mutually satisfactory solution based on best practices and protecting the interests of both fishermen and consumers in the EU, as well as in Iceland".

"With that attitude in mind there is an urgency to have constructive discussions on the mackerel fishery issue, as well as to hear from Iceland their views on reform of the CFP!"

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