Fisheries: integrated framework for partnership agreements with third countries

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The Council took note of the Commission’s presentation of the communication on an integrated framework for fisheries partnership agreements with third countries and of some general observations by delegations. The Council instructs the Permanent Committee of representatives to examine the communication in detail.

The Spanish, French, Portuguese, Dutch and Italian delegations recalled the importance of the Council Conclusions on this issue adopted on 30 October 1997. The Spanish and Portuguese delegations requested that full use of the fishing possibilities could be made within the fishing agreements. The German delegation pointed out that the sustainability of fishing resources and an improved financial involvement of the private sector were two key issues to be addressed. The Italian and the Greek delegations favoured the approach of the Commission although they made it clear that improving partnerships with third countries should not be made at the expense of commercial aspects. The Swedish delegation supported the communication presented but reiterated its requirements concerning the costs occurred by the fishing possibilities and asked for improved co-ordination with Community policies on development and aid.

Commissioner Fischler reminded the delegations that a common view was shared by the Council and the Commission on the need for the EC to have sustainable resources both in Community waters and in other seas. He also stressed the need to promote a high seas fleet in view of the size of the EC fleet and indicated that the provisions of the Communication would promote investments, transfer of technical know-how in order to assist third countries to develop their management of fishing resources. He emphasised that shipowners’ fees are considered as part of the overall financial contribution granted under a fisheries partnership agreement and must reflect a fair price for access to fishing rights.

The Communication, having noted that the external dimension of the Common Fisheries Policy is an essential component of this policy, proposes adjusting the agreements with third countries in order to ensure sustainable development of fisheries based on scientific data. The Commission also proposes to conduct sustainability impact assessment for the negotiation of new fisheries partnership agreements.