

Community action in relation to whaling

2008/2101(INI) - 19/02/2009 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 626 votes to 12, with 19 abstentions, a resolution welcoming the Commission Communication on Community action in relation to whaling and the Decision on whaling, which was adopted by qualified majority at the Council.

Ban scientific whaling: the Parliament supports the maintenance of the global moratorium on commercial whaling and a ban on international commercial trade in whale products. It seeks to end "scientific whaling" and supports the designation of substantial regions of ocean and seas as sanctuaries in which all whaling is indefinitely prohibited. The Council is called upon to adopt a new common position under Article 37 as well as Article 175 of the EC Treaty. MEPs also call on the Council, the Commission and those Member States participating in the International Whaling Commission (IWC) Working Group to work toward the achievement of a broad agreement enabling the development of measures to protect whales and other cetaceans.

Hunting quotas: the Parliament respects the need for a limited amount of hunting to be done by those traditionally engaged in it for the purposes of sustenance, but calls for much greater emphasis on research into and the employment of humane killing methods. The resolution calls for any such hunting to take place only with clear quotas based on the advice of the IWC Scientific Committee and regulated under strict controls incorporating full recording and reporting to the IWC.

More protected areas: the Parliament also calls for the establishment, in suitable locations around the world, of more Marine Protected Areas in which whales would receive special protection. In this context, the resolution draws attention to the need to use more selective fishing gear to avoid by-catches of other species, particularly cetaceans. The resolution also calls for threats to the cetacean population arising from climate change, pollution, ship strikes, fishing gear, anthropogenic ocean noise (including sonar, seismic surveys and vessel noise) and other hazards to be tackled outside such protected areas. MEPs believe that the Commission should, in advance of global action, bring forward further proposals to counter such threats in respect of Community waters and Community vessels.

Whale-watching: the Parliament calls on the Commission to define a revised regulatory framework for the practice of whale-watching that protects the economic and social interests of coastal regions where this activity is carried out, taking account of its recent development. The EU is also called upon to promote, in key international fora, in a coordinated and coherent way, the highest level of protection for whales at a global level.