Environment, biodiversity : community strategy

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The harmful effects of the common agriculture and fisheries policies on biodiversity are highlighted in a motion for a resolution adopted by the Committee. Biodiversity, which is increasingly threatened by human activity, can be defined as the existence of a wide variety of plants and animals in their natural environments. According to the motion, it guarantees water, air and soil quality as well as climate stability and provides man with resources indispensable for survival. The motion is contained in a non-legislative report drafted by Mr Jonas SJÖSTEDT (EUL/NGL, Sw) on a Commission communication regarding a European Community biodiversity strategy. The strategy fits into the context of the UN Biodiversity Convention which resulted from the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. The motion urges that the EU stop aiding projects with a directly negative impact on biodiversity. A "state of nature" inventory of species, ecosystems and gene banks should be drawn up, it says, and biodiversity conservation integrated into the Community's other policies. The motion notes that the common agricultural policy often has a directly negative impact on the Community's biological diversity and calls on the Commission to press for a switch to sustainable agriculture (eg extensive pasturage). More agricultural aid should be earmarked for environmental measures and organic farming. It says that genetically modified organisms may have far-reaching implications for existing indigenous organisms and the Commission should commit itself to a binding Biosafety Protocol as a safeguard against the potential risks of biotechnology. It also notes the extremely negative impact of EU fisheries policy on certain fish stocks, marine mammals and turtles. Fishing methods and gear should be adapted to reduce habitat degradation. The committee urges the Commission to make aid to applicant countries dependent on biological diversity criteria. The motion also refers to biodiversity problems in the world's less developed countries. The committee criticizes the Commission for failing to draw up biodiversity action plans for transport and energy, adding that "the Commission devotes no attention at all to the impact of chemical and industrial processes on biological diversity". Tourism should be sustainable. The EU should fully compensate for damage caused by the common agricultural policy, Trans-European Networks or regional policy. Positive economic incentives should be adopted to conserve biodiversity and fines or taxes should be employed as a deterrent.