Industrial fishing

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Adopting the own initiative report by Mr Heinz KINDERMANN (PSE, D) on industrial fisheries, the European Parliament considered that industrial fisheries, in moderation, were justifiable even in the North Sea, the Skagerrak and the Kattegat (where industrial fisheries represent 60% of sea catches), if they respect the principle of sustainability and if fisheries for human consumption take precedence in the event of conflicting interests. In order to meet these two conditions, Parliament considered that: - the impact of industrial fisheries on all species living in the sea must be accurately researched and monitored; - catch and by-catch limits based on scientific evaluations must be respected; - a rigorous control system must be established in ports of landing; - in cases of doubt, the precautionary approach must followed unreservedly. Parliament felt that, given the ecological and socio-economic interactions of industrial fisheries, they could not be dissociated from fisheries for human consumption and therefore hoped that the mortality per fishery of target species in industrial fisheries would be considerably reduced. Noting that controls over the application of Community law in industrial fisheries had caused serious problems of excessive catches (especially of protected species), Parliament welcomed the measures taken in 1996 by the Danish administration, the results of which were beginning to be felt. However, it would require several years to assess the real impact of this system. Considering, moreover, that the TAC for sand eel fishery introduced in 1998 (Regulation 45/98/EC) would fall short of what was needed, it called for a management plan to be drawn up in this sector encompassing management objectives based on mortality or biomass of the spawning stock and defining early warning signs, such as a decline in stocks or a decline in the breeding success of sea birds. It called on the Commission to draw up a proposal for the introduction of protection zones in environmentally sensitive areas (spawning grounds, areas of juveniles) and to propose a reduction in the maximum permitted percentage of protected species from 10% to 2% in respect of the sand eel fishery. It welcomed in particular the recent introduction of total catch limits for herring taken in sprat fishery but considered that is was too early as yet to relax other conservation measures to offset this, as the Council intended to do by increasing the permitted by-catch percentage of herring taken in the sprat fishery in the North sea from 10% to 20%. Finally, it regretted the lack of political will to curb effectively the heavy by-catches of whiting and haddock in the Norway pout fishery and therefore called on the Council and the Commission to take account of by-catches of protected species in the pout fishery when total allowable catches are fixed annually and to include them in the catch quotas allocated to the Member States.