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Recovery potential of the Mediterranean is high, says sector

President of Europêche, Javier Garat, was key speaker at a public debate held at Europe's biggest industry event, the global Seafood EXPO in Brussels hosted by Commissioner Vella. During the debate, the Commissioner launched a 'Mediterranean Strategy' and a call for action to halt environmental degradation and the threat for many vulnerable fishing communities.

Garat highlighted that fishing activity in the Mediterranean represents about 1.6% of global catches which translates as 4% of the total value; so protecting this area is a high priority for the different EU fishing fleets operating in these waters. He stressed the need for the sector to be more proactive on this issue which would then serve as an example to neighbouring non-EU countries who have been fishing in these shared waters for centuries.

Garat stated: *"The fishing sector has to take the lead on the recovery of the Mediterranean together with the scientific community, governments and NGOs. Fishermen must be given a real say in forging fisheries policy because only through a real bottom-up approach will there be a better understanding of the rules, which will lead to a culture of compliance."*

"We must also urge Member States and the EU to take adequate measures to reduce pollution, better management of coastal areas and also limit the impact of other human activities on the environment. Very little data exists on the Mediterranean leading to gaps in knowledge. Member States and the Commission need to invest more in research and support scientists to better identify the problem areas and produce tailor-made solutions."

Garat continued: *"We have recently witnessed the spectacular recovery of bluefin tuna, whose quota has been increased by 20% every year. This goes to show that the right measures, coupled with a strong commitment from the industry, will certainly lead to abundant waters and sustainable fishing communities for generations to come."*

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Europêche represents the fisheries sector in Europe. Currently, the Association comprises 14 national organisations of fishing enterprises from the following 9 EU Member States: DE, DK, ES, FR, IT, MT, NL, PL, UK.

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