

**CALLING ON MSC TO STAND UP FOR ITS VISION OF “THE WORLD’S OCEANS TO BE TEEMING WITH LIFE, AND SEAFOOD SUPPLIES SAFEGUARDED FOR THIS AND FUTURE GENERATIONS”<sup>1</sup> AND ITS PROMISE TO RETAILERS AND CUSTOMERS TO BE THE “GOLD STANDARD FOR SUSTAINABILITY”<sup>2</sup> SO STAKEHOLDERS CAN BE ASSURED OF SUPPORTING TRULY SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES WHEN SELLING OR BUYING SEAFOOD PRODUCTS WITH THE MSC LABEL**

**JANUARY 2018**

Dear Dr. Kiene, Chair of MSC Board of Trustees, and Mr Howes, MSC Chief Executive,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations and individuals, we are writing to express our significant and increasing concerns with both the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)’s Certification Standard and existing certification process as well as the lack of urgency to respond to concerted calls for improvement. This follows a January 2017 letter signed by 53 international organizations. This first letter brought concerns to the MSC leadership regarding key flaws in Principle 2 (‘Environmental and Ecological Impacts’) that are increasingly allowing fisheries with widely unacceptable impacts to be certified as sustainable. Now, at the start of 2018 additional organisations, groups and individuals are joining our call for more immediate dialogue and action, and have signed on to support the urgent implementation of critical improvements.

Attached as an “Annex” to this letter are our detailed requirements for imperative improvements to the MSC Standard and process of certification. These requested improvements are the result of research and analysis undertaken by NGOs and academics with marine conservation and seafood certification expertise in addition to years of stakeholder participation in the MSC program.

Given that the MSC recently celebrated 20 years of work and announced ambitious goals to expand the number of certified fisheries and products in the program to include 20% of global fisheries catch by 2020, it is imperative that the MSC maintains credibility with key stakeholders – the international conservation community of organizations, researchers, and scientists - as well as with retailers and consumers worldwide.

Concern is growing given the anticipated expansion due to the fact that in recent years an increasing number of controversial fisheries have received MSC certification or have been recertified, despite the fact that these fisheries:

- catch thousands of vulnerable and endangered animals,
- routinely discard and waste excessive amounts of sea life as unwanted bycatch,
- irreversibly destroy vulnerable sea bottom habitats,
- continue to catch overfished species, and
- continue to use unsustainable, non-certified methods for much of their catch.

Many of the same key flaws in the MSC Standard and process have been consistently identified by experts and stakeholders in the international community over the last decade. These weaknesses allow Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) to pass such fisheries for certification. Despite a large number of scientific studies published in peer-reviewed journals, countless stakeholder meetings, and a long history of letters from individual NGOs or alliances of NGOs, the MSC has to date failed to implement the changes to Principle 2, that are needed to properly protect habitats and marine species not considered as “target species”.

<sup>1</sup> MSC Annual Report 2015-16

<sup>2</sup> MSC Annual Report 2015-16

While we acknowledge that the MSC has made some improvements to its Certification Standard and process over the years, specific fishery certifications are evidence that critical weaknesses remain in the MSC system. The next scheduled update of the Standard is slated for 2020; accounting for phase-in times this means that critical changes would not be in effect until 2022-2028, and potentially even longer for some fisheries. For many of the species and ecosystems dealt with under Principle 2, the situation is untenable and changes to the MSC process need to be much swifter if the program is to act as an agent of change.

While the list of key changes requested in the “Annex” focus on Principle 2 issues of the MSC Certification Standard and Certification Requirements – bycatch and retained species, habitat, and ecological impacts - we recognize that these concerns are not comprehensive and look forward to a dialogue that is inclusive and transparent.

In addition to the points attached, of particular note we call for swift action to include ethical concerns, such as those related to social and labour issues in the fishery sector in the MSC assessments, ensuring that all people throughout the chain of custody are treated fairly and decently and that companies respect human rights and adhere to the International Labour Organization’s Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

Signed,

**SUSAN MILLWARD, DIRECTOR, MARINE ANIMAL PROGRAM, ANIMAL WELFARE INSTITUTE, WASHINGTON, DC USA**



**JOSÉ TRUDA PALAZZO, JR., VICE-PRESIDENT, THE AUGUSTO CARNEIRO INSTITUTE, BRAZIL**



**CANDACE CRESPI, CAMPAIGN MANAGER, BLUE SPHERE FOUNDATION**



**DR. FRÉDÉRIC LE MANACH, SCIENTIFIC DIRECTOR, BLOOM**



**KATRIEN VANDEVELDE & JAN WOUTERS, FOUNDERS, BLUESHARK CONSERVATION, BELGIUM**



**MARK JONES, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, BORN FREE FOUNDATION, UK**



**DAVID KAPLAN, PRESIDENT, CETACEAN SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL, CONNECTICUT, USA**



**ISABEL NARANJO, PRESIDENT, CREMA, CENTRO RESCATE ESPECIES MARINAS AMENAZADAS**



**RALPH O. SCHILL, PRESIDENT SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE, CONFÉDÉRATION MONDIALE DES ACTIVITÉS SUBAQUATIQUES (CMAS)**



**DAVID SUZUKI FOUNDATION - SCOTT WALLACE, SENIOR RESEARCH SCIENTIST**



**ALEJANDRA GOYENECHEA, SENIOR INTERNATIONAL COUNSEL, DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE**



**ULRICH KARLOWSKI, FOUNDATION BOARD MEMBER, VORSTAND DEUTSCHE STIFTUNG MEERESSCHUTZ (DSM)**



FRANK SCHWEIKERT, VORSTAND, DEUTSCHE MEERESSTIFTUNG



PAULO GUILHERME ALVES CAVALCANTI, CO-FOUNDER OF DIVERS FOR SHARKS, BRAZIL



NANCY AZZAM, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DOLPHIN CONNECTION, CALIFORNIA, USA



ANGELA ZILTENER, FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT, DOLPHIN WATCH ALLIANCE



SHANNON ARNOLD, MARINE POLICY COORDINATOR, ECOLOGY ACTION CENTRE, CANADA



CLARE PERRY, OCEAN CAMPAIGN LEADER, ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTIGATION AGENCY



STEVE TRENT, DIRECTOR, ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE FOUNDATION



Protecting People and Planet

FELIPE VALLEJO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, EQUILIBRIO AZUL, QUITO, ECUADOR



**BILLO HEINZPETER STUDER, PRESIDENT, FAIR FISH INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION**



**MONICA BIONDO, BIOLOGIST, M. SC., MARINE BIOLOGIST, FONDATION FRANZ WEBER**



**RANDALL ARAUZ, INTERNATIONAL POLICY DIRECTOR, FINS ATTACHED MARINE RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION**



**JORGE SERENDERO, CEO, FOR THE OCEANS FOUNDATION, COSTA RICA**



**KEVIN HAGUE, CEO, FOREST & BIRD, NZ**



**EUCLIDES RESENDE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FUNDAÇÃO TARTARUGA, CABO VERDE**



**ULRIKE KIRSCH, INTERNATIONAL DOLPHIN-SAFE MONITORING PROGRAM GERMANY, GESELLSCHAFT ZUR RETTUNG DER DELPHINE E.V.**





**OLIVER KNOWLES, OCEAN CAMPAIGNER, GREENPEACE INTERNATIONAL**



**APPLE CHOW, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SHARK FOUNDATION, HONG KONG**



**MARK J. PALMER, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR INTERNATIONAL MARINE MAMMAL PROJECT**



**IOANNIS GIOVOS, DIRECTOR OF ISEA , ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATION FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE AQUATIC ECOSYSTEMS, GREECE**



**LIVING OCEANS SOCIETY, KAREN WRISTEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**



**DR. JORGE A. JIMÉNEZ, DIRECTOR GENERAL MAR VIVA, SAN JOSÉ, COSTA RICA**



**FREDERIC BUYLE, NEKTOS, BELGIUM**



**NEKTOS**

**SIGRID LÜBER, PRESIDENT, OCEANCARE, SWITZERLAND**



**CANDACE CRESPI, CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR, OCEANIC PRESERVATION SOCIETY GREENBRAE, CA USA**



**EDGAR MAURICIO HOYOS PADILLA, DIRECTOR GENERAL, PELGIOS KAKUNJA A.C.**



**DR. SANDRA ALTHERR, CO-FOUNDER, PRO WILDLIFE E.V., GERMANY**



**SEACHOICE, SARAH FOSTER, NATIONAL MANAGER**



**GEORGIENNE BRADLEY, DIRECTOR, SEA SAVE FOUNDATION**



**FERNANDO REIS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SHARKS EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE, SPAIN**



**STEFANIE BRENDL, SHARK ALLIES, CALIFORNIA, USA**



**FABIENNE ROSSIER, PRESIDENT, SHARKS MISSION, FRANCE**



**SABINE FALK, VORSTAND, SHARK SAVERS GERMANY E.V**



**ALEX BUTTIGIEG, SHARKMAN'S WORLD, MALTA**



**ALEX SMOLISKY, PRESIDENT, SHARKPROJECT INTERNATIONAL E.V.  
FRIEDERIKE KREMER-OBROCK, PRESIDENT, SHARKPROJECT GERMANY  
E.V.  
HERBERT FUTTERKNECHT, PRESIDENT, SHARKPROJECT AUSTRIA**



**BARON JUPP KERCKERINCK ZUR BORG, FOUNDER SHARKPROTECT E.V. ,  
GERMANY**



**JUPP BARON KERCKERINCK, CEO BOARD OF TRUSTEES, SHARK  
RESEARCH INSTITUTE PRINCETON, NJ USA**



**DAVID MCGUIRE, MPH, DIRECTOR AND FOUNDER OF SHARK STEWARDS**



**JULIAN ENGEL, 2. VORSITZENDER, STOP FINNING DEUTSCHLAND E.V.**



**ALEXANDER ENDL, FOUNDER AND CHAIR, THE DOLPHIN'S VOICE E.V,  
GERMANY**

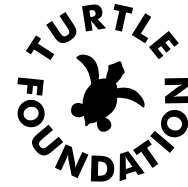




**VEERLE ROELANDT, THE GLOBAL SHARK CONSERVATION INITIATIVE,  
BELGIUM**



**DR. FRANK ZINDEL, PRESIDENT OF TURTLE FOUNDATION SWITZERLAND  
AND LIECHTENSTEIN, BOARD MEMBER OF TF GERMANY**



**PETER FUGAZZOTTO, STRATEGIC PROGRAMS DIRECTOR, TURTLE ISLAND  
RESTORATION NETWORK**



**RALPH O. SCHILL, PRESIDENT SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE, GERMAN  
UNDERWATER FEDERATION (VDST)**



**JEFF PANTUKHOFF, PRESIDENT & FOUNDER, THE WHALEMAN  
FOUNDATION LAHAINA, HI USA**



**ALEX HOFFORD, WILDLIFE CAMPAIGNER, WILDAID HONG KONG**



**PETER KNIGHTS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WILDAID**



**JOHN BURTON, CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE, WORLD WISE FOODS**



**MEGAN BAILEY, CANADA RESEARCH CHAIR, DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY,  
MARINE AFFAIRS PROGRAM, HALIFAX, CANADA**



**DR. CAT DOREY, CONSULTANT (FISH, FISHERIES, & SCIENCE  
COMMUNICATION) AUSTRALIA**



**HANNES JAENICKE, ACTOR AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVIST, FILM  
PRODUCER**



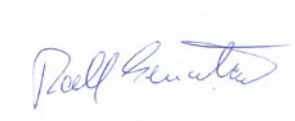
**ROBERT MARC LEHMANN, MARINE BIOLOGIST, PHOTOGRAPHER, CAMERA  
MAN, NG PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR 2016, GERMANY**



**CALLUM ROBERTS, PROFESSOR OF MARINE CONSERVATION,  
ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT UNIVERSITY OF YORK, UK**



**DR. RALF P. SONNTAG, SENIOR ADVISOR MARINE CONSERVATION,  
GERMANY**



**TOM VIERUS, MARINE BIOLOGIST, PHOTOGRAPHER, FILMMAKER,  
GERMAN SCIENCE PHOTOGRAPHER 2016/2017, GERMANY**

