Protection of the Rhine: conclusion of the new Convention, 12 April 1999, Bern

2000/0037(CNS) - 07/02/2000 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to conclude a new Convention of the Protection of the Rhine. CONTENT : by Decision 77 /586/EEC the Community concluded the Convention for the protection of the Rhine against the chemical pollution and the Additional Agreement to the Agreement concerning the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine against Pollution (ICPR). The other Contracting Parties are France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Switzerland. At the 25th meeting of the Coordinating Group of the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine, the representatives of the riparian states drew attention to the importance, both now and in the future, of protecting the waters of the river Rhine and concluded that it was necessary to provide for a new Convention on the Protection of the Rhine which would take account of complementary approaches involving measures to: - preserve, improve and stabilise the ecosystem of the Rhine; - ensure the natural functioning of running water; - promote the economic and effective use of water, particularly with regard to the management of drinking water reserves; - prevent, reduce and avoid the the incidence of transfrontier industrial and urban pollution, particularly where this is attributable to toxic, persistent, carcinogenic, mutagenic and bioaccumulable sustances; - reduce pollution from diverse sources, including groundwater; - prevent and counteract accidental pollution incidents. Since the new Convention covers areas of Community competence relating to the environment, the Community, represented by the Commission, has been taking part in the negotiations in accordance with the negotiating directives issued by the Council. On the 22/01/1998, the Contracting Parties approved the text of the new Convention on the Protection of the Rhine. The Contracting Parties also decided to draw up a new "Programme for the Sustainable Development of the Rhine" which under the new Convention, will seek to continue and strengthen, beyond the year 2000, the work carried out under the existing "Rhine Action Programme". After examining the Commission's proposal, the Council adopted conclusions in which it decided that the Community should sign the new Convention, subject to its eventual conclusion. The new Convention was signed simultaneously with the other Contracting Parties on the 12/04/1999 in Berne. The Commission therefore proposes that the Council should take a decision on the conclusion by the Community of the new Convention on the Protection of the Rhine.