Strong protest against WWF’s plans to certify the unsustainable industrial aquaculture

The rapid rise in global demand for cheap shrimp and farmed salmon has caused extensive degradation of mangrove wetlands and other coastal ecosystems and subsequent losses in biodiversity. These losses have also destroyed livelihoods among local communities and indigenous peoples in many nations across the global South.

Without changing the production-commercialisation-consumption pattern, World Wildlife Fund (WWF) plans to create a certification body for the industrial production of shrimp and salmon which would just “greenwash” the unsustainable industrial aquaculture.

Over 70 human rights and environmental groups from around the world have expressed outrage at the planned launch of the World Wildlife Fund's Aquaculture Stewardship Council, in a letter sent today to leading members of WWF, which is reproduced below:

“Letter to WWF from 70 International NGO Networks, Organizations and Individuals
Opposing the Formation of the Aquaculture Stewardship Council

We the undersigned non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and concerned individuals from around the world are deeply troubled by the intentions of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) to form the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC). Strong opposition to this latest among many such recent certification initiatives is based upon our years of collective experience in working to counter the negative effects of the industrial aquaculture of shrimp, salmon and other carnivorous marine fin-fish species. We see the ASC as yet another attempt by a Big International NGO to formulate some ill-conceived plan to remedy the problems of unsustainable industrial aquaculture. These kinds of flawed remedies do not involve the local communities and grassroots movements in the process of defining steps to be taken, thereby excluding those peoples most affected by these industries’ ongoing assaults on ocean health and coastal integrity.

Current attempts by WWF and other intended certifiers are not supported by local communities and indigenous peoples, the global network of NGOs, academics and citizens who are still demanding a moratorium on further expansion of these socially disruptive and ecologically destructive industries.

Having gained a better understanding of the proposed mechanism for developing global standards for industrial aquaculture, we NGOs and representatives of regional NGO networks and organizations from Asia, Latin America, Africa, Europe and North America must continue to take a strong stance against these various certification schemes. We believe that these attempts at certification are funder and industry driven, and do not allow the voice of the majority of affected stakeholders – local communities and indigenous peoples - to have meaningful input into this so-called "dialogue" and standard-setting process.

The proposed standards that will define the Aquaculture Stewardship Council appear to be largely based upon supporting unsustainable, open throughput systems of aquaculture production, whether

for shrimp, salmon or other fin-fish species, and not upon more sustainable closed production approaches, indicating that the proposed ASC's process is aimed in an inappropriate and environmentally dangerous direction.

We demand that WWF halt this initiative to form the ASC and immediately initiate real and meaningful dialogues with affected communities, not just with industry and a few NGOs and academics. There still is a great need for strict social and rights-based standards, not just environmental and technical fixes initiated at the aquaculture farm level. That vital component of the dialogues with the local communities and indigenous peoples is still missing, and their voices are still not heard within those elite circles that are now attempting to form the ASC. We the undersigned now join hands to strongly state our opposition to the ASC process.

(See letter with signatures and press release at http://www.wrm.org.uy/deforestation/mangroves/aquaculturecertification.pdf)