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PRESS RELEASE

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**MINISTER KILLEEN RESISTS STRONG OPPOSITION TO NEW EU FUNDING
FOR A PACKAGE OF MEASURES TO HELP IRISH FISHERMEN**

At today's EU Fisheries Council, Minister Tony Killeen T.D. welcomed changes to EU State Aid rules that give more flexibility in relation to the provision of funding under emergency measures to the fishing industry. However, Minister Killeen expressed very strongly at the Council, serious disappointment at the slow progress by the Commission at the sourcing and making available of additional EU funds to support member states and the high level of resistance to additional EU funding expressed strongly by some Member States.

During the meeting Minister Killeen set down clearly the case for additional EU funds for countries such as Ireland, which does not have uncommitted EU funding available to support the implementation of these measures. Minister Killeen said: *"Ireland has committed in excess of its available EU Fisheries Fund of €42m for 2007 – 2013 for the permanent scrapping of fishing vessels, which has been my first priority in order to strengthen the economics of the fleet. In these circumstances, it is clear that Ireland would meet the criteria set by the EU Commission under which additional funds could be made available later this year"*.

The Commission re-iterated the commitments already made in its Communication on this issue that EU additional funds of €600m could be made available to Member States who received only a small share of the European Fisheries Fund and who have also used the amount they received primarily for the scrapping of its vessels.

Minister Killeen sought, with other like-minded Member States, such as the Netherlands, a strong commitment from the Commission for a proposal that would make available additional funds this autumn to those member states that needed to implement these emergency measures. However, at Council it was clear that there was opposition from a large block of Member States to the allocation of any additional funds. However at the insistence of

Ireland, Commissioner Borg re-iterated the commitments in their communication of the 8th of July to provide additional funding with the bulk of that funding to be provided during 2009.

“ I want to introduce an EU funded package of measures to address the crisis faced by the fishing fleet as early as possible, but I consider there was not an adequate response at this Council to my demand for additional funds this autumn. At the Council I had to face down strong opposition from a block of Member States who are opposed to any additional funds being made available. I made it clear that I did not consider it fair that our fleet would be directly competing with the fleets of other Member States, who would receive aid as a result of today’s relaxation of State Aid rules and because they are in receipt of large EU budgets under the European Fisheries Fund. This, I believe amounts to unfair competition and I made my views clear that I consider this an issue that must be addressed on an equitable basis across the EU. While I was disappointed with the lack of urgency in the response, the Commission did make clear that it remains committed to making available the €600m in the manner which they set out in their Communication of 8 July 2008. While there were no final decisions on the additional funding at this Council, I intend to work with like-minded states to persuade the Commission to bring forward proposals early this autumn for the new financial instrument to support the measures agreed today ”, said Minister Killeen.

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