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SNP backs international efforts to save traditional fishing rights

Press release by SNP MEP Ian Hudghton

SNP President **Ian Hudghton** MEP has (Tuesday) welcomed support from various European governments for the principle of EU nations retaining historical fishing rights according to traditional practices.

The governments of Germany, Denmark and Estonia have all given backing to the principle of "relative stability" whereby fishing opportunities are allocated to states according to historical catches. Additionally, from outwith the EU the Norwegian government has backed the principle.

The international support is in contrast to the position of both the UK government and the Tory Party who have in recent weeks called for the scrapping of historical rights.

Mr Hudghton commented:

"The SNP believes that powers over fisheries should be returned to Europe's fishing nations. Coastal communities around Europe have depended on their traditional fishing waters for generations - and those historical benefits must be retained."

"Fortunately the Scottish government are not alone in seeking to protect the principle of relative stability. Whilst both Labour and the Tories are preparing to sell Scotland's fishermen out once again, an alliance of northern nations is emerging intent on protecting their fishing heritage."

"The SNP have long been the champions of Scotland's fishing communities. As the process of European fisheries reform gets under way, the SNP are pledged to defend Scotland's historical fishing rights in Holyrood, Westminster and Brussels."

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Notes for editors

- The international support for relative stability is stated in submissions from various national governments to the European Commission's consultation on fisheries reform.
- In their response, the German government states (at page 10): "Regardless of the necessary reforms, European fisheries require a reliable economic framework. It is therefore Germany's view that the key elements of the Common Fisheries Policy are not open to discussion. This includes specifically the allocation of the total allowable catches according to the principle of relative stability and the system of national quotas. These basic pillars are best for ensuring that the Member States' joint responsibility for sustainable fishery is preserved and that coastal fishing has reliable future prospects."

- The Danish government states (page 8): "With its merit of establishing a mechanism to distribute fishing opportunities, it is the view of the Danish Government that the principle of relative stability is a fundamental principle of the common fisheries policy and must be maintained."
- The Estonian government states (page 5): "Fishing opportunities should be allocated to the Member States so that all Member States are provided by a guarantee to enjoy the access to all fishery resources and fishing activities based to the relative stability."
- The Norwegian government states (page 16): "From the Norwegian perspective relative stability between the different vessel groups in our fishing fleet has been an important part of the overall fisheries policy. The distributional stability has provided financial security, and spurred an industry-driven capacity reduction. Over time relative stability makes it possible for the different fleet segments to self-adjust the harvest capacity to the available resource base and improve the efficiency in the industry. On that note it is difficult to see exactly how the principle of relative stability limits the flexibility to manage the CFP."
- In the Scottish government's submission to the Commission, it is stated (page 35): "Relative Stability should remain as a key pillar of the CFP. It recognises and protects historic rights".
- The UK government recently attacked the principle of relative stability, stating in a briefing to all UK MEPs: "Fishing opportunities are based on historic practices which stifles innovative business and the ability to adapt to climate change."
- Tory MEP Struan Stevenson recently tabled a text in the plenary of the European Parliament stating: "access rights should be based on updated criteria and no longer solely on the criterion of historical catches".

Copies of all relevant texts are available from Mr Hudghton.

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Ian Hudghton

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