

## DECLARATION OF VIGO

Government officials, scientists, lawyers, NGOs and representatives of the fishing industry met at the World Conference on Deep Sea Fisheries in Vigo, Spain, 18<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> September 2003, to discuss the development and long-term management of deep-sea fisheries resources.

Central to these discussions was recognition that responsible commercial fishing companies have the highest possible interest in ensuring that deep-sea fisheries are sustainable in the long term. This “enlightened” self-interest is driven by considerable investment in boats and infrastructure that can only be supported by rational exploitation of wild fisheries resources.

With sustainability as their top priority the Vigo conference considered:

1. The evidence relating to the existence of fishing stocks in the deep-sea and their sustainability.
2. The technical issues involved in developing deep sea fisheries.
3. The effective management of deep sea stocks.
4. The legal framework required to ensure responsible deep sea fishing on a sustainable basis.

Details of the discussion under each heading is available in a summary document compiled during the conference.

### **Key conclusions were:**

1. Deep sea fishing is already taking place in many parts of the world. There is recognition that deep-sea fisheries are not a substitute for conventional fisheries, nor will they offer high sustainable yields. However, they are important fisheries.
2. It is fundamental that the sustainability of fisheries for deep sea species will depend on scientific understanding of the species and their ecosystems. Investment in scientific research is therefore an essential pre-requisite of sustainable management.
3. The greatest danger to fish stocks in the deep sea will come from illegal and irresponsible fishing. Sustainability is only likely to be achieved through the joint cooperation of legitimate, responsible fishing companies and management authorities at national and international levels, especially to combat unregulated fishing and collect data required for the management of deep sea resources.
4. The organising committee, after the presentations and discussions at the conference, agreed, therefore, to urge all international and national agencies involved in the management of deep sea fisheries resources to work in a positive and cooperative way with commercial fishing companies, NGOs and others throughout the world to ensure the development of viable and enforceable deep sea fisheries policies.
5. They call upon those international and national agencies to involve representatives of responsible fishing companies and other stakeholders in all discussions concerning the development, management and control of deep-sea fisheries.
6. And they call for the establishment of a multilateral cooperative body, the International Council for the Deep Sea, at which would be represented all interested parties, including the commercial fishing industry, to provide a framework for this on-going dialogue including the

development of approaches for research, sustainable management and control of fishing on deep-sea resources.

7. Only by working together as equal partners will we find ways to preserve our deep sea heritage.

Vigo, 19 September, 2003