Environment policy and sustainable development, European Council of Gothenburg, June 2001

2000/2322(INI) - 14/05/2001

The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Anneli HULTHÉN (PES, S) on environmental policy and sustainable development with a view to the Gothenburg Summit. It regretted that not enough time had been left for Parliament to take part in the discussion on preparing for an EU sustainable development strategy (SDS) or to comment on the specific proposals contained in the Commission's consultation paper in time for the Summit. The report emphasised that the SDS must be the result of an open process involving the citizens of Europe, and should also make it clear what the benefits were for ordinary citizens and different stakeholders. The committee was critical of the Commission's failure to take account of the global aspect, and stressed that global responsibility must be a key feature of the strategy, which should make an important contribution to the Rio+10 Summit to be held in 2002. It also stressed the need to set specific, measurable targets and develop indicators for following up and reviewing the sustainable development agenda established in Gothenburg and for incorporating the objectives of environmental integration into the broad economic policy guidelines. It called for the SDS to extend over a generation, e. g. a 25-year period, and to be subject to 5-year reviews. It also wanted sustainable food supply to be added to the list of 6 fundamental topics of the strategy proposed by the Commission. The Commission and Council were urged to define the most urgent needs for reform of existing EU policies in the context of the SDS and to establish a time frame and general objectives for those reforms. For example, the CAP should be reviewed in 2002 with the aim of bringing about consumer-centred sustainable farming that would produce safe food and remotivate the agricultural community. The goals of the common fisheries policy should include environmental concerns, species conservation and the prevention of overfishing. A coherent policy was also needed to prevent pollution of the sea. The report made a number of other key points: - the EU should continue to press for greater legal clarity as regards the relationship between WTO rules and trade measures taken under Multilateral Environmental Agreements. The WTO needed to be reformed so as to subordinate its activities to the objectives of sustainable development and international commitments to protect the environment; - the Council and the Commission were urged to maintain funding commitments for local employment initiatives, as the local economy had a vital role to play in reducing transport requirements. There should be support for regionally- and locally-oriented production and consumption patterns where applicable; - a change in transport policy was needed to reduce long-distance transport by road and increase investment in public transport and rail systems; - environment and energy policy should be coordinated and, in the long term, energy policy should be drawn up at Community level. A target of 12% of energy from renewable energy sources should be set for 2010 and 50% for 2040; - the Commission should complete the European climate change programme as soon as possible and implement emissions trading for the EU.