Common rules with a view to the application of the external dimension of the CFP, including fisheries agreements

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The Committee on Fisheries adopted the own-initiative report by Linnéa ENGSTRÖM (Greens/EFA, SE) on common rules in respect of application of the external dimension of the common fishieries policy (CFP), including fisheries agreements.

The EU is a **major market for fishery products** and the largest importer of such products, consuming 11 % of the world's fish production in terms of volume and importing 24 % of fishery products in terms of value, even though it only accounts for 8 % of the world's catch. The EU has an extensive processing industry with a significant social dimension which must be protected.

Members considered that: (i) the sustainable management of global fish stocks must inevitably involve **multilateralism and international cooperation, including bilateral cooperation**; (ii) the EU has a key role to play in global governance of the seas and oceans; (iii) the CFP must be based on an **ambitious vision that is coherent with the internal dimension.**

In this regard, the report welcomed the inclusion in the basic regulation on the CFP, for the first time, of a chapter referring to the external dimension and stressed the importance of ensuring consistency between fishery, environmental and trade policy and development cooperation.

Sustainable fisheries: Members insisted that the promotion, by the EU and the partners with whom it has bilateral and other agreements, of environmentally, socially and economically sustainable fisheries based on transparency and the participation of non-governmental stakeholders, especially professionals who depend on fishing for their livelihoods, is essential in order to secure a future for coastal communities and the marine environment. They insisted on the importance of **promoting ecosystem protection and maintaining fish stocks** above levels capable of producing the maximum sustainable yield, and the importance of supporting the development of local communities.

Members emphasised that all aspects of the external dimension of the CFP must be predicated on **equitable and mutually beneficial relationships** between the EU, its Member States and their partners globally, be they bilateral sustainable fisheries partnership agreements (SFPAs) or multilateral regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs), with a view to promoting sustainable development of the local fishing industry.

In its external fishery-related activities (catching, processing and marketing), the EU must **promote its highest environmental and social standards** and implement rigorous and effective control and inspection measures, while ensuring transparency in all its activities, so as to ensure fair competition on the EU market. Members called for full **transparency in the funding of fisheries projects** and the use of sectoral support, so as to ensure the proper use of EU funds.

Better scientific data: Members reiterated the need for better scientific information on the status of resources and catch/effort data for fishing outside EU waters, especially in the waters of certain developing coastal states, with funds available under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and the European Development Fund being used for that purpose. They stressed, in this connection, the importance of reliable scientific data and independent ex-post evaluations concerning the effectiveness of

fisheries partnership agreements (FPA) and called for the expansion of independent observer programmes that contribute to the monitoring of fisheries and the collection of scientific data.

Regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs): Members called on the Commission to **allocate greater funding** to RFMOs, since they have a crucial role to play in combating illegal, undeclared and unregulated (IUU) fishing. They also urged the EU to use its influence to ensure that all fisheries with a regional dimension are managed by an RFMO.

Members called on the EU to utilise its network of SFPAs and negotiations in RFMOs to ensure that the partner countries limit access by all distant-water fleets to surplus stocks, as required by UNCLOS and the CFP, and as the EU does, and to provide **preferential access to fleets** using the most environmentally and socially sustainable practices for the region and stocks concerned.

Developing countries: Members emphasised the need to promote local development by means of sectoral support, by increasing the empowerment of partner countries' fisheries through, in particular, **strengthening sustainable aquaculture, developing and conserving artisanal fishing**. European investments in third countries' fisheries under the guise of joint ventures must be covered by the CFP. Moreover, the importance of involving **women** throughout the value chain, from financing through to the processing and/or marketing of fish products is emphasised.

Employment and working conditions: the report recognised the importance of the external dimension of the CFP in creating employment in both the EU and our partner countries, including through the hiring of local crew in the context of SFPAs. It called for instruments to protect workers and decent working conditions to be **included in European regulations on fishing matters** and in SFPAs in order to guarantee the same working conditions, remuneration, protection of workers' rights and levels of training for EU and other nationals.

Transparency: the Commission is called upon to improve transparency by setting up a **database** covering all private agreements between or on behalf of EU ship-owners and local or regional bodies or authorities or third countries that involve access to third-country fisheries, including conditions for access, allowable fleet capacity, the identity of the vessels and the resulting fishing activities, and that this database should be in the public domain, with the exception of those parts which contain commercially sensitive information.

Vessels fishing under the provisions of an SFPA but which do not fulfil their obligations, such as that of supplying their Member State with the data required under the terms of their fishing authorisation, should be subject to the penalties provided for in the Control Regulation and the IUU Regulation, including, where appropriate, denial of a fishing authorisation.

Vessel reflagging: the report welcomed the recent publication of the names of EU-flagged vessels granted authorisation to fish outside EU waters, and insisted that the Commission **publish such information as a matter of course**, including data on their activities and catches.

The basic regulation includes a provision requiring vessels that leave and subsequently return to the EU register to provide information on their activities before their return. Members considered that this requirement should be strengthened such that a **vessel's complete flagging history** must be submitted to the Commission and included in the Community Fishing Fleet Register database prior to the vessel's acceptance in the register.

Members promoted the development of a **unique international system** for registering all vessels sailing in international waters.

Traceability of products: the report emphasised that stainable fisheries partnership agreements should also ensure the complete traceability of marine fisheries product. Members stated that the economic, social and environmental conditions prevailing in the collection and processing of fish should be **clear to consumers**.