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### **Canada Weighs Down Global Momentum at UN Negotiations**

October 6, 2006, Halifax/Vancouver: As the first round of U.N. debates on oceans draw to a close in New York, Canada has yet to declare whether or not it will support a moratorium on High Seas Bottom Trawling. While countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, the U.K., and the U.S. are showing support for protecting the high seas through an interim moratorium, Canada is still sitting on the fence.

For years Canada has fought out-of-control trawling by foreign fleets on the nose and tail of the Grand Banks of Newfoundland, yet when an opportunity arises to stop pirate fishing on the high seas, Fisheries and Oceans Canada appears to be more aligned with their traditional high seas foe, Spain, than they do with their traditional allies.

“Canada’s failure to take a leadership role in this debate is inexplicable,” says Jennifer Lash of Living Oceans Society. “Past Canadian governments have denounced bottom trawling on the high seas, fired on a Spanish vessel and seized its nets, and even tried to blame the cod crash on foreign fleets. Now that there is a real opportunity to stop this activity they are balking.”

On Monday, President Bush issued a memorandum to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to protect sustainable fisheries by calling for an end to destructive fishing practices, such as unregulated bottom trawling on the high seas.

“I guess even we underestimated the hold of the dragger industry on the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans,” said Mark Butler of the Ecology Action Centre. “That he should line up with countries like Spain to oppose the moratorium disregards the views of scientists, most fishermen, the Canadian public, and countries such as the U.K., Australia, Norway, Brazil, and the US. It says a lot about the power of that sector of the Canadian fishing industry.”

Instead of stepping up to protect the world’s seamounts in partnership with other countries, Canada took the small step of protecting only four seamounts at this September’s North Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) meetings. The seamounts will be “protected” for only three years without any enforcement.

Organizations from across Canada and around the world such as Living Oceans Society, the Ecology Action Centre, and the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition, are calling on the

192 member-nations of the United Nations General Assembly to uphold the U.N.'s call for an interim prohibition on bottom trawling issued two years ago.

If a moratorium is not put in place this fall, it will be one full year before the UNGA will hear debates on the issue again and damage to the oceans will continue unabated.

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For further information contact:

Jennifer Lash, Executive Director, Living Oceans Society (250) 741-4006

Mark Butler, Ecology Action Centre (902) 429-5207