Authorising Poland to ratify the amendment to the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea

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PURPOSE: to authorise Poland to ratify, in the interest of the European Union, the amendment to the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: Council may adopt the act only if Parliament has given its consent to the act.

BACKGROUND: Poland, China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Russia and the USA signed the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea in 1994. The EU is not a party to the Convention.

After Poland joined the EU in 2004, the conservation and management of pollock resources in the Central Bering Sea was to be the responsibility of the EU under the Act of Accession. However, the text of the Convention currently limits accession to the Convention to States. It is therefore important to amend the text to allow the EU to become a contracting party as a regional economic integration organisation.

A Council decision authorised Poland to negotiate, in the interest of the European Union, an amendment to the Convention that would allow the European Union to become a full party to the Convention. To this end, Poland proposed an amendment to the Convention to allow for the participation of regional economic integration organisations and the accession of the European Union as a party to the Convention. Poland notified the Convention's depositary of the proposed amendment to the Convention in October 2016. The depositary sent the amendment to the Contracting Parties in 2017.

Poland should therefore be authorised to ratify the amendment to the Convention.

CONTENT: the Commission proposes that the Council decide to authorise Poland to ratify, in the interest of the European Union, the amendment to Article XVI.4 of the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea to allow for the accession of regional economic integration organisations to the Convention.

The objectives of the Convention are to:

- establish an international regime for the conservation, management and optimum utilisation of pollock resources in the Convention area;

- restore and maintain pollock resources in the Bering Sea at levels that will provide for their maximum sustainable yield;

- cooperate in the gathering and analysis of factual information concerning pollock and other living marine resources in the Bering Sea; and

- provide, if the Parties agree, a forum in which to consider the development of conservation and management measures for marine living resources other than pollock in the Convention Area, as may be necessary in the future.

The EU's participation in the Convention has a limited impact, as membership is not conditional on the payment of a budgetary contribution and it is expected that the moratorium will continue to apply in the near future.

However, should the area be re-opened to fishing, the EU’s role would be to promote the principles and standards of the Common Fisheries Policy in this international organisation, in particular the adoption of management measures based on best science.