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Statement by the BS RAC on compliance and the sustainability of the Baltic cod fishery

The BS RAC recognises that non-compliance is one of the main barriers to maintaining a sustainable cod fishery in the Baltic Sea. That is why the RAC organised the Conference on Control and Compliance in the Baltic cod fishery on 28-29 March 2007.

To continue the process initiated with the Conference, and in light of recent developments, the BS RAC Executive Committee met on 25 October 2007 to discuss problems of control and compliance in the Baltic Sea again. Also present at the meeting were representatives of the European Commission, the Community Fisheries Control Agency and a large group of observers.

Based on the discussion at the meeting, the BS RAC Executive Committee has agreed on the following statement:

The BS RAC supports the statements made at the Fisheries Council on 22-23 October 2007 by the European Commission and Poland concerning the cod fishery in the Baltic Sea and future efforts to improve control and enforcement.

In this context the BS RAC welcomes the constructive intervention by the participants and relevant authorities during the BS RAC Executive Committee 25 October in Warsaw. It emphasises its willingness and commitment to contribute actively to establishing a culture of respect for and compliance with Community fisheries legislation.

The BS RAC recognises that non-compliance is still a serious problem in the Baltic Sea.

The BS RAC extends its support to the Baltic fishermen who conduct their fishing activities in accordance with the rules of the Common Fisheries Policy. In order to safeguard those complying with the rules, better enforcement must be ensured to sanction companies engaged in illegal fishing activities.

The BS RAC urges all fisheries organisations around the Baltic Sea to take an active role in building up a culture of compliance in the Baltic cod fishery.

The BS RAC urges the processing, trading and retail companies to assume their share of responsibility in combating illegal fishing activities.



The BS RAC urges the Baltic Sea Member States to take immediate steps to implement a level playing field of control in the Baltic, including the harmonised use of sanctions.

The BS RAC urges the Baltic Sea Member States to establish and implement sanctions which are proportionate to the type of infringement, but forceful enough to be deterring. For example, in the case of repeated severe infringements by a fishing vessel, it may be appropriate to withdraw its fishing licence.

In order to rapidly improve compliance, control and enforcement, the BS RAC urges the Baltic Sea Member States to increase the powers of the Commission and the Community Fisheries Control Agency (CFCA). For example, to allow the Commission to carry out control activities in Member State's waters without prior notice, and to work with the CFCA to ensure an efficient coordination of control activities by pooling together the control resources of the Baltic Sea Member States at sea and onshore.

The BS RAC encourages the European Commission and the Community Fisheries Control Agency to develop and implement a traceability system for fish and fish products from the point of landing until they reach the consumer. The BS RAC wishes to contribute to this work.

The BS RAC has an important role to play in improving the current situation. It will actively work to establish a comprehensive cooperation between stakeholders and the relevant scientific institutions in order to improve the biological assessment of the Baltic cod stocks. The future success of fisheries management in the Baltic Sea is dependent on a shared understanding of the state of the fish stocks