Common fisheries policy after the year 2002

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Adopting the report by Mrs Carmen FRAGA ESTEVEZ (PPE, E) on the common fisheries policy after the year 2002, plenary only adopted one of the 64 amendments submitted. This amendment emphasized the importance of the environment and the protection of species. For the rest, the European Parliament considered that, even if the common fisheries policy is to be reworked, it must not under any circumstances disappear or be completely overturned. Parliament announced a series of general principles, the main ones being: to maintain a common fisheries policy after 2002 which treated fisheries in the same way as any other economic sector and relied on rationalization to improve yields; to make a clear distinction between non-industrial and industrial fishing; to maintain derogations from the principle of free access; to allow Member States exclusive use and management of their 12-mile zone; to involve fishermen in the review and the application and management of the common fisheries policy. Apart from strengthening technical measures, Parliament also insisted on the need to decentralize the common fisheries policy, the need to increase research, the importance of aquaculture and the specific measures which needed to be taken in various areas in order to maintain the coastal fleet. Parliament set out a number of proposals for making more rational use of resources: a flexible system needed to be implemented to minimize rejects. Capacity should be reduced on a rational and equitable basis and should concentrate on fleets which fished the most vulnerable resources. Total authorized catches (TACs) should be rationalized by dividing fishing rights between fishermen. Parliament also called for the possibility of transferring these fishing rights to be examined. Given that present controls were inefficient, they needed to be simplified and rationalized by imposing common minimum standards subject to penalties. The role of the structural policy needed to be refocused on the need to adapt the fleet to the quotas available. This called for development of the processing industries, specific measures in favour of non-industrial fleets and a more integrated approach with other policies to develop shore areas. At the external level, fisheries should benefit from the same system of requirements and compensation as that granted to other foodstuff sectors. It must also be possible to apply the principle of subsidiarity in this area by allowing bilateral fisheries agreements, with the Member States in question able to negotiate fishing opportunities and bear the cost of financial compensation themselves.