

Nouadhibou, 9 June 2011

**PRESS RELEASE: ESTABLISHMENT CONVENTION BETWEEN MAURITANIA
AND THE CHINESE COMPANY *POLY HONDONE PELAGIC FISHERY CO.***

Mauritania professional fishermen, after having acknowledged the establishment contract signed between the Minister of Economic Affairs and Development and the company *POLY HONDONE PELAGIC FISHERY CO.*, would like to call attention to the fact that this Convention is worsening the already precarious economic situation of national operators from the industrial and artisanal fisheries sector.

1. This Convention, by allocating dozens of bottom fishing licenses (trawlers, potters, longliners, gillnetters and various experimental fishing gears), is dangerously increasing the pressure on the cephalopods stock, which is already overexploited up to 35%, according to the researchers' conclusions presented to the IMROP working groups, including most recently in December 2010 in Nouadhibou in the presence of international experts.

Moreover, the European Parliament, in its resolution of 12 May 2011, called on the Commission that the negotiations of the renewal of the fisheries agreement between the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and the European Union, which ends on 31 July 2012, should only include surplus stocks in line with the current fishing effort of both Mauritanian and foreign activities.

We take this opportunity to welcome, on behalf of the National Fisheries Federation, which regroups all national actors, this decision of the European Parliament which reflects European elected representatives' concerns about the preservation of fish resources which are a heritage for the whole of humanity, for the benefit of both producer countries and consumer countries.

2. This Convention, by opening artisanal coastal fisheries to Chinese fishermen, also constitutes a serious violation of the vital interests of this particularly vulnerable group of Mauritanian workers. Mauritanian artisanal fishermen have hardly begun to "mauritanize" some fisheries compared to their African brothers, after years of sustained efforts. The massive and

uncontrolled introduction of sophisticated Chinese vessels will nip in the bud the timid growth observed lately in the artisanal fisheries sector.

For these two above-mentioned reasons at least, and without forgetting the various irregularities which put into question this Convention and the outrageous advantages that it provides to this new Chinese company – which put it in a dominant position in the face of national and other foreign investors, including Chinese companies who have trusted our country for three decades –, the national profession condemn it.

Our endangered sector is crying out for help and we call on His Excellency the President of the Republic to intervene in order to modify the aspects of this Convention related at least to the two above-mentioned issues, in order to protect the best interests of the Nation, as he bravely did as regards the Conventions on mining and oil exploitation.

Chairman of the Industrial Fishing Fleet

Cheikhany Ould AMAR

Chairman of the Artisanal Fishermen

Sid'Ahmed ould ABEÏD