Combating acidification and air pollutants: Community strategy

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The committee adopted unanimously a non-legislative report by Mrs Anneli HULTHÉN (PES, S) on a Commission communication proposing a Community strategy to combat acidification (including acid rain), which has devastating effects on the natural and built environment (including Europe's cultural heritage) and on human health. A resolution contained in the report supports the Commision proposal for the establishment of an interim target for the EU: according to this proposal, the area of Community territory having rural ecosystems in which critical levels of acidification were exceeded in 1990 would be halved by 2010. This is to be achieved by the imposition of national emission ceilings. Following on from the interim target, the committee wants a new objective to be set for 2015 whereby, in principle, critical levels must not be reached in any rural ecosystem. The resolution also calls for full application of the polluter-pays principle and wants a toughening of existing legislation on emissions from large combustion plants (eg coal-burning power stations, cement factories and large-scale waste incinerators). It seeks the abolition of coal subsidies as well as greater use of financial instruments to reduce sulphur and nitrogen emissions. Rules should also be laid down for emissions from shipping using EU ports. Assistance to countries applying for membership of the Union should be linked to stringent requirements for action to reduce acidifying emissions. The committee also called on the Commission to put forward a strategy for reducing the adverse effects of farming on the environment, with special emphasis on ammonia.