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10<sup>th</sup> October 2017**Troubled waters for Baltic fishermen****- For immediate release -**

After long hours of discussion, EU Fisheries Ministers have finally agreed fishing opportunities for 2018 for the ten stocks in the Baltic Sea following talks in Luxembourg yesterday. The total allowable catches (TACs) were agreed in the framework of the Common Fisheries Policy which aims to have all stocks fished at sustainable levels by 2020.

For the important pelagic stocks, central herring sees an increase of +20% while Western and Bothnian herring stocks undergo a sharp decrease of -39% and -40% respectively. The two stocks of salmon saw a reduction of -5% whilst the sprat TAC was slightly raised by 1%. Concerning demersal species, the plaice stock saw a disappointing decrease of -10% regardless the good state of the stock. This was adopted as a consequence of the application of the precautionary approach forced by insufficient scientific data. The agreement provides a roll-over for Western cod and a reduction of -8% for Eastern cod.

In addition to the adoption of TACs in the Baltic Sea, the Council of Ministers also decided to postpone negotiations on the proposed ban of marine eel fisheries to a later stage. Europêche welcomes this decision in view of the impact of the cuts proposed, particularly for the small scale fishermen represented by our organisations.

Peter Breckling, Deutscher Fischerei Verband (DFV), declared: *'Fishing companies have to survive another critical year, the loss of 39% of Western herring really hurts after last year's reduction of Western cod. These strong cuts are especially difficult for small-scale coastal fisheries. These fishermen have little room for manoeuvre and may need financial support to survive next year.'*

The fishing body also highlighted the excellent perspectives for the Western cod, as reflected by the latest scientific advice from ICES<sup>1</sup> for 2019. According to scientific data, the stock is forecasted to reach the highest biomass levels ever recorded and the TAC could be tripled if conditions remain the same. This positive trend was not reflected in the TAC decided by decision-makers.

In this sense, Michael Andersen, Danish Fishermen's Producer Organization (DFPO), stated *'Fishermen find it hard, indeed impossible, to understand and accept that the TAC for cod in western Baltic is set below what science says can be taken sustainably and in line with MSY policy. When, further to this, a closed period is continued, without scientific recommendation from ICES, it makes all the political declarations about social considerations seem empty. It actually shows blatant disregard for the fact that there are people involved.'*

ENDS

**Europêche** represents the fisheries sector in Europe. Currently, the Association comprises 15 national organisations of fishing enterprises from the following 10 EU Member States: DE, DK, ES, FR, IT, MT, NL, LV, PL, UK.

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<sup>1</sup> International Council for the Exploration of the Sea