Resolution on momentum for the ocean: strengthening ocean governance and biodiversity

2022/2836(RSP) - 06/10/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 468 votes to 53, with 34 abstentions, a resolution on momentum for the ocean: strengthening ocean governance and biodiversity.

The text adopted in plenary was tabled by the EPP, S&D, Renew, Greens/EFA and ECR groups.

The European Parliament has declared a **climate and environmental emergency** and has committed to urgently taking the concrete action needed to fight and contain this threat before it is too late. Biodiversity loss and climate change are interlinked and exacerbate each other, representing equal threats to life on our planet, and as such, should be urgently tackled together.

The ocean covers 71 % of the earth's surface, produces half of our oxygen, absorbs a third of CO2 emissions and 90 % of the excess heat in the climate system, and plays a unique and vital role as a climate regulator in the context of the climate crisis. It should be recognised at an international level as a **global common** and should be protected in the light of its uniqueness and interconnectedness and the essential ecosystem services that it provides, on which current and future generations depend for their survival and well-being.

EU as a global leader

The resolution called for the EU to stand as a leader in protecting the ocean, restoring marine ecosystems, and raising awareness about the essential role that the ocean plays in maintaining a liveable planet for humans and animals. It stressed that the upcoming climate (COP27) and biodiversity (COP15) conferences will be crucial to ensure the centrality of oceans in the fight against climate change and the full achievement of the objectives of the Paris Agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Improving EU and international ocean governance

Given that combating the degradation of the ocean requires a considerable joint effort, Parliament called for global, systemic, integrated and ambitious governance. The Council is called on to develop and implement a long-term strategic vision for maritime issues in order to make the EU a global leader in the sustainable development of our ocean, and particularly in protecting the ocean and its ecosystems in order to address the current environmental and climate crises.

Ensuring preservation in the face of climate and environmental crises

Members reiterated their support for the prohibition of all environmentally damaging extractive industrial activities such as **mining and fossil fuel extraction** in marine protected areas (MPAs). They called for the EU to launch and fund scientific research programmes to map carbon-rich marine habitats in EU waters to serve as a basis for designating such areas as strictly protected MPAs to protect and restore marine carbon sinks.

As regards pollution, Parliament underlined the necessity to address plastic pollution by reducing waste at its source, cutting down on plastic use and consumption as a priority, and increasing circularity.

Recalling that illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities and overfishing represent a considerable threat to sustainable fishing and the resilience of marine ecosystems, the resolution called on the Member States to improve the implementation of the EU IUU Regulation and ensure dissuasive **sanctions** against illegal fishing. Regarding cases of IUU fishing outside EU waters, Parliament called for a strong global system of deterrent sanctions and a multi-pronged approach to fighting IUU fishing.

Raising awareness, promoting research and knowledge

Parliament stressed the need to support research and innovation on ocean climate adaptation and marine renewable energies to make the EU a champion of green ships, fishing vessels, and ports. It stressed that funding should be provided for deep-sea ecosystems and biodiversity. It called for strong action to tackle **ship-source pollution and illegal waste discharge** and for the EU to play a leading role in the establishment of green corridors and connections between green ports worldwide to strengthen and scale up the green transition in the maritime sector. The Commission is called on to examine the possibility of creating an **EU research centre for sustainable marine fuels and technologies** that would help to coordinate the efforts of stakeholders involved in the development of sustainable marine fuels. The EU should also support the creation of an **International Panel for Ocean Sustainability** based on the model of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to lay the foundations for future ocean governance and management.