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22nd November 2018**World Fisheries Day dedicated to secure decent work in the fishing sector****- For immediate release -**

On the occasion of the World Fisheries Day, the FAO and the Holy See joined forces once again to host a successful event focusing international attention on the fair treatment and well-being of fishers around the globe. Europêche, on behalf of the EU fishing industry, participated together with international organizations, government representatives, trade unions and relevant stakeholders in this year's event titled '*Labour rights are human rights: working together to ensure the rights of fishers – fighting trafficking and forced labour in the fishing sector*'. United Nations specialized agencies in fisheries and their Member states were urged to work together to promote the ratification, implementation and enforcement of internationally agreed social standards to support the livelihoods of 38 million fishers in the planet.

High-ranked panellists provided advice on how to overcome obstacles and shortcomings to better protect fishers and fight against IUU fishing, which is widely associated with offences involving the safety and welfare of crews. "*Behind every economic activity there is a human being*", they recalled.

The panel concluded that despite major progress in environmental sustainability, insufficient attention has been given by nations to the implementation and enforcement of essential principles of international law for the protection of fishers, making fishing still a hazardous activity. Particularly, ILO¹ Work in Fishing Convention, C188 (manning and labour conditions); IMO² Cape Town Agreement 2012 (safe construction) and STCW-F³ Convention (safety training); FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and Agreement on Port State Measures (responsible fishing), are the foundations for the protection of fishermen across the world. These Conventions are either not in force or poorly ratified by the international community. These instruments, if ratified, fully implemented and enforced by all States, could significantly improve the life of fish workers, their families and the environmental status of fisheries resources.

Mr Ment van der Zwan, Europêche spokesman on social affairs, and one of the key speakers, affirmed: "*We are resolved to continue the momentum initiated by the FAO and the Holy See in Rome to strengthen social sustainability across fishery value chains. Labour rights are human rights; it is not just a slogan. It's something we must all recognize, prioritise and respect. Labour abuse undermines workers and employers that are competing under fair conditions and respecting legality. Meeting human needs and labour standards are fundamental for a socially responsible fishing industry and fisheries policies.*"

He concluded: "*We need to move from words to deeds. As industry, we are taking matters seriously since as a result of the legislative action of the European social partners in the fisheries sector⁴, the ILO Work in Fishing Convention was transposed into EU law, which entered into force exactly one year ago. Similarly, we are now working to transpose the STCW-F Convention into Community legislation to bring greater*

¹ International Labor Organization

² International Maritime Organization

³ International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel

⁴ Europêche and the European Transport Workers' Federation

safety at sea and planning to produce international guidelines on medical examination and recruitment of migrant fishers.”

The fishing industry recalled the importance to develop an effective roadmap by FAO, ILO and IMO for the rapid worldwide implementation of the international agreements relating to work and safety in the fishing sector.

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