External dimension of the common fisheries policy

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The Committee on Fisheries adopted an own-initiative report by Isabella LÖVIN (Greens/EFA, SE) on the external dimension of the Common Fisheries Policy in response to the Commission Communication on this subject.

The Members welcome the Commission's Communication and the many positive proposals it includes for encouraging the sustainability of the EU's overall fishing and related activities outside EU waters, including the outermost regions. They consider, however, that the scope of the document is not broad enough, being too concentrated on bilateral agreements and multilateral organisations and that it should take an integrated approach to other activities seeking to procure products destined for the EU market.

The report underlines that the **maintenance of the present fishing agreements and the search for new fishing opportunities in third countries** must be a priority objective of external fishing policy. The Commission is urged to:

- to support clearly defined principles and objectives for environmentally, economically and socially **sustainable fisheries** on the high seas and in waters under national jurisdiction at all international forumsto which the EU is a party,and to rapidly and effectively implement decisions made there;
- **to drive forward the global and multilateral agenda promoting sustainable fisheries and the conservation of marine biodiversity**, while transforming its dialogues with countries such as the USA, Japan, Russia and China and other third countries with a strong fishing presence in the world' s oceans, into **effective partnerships** to address crucial issues such as the eradication of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, the reduction of both over-fishing and fleet capacity where necessary, and the strengthening of high seas control and governance in line with the principles of UNCLOS and other relevant instruments;
- **to promote international law**, notably UNCLOS and participation in ILO conventions and to monitor compliance with these rules.

The Members believe that the EU should **launch an initiative at UN level** to set up a global catch and traceability documentation scheme for all major fish species that enter international trade, founded on the principle of Flag State responsibility and compatible with the IUU regulation, as a key tool to strengthen compliance with existing conservation and management measures and combat IUU fishing so as to promote responsible consumption.
Overall, the Members consider that the **EU should be active within the UN system** to explore means for the global community to address:

- the need for more regionalised and integrated global ocean governance, regarding both living marine resources and other resources,
- pollution and the impacts of climate change on the oceans, including the protection and rehabilitation of precious blue carbon sinks, and
- social standards and working conditions;

Bilateral Fisheries Agreements: the Members consider that bilateral fisheries agreements, or Sustainable Fisheries Agreements (SFA) as the Commission proposes to call them, negotiated between partners and equitably implemented, should be based on responsible and sustainable exploitation of resources by EU vessels and be of benefit to both parties, facilitating the provision of economic resources, technical and scientific expertise and support for improved fisheries management and good governance. The report calls for the EU to aim at concluding, as soon as possible, Sustainable Fisheries Cooperation Agreements with

neighbouring countries where the EU provides funding and technical support in order to achieve a more concerted and coherent policy, with the aim of achieving a more harmonised and sustainable fisheries policy.
Members take the view that the **clause on human rights** must be implemented without discrimination and must apply equally to all countries, not only to fishing agreements but also to trade agreements. Otherwise, they consider that the currently used **social clause** should be strengthened to include respect for International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 188, ILO Recommendation 199 on work in fishing, as well as the eight ILO Fundamental Conventions, and ensure that working conditions for crew members domiciled outside the EU and working on board vessels flying an EU flag should be equal to those of workers domiciled in the EU.
They are convinced that **full transparency on catches, payments and implementation of sectoral support** will be an indispensable tool for developing responsible and sustainable fishing based on good governance, the fight against the improper use of EU support and against corruption. They emphasise the need to **improve transparency** both during the **negotiation and the lifetime of the Fisheries Agreements**, on behalf of both the EU and third countries.
Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs): the Members urge the EU to take the **lead in strengthening RFMOs** in order to improve their performance, including through regular reviews by independent bodies of the extent to which they achieve their objectives, and to ensure that the recommendations made in such reviews are rapidly and fully implemented.

The EU is called on to work to ensure that all RFMOs have an **effective compliance committee**, and believes that proven cases of lack of compliance by states must lead to dissuasive, proportionate and non-discriminatory sanctions, including reductions in quotas, effort, capacity allowed, etc.

The Members take the view that the Union must **coordinate its fisheries and development policies better** and engage in systematic, long-term and in-depth dialogues and partnerships with other flag, market and coastal states in order to achieve improved fisheries management and food security worldwide.

The Commission is urged to:

- **allocate greater funding** to the RFMOs, since they have a crucial role to play in combating illegal, undeclared and unregulated fishing;
- take the lead to promote the creation of a comprehensive **network of coverage of RFMOs** so that all high seas fisheries are effectively managed with the ecosystem and precautionary approaches that foster the conservation of resources.

Other Aspects of the External Dimension: the Members believe that even though the external activities of EU businesses may exceed the external dimension of the common fisheries policy, trade activities and the **private agreements between EU shipowners and third countries**, including those conducted under the framework of bilateral cooperation policies, must be legitimately respected and protected as long as they are conducted within the framework of international law.

They believe that Member States should continue to provide information on private agreements between EU shipowners and third countries, as well as on joint ventures in third countries, including the number and type of vessels operating under such agreements and joint ventures, as well as their catches. This information should continue tobe made **publicly available**, subject to individual and commercial data protection rules, as laid down by the Fishing Authorisations Regulation.