



PRESS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Jackie Marks
(301) 459.9570

SEAWEB APPLAUDS EU AND US BILATERAL STATEMENT TO COMBAT INTERNATIONAL PIRATE FISHING

SILVER SPRING, MD – The European Union and United States (US) today signed a landmark bilateral statement highlighting the need for international cooperation to effectively combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, also known as “pirate fishing.” Spearheading today’s unprecedented effort are Maria Damanaki, European Union (EU) Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, and Dr. Jane Lubchenco, Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and Administrator, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

The United States and EU rank among the world’s top three seafood importers and fully recognize their responsibility to ensure that all seafood imported onto EU and US soil is sourced legally. Preventing IUU fishing will help secure livelihoods, safeguard growing economies, protect human rights and achieve a healthier marine ecosystem. This international effort includes the exchange of information, strengthened monitoring and enforcement of sustainable management measures, reinforcement for bilateral cooperation at the technical and political level, and support for ratification of the FAO Port State Measures Agreement.

“SeaWeb applauds the signing of this historic bilateral statement between the European Union and United States on efforts to combat the horrendous problem of pirate fishing,” said Dawn M. Martin, President and CEO of SeaWeb. “This unprecedented level of cooperation represents a giant leap forward in stopping unscrupulous fishing operators from threatening the world’s ocean, damaging developing economies, undermining legitimate businesses, robbing hard working families of their livelihoods, and violating human rights.”

Pirate fishing threatens fisheries and livelihoods on a global scale, costing fishermen and coastal communities up to \$23 billion (US) per year in seafood and seafood products. Pirates can gain a competitive advantage by circumventing international laws and regulations by using banned fishing gear, fishing in restricted areas or inside national boundaries without permission, and misreporting of catches. It is estimated that up to 20 percent of fisheries are illegal. Documented human rights abuses include: incarceration of crew members, withholding of pay, confiscation of documents, violence, confinement on the ship for months or even years, and a lack of safe food and clean water.

The legitimate seafood industry plays an increasingly important role in ensuring seafood is sourced legally and that consumers are receiving a sustainably sourced product. Norpac Fisheries Export (Norpac) is an important stakeholder in the Central and Western Pacific Highly Migratory Species (HMS) fishery, and is involved with developing global solutions that suppress IUU fishing through a combination of technology and industry experience. Norpac’s systems have been deployed by other countries in their battle against pirate fishing. These systems include traceability of raw materials and finished goods through the entire logistics chain.

“Norpac actively supports the effort to combat IUU fishing and to improve fisheries management, and commends the leadership position taken by Commissioner Damanaki and Dr. Lubchenco,” said Tom Kraft, Managing Member of Norpac. “We look forward to working with both governments to

enhance their efforts against pirate fishing, and with NGOs, such as SeaWeb, that are highly effective in helping to drive responsible dialog and action among the key stakeholders.”

High Liner Foods Inc. has adopted a policy of not purchasing raw materials from IUU fisheries and aquaculture operations, in addition to supporting responsible and ethical business practices that promote the long term viability of natural resources.

“IUU fishing undermines our efforts toward ensuring a more sustainable seafood industry. It also creates economic hardships for businesses, families and whole communities worldwide whose livelihoods depend on legal and responsible fishing,” said Henry Demone, President and CEO of High Liner Foods, Inc. “It will take a global commitment by governments, industry leaders, NGOs and other stakeholders, to combat IUU fishing and we are proud to be part of that effort.”

For more than a decade SeaWeb has successfully collaborated with representatives across the seafood supply chain raising awareness about issues such as pirate fishing and providing support for industry leaders to influence policy and the behavior of their peers toward a more sustainable future for the ocean.

“SeaWeb is pleased to see so much progress on this type of international cooperation and would welcome other governments to seek to establish similar agreements among impacted nations,” said Martin. “Our hope is that today’s action marks the beginning of ongoing transatlantic dialogues on ocean health and sustainability.”

SeaWeb’s Seafood Choices flagship event, the annual Seafood Summit, has provided a platform for productive dialogue on IUU as the event brings together a full range of stakeholders on issues pertaining to the global seafood industry with the goal of making the seafood marketplace environmentally, socially and economically sustainable. The Seafood Summit will venture into Asia in September 2012 for its 10th International Summit in Hong Kong, in order to expand international dialogue about the many factors influencing the rapidly changing sustainability seascape.

SeaWeb is the only international, nonprofit organization exclusively dedicated to using the science of communications to transform people’s relationship with the ocean. We transform knowledge into action by shining a spotlight on workable, science-based solutions to some of the most serious threats facing the ocean, such as climate change, pollution and depletion of marine life. We work collaboratively with targeted sectors to encourage market solutions, policies and behaviors that result in a healthy, thriving ocean. By informing and empowering diverse ocean voices and conservation champions, SeaWeb is creating a culture of ocean conservation. www.seaweb.org

Seafood Choices is an international program of SeaWeb that provides leadership and creates opportunities for change across the seafood industry and ocean conservation community. We seek to create synergies and help identify creative solutions to long-held challenges. By building relationships and stimulating dialogue, Seafood Choices is encouraging and challenging all sectors of the seafood industry along the road toward sustainability. www.seafoodchoices.org

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EDITOR’S NOTE: To arrange interviews or for more information about IUU or SeaWeb’s work, contact Jackie Marks at jmarks@seaweb.org or +1 (301) 495.9570. Photos available via SeaWeb’s Marine Photobank: contact Devin Harvey at dharvey@seaweb.org or www.marinephotobank.org.

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