

Agenda Item 5.3: By-catch Issues

**Resolution on the Commission communication to the Council and the European Parliament:
Report on the implementation of the "statement of conclusions from the intermediate
ministerial meeting on the integration of fisheries and environmental issues 13-14 March
1997 in Bergen", adopted by the European Parliament on 10 March 1999**

Submitted by the Secretariat

NOTE FROM THE SECRETARIAT:
**IN THE INTERESTS OF ECONOMY, DELEGATES ARE KINDLY REMINDED TO BRING THEIR OWN
COPIES OF THESE DOCUMENTS TO THE MEETING**

1. Fisheries and the environment (Rule 52)

A4-0063/99

Resolution on the Commission communication to the Council and the European Parliament: Report on the implementation of the "statement of conclusions from the intermediate ministerial meeting on the integration of fisheries and environmental issues 13-14 March 1997 in Bergen"(COM(98)0326 - C4-0495/98)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the statement of conclusions from the intermediate ministerial meeting on the integration of fisheries and environmental issues 13-14 March 1997 in Bergen,
 - having regard to the Commission's communication (COM(98)0326 - C4-0495/98),
 - having delegated the power of decision, pursuant to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure, to the Committee on Fisheries,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Fisheries and the opinion of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection (A4-0063/99),
1. Acknowledges the comprehensive and integrated approach reflected in the guiding principles and management objectives contained in the statement of conclusions of the Inter-Ministerial meeting (IMM) in Bergen;
 2. Notes the actions and initiatives undertaken by the Commission, consistent with its work programme, which it has implemented in order to put into effect the principles contained in the Final Declaration of the Bergen Conference;
 3. Expresses its satisfaction at the progress made over recent years in order to preserve sustainable fisheries in the North Sea but considers however, that there remains much to be done to ensure the future of certain over exploited fisheries and a fragile marine ecosystem brought about by pollution and the heavy pressure on resources;
 4. Insists that the Council adopt the necessary measures to reduce the current fishing effort in the area and progressively reduce the present TACs which although based on scientific criteria remain for certain species at levels near or less than the biologically accepted minimum and which could, in the event of some unforeseen negative consequences provoke the collapse of the stock, specially with regard to mackerel, plaice, haddock, saithe and cod; urges the Council therefore to apply the precautionary principle in determining the TACs, and calls on the Commission to expedite its efforts to develop a quality label for sustainable fish;
 5. Demands that the Council and the Commission adopt the necessary measures to reinforce the control of fisheries in order to avoid the current numerous illegal catches, the disregard of legal minimum sizes and the over exploitation caused by unchecked landings;
 6. Recognises the recent improvements introduced under Regulation (EEC) 2847/93, but believes that this system must be perfected in such a way as to follow fish and fish products at all stages: catch, landing, transport on land and marketing up to the final consumer; insists therefore that the Commission presents proposals and the Council takes decisions in order to achieve the following objectives:
 - transparency, reliability and speed in the transmission of data by means of compatible systems which ensure the proper intercommunication between all the administrations of the Member States and the Community institutions;
 - adoption of a comparable system of sanctions whereby similar penalties are imposed for similar infringements regardless of where they take place;

- reinforcement of the human and economic means of controlling fishing activities both at a Community and national level, which at the present time are manifestly insufficient to achieve the objectives which they pursue;
7. Calls on the Council to adopt the necessary measures for achieving the objectives laid down in the Multi-annual Guidance Programmes (MAGP) with regard to each segment of the fleet in the Member States and establish at the same time effective sanctions for those states which systematically fail to implement their required objectives;

In this respect the reduction of fishing effort in the North Sea is particularly important for the bottom trawlers engaged in industrial fisheries, the purse seiners fishing for pelagic species and the beam trawlers targeting flatfish and roundfish;

8. Emphasises the need for the Water Directive to be fully implemented in Member States and continued vigilance in monitoring discharges of all kinds into the North Sea which can damage eco-systems, particularly with regard to fish stocks;
9. Notes with approval the adoption of MAGP IV as an attempt to further reduce the excessive fishing capacity of the EU fleets and looks forward to the Commission's mid-term review of progress in 1999; regrets, however, that Council found itself unable to institute a sufficiently ambitious programme to prevent further depletions of those stocks which are most heavily exploited; urges the Member States, when implementing their national MAGPs, to include ecological and social criteria, for example by retaining those vessels which are the most selective in their fishing and which provide the most employment per amount of fish caught;
10. Advocates as a matter of principle the setting of objectives, the improvement of fishing practice, recovery plans and special projects such as the establishment of no-fishing zones or periods;
11. Points out that the objectives do not lay down any special methods or timetables for the improvement of fishery practice or the taking of urgent action;
12. Notes that the follow-up to the IMM by ad hoc measures to deal with urgent problems could be of great importance, for example:
 - further action to promote the recovery of cod stocks by reducing by-catches of undersized fish by encouraging the development of fishing gear which reduces the risk of unwanted by-catches;
 - technical measures to protect sizeable recruitments of North Sea cod or of other heavily fished species from the negative impact of mixed fisheries;
 - the provisional closure of areas in which high densities of juvenile cod and therefore high by-catch rates are to be expected, combined with a temporary reduction in the capacity of the fleets concerned;
 - immediate reduction of by-catches of small cetaceans as laid down in the ASCOBANS Resolution (Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas);
 - the setting-up of a cetacean protection area around the island of Sylt, as this is a particularly important breeding ground, in conjunction with a ban on fishing methods representing a hazard to cetaceans and their young;
 - drastic restrictions on the destructive technique of beam trawling (for bottom fishing) in the North Sea, where it is causing great damage, linked to a reduction in the capacity of these fleets or at least a freeze on trawler numbers;
13. Calls for more information on the temporary reduction in industrial fishing in endangered areas as already promised by the Danish Government in Bergen;
14. Favours the inclusion of NGOs in the process of implementing the Statement of conclusions;
15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission and the Council.