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**Speaking notes - Communication on a
new Strategy for the Sustainable
Development of European Aquaculture**

*Check Against Delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort*

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Strasbourg, 17 June 2010.

Dear Chair, Honourable Members,

I am very pleased to have the opportunity today to listen to your views on our Communication on a new Strategy for the Sustainable Development of European Aquaculture. I very much welcome the report prepared by Mr Milana and congratulate him for the way in which he has brought together all opinions. I would like to comment briefly on some aspects of this report.

First, I appreciate your support for a greater focus on our aquaculture sector. EU aquaculture is at the forefront of sustainable development. Our industry already benefits from the recognition of its assets: the high quality of its products and its environmental sustainability help it develop in a context supported by the most advanced research. In close association with stakeholders, the Commission will pursue its efforts to support research and technological developments.

Second, EU aquaculture complements our capture sector and is an integral part of the Common Fisheries Policy. Aquaculture activities depend upon a range of EU policies in areas such as environmental protection, animal health and welfare, consumer protection, trade and research. Mr. Milana's report proposes to include within a single Regulation all measures that govern the aquaculture sector and I would like to inform you that at this point in time I have not yet concluded whether we should go in that direction.. What we should do, however, is to give aquaculture a clearer focus in the context of the ongoing reform of the CFP. The Commission should also:

- consolidate and simplify the EU legislative framework;
- better integrate aquaculture considerations into our cross-cutting EU policies; and
- promote a coordinated approach between the different areas in order to make the development of aquaculture a truly collaborative effort.

However, on governance and better legislation, we must recognise that a number of measures to address the aquaculture challenges largely depend on decisions taken by national and local authorities. I fully share your call for streamlining administrative procedures, notably on licensing, and for developing spatial planning; I also fully support setting up national or regional aquaculture programmes to allow EU aquaculture to realise its full potential.

I would like to address now some more specific issues that are also raised in Mr Milana's report.

The Commission will continue to ensure environmental protection in its policies and actions. We will also develop guidelines on aquaculture in relation to environment protection instruments, such as the Natura 2000 network, to allow for an improved level playing field among Member States.

In this context, I would also refer to predators benefiting from strict protection status in Europe –notably cormorants. I have listened carefully to your renewed call for a European cormorant management plan. The Commission agrees on the need for more coordinated action, but does not consider at this stage that an EU-wide management plan would be an appropriate measure due to a lack of consensus between Member States on the type of action to take.

Staying with environmental sustainability issues, we all share the view that responsible production of fish feed is a prerequisite to sustainable aquaculture. Fishing for fishmeal must be sustainably managed. I am also convinced that the move to progressively substitute fish meal and fish oil in feed for carnivorous farmed fish with ingredients from other sources, notably plants, should continue, with support in particular from continued research and selection of fish.

This brings me to fish welfare considerations. The Commission is promoting a species-dependent approach when evaluating fish welfare in aquaculture. However, putting into place too detailed rules for the farming, transportation and killing of different fish species will add to the legislative and administrative burden applicable to EU operators.

Guaranteeing animal welfare also implies gaining access to veterinary medicines where necessary. The Commission is presently conducting a public consultation with the view to assessing, and possibly reviewing, current veterinary pharmaceutical legislation, in order to address in particular the problem of insufficient availability of authorised medicines for use in farmed animals, while ensuring full protection of consumers with regard to possible residues of such medicines in food.

To conclude I would reiterate that aquaculture is truly part of the Common Fisheries Policy, and that it should be covered under the new legislative framework of the CFP. We need to help the sector organise itself more efficiently and in particular strengthen its producer and inter-branch organisations to better link production forecasts to market needs and ensure higher value for their products through marketing and labelling.

Similarly, looking ahead to the post-2013 financial framework we will have to define which priorities should enjoy specific EU financial support. No decision has been taken so far, but my preference would clearly be for a financial instrument in support of the reformed CFP, in which aquaculture would be given an appropriate place.

Your report contributes relevant and interesting ideas to these considerations. We will continue to involve all stakeholders in the development of the CFP reform process and I look forward to pursuing work with you on how to best shape these new policies.

Thank you.