Conservation of fishery resources: cod and hake, stock recovery

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The committee adopted the report by Catherine STIHLER (PES, UK) amending the proposal under the consultation procedure. The report pointed out that the Commission had acknowledged that the situation as regards hake stocks was not exactly the same as that of cod and that the scientific reports were more contradictory than conclusive. It therefore said that the most reasonable course of action appeared to be to exclude hake from the proposal and apply alternative conservation measures. The committee wanted the interests of fishermen and the regions affected to be properly taken into account and therefore urged the Commission to adopt technical measures which would allow fishing activities to continue (such as temporary cessations of activity, temporary closures of areas containing juveniles, restrictions on mesh sizes and minimum sizes) in preference to measures such as compulsory scrapping of vessels and drastic reductions in TACs. Given the decreases in Total Allowable Catches (TAC) already implemented in recent years, the maximum TAC annual reduction should be limited to 30%, rather than 50% as proposed. Moreover, subsidies for scrapping a vessel should be increased from 20% to 30% if the application was made within 2 years of the entry into force of the regulation. The committee also felt that Community co-financing of compensation for temporary cessation of activities should be available for three years rather than one year as proposed. Finally, given the likely duration of the recovery plan and the hardship it would undoubtedly cause to the fisheries sector, the committee called on the Commission to undertake an annual review of the progress achieved and carry out a socio-economic impact assessment of the effects of the scheme.