

'Ban fishing subsidies' call Published: 2 May 2007

GENEVA: Fishing subsidies should be banned to make global trade more equitable and prevent overfishing of already depleted high-sea stocks, the US told World Trade Organisation members yesterday.

"We see obvious trade benefits from it, but also benefits in terms of protecting the marine environment and also sustainable development, since so many countries depend on fishing as an important part of their economy," American ambassador to the trade body Peter Allgeier said. Environmental groups have backed the US proposal, saying it provides an opportunity to save global fish stocks from collapsing.

Oceana, a Washington-based pressure group, cites a Canadian study estimating that the world's fishing industry each year receives some \$20 billion - a quarter of its revenue - in subsidies that encourage overfishing of species including swordfish, tuna and marlin, or sustain environmentally damaging practices such as dredging the sea floor.

The 27-nation European Union, which gives out hundreds of millions of euros a year to fleets in Spain and other member countries, is the biggest single subsidiser, followed by China, India, Japan and Brazil, according to Oceana, whose most recent figures were for the year 2000.