Common fisheries policy: monitoring of fisheries, action plan

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By adopting the report of Mr.NOVO (EUL/NGL,P),the Committee endorsed the Commission's action plan to improve the implementation of the fisheries policy .If the control measures, which should be operational by 2000 and run until 2002, are to be effective it is vital to secure the support of fishermen as well as shipowners and producer organisations by involving them fully in the entire process, stresses Mr NOVO. The controls have to be applied fairly, across the EU (both on land and at sea), with standard penalties for the same offences and a set of harmonised criteria for data on fleets. There must also be tighter controls on non-EU vessels fishing in Community waters. Adequate funding for the controls is essential, says Mr NOVO, and fisheries must cease to be the "poor relation" in the Community budget. If the current shortcomings in the fisheries policy are to be corrected and responsible fishing encouraged, money must be found for more inspectors and new technology, particularly satellite monitoring systems. Monitoring should not stop at fishing vessels. Post-landing controls must be stepped up so that the entire production, processing and marketing chain is covered right up to the end product on the consumer's plate. It is the Member States who carry the main responsibility for fisheries controls and they must meet all their obligations. If fleets are to be monitored properly the necessary data must be provided and Mr NOVO suggests introducing some form of penalty where information is repeatedly withheld.The Fisheries Committee regards control measures as part of a wider approach to fisheries in which fleet reductions should not be the only response to the decline in stocks. Funds should also be provided for training and retraining.