Common fisheries policy: action plan 2003-2005 for uniform implementation, common inspection structure

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PURPOSE : to set out proposals for an Action Plan regarding enforcement of the Common Fisheries policy (CFP) and a proposal for a Joint Inspection Structure (JIS) at Community level. CONTENT : implementation of the CFP requires a sound organisational inspection and enforcement structure, sufficient means of inspection and surveillance and an appropriate strategy for the co-ordinated deployment of these means. The Commission proposes an Action Plan to be implemented from 2003, to be carried out over the next two years. The initiative launched by the Action Plan will be carried forward and expanded on a permanent basis through the development of a Joint Inspection Structure (JIS). Setting up the JIS will take more time, as all the issues involved will need to be carefully addressed. The Commission intends to carry out a feasibility study in co-operation with the Member States on the JIS. The Commission will come forward with a legislative proposal on the JIS for adoption by the Council in 2004. With regard to the Action Plan, the Actions are as follows: Action point 1: The aim is to prioritise the use of existing means of inspection and surveillance in selected fisheries or stocks. The latter are: - demersal fisheries in regions 2 and 3; - highly migratory species in the Mediterranean; - cod, herring and sprat fisheries in ICES divisions III b, c and d; - industrial and pelagic fisheries in regions 1, 2 and 3; - landings of IUU vessels in Community ports. Action Point 2: In order to enhance the effectiveness of inspection activities the Commission will adopt regulations laying down specific monitoring programmes for the relevant fisheries or stocks and establish: - common inspection and surveillance priorities; - benchmarks for inspection and surveillance of fishing activities; - checks to be made by inspectors. Member States should adopt the necessary measures to facilitate the implementation of specific monitoring programmes, particularly as regards the human and material resources required. Member States should ensure that their competent authorities will achieve the common inspection priorities and benchmarks. Action Point 3: In order to enhance transparency of inspection activities, the Commission will periodically review the effectiveness of inspection and surveillance activities in cooperation with national control experts. Action Point 4: The aim is rationalised data recording and reporting to authorities. Working in co-operation with the Commission and third countries, Member States will adopt legislation requiring the setting up of pilot projects in order to develop and test electronic reporting devices and logbooks. Action point 5: In order to increase the effectiveness of inspection through making relevant information accessible, Member States will appoint co-ordinators to provide the relevant information to inspectors from other Member States. Action Point 6: In order to guarantee confidentiality of information concerning individual vessels or individual operators, the Commission will review national proceduresconcerning accessibility of individual data. Where needed, it will introduce harmonised minimum requirements if necessary by adopting legislation. Action Point 7: Working in co-operation with national authorities, the Commission will review operational communication procedures and, where needed, will introduce uniform communication routines. Action Point 8: The aim is to improve the effectiveness of follow-up of infringements committed by vessels flying the flag of another Member State or third country. The Commission will compile and make available to other parties a list of national co-ordinators capable of responding at short notice to requests for information on the characteristics of vessels flying the flag of the Member State concerned. Member States must ensure that the co-ordinator can act on behalf of all the relevant competent authorities. Action Point 9: Member States should adopt the necessary measures to facilitate systematic exchange of inspectors between their competent authorities, notably as regards inspection and surveillance of transboundary fishing activities, including language training for national inspectors. The Commission will review the information on irregularities and non-compliance which it received from third parties, on an annual basis, together with representatives of the Fishing industry. Action Point 10: To ensure fair inspection, the Commission will compose a draft code of

conduct for inspection to be discussed with national inspectors and the fishing industry by mid 2003. Action Point 11: The Commission will provide regular feedback of inspection information to national control experts. With regard to the establishment of a JIS, the Commission proposes to proceed on the following basis: - adoption by the Commission of Community inspection and surveillance strategies, notably in accordance with Art. 34(c) of Regulation 2847/93/EEC; - pooling of national means of inspection and surveillance by Member States; - deployment of pooled means by a Community Fisheries Control Agency (CFCA). The Commission will present a detailed feasibility study by the end of the year. The CFCA will not change the responsibility of Member States for control and enforcement of the rules of the CFP. The basic function of the CFCA consists of co-ordination of deployment of national means of inspection and, where appropriate, additional contracted means of inspection for the purpose of joint inspection and surveillance of fishing activities in accordance with the rules of the CFP. It has to ensure co-ordinated deployment of national means in accordance with Community inspection strategies setting priorities and benchmarks. This function includes the following tasks: - planning the deployment of means of inspection and surveillance pooled by Member States; - organising deployment of means of inspection and surveillance. This includes instructions concerning the geographical areas, the stocks, fisheries and the fleets to be surveyed and inspected in a given period. Organising does not mean the selection of individual fishing vessels for inspection. Planning the deployment of means of inspection and surveillance will include forming multinational teams for inspection at sea and ashore. Agreements should be concluded annually between the CFCA and each national competent authority with regard to the pooling of means of inspection and surveillance. The CFCA will ensure that inspection and surveillance activities of national authorities are fully co-ordinated. The JIS is allocated EUR 1 million in the financial statement.