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EU fishing sector calls for experienced candidates to decide on fisheries policies

- For immediate release -

In light of the upcoming European Parliament elections in May 2019, the fishing industry represented by Europêche reminds the political groups of the importance of the sector in Europe that brings about numerous benefits for the coastal and rural economies. The EU fishing sector is not only a major source of food to secure the livelihoods of millions of European citizens but also an engine for sustainable growth. Fisheries, as an EU exclusive policy, demands people with a lofty sense of responsibility, technical competence and expertise to take sound decisions based on the best available science. Political groups have therefore the duty to select and nominate fit-for-purpose candidates when assembling the EU electoral lists.

More than ever, time calls for EU leaders to focus on the significant role that fisheries plays as economic driver in many outermost, regional and local areas in Europe. For centuries, this activity has been an integral part of the social fabric of every European state inextricably linked to their cultural traditions and regional heritage. Given the socio-economic significance of this sector, which not only includes fishing vessel owners and fishers but also the processing and marketing industries, aquaculture, transport, tourism, restaurants, education, marine research, shipyards and port facilities; Europêche requests the prioritisation of the primary industry, as the first link in the food chain, within the different political programmes.

The fishing body, Europêche, recalls that in some European coastal communities more than half of the local jobs are found in the fishing sector. Regarding food security, on average, the EU fishing fleet catches almost 5 million tonnes of fish a year. That is the equivalent of 48 billion meals a year, enough to feed everyone in the European Union 96 times. Hence, the EU has a responsibility towards the sustainable and responsible use of its resources, including food supply.

More importantly, fisheries is an EU exclusive policy for which the Union holds exclusive competence to regulate and legislate. In this context, Europêche recalls that *“fisheries management is not child's play”*. It involves and requires expertise on complex scientific data, intricate technical and control measures, compound rules on access and quota distribution, intertwined safety and labour standards, multilateral trade and international partnership fisheries agreements, environmental legislation and cross-sectoral marine governance. The chosen candidates will have the difficult task of successfully balancing these factors. The sector therefore demands political groups across Europe to nominate candidates with the technical competence and adequate knowledge to be able to secure the benefits of a thriving fishing industry whilst ensuring the sustainable management of our fish stocks.

Daniel Voces, Managing Director of Europêche, declared: *“We have many challenges ahead of us for the next legislative term. The combination of the ambitious and rigid objectives set by the Common Fisheries Policy to achieve Maximum Sustainable Yield levels by 2020, the implementation of the landing obligation, the low implementation rate of the current fisheries fund and the uncertainty that Brexit is creating are demanding practical and balanced decisions from EU policy-makers. Taken all*

the above into consideration, each political group should have, in our view, a clear candidate to take the lead on fisheries and maritime affairs within the European Parliament so as to continue finding pragmatic solutions and further promoting an innovative, sustainable, competitive and knowledge-based fisheries sector in Europe”.

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