

Committee on Fisheries meeting March 2-6, 2009

IUCN's statement on Agenda Item 10 Climate change

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

IUCN the International Union for Conservation of Nature draws attention to a study by researchers at universities in Canada, the UK and the United States released last month at a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. That study gave warning that climate-driven environmental changes could greatly affect the distribution of many commercially important fish stocks. It is now clear that the climate is changing, temperatures are rising, and ice is melting. Already, some fish stocks appear to be migrating towards the poles. Ocean waters are becoming more acidic, thus also affecting the basis of the marine food chain with repercussions on the world's fisheries. The effects of these changes are projected to be particularly harmful to fisheries in tropical and subtropical areas. We urge continued attention of this issue with consideration of steps that could be taken to lesson the impact on the poor who are particularly dependent on protein from marine capture fish.

We welcome the announcement by an Arctic coastal states that has closed or will close waters under its jurisdiction to fishing efforts in new areas until such time as scientific study and assessments have been completed that will enable fishing activities to go forward in a sustainable way. At the same time indigenous populations may continue to fish for subsistence as they always have. This action could serve as an example for other states to introduce now necessary conservation measures in areas subject to their jurisdiction. IUCN supports the development of a regional arrangement or organization to manage and conserve targeted fish stocks and dependent and related species and ecosystems throughout the Arctic. Such a regional arrangement or organization should be developed now, before a race to develop any fisheries develops.

In a broader context, IUCN calls for an improved management of the world's fisheries resources with due considerations to climate change and its projected broad impact to the ocean ecosystems.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman