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New Commissioner must stand up to apparatchiks

Press release by SNP MEP Ian Hudghton

HUDGHTON INVITES FISHERIES CANDIDATE TO SCOTLAND

SNP President **Ian Hudghton MEP** has today (Tuesday) invited the European Commission's nominee for the post of Fisheries Commissioner to Scotland to view firsthand the pioneering efforts of Scottish fishermen to conserve stocks.

The invitation came after the Commission candidate, Ms Maria Damanaki, underwent three hours of intensive questioning by the European Parliament's Fisheries Committee.

If approved by the full Parliament, Ms Damanaki will oversee the forthcoming reform of European fisheries policy. Whilst Mr Hudghton was impressed by Ms Damanaki's willingness to engage fully with Members of the Committee, he expressed concerns that some of her statements showed a lack of awareness as to the extent of the CFP's failings.

Mr Hudghton commented:

"Ms Damanaki was competent, well-briefed and seemed genuinely willing to engage in the debate on the future of fisheries management. Assuming she is confirmed in post, this attitude will be most welcome. I also welcome her comment today on CFP Reform, when she said that "the whole policy is up for discussion".

"Nevertheless, some of her comments merely reflect what the Commission has been saying for the last quarter-century - that Brussels has all the power and that Brussels must exercise that power in full.

"The starting point of the Commission's apparatchiks is that the EU's founding treaties give total power to them and that that control must remain at the centre. I take a different view - I believe that Europe's fishing nations should work together to develop policies tailor-made for each country, each fishery and each maritime region.

"I have invited Ms Damanaki to come to Scotland at the earliest possible opportunity to see firsthand the efforts of the Scottish fleet. The Scottish Government, working in full co-operation with the fishing industry and other groups, has pioneered ground-breaking schemes to conserve our precious stocks.

"Scotland's efforts are just a start but they offer an example of what individual nations can achieve when working in agreement with their fishing sector. Real powers must be returned to all Europe's fishing nations - and the new Fisheries Commissioner must stand up to the Brussels establishment if she is to achieve success during her time in office."

Notes for editors

- Maria Damanaki from Greece was attending a hearing in front of the European Parliament Fisheries Committee in Strasbourg.
- The full European Parliament will vote to accept or reject the new Commission at a later date. The vote will be on the new Commission as a whole, not on individual Commissioners.
- Mr Hudghton wrote a letter to Ms Damanaki after the meeting inviting her to visit Scotland at the earliest possible opportunity to examine progress in initiatives such as the Conservation Credit Scheme.
- The CFP is currently the subject of a whole scale review by the EU. It is anticipated that Europe's new management regime for fisheries will come into effect in 2013.

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