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**Conclusions of the Kick off meeting of the European Fisheries Technology Platform, Navalia, Vigo, 18th May 2010
by Guy Vernaève, Secretary-General, Europêche**

Ladies and gentlemen,

I've been asked to draw the conclusions of this kick off meeting and I have accepted this task with great pleasure and honour. I will therefore now attempt to do this as well as possible.

As indicated this morning by Javier Garat, President of Europêche, the idea of creating a European Fisheries Technology Platform especially originates from the fishing industry, even if it was also encouraged by Mr. Borg's Cabinet some time ago. Today, it has already gathered over 30 associations and organizations from different European countries.

There have been **2 working sessions** during this meeting.

During the **first one**, the EFTP has been considered from a triple point of view: the Administrations, the European ship owner's sector and the European fisheries supplying industry.

I have noted from the various speakers' interventions and presentations that, as the European fishing industry is highly dependent on research and innovation, there is a clear consciousness that the initiative to create a European Fisheries Technological Platform could be the right and efficient tool, in order to promote the transition from a high cost traditional sector to a more competitive, sustainable and modern one.

The initiative is indeed welcomed by the Commission and has been supported this morning by various services of the Spanish Administration.

Such a platform, envisaging to bring together all research and technological innovation projects relating to the fisheries sector, should be framed in the context of the ETP definition, that is a major pan-European mission-oriented initiative aimed at strengthening Europe's capacity to organize and deliver innovation and capable of bringing together all relevant stakeholders to identify the innovation challenge, develop the necessary research programme and implement the results.

I've also understood from the industry's statements that this initiative will allow a larger technological development in the fishing sector and that it will modernize the activities of ship owners, processors and traders, making them more sustainable, efficient and competitive in the long term.

During the **second session of work**, three topics were raised: the EFTP structure, the EFTP working groups and the EFTP future roadmap. Let me summarize what I think is now valuable for the future.

I hope you can agree with me that it is necessary to make sure that the **organizational structure of the EFTP** be light and dynamic, as Maribel Rodríguez from the EFTP Secretariat pointed out. It should always be adjusted to the evolving needs of its members. Let us therefore think about a Board of Directors, in which the fishing sector should play a leading role, taking forward and consolidating the "vision" of the EFTP as a preliminary step towards developing a strategic research agenda, a Steering group to put the EFTP strategies into practice and a few working groups, probably 6 as identified today, plus of course a General Assembly, as the highest authority of the platform, responsible for the nomination of the members of the Board of Directors and for the approval of the administrative, financial and operational actions of the EFTP.

As far as the **EFTP working groups** are concerned, I think we can all accept that the thematic areas can be those identified this afternoon, even if their structure might still vary as it is not set in stone. The working groups should be free to choose their members, while the Chair should come from the industry, and they will have to develop training modules, guidelines and systems in order to improve standards regarding for instance safety and quality of life on board, handling of materials, etc.

We should also take into consideration the comments made by the Commission two months ago in a letter to *Europêche*, i.e. the involvement of the RACs, the necessary synergies with other existing platforms such as the ETP "Waterbone" or "Food for Life".

Concerning the **2010 EFTP roadmap**, I would like to stress that a proper roadmap is essential for a successful launch of the EFTP. It should establish the necessary means to reach the initial targets of the platform. At this very stage, I think we have moved forward quite considerably: we have an agreed structure of the platform, we have a code of ethics, a voluntary code of practice, terms of reference for each working group, and we almost have an advanced draft vision 2025 document.

Ladies and gentlemen,

There is however still much to do: the EFTP's clear composition, its representativeness and the necessary balances between stakeholders in the different bodies, as indicated by Rosa Fernández from the EFTP Secretariat, the definition of a legal personality for this platform, the memorandum of understanding recognizing the role developed so far by the present technical Secretariat and committing to continue assuming it function in the future, together with a proper Secretariat that would run the platform once it has an official status. It is indeed important to have a legal form and statutes for the EFTP to gain capacity to operate and also particularly if we want to submit projects for co-financing under calls of proposals of the Commission 7th Research Framework Programme running until 2013. In this context, we could follow the model of the European Aquaculture Technology and Innovation Platform which was born a year ago and which has chosen the AISBL, the acronym of an international Association without lucrative goals under Belgian law, should the Secretariat of the platform wish to be established in Belgium.

The way ahead: Europêche, representing the European fishing fleet owners, will celebrate its next general Assembly in Brussels on the 30th of June. We have already planned a presentation of the European Fisheries Technological Platform on this occasion because it is clear that the success of the initiative we are talking about today will highly depend on those who are involved and therefore, among various stakeholders, **we definitely need to attract fishing companies that are behind our national organizations and persuade them to play an active role in EFTP, besides other companies representing the whole value chain of European fishing industry. In other words, we must integrate all relevant players in the fisheries value chain in the process of Research, Development and Innovation.**

After that, I think we should seek to celebrate another meeting in Brussels, during the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU, so as to have the time to solve pending questions and make decisions about outstanding issues. At that meeting, the core members of the EFTP Board of Directors should be presented and the first version of the vision document should be agreed upon. In this respect, I was wondering whether we could match up this meeting with an Info Day called “the Ocean of tomorrow”, that is aimed at joining research forces to meet challenges in ocean management. This event will take place in the Conference centre of the European Commission on the 9th of September and Commissioners Geoghegan-Quinn (Research and Innovation) as well as Damanaki (Fisheries and Maritime Affairs) have been invited to participate take.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Before leaving it to the Chairman to close the meeting, I would like to draw the attention of this Assembly to some important items for an initiative such as this EFTP to become effective: - **one must seek the restructuring of a traditional industrial sector like the fishing industry; - one must clearly commit the industry and involve Member States, so as to be in phase with what they do in fisheries research and innovation; -one must make sure a wide range of stakeholders are represented in the platform; - and we must be selective in the areas we want to address and always be closed to the industry’s needs and requests.** Most of these points have been recalled to us by the Commission itself on several occasions.

With these final words, I would like to thank you for your attention and now give the floor back to the Chairman of this session.

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