

DECLARATION BY THE EUROPEAN FISHING COMMUNITIES ON THE FUTURE OF THE FISHERIES SECTOR IN EUROPE AFTER BREXIT

We, representatives of European fishing communities, are gathered here in Santiago de Compostela, on October 25 2017, with one joint, shared, purpose. To call upon European governments, the European Council, the European Commission, and the European Parliament to make fisheries a priority in the Brexit negotiations and to safeguard the economic and social future of European fishing and coastal communities.

European coastal and fishing communities have relied on the fishing industry for their social, economic and cultural development for centuries. Indeed – the fishing industry is at the heart of our shared culture and traditions in Europe. It has, for centuries, shaped lives and values throughout the continent and provided food for millions of Europeans over centuries.

Fisheries embody the ideals of the European Union, such as shared territorial sovereignty and sharing resources in the common interest of all Member States, like no other. Fishing communities know the value of borderless travel and cross border commerce. We have built links across geographic and language barriers for centuries – all the while prioritizing the importance of solidarity, and cooperation, in the face of common challenges.

Through this ethos of co-operation, best exemplified by years of joint sustainable management of shared fish stocks, the fishing industry has continuously supported coastal communities – providing valuable employment, income and stability.

The economic prosperity of coastal communities in European regions and countries bordering the Atlantic and the North Sea is closely linked to our relationship with the United Kingdom. We have, for centuries, shared resources and fishing grounds with our British colleagues.

We note with concern that the planned departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union has created considerable uncertainty for the fisheries sector and for the coastal communities that the sector supports. These are communities that – in the most part – are already facing significant homegrown socio-economic challenges, independent of Brexit, such as maintaining sustainable employment and avoiding de-population. *We also note with concern* that many British policy makers and fisheries professionals have signaled their intention to move away from a fisheries management model based on cooperation and on the acknowledgment of our economic interdependence. Many appear to see Brexit as an opportunity to exclude European fishermen from their traditional fishing grounds. Fish caught in those waters have supported our communities for many centuries. As such, continued access to those waters is of fundamental importance for the survival and continued prosperity of our coastal communities.

We also note with concern that many in the UK see Brexit as an opportunity to unilaterally alter the distribution of catch quota. A distribution that has allowed our economic prosperity for years.

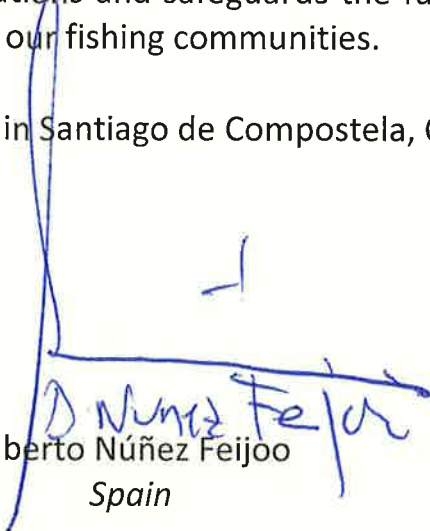
We call upon European decision-makers to take into account the challenges faced by coastal communities in Europe. We call upon them to uphold the principle of reciprocity in trade relationships so as to make access to European markets for British seafood products conditional on access to fishing grounds for our fleets.

European decision-makers need to work to support fishing communities all across Europe by upholding the values that we, across Europe, share. We ask these decision makers to aim for an agreement that will guarantee long-term economic prosperity for our communities and sustainable management of fish stocks.

By our very nature, and through our shared history, European fishing communities will be the first to experience the new relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union. The future social and economic prosperity of our communities - and the fishing industry – will depend on European policy-makers approaching the issue rationally, sensibly and with an understanding of the shared history of European fisheries in mind.

We stand here today, united in a common purpose to ensure that fisheries is a priority in Brexit negotiations and safeguards the future of our social and economic prosperity for our fishing communities.

Signed in Santiago de Compostela, October 23rd 2017



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