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**Speaking points on imports of fisheries
and aquaculture products (Cadec
report)**

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

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Mister President, Honourable Members,

First of all I would like to thank Mr Cadec and the EP committees that have sponsored this own initiative report. You have regretted that the Green Paper on the CFP Reform did not pay enough attention to the issues you raise here. My objective today is to reassure you that the Commission is committed to work taking into full account all policies that have an impact on the CFP Reform.

As I have stated from the outset, the purpose of the reform is to turn around the negative spiral we are in now. We have a fisheries sector that is neither ecologically sustainable nor economically performing well. We need robust fisheries that ensure sustainable exploitation of the resources while allowing our fishermen, their families and the communities involved making a decent living from their activities. We need fisheries that are ready to meet the challenges of the market, both national and international, and both currently and for the future.

I hear your concerns about unfair competition from third countries and the absence of level playing field in terms of social conditions, environmental and sustainability requirements, health protection laws. Let me share with you that this same concern has been voiced by all Member States who took the floor at the last "Agriculture and Fisheries" Council on 29 June. So we need to answer here.

While we are changing the rules for European fisheries in the context of our CFP Reform, one of the biggest challenges will be precisely to do our best in order to secure a level playing field for all products placed in the EU market. In this respect, for instance, we should all work together to fully and effectively implement our legislation against illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing (IUU). I would also like to say that we remain committed to promoting the respect of all international principles and instruments of good maritime and fishery governance by our partners, as well as their responsible behaviour in terms of environmental protection and social conditions.

I strongly support your call for an increased coherence of our policies. We need to work together with a global and integrated vision.

Two thirds of the fish consumed in Europe is already imported in order to ensure a steady supply of raw material to our processing industry and fair prices to consumers. Yet one third of the EU market still is supplied by an EU sector that represents jobs and is part of the social fabric of many regions in Europe.

While we are in the middle of a serious reform of our Common Fisheries Policy, EU trade policy should continue to take into account the complex nature of the EU's fishing sector and its economic and social realities. I look forward to working closely together with my colleague Mr De Gucht in order to secure the necessary time for the adjustments that are needed taking into account the pace of the ongoing CFP reform.

With reference to WTO negotiations, we pay particular attention to the ongoing discussions on subsidies. It is our view that we should always be able to support environmentally friendly and innovation-oriented initiatives of our Member States.

Concerning the revision of the Market Policy, I agree with the draft report, that the new market policy of the CFP should revisit the instruments of the current Common Market Organisation (CMO). The revision should aim at strengthening producer organisations in their ability to better link supply to demand in terms of quality and volumes. It shall also support market supply and stability and review provisions on marketing standards and information to consumers.

Regarding labelling: Consumers want to know more about the seafood they buy. They want to know where the fish was caught or raised. Also, they want to know whether the products respect the environment, and whether they have been fished

sustainably. The Commission is ready to work on legislative initiatives, aiming at giving to the consumers the information they need about where all products come from.

Finally, a word on aquaculture. The Commission is fully committed to achieving the objectives of the Strategy for the Sustainable Development of European Aquaculture. As we have already discussed in the EP report, we also share the view that further developing aquaculture in the EU can lead to a reduced dependence on imports and better respond to a constantly rising consumer demand.

Before closing I would like to stress that today's debate will provide an important contribution to the preparation of the CFP Reform; it will also send an important political signal to the men and women of the European fisheries sector, who prepare for tougher disciplines but are also expecting a message of hope for their future.