

## Think Tank Paper:

### **Background regarding our statement to *Council Regulation (EC) No 734/2008 of 15 July 2008 on the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems in the high seas from the adverse impacts of bottom fishing gears***

In the 1950s, we told ourselves the story of how oceans possess an inexhaustible supply of fish and marine life that can unconditionally serve as our food source. But in the wake of rapid industrialization of fishing and the ruthless pursuit of profit, the fiction that our oceans are inexhaustible has dissipated just as rapidly as the oceans and aquatic life itself. Modern engines and latest technology enable ships to catch enormous amounts of fish and create floating factories that can stay at sea for months to locate swarms of fish with deadly precision, diving to enormous depths for catching even the last remaining fish. Senselessly and needlessly, the last remnants of aquatic species are being plucked from the sea. According to the World Wildlife Fund, industrial exploitation of the oceans has led to overfishing in over 30 percent of all commercial fish stocks, while over 60 percent of the remaining stocks are on the verge of being overfished (as of July 2018). According to the EU Commission, 96 percent of EU stocks in the Mediterranean are overfished. Unsurprisingly, this exploitation adversely affects the oceans' ecosystem; seemingly, this is no deterrent. As a consequence of overfishing, the fishing industry is currently targeting species that constitute a significant segment of the natural food chain for sea mammals such as seals and whales. The death of the oceans may not be the end of the world, but it will be the end of humanity, because if they die, so do we. The pace at which the ecosystem of our oceans is being destroyed is so rapid that in order to ensure our own survival, industrial fishing must be discontinued immediately.

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