Management of deep-sea fish stocks

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The European Parliament adopted, by 579 votes to 49 and 4 abstentions, a resolution on on the management of deep-sea fish stocks in response to the Commission Communication on the subject. The own-initiative report was tabled for consideration in plenary by Rosa **MIGUÉLEZ RAMOS** (PES, ES) on behalf of the Committee on Fisheries.

Members welcome the attempts by the Community fleet to pursue a sustainable fishery policy and notes a certain lack of symmetry between the situation described in the Commission Communication and the actual situation. They point out that, before new management measures are adopted, an analysis should be made to establish the reasons why existing measures are not applied and the reasons that lead to the Member States failing to fulfil their obligations, or fulfilling them late or using different methodologies.

Parliament agrees with the Commission that the systematic collection of reliable data is the cornerstone of stock assessment and scientific advice. It calls on the Commission, the Member States and the fishing industry to fill in the gaps that exist so that effort control measures can be adapted to each fishery, recognizing that most deep-water fisheries are mixed fisheries.

It points out to the Commission that, even where total allowable catches (TACs) and effort limitations for these fisheries have been fixed arbitrarily owing to the lack of biological knowledge, the precautionary approach to and the exploitation of each species considered as a deep-water species must be observed and TACs must be set accordingly, on the basis of precise scientific studies. Given that many of these stocks are managed in international waters, measures must be coordinated within the various RFOs so that the measures adopted take account of all fleets operating in these fisheries. Parliament believes all restrictions should apply to fishermen from all contracting parties, in order to prevent disadvantages from arising.

Members stress the need to introduce a ban on discards in deep-water fisheries, which would enable scientists to study with more precision the complex diversity of species, many of them inedible, being landed. Within the framework of measures to reduce by-catches and eliminate discards, the Commission should vary the levels of fishing effort according to the species targeted and those caught merely by accident, whilst at the same time strengthening monitoring and control procedures.

The Commission is requested to:

-carry out a socio-economic assessment of deep-sea fisheries and an analysis of the impact that new fishing effort reductions will have on the industry, as well as the impact of continued depletion of the fish stocks that the fisheries depends on;

-introduce new programmes for the collection of scientific information, if necessary using research vessels;

-improve monitoring and control procedures in the Member States;

-make every effort to ensure the implementation and possible improvement of existing international deep-sea fishing.

The Commission and Member States are asked to :

-develop common guidelines, exchange best practices, improve the use of available Community technology and involve think tanks and NGOs in order to implement better measures to reduce illegal fishing and the sale of illegal catches on European markets;

-promote more environmentally-friendly catching methods which do not harm either the environment or ecological biodiversity as a result of unwanted by-catches.