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Dr. Caroline Lucas
Member of the European Parliament
European Parliament
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B-1047 Brussels

Dear Dr. Lucas,

Thank you very much for your letter of 17 February 2003.

The Commission shares your concern and is aware of the detrimental impact certain shrimp fisheries can have on the environment. The Commission has therefore financed research studies on methods of reducing discards and the collateral environmental damage caused by these fisheries.

Globally and also within EU, fishing for shrimp is carried out with a variety of fishing methods and techniques; some shrimp trawlers are small vessels that fish in coastal waters; some are large factory vessels that fish in deep waters. The impact on the environment of shrimp fishing differs and it is therefore necessary to address each fishery specifically.

Within the Community this work has started as you correctly noted in your letter and substantial reduction of by-catch has been achieved in some fisheries. I, however, agree that we need to do more to avoid or continue to reduce by catches. By-catches of marine organisms of low or no commercial value are discarded and the Commission has recently presented an action plan for reduction of discards generally for EU fisheries. An important part of the plan is to encourage further research and trial of more selective and environmentally friendly fishing methods. The reformed CFP will also offer improved possibilities to address these issues.

As for our fishing agreements with third countries, the Commission has as a part of the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy proposed changes into the Community's fisheries agreements with third countries that will aim to promote responsible and sustainable fishing. In December 2002, a Communication from the Commission entitled « On an integrated framework for fisheries partnerships with third countries » outlined the approach that the Commission would like to be adopted, and this includes specifically the need to take into account the effects of fishing on the marine ecosystem. The new

partnership agreements will place more emphasis on the provisions contained in UNCLOS. In this respect I can assure you that the Commission is as committed to ensuring sustainable fisheries in the waters of third countries as it is for Community waters in accordance with our commitments in the Johannesburg Summit.

Yours sincerely,



Margot WALLSTRÖM