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Joint statement from Maria Damanaki, European Union Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, and Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D., United States Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere

Note: Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D., United States Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, and Maria Damanaki, European Union Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, issued the following joint statement on sustainable fisheries management today as the two leaders delivered remarks to the EU Parliament on EU/US cooperation in Brussels:

As European Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries and U.S. Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, we come together this week to advance our shared goals of healthy oceans and seafood, prosperous and sustainable fisheries, and economically vibrant coastal communities. To achieve these goals, we recognize the importance of putting into place policies and practices that favor long-term sustainability and prosperity.

We are here today to acknowledge the progress to date on rebuilding sustainable fisheries, promoting sustainable aquaculture, and combating pirate fishing (also called illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing). We recognize the importance of strong international cooperation to achieve sustainable and legal fisheries on a global scale.

We have identified the most effective tools for rebuilding and maintaining sustainable fisheries. These tools include:

- A science-based, precautionary, and ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management;
- Working partnerships to conduct cooperative scientific research and to develop innovative fisheries management strategies that improve profits while sustaining healthy fisheries;
- Strong measures to combat pirate fishing because it leads to unfair competition for law-abiding fishermen in the marketplace, and it undermines efforts to manage fisheries sustainably;
- Sustainable aquaculture to meet the growing demand for seafood that wild fisheries alone cannot satisfy;
- Global leadership and a commitment to implement best practices for using these tools.

The United States turned the corner on ending overfishing and rebuilding sustainable domestic fisheries with the help of specific tools provided by the U.S. Congress in the landmark

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, with the commitment of U.S. fishermen to rebuild sustainable and profitable fisheries, and with the use of catch shares to align fishing and conservation incentives. The United States implemented annual catch limits and accountability measures in all federally managed fisheries, which are designed to end overfishing and rebuild stocks. The latest report shows that 79 percent of U.S. fish populations that were scientifically examined are at or above a level able to provide maximum sustainable fishing. Around a third of federally managed stocks are now managed with catch share programs, resulting in greater profitability, safer fishing conditions, and lower by-catch.

The EU is engaged in the development of a drastically reformed Common Fisheries Policy that draws upon similar tools. This reform emphasizes the central importance of following scientific advice for exploitation of the resources, setting concrete deadlines for reaching maximum sustainable yield of fisheries, and open, highly participatory regional decision-making. The reform also aims to eliminate wasteful practices, such as discarding of unwanted catches.

Reversing the decline of fish populations requires time for stocks to rebuild and long-term commitment of managers, the fishing industry, processors, coastal communities, and other stakeholders. We believe, as has been the case in the United States, that taking steps to reverse these declines will be repaid by greater rewards – sustainable and profitable fishing, healthy seafood and thriving coastal communities.

As the EU and U.S. continue the hard work of rebuilding domestic fisheries, we are also making progress in combating pirate fishing to level the playing field for law-abiding fishermen. As two of the largest harvesters of seafood and two of the largest markets for it, we have a responsibility to ensure that seafood provided to consumers, whether domestically produced or imported, is fished in accordance with responsible fishery management measures. Since we signed the statement last September in which we agreed to join forces against pirate fishing, the EU and U.S. have improved coordination and strengthened monitoring and enforcement. We have also worked together to secure adoption of stronger science-based management measures by the various regional fishery management organizations responsible for managing internationally shared fisheries. Our partnership to combat pirate fishing is a down payment on our larger shared commitment to sustainable fisheries, healthy seafood and prosperous fishing and fishing industry jobs.

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For more information on Lubchenco's visit to Brussels go to:
http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/stories/2012/05/05_30_12_international_page.html

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