



# WWF's Essentials for the North Sea Ministerial Meeting

briefing

**The 5th North Sea Ministerial Conference (Bergen, Norway 2002) adopted an ecosystem approach to management of all human activities that affect the North Sea. Shipping and fisheries were identified as activities to be tackled by additional measures and hence, particularly addressed at Ministerial level.**

Since the publication of the regional Quality Status Report (rQSR II) for the Greater North Sea (OSPAR, 2000) and the Progress Report to the 5th North Sea Conference (2002), the ecological status of the North Sea has not improved. Although some progress has been made in other frameworks, such as the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), the OSPAR Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic and the EU, there are grave concerns about the continuing environmental impact of current practices in maritime transport and fishing fleets. Recent trends in both sectors indicate that the number and scale of human impacts on the North Sea ecosystem is increasing rather than being controlled and mitigated:

- Despite the Special Area status of the North Sea under MARPOL, continued illegal discharges of oil and garbage remain a nuisance and lethal threat for marine wildlife, due to gaps in the prosecution of offenders and disincentives to the use of port waste reception facilities.

- While existing IMO instruments for ballast water management are still waiting to be implemented or enter force, the rate of non-indigenous, invasive species introduced by ballast water from ships is steadily increasing and constitutes one of the most serious and critical threats to the ecosystem structure in synergy with other man-made impacts such as climate change effects and eutrophication.

- While land-based sources of greenhouse gas emissions are in the focus of the follow-up to the Kyoto Protocol, air emissions from ships are still to be addressed as they constantly add to adverse climate change effects in the North Sea ecosystem, including sea-level rise, habitat loss and changes in species composition.

- Following three years' independent scientific advice from ICES recommending zero catch, a total allowable catch (TAC) and quotas

for North Sea cod were repeatedly adopted, despite the stock being on the verge of collapse. In total



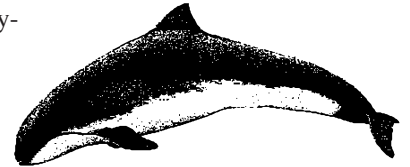
TACs and quotas for 2006 were set 45% above the level scientifically recommended. Mixed fisheries for e.g. Norwegian lobster with a high rate of juvenile cod bycatch were allowed to expand and boom.

- Flatfish fisheries (sole, plaice) in the North Sea contribute to the waste of natural marine resources with the horrendous portion of up to 80% of the catch known to be discarded. The associated



seabed disturbance by beam trawling adds to the destruction of the North Sea environment instead of allowing ecosystem recovery.

- The level of unintended by-catch of harbour porpoises and other marine mammals as well as seabirds



remains unsustainably high because of the reluctant implementation of agreed technical measures, gear improvements and observer schemes.

The above-mentioned examples illustrate an unsustainable situation running contrary to the fundamental principles endorsed by the North Sea Conferences (1984-2002) and the objectives enshrined in the EC Common Fisheries Policy (2002). Current management of human activities in the North Sea is not consistent with the commitments made by North Sea and/or European governments in global fora such as the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD, 2002).



**North Sea Ministerial Meeting on the Environmental Impact of Shipping and Fisheries Gothenburg, Sweden 4-5 May 2006**

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**In the light of these continuing concerns, WWF calls on Environment, Transport and Fisheries Ministers and the Members of the European Commission to adopt the following actions within the Gothenburg Declaration. WWF calls upon Ministers to agree to ...**

### EU Marine Strategy Directive and Maritime Policy

- Undertake a collective effort and initiative to strengthen the proposed EU Marine Strategy Directive in terms of legally binding provisions, targets and criteria to achieve good environmental status (GES);
- Advocate the Marine Strategy to become the backbone of a future EU Maritime Policy, with ramifications into all maritime sectors, including fisheries; and
- Support the development and adoption of a regional marine strategy for the North Sea which will entail the principles, objectives and targets so far adopted by North Sea Ministerial Meetings.

### Shipping

- Urge the North Sea States that have not done so to ratify the International Convention on Liability and Compensation for Damage in Connection with the Carriage of Hazardous and Noxious Substances by Sea (HNS) 1996, Annex VI, 1997, of MARPOL 73/78, the International Convention on the Control of Harmful Anti-fouling Systems on Ships (AFS) 2001 and the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediment 2004;

#### In the spotlight: ballast water from ships



The amount of shipping transports, in particular transoceanic shipping, has increased and the vessels are both bigger and faster resulting in enhanced chances of survival and risk of introduction of alien species. Annually, 3-5 billions of tons of ballast water are transported across the world and each day approximately 7000 species are hitch-hiking through the oceans including to the North Sea which contains some of the world's busiest shipping lanes.

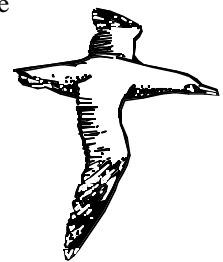
- Aim at removing disincentives (fees) to the use of port waste reception facilities and establishing a 100% no-special-fee system in North Sea ports;
- Tighten up the enforcement of maritime pollution rules and make illegal discharges in any part of the North Sea an offence under the law of each North Sea State;
- Take action at IMO level to combine the phase-out of single hull tankers with enhanced control and maintenance of double hull tankers; and
- Promote a holistic Clean Ship Approach to eliminate harmful discharges and emissions from a vessel's „cradle“ to its „grave“ by addressing all aspects of its construction, operation and dismantling. Aim to progressively improve regulatory shipping standards at international level while taking advantage of existing and encouraging new voluntary initiatives in shipping industry.

### Fisheries

- Reaffirm their commitment to effectively and progressively implement the ecosystem approach to fisheries management;
- Make every endeavour to promote and introduce fishing gear and fishing methods that help minimise by-catches of

non-target organisms and habitat disturbance and reduce incidental by-catches of marine mammals to less than 1% of the best population estimate;

- Acknowledge the synergies between marine protected areas (MPAs) designated for the conservation and/or restoration of the marine environment and closed areas for fisheries management in the context of marine spatial planning, and the need to develop management plans for fisheries in MPAs;
- Urge the competent fisheries authorities to ...
  - Develop and adopt, by 2008, a Fisheries Ecosystem Plan for the North Sea;
  - Introduce, by 2008, Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) procedures and guidelines to be applied to new and existing fishing plans or programmes, and address effects on sensitive species and habitats within Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) procedures for fishing methods;
  - Effectively implement the measures outlined in the cod recovery plan, including the effort limitation regime, pending further evaluation and review;
  - Support the introduction of an effort limitation as an alternative to the current TAC regime for certain North Sea mixed demersal fisheries;
  - Introduce efficient measures to minimise discarding and high-grading, such as the development of selective fishing gear, real reduction of fleet overcapacity, observer programmes and monitoring, and discard bans; and
  - Designate, by 2008, experimental closed areas of sufficient size and duration aimed at contributing to the recovery of demersal fish stocks.



#### WWF briefings and background resources available during the North Sea Ministerial Meeting 2006

- North Sea still on „sick-leave“
  - Marine Spatial Tools: MPAs and Closed Areas
  - North-East Atlantic and Baltic Health Check Report
- Biodiversity Assessment and Threats Analysis for the North-East Atlantic Shelf Ecoregion
  - Saving the Treasures of the Sea - by creating networks of marine protected areas in the North-East Atlantic
  - Managing Across Boundaries: the Dogger Bank - a future international marine protected area

Also available as downloads from <http://www.wwfneap.org>

- Fish Voice - an Independent View from the Fish
- Long-term management plans for North Sea fisheries
  - Reducing the ecological impacts of fishing
    - Managing fishing fleets
    - Working to reduce fisheries bycatch
- Restoring Europe's Fisheries - A New WWF Initiative
  - The fisheries benefits of marine protected areas
  - Essential guide to successful recovery plans for Europe's fish stocks
- PSSAs - a tool to protect the world's sensitive marine ecosystems from shipping impacts

Also available as downloads from <http://www.panda.org>

- Marine Protected Areas in the Context of Marine Spatial Planning - Discussing the Links
  - Marine update: WWF's Draft Marine Bill
  - Marine update: Marine spatial planning

Also available as downloads from <http://www.wwf.org.uk>