Current situation and perspectives of fisheries agreements

1996/2141(INI) - 15/05/1997 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mr Peter CRAMPTON (PSE, UK) on international fisheries agreements, the European Parliament called on the Commission to present a proposal for a regulation establishing a framework for international fisheries agreements signed by the Community. Stressing that these agreements must comply with the international obligations and basic aims of the Community, Parliament called for a number of principles to be applied when defining and implementing the said agreements: - the sustainable exploitation of living marine resources, measures to prevent the depletion of target and non-target species and the prevention of damage to marine habitats, - guaranteed access of Community vessels to fishery resources, - cooperation between all parties concerned for the purpose of assessing fishery stocks, scientific research, conservation measures, monitoring and control, the coexistence of industrial and traditional fishing methods, the introduction and application of regional measures, - total consistency between the fishery agreements and EU policy in other areas (including the impact on employment in regions dependent on fishing). Parliament called on the Commission to take note of the impact of the agreements on the application of Article 130a and Article 130b of the EC Treaty and urged it to pursue a policy which would provide information on, and allow for the monitoring and control of, agreements concluded with third countries. At the same time, the Commission was called on to lay down a series of guidelines which would allow the agreements to be assessed in a uniform manner after their expiry. These guidelines should contain the following elements: - information on fishery resources prior to the signing of any agreement and periodical assessment of resources during the period of application of the agreement, - assessment of resources in respect of the scientific research, monitoring, control and training available in the third countries, - consultation with representatives from local fishing communities and consideration of their interests, - coordination with other Community activities, - analysis of the cost /benefit aspects of the agreement, including not just the financial parameters but all relevant factors, - inclusion of measures designed to ensure that the local landing of catches is not detrimental to the operation of local fish markets, - introduction of a mechanism enabling third countries to inform the EU of the results of Community-financed programmes for research, education and training, - the future profitability of the Community fishing fleet, - the setting up of a public register of companies and undertakings which benefit from the fisheries agreements and publication of the criteria of access to the waters of the third countries referred to in each of the agreements. In addition, Parliament hoped that, while respecting international obligations and codes of conduct, the fisheries agreements would help maintain, reinforce and diversify the Community fishermen's access to fishery resources. Recalling that the entire responsibility for setting the capacities of the catches taken in their waters resided with those States which bordered the sea, Parliament nevertheless called on the Community to set an example by encouraging the rational use of marine resources. From this perspective, the conservation of resources should be given a high priority in all agreements signed with third countries. On the matter of the budget, Parliament referred to the interinstitutional declaration of 12 December 1996 on improving information to the budgetary authority on the subject of fishery agreements and recalled that it was up to this body, within the framework of the annual budgetary procedure and the financial perspectives (1998-1999), to determine the budget allocation for the fisheries agreements. Finally, at institutional level, Parliament asked to be consulted on the mandate for negotiation laid down by the Council and reaffirmed its criteria for the definition of the concepts of 'considerable budgetary implications' under Article 228, third paragraph, second line, of the Treaty on European Union, allowing Parliament to be consulted on all agreements and financial protocols relating to fisheries, in accordance with the assent procedure.