The common fisheries policy and the challenge of globalisation of the economy

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Daniel VARELA SUANZES-CARPEGNA (EPP-ED, E). The current trend to promote ever-closer ties between economics, finance, society and culture at world level should not, it felt, stifle traditional industries such as fisheries, which helped preserve the identity of coastal regions and sustain economic cohesion to the benefit of local communities. Looking ahead to a new round of trade liberalisation under the WTO, the common fisheries policy needed to have an all-round vision of its potential and its specific characteristics. The committee outlined a plan to be promoted by the EU at world level, consisting of: (1) the protection of marine biotopes and conservation of fishery resources in order to guarantee sustainable development and rational exploitation of species; (2) the adoption by the EU institutions of a coherent strategy as regards the WTO negotiations, which should not be limited to purely economic factors; (3) a comprehensive approach in trade negotiations so that account was taken not solely of tariff-reduction aspects but also of the multifunctional nature of fisheries as well as the right of establishment and of investment by EU Member States in third countries and free access to their ports; (4) the preservation of ambitious targets in the areas of environmental standards and health and food safety conditions. As regards external action, the report emphasised the need for active cooperation by the EU in the development of fisheries in non-EU countries as well as the leading role the Union should play in promoting and observing international law and the law of the sea. The EU should also encourage the creation of regional fisheries organisations (RFOs), which were the most flexible instruments for managing marine resources to be found in the high seas or on continental shelves shared by more than one state. The Community should carry more weight within existing RFOs and should allocate more human and material resources for this purpose. Lastly, the report called on the Commission to propose ways of penalising Community vessels flying flags of convenience, as they did not comply with Community and international law and thereby created unfair competition within the EU.