Resolution on the state of play regarding the proposed multi-annual plan for the western stock of Atlantic horse mackerel and the fisheries exploiting that stock

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution tabled by the Committee on Fisheries on the state of play regarding the proposed multi-annual plan for the western stock of Atlantic horse mackerel and the fisheries exploiting that stock.

It notes that the western stock of horse mackerel is economically the most important stock of horse mackerel inhabiting Union waters, and in 2009 the Commission proposed a management plan based on the preparatory work in the Pelagic Regional Advisory Council and the advice given by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) and the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF). Parliament underlines that the plan's objective is to maintain the biomass of western horse mackerel at a level that ensures its sustainable exploitation, and to provide the highest long-term yield.

Harvest control rule: Members state that the biological information on the western stock of horse mackerel is not sufficient for a full stock assessment. However, the STECF advice indicates that a harvest control rule based on the trend in egg abundance would provide for sustainable stock management. Parliament believes that the harvest control rule should be based in equal parts on precautionary advice given for average recruitment conditions and on recent total allowable catches, adjusted by a factor that reflects the recent trend in the stock abundance as measured through egg production.

The biological references and parameters forming part of the harvest rule should follow the most recent scientific advice and the Commission should be empowered to adopt delegated acts pursuant to Article 290 TFEU in respect of modifications of certain biological references and parameters built into the harvest rule and in order to be able to react quickly to changes.

Ordinary legislative procedure: Parliament stresses that the harvest control rules are core elements of the multi-annual plans that must be decided under the ordinary legislative procedure. Multi-annual plans are a cornerstone of the Common Fisheries Policy and a fundamental conservation tool establishing general provisions necessary for the pursuit of the objectives of the CFP. They must therefore be adopted under the ordinary legislative procedure, in accordance with Article 43(2) TFEU. Members state that the Council cannot reserve for itself the power to adapt unilaterally the parameters defined in the proposal for setting the total allowable catches, as they are key components of the proposed long term plan. They recall that Parliament, in its position at first reading, introduced some flexibility for the Council in the mode of calculation of the total removal, in accordance with the scientifically based harvesting rules, with the aim of facilitating a compromise solution and contributing to a constructive and positive approach regarding this legislative proposal.

The matter has been blocked in Council since November 2010. The resolution stresses that the existing interinstitutional deadlock must be resolved for the benefit of a sustainable fish stock and to allow fishing operators better forward planning of their activities. It urges the Commission to act swiftly, as indicated and promised on several occasions, in order to prevent other interinstitutional blockages in relation to future long-term management plans. The Council, in turn, is urged to submit its position on the proposed

multi-annual plan for western stock of Atlantic horse mackerel in order to allow the Parliament to start its second reading and make progress on this matter.

Lastly, Parliament underlines that long-term management plans applying to as many fish stocks as possible are key for the conservation of fish stocks, as stressed by the Commission in its proposal for a reformed Common Fisheries Policy. It urges the Commission to take more initiatives to foster a political dialogue between the three institutions aimed at clarifying their respective roles in the decision-making process and at addressing the issue of the future architecture of multi-annual management plans.