Maritime pollution, Mediterranean Sea, 1995 Barcelona Convention: specially protected areas and biological diversity

1999/0019(CNS) - 12/02/1999 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: on behalf of the Community, to conclude the protocol on specially protected areas and biological diversity in the Mediterranean Sea, within the framework of the Barcelona Convention. CONTENT: the Community has been a contractual partner to the Convention for the protection of the Mediterranean Sea against pollution (the aforementioned Barcelona Convention) since 1977 and has concluded a number of protocols within this framework, with a view to helping to prevent pollution in the marine environment. In 1995, within the framework of the revision and improvement of the legal instruments of the Action Plan for the Mediterranean (APM), the contractual partners (including the Community) adopted a new protocol to the Barcelona Convention, signed by 16 Mediterranean countries and the Community: namely, the protocol on specially protected areas and biological diversity in the Mediterranean, which replaces an earlier version of this protocol. The purpose of this proposal is to allow the Community to approve this revised Protocol and its annexes, which set out the areas of Community competence with regard to the environment. Essentially, the amendments are designed to strengthen the mechanism for providing protection and to improve the Mediterranean's natural and cultural heritage by means of the creation of specially protected areas as well as the strengthening of measures to protect threatened areas. They are also designed to protect natural habitats and maintain biodiversity in the long term. The new protocol also contains an annex which sets out the common criteria to be used for selecting protected marine and coastal areas as well as an annex relating to areas which are endangered or threatened, or where exploitation is to be regulated. With a view to the effective achievement of the Community objectives with regard to the environment, it is important that the Community should accept amendments in line with the procedures set out in Article 228, paragraphs 2 and 3, of the Treaty. Acceptance by the Community will be accompanied by a specific declaration, explaining that the Community is contributing to the implementation of the provisions of the annexes of the protocol through the creation of the "Natura 2000" Community network.