

# CFFA

Coalition for  
Fair Fisheries Arrangements

# CAPE

Coalition pour des  
Accords de Pêche Équitables

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## Joint NGO position on the EU proposed policy to reduce discards

*Issues for EU fishing activities in third countries waters*

June 2007

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*In a joint contribution, European Environment and Development NGOs<sup>1</sup> have commented on the European Commission's proposal to reduce by-catches and eliminate discards in EU fisheries<sup>2</sup>. What the Commission is proposing is a discard ban with supporting measures such as by-catch quotas and the use of more selective fishing gears.*

In their general comments, NGOs highlight that the key issue is to avoid unwanted catches in the first place. They insist that an EU policy needs to effectively tackle all the different types of by-catch, including juveniles, endangered and protected species, as well as the two reasons for discarding: high-grading and getting rid of unwanted catch.

NGOs support a discard ban, as it would move the focus of management measures from landings to catches and from fish production to fish mortality; by regarding “no discards” as the norm, any discarding then requires adequate justification (e.g. high survival potential). However, it should be clear that the purpose of a discard ban is to avoid unnecessary biomass removal from the seas and not present opportunities for new markets to utilise discards.

Particular attention should be given to how all of these measures can be “translated” to apply to EU fleets fishing in the waters of third countries. First, the emphasis should be put the need to introduce selective fishing and to ban destructive fishing practices. This is particularly important in the coastal zone of tropical countries, where wasteful practices directly affect local coastal communities, who depend on fishing for their livelihoods.

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<sup>1</sup> BirdLife International – Greenpeace International – Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements (CFFA) – International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) — Oceana –North Sea Foundation —the Fisheries Secretariat – European Bureau for Conservation & Development (EBCD)

<sup>2</sup> Communication from the Commission to the Council and European Parliament on A policy to reduce unwanted by-catches and eliminate discards in European fisheries (COM(2007)136)  
[http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2007/com2007\\_0136en01.pdf](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2007/com2007_0136en01.pdf)

More specifically, in the case of the EU distant water fleet, NGOs are proposing that the use of the most selective fishing gears should be a pre-requisite condition for participation in fishing under Fisheries Partnership Agreements (FPAs). The EC should take the opportunity of this to make an issue of discarding in the negotiations for FPAs. Third countries need to be convinced of the necessity to introduce measures to stop the waste of their resources.

NGOs feel that financial support should be made available for vessels to adopt more selective and less environmentally damaging fishing practices. These financial incentives should be equally applicable to EU vessels fishing outside EU waters, as this is probably a more realistic way to ensure that EU fleets active in third countries reduce their by-catch and discarding.

Finally, NGOs stress that the information available in the Commission staff working document accompanying the Communication<sup>3</sup> confirms the long-held view of NGOs that trawl fisheries are particularly damaging. NGOs believe that unless by-catch levels are dramatically cut, some trawl fisheries should be closed. *“The level of wastage and collateral damage are simply not acceptable from a sustainability point of view”*.

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<sup>3</sup> Commission staff working document: Accompanying document to the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament – A policy to reduce unwanted by-catches and eliminate discards in European fisheries (SEC(2007)380)