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Press Statement

For immediate release: 26 October 2010

EU shying away from firm commitment on bluefin tuna conservation

Rome, Italy – WWF is disappointed at the lack of ambition shown by Mediterranean EU Members States at today's European Fisheries Council in Luxembourg, on a new recovery plan for Atlantic bluefin tuna.

“Mediterranean countries have refused fishing cuts which are indispensable for saving Atlantic bluefin tuna from recovery – and for safeguarding the future of their own millennial artisanal fishing sector,” Dr Sergi Tudela, Head of Fisheries at WWF Mediterranean

WWF commends the UK, Germany and Sweden for agreeing with EU Fisheries Commissioner Damanaki on the need to take all necessary action to rescue bluefin tuna – while deploring that France's Minister, whose fleet is notorious for overfishing bluefin tuna, is not taking responsibility and is instead defending the status quo. WWF urges EU Member States to back a cut in total annual bluefin catch to below 6,000 tonnes and the protection of spawning areas – as only these steps will give a chance of recovery to bluefin tuna.

“With the EU Common Fisheries Policy reform due for the end of 2012, Fisheries Ministers must see beyond their short-term interests and get serious about building sustainable fisheries for the future,” said Tudela. “These countries are legally obliged under the EU Marine Strategic Framework Directive to restore healthy fish stocks by 2020 – which in the case of bluefin tuna means a total annual catch quota of less than 6,000 tonnes. It is not an option to break out of the EU legal framework.”

Next month in Paris, France, parties to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) will gather to decide new measures that will define the fate of Atlantic bluefin tuna.

“As the body representing all 27 EU Member States at ICCAT, the European Commission needs a strong and unambiguous negotiating mandate for the Paris meeting, which Commissioner Damanaki is trying to establish,” said Tudela of WWF. “That this ambition should be thwarted by the very countries whose fishing future depends on it, is deplorable and indefensible.”

For further information, interviews with WWF fisheries policy experts, or photos, please contact:

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See WWF's position for ICCAT 2010:

http://wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/footprint/smart_fishing/sustainable_fisheries/bluefin_tuna/bluefin_tuna_news/?195536/Cut-catch-by-over-half-and-close-spawning-areas-to-save-bluefin-tuna-says-WWF