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From Huw Irranca-Davies MP  
**Minister for the Natural and Marine Environment**

*Dear Mr Ritter*

### **Bluefin Tuna Campaigns**

Having just read your recent blog on the issue of the proposed listing of bluefin tuna on CITES Appendix I, and being aware that your members have submitted numerous letters on the issue, I felt compelled to write to you to clarify what the UK Government has been doing to try and secure the future for this iconic species.

When Monaco announced its intention last July to submit a proposal to list Bluefin Tuna on Appendix I of CITES I clearly stated in the press that the UK supported this and would work within the EU to build support amongst other Member States.

CITES listing proposals are a matter of EU competence however, which meant that ideally a consensus for support or opposition of a proposal, amongst all 27 Member States, must be reached and failing that, a majority vote. At the time that Monaco was seeking support for their proposal there remained the possibility that the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) would deliver the measures necessary to secure the future of the bluefin and confirm its willingness and ability to do so via its 20<sup>th</sup>

Committee meeting in November, and thus make it unnecessary to list bluefin on CITES. However, despite our best efforts and aspirations at that meeting, ICCAT was only able to partially demonstrate measures sufficient to secure the species ahead of CITES COP in March this year. Hence, it remains our view that the CITES Appendix I listing is not only fully justified but also necessary.

Your blog questions why Defra has been reticent about stating a position on this species for the last few months. As I am sure you are aware since Monaco submitted its proposal last October we have been working with other Member States looking at over 40 CITES listing proposals in order to agree an EU position on each before they are discussed and voted upon at the CITES Conference of Parties (CoP15) which will take place in Doha, Qatar in March 2010. Other organisations have also been commenting on the CITES listing proposals like the FAO (in the case of aquatic species), the CITES Secretariat and a wide range of NGOs. All EU Member States have been reviewing all comments to inform our decision-making process.

In recent months we have been in discussions with other EU Member States in formal meetings, and behind the scenes, to gauge support and try and persuade those not in favour why they should support it. Hopefully this effort has contributed to the recent shift in position of some other EU Governments who were formerly undecided or opposed to the Monaco proposal.

As you will appreciate with so many differing views on a raft of proposals, where EU agreement is necessary, the consultation and discussion process can be complex. In addition to that the listing of commercially-traded fish species on CITES is always controversial with those who are economically reliant on trade in a certain species understandably defending their position. This is the main obstacle we need to overcome but we stress that action is needed now to ensure sustainable stocks of bluefin tuna for future generations.

I can assure you, therefore, that the UK has been taking an active role in supporting the Bluefin Tuna listing proposal, lobbying others to support it and also continuing to work within ICCAT. If we are successful and go into the CITES CoP with EU support on this

issue we will have a strong lobbying base and the UK will work very hard to see that the proposal gets adopted in Doha.

I would be grateful if you could publish this letter on your website so your members and supporters can see my response to their concerns.

*My Regards,*  


**HUW IRRANCA-DAVIES**

