Economic growth and environment

1994/2187(COS) - 11/10/1995 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mr Johannes BLOKLAND (EDN, NL), Parliament considered that the Commission was still underestimating the urgency of the environmental situation, whereas the principle of sustainability called precisely for measures to be taken in the short term. It felt that the statement that "economic growth and environmental protection are not mutually exclusive but should go hand in hand" was put in terms which were too absolute. The report called on the Commission to draw up a European plan designed to allow a sustainable economic structure to be implemented in the year 2020 and drew attention to the fact that the measures which were essential for the creation of a sustainable economy would only account for a small proportion of GNP (2 to 3%) if they were taken at the right moment. In the same spirit, the report called for the development of a range of instruments (with a timetable for implementation) which were capable of creating a sustainable economy and supported the Commission's actions in respect of "green accounting". Parliament regretted that the Council had not been in a position to take practical steps in the area of environmental taxation (a CO2 tax). As a result, the report called on the Commission to develop, as soon as possible, practical models for the introduction of an energy tax which would have a positive impact, both in terms of growth and employment and as far as reducing the burden of pollution was concerned (for example, by offsetting the energy tax by a reduction in wage costs and by using the revenue from this tax to implement energy-saving measures). The Commission was also called on to develop an energy-taxation model which would provide for the taxation of primary energy at the beginning of the energy consumption process. The report also stated that as well as taxation, the Commission should consider a system of emission subsidies, fines and permits which would serve to reduce pollution levels. Urging the Commission to seek international cooperation on the application of minimum standards for environmental protection, the report also encouraged the transfer of ecotechnology to the developing countries. Finally, the Commission was called on to include environmental issues more emphatically in its employment policy and to introduce policies promoting reutilization, recycling and environmental protection in business and industry.