External dimension of the common fisheries policy

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The European Parliament adopted by 450 votes to 11, with 19 abstentions, a resolution on the external dimension of the Common Fisheries Policy in response to the Commission Communication on this subject.

Members insist on the need for the EU to work on the basis that Union **policy coherence converges on improving the governance of international fishing**. They 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.

Members consider that the size of the EU market for fisheries products and the geographical range of activities by EU-flagged and EU-owned vessels impose **a high level of responsibility on the Union for ensuring that its fisheries' ecological footprint and socio-economic impact are sustainable**, providing high quality fisheries products to consumers in Europe. Members believe that fishing by EU interests inside and outside Union waters, and fishery products destined for the EU market, should be based upon the **same standards in terms of ecological and social sustainability and transparency**, and that these same principles must be defended and required of third countries, both bilaterally and multilaterally.

The resolution 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. It recognises that when the EU fleet ceases to operate in the fisheries of a third country, such fishing rights are normally redistributed among other fleets that have much lower standards of conservation, management and sustainability than those advocated and defended by the EU.

The Commission is urged to:

- to support clearly defined principles and objectives for environmentally, economically and sociallysustainable 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.

Parliament believes 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: Parliament considers 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 resolution welcomes the intention of the Commission to include several provisions in future bilateral agreements, including: respect for the principle of limiting access to resources that are scientifically demonstrated to be surplus for the coastal State in line with the provisions of UNCLOS; **safeguarding human rights** in line with international agreements on human rights; and an exclusivity clause, though this must be strengthened and formally recognised through agreements, ensuring in all cases the strictest respect for democratic principles.

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.

Parliament is 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. It emphasises 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. **Parliament should be adequately involved** in the preparation and negotiating process and the long-term monitoring and assessment of the functioning of bilateral agreements according to the provisions of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU.

The resolution suggests that bilateral conventions should be introduced to encourage Union fisheries investments in **countries where at present there are no association agreements**, because there are no excess fishing opportunities, and to contribute as a result towards sustainable fishing. In this context, coordination between European development funding and the funding of bilateral agreements should be a top priority.

Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs): Parliament urges 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.

Parliament takes 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: Parliament believes 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.

Parliament believes 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 to be made publicly available**, subject to individual and commercial data protection rules, as laid down by the Fishing Authorisations Regulation.