

10 January, 2022

Mr. Frans Timmermans
Executive Vice-President, European Green Deal
c/o: Helena Braun, Vasilka Lyubenova

Re: Initiating a global dialogue on transparency at the Our Oceans Conference in Palau

Dear Executive Vice-President Timmermans,

Happy New Year, I hope this finds you and your colleagues safe and well. The Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) has very recently been in liaison with your cabinet concerning a possible engagement by the European Commission during the Our Oceans Conference in Palau, which is now due to take place on 13-14 April, 2022.

It is my understanding that your cabinet would welcome a briefing on this important opportunity for the EU to reinforce its leadership position on global fisheries governance. I therefore attach a short document setting out the need for greater transparency in global fisheries, the means to achieve this, and the opportunity that the Our Oceans Conference presents to advance these together with the Biden administration.

We are facing the collapse of diverse marine ecosystems across the globe, with devastating consequences for food security, livelihoods and for our climate. Central to the root causes of this environmental degradation are illegal and unsustainable fishing practices that exploit a unique lack of transparency in the sector. Nearly 90% of the world's fisheries are either fully or over-exploited, and illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing represents up to one third of the world's reported catch. Yet the solutions to tackle IUU fishing and associated abuses are economically viable, technologically available, and logistically deliverable today—as set out in EJF's 10 principles for transparency detailed in the attached briefing.

The EU imports 60% of its seafood and is the world's largest seafood importer. It is also a globally important flag state and is responsible for large stretches of the ocean. The European Commission has already led the world committing to a zero-tolerance approach to IUU fishing, reiterated through the European Green Deal and Farm-to-Fork Strategy. It has also led the world with the EU IUU Regulation, which can block illegal imports and incentivises other states to improve their performance. Across the Atlantic, the Biden administration has also articulated an ambitious environmental agenda that includes a return to multilateral solutions to global problems such as the threat to our ocean.

Over past decade I have seen the outstanding hard work and dedication of the Commission in its efforts to combat IUU fishing, and I have also witnessed the beneficial impacts of these efforts, across multiple geographies and jurisdictions. This body of work has truly been an example of leadership on a global stage, for global good.

In line with these commitments and building on this leadership, I am writing to respectfully urge and encourage you to initiate a global dialogue on the implementation of transparency measures needed in global fisheries governance. This could include a clear statement from the world's leading seafood markets—in particular the EU and the USA—that



transparency in fisheries is critical in the fight to preserve our ocean. I believe the Our Oceans Conference in Palau offers the perfect and timely opportunity to do this.

In addition to a short briefing on the opportunity to initiate a global dialogue on transparency in partnership with the USA, I attach *Out of the Shadows*, which details the illegality and abuses that are facilitated by the opacity of seafood supply chains and the simple, cost-effective measures that are immediately available to combat these.

I would of course be very happy to provide any further information or assistance and meanwhile send my thanks for your time and consideration.

With all best wishes to you and your team.

Yours sincerely,

Steve Trent
Founder / CEO