

Recommendations from Gearshift to Moving from Words to Action

May 2, 2005

An international conference¹ including fishermen, conservation groups, scientists and community economic development representatives concluded there are clear negative impacts of trawling or dragging on the sea floor.

The time has come to move from discussing the threats to our oceans to implementing real solutions. The commercial extinction of 11 groundfish species² on the high seas surrounding Newfoundland, the collapse of an undetermined number of coastal stocks and the decimation of coastal communities are examples that must not be followed.

The Canadian Government must:

- 1) Accept results of peer reviewed science and publicly recognize the known effects of fishing gear, particularly bottom trawl (dragger) damage to fish habitat and sea floor species.
- 2) Create incentives for fishermen to shift from damaging and destructive bottom trawling technologies to more appropriate and less destructive gear types.
- 3) Act in a precautionary manner, by freezing the footprint of current bottom trawl areas and designating all other areas closed to bottom trawling gear.
- 4) Manage fisheries, fishing vessels and fishing gear to ensure restoration of sustainable fisheries which will support continued existence of fishing families and coastal communities. Management must adopt a transparent approach to decision making and ministerial discretion that includes full and active participation of coastal fishermen, communities, independent scientists and conservation organizations.
- 5) Support the UN General Assembly resolution for an interim prohibition on bottom trawling on the high seas until appropriate and effective governance regimes are in place.

International Governments and Regional Fisheries Bodies must:

- 1) Limit and control the expansion of destructive fishing technologies in high seas environments by supporting a 2005 resolution at the UN General Assembly for an interim prohibition on bottom trawling on the high seas until there is scientific assessment of deep sea ecosystems,

¹ Gearshift: A Call for Healthy Fisheries At Home and on the High Seas was held in St. John's, Newfoundland April 29-30, 2005.

² Under moratoria: 3NO capelin (1993), 3L cod, 3NO cod, 3M cod, 3LNO American plaice, 3M American plaice, 3NO witch flounder, 3L witch flounder, 3NO shrimp (1995), 3LN redfish (1998). Haddock stocks collapsed in the early 1960s.

habitats, and fisheries and long-term management regimes can be implemented based on the precautionary and ecosystem approaches (Articles 5 and 6 of the UN Fish Stocks Agreement).

National and International Governments must:

1) Implement and maintain effective monitoring, control, surveillance and enforcement including: independent observer programs, in-port and at-sea inspection and reporting, real-time reporting through VMS, red listing of IUU vessels and national enforcement of vessels fishing internationally.

2) Ensure that independent scientific research and assessment, (including open and complete disclosure of data) forms the basis for decisions related to timely and adaptive marine management and fisheries regulation.