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Groups want fish protected

GENEVA - State subsidies that encourage overfishing should be banned under any World Trade Organisation free trade pact, environmental groups said on Tuesday.

Conservationist groups WWF and Oceana urged countries negotiating a new WTO deal to back a US proposal on ending incentives that have vastly expanded the size of the world's fishing industry, pressuring stocks worldwide and threatening extinction for many species.

"We are pouring billions of dollars into overfishing today. That is just madness in a world where fish stocks are depleting in every ocean," WWF Senior Fellow David Schorr said.

Scientists have warned that the world's fisheries are on a steep decline and could collapse beyond repair within 50 years if current trends continue.

More than one billion people worldwide depend on fish as their primary source of protein.

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