Environment, biodiversity : community strategy

1998/2033(COS) - 20/10/1998 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Adopting the report by Mr Jonas Sjöstedt (GUE/NGL, S) on biodiversity, Parliament denounces the negative impact of agricultural and fisheries policies on biodiversity. It stresses the particular need for initiatives, measures and programmes on this subject at national, international and Community level. Welcoming the Commission communication as a first step towards raising awareness of loss of biodiversity, Parliament considers that there is a need for an inventory of species, ecosystems and natural gene banks to enable the situation of those that are threatened to be assessed. Parliament also urges the Commission to present an overview of the measures which the Community has initiated and to encourage incorporation of the biodiversity element in the various policies which are implemented and to include in its strategy the development of basic knowledge of biodiversity. Overall, Parliament inveighs against EU projects with a negative direct impact on biodiversity and urges the Union no longer to support this type of project. It calls on the Commission to ensure that the habitats and birds directives are implemented fully, to adopt appropriate measures to require Member States fully to comply with Community law on the environment and nature conservancy and to intensify monitoring in sensitive area. It calls on the Commission to stipulate that the action plans on biodiversity be ready within two years and to specify timetables for the individual measures proposed. It calls for action also in the areas of transport and energy. Parliament firmly denounces the damage to biodiversity caused by the common agricultural policy and calls on the EU to cease financing projects which directly harm biodiversity through the CAP, trans-European networks or the Structural Funds. In the context of the current CAP reform, Parliament calls for a switch to sustainable agriculture (e.g. low- density grazing) and financial support for environmental measures and organic farming. In relation to negotiations for enlarging the EU, priority should be given to this aspect so as not to impoverish these countries' biological heritage. Parliament is also concerned at the proliferation of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) which could have a considerable impact on indigenous organisms. In this regard, Parliament calls for an investigation into the impact of the CAP on the use and preservation of genetic resources in agriculture and forestry. Parliament also points out that caution is needed with regard to introducing foreign species and GMOs. With regard to GMOs, measures at international level are also needed. Parliament calls in particular for some simple rules: for the export of GMOs or products containing GMOs to non-member states, exporters or importers should obtain approval of the import from the country of destination and from the authority in the competent Member State. Approval should also be obtained for the export from the country of destination. Parliament also calls for a clear and all-inclusive system for labelling products derived from or containing GMOs. Parliament also notes the disastrous impact of the European fisheries policy on certain fish stocks, marine mammals and turtles; fishing methods and fishing gear should be adapted to reduce habitat degradation. The FAO code of conduct for responsible fishing should be fully applied and a plan should be implemented for research into the interaction between fisheries and marine ecosystems. Pointing out once more the importance of managing fish stocks, Parliament calls on the Commission to draw up an action plan to achieve sustainable management of fish stocks and support traditional fishing methods. Where necessary, activities of distant water fishing fleets operating in international waters should be reduced. Underlining the importance of raising public awareness of environmental damage, Parliament calls for appropriate financial resources to be provided for public information. Parliament considers indispensable the establishment of an institutional framework to legally safeguard the use and balanced sharing-out of the benefits of biodiversity. It calls on the Commission to commit itself to a binding Biosafety Protocol, linked to the Convention on Biodiversity, which safeguards human and animal health, the environment and biological diversity and which protects the socio-economic welfare of societies. Economic incentives should also be provided to safeguard biodiversity and legislative measures (fines or taxes) to discourage practices which harm biodiversity. Parliament calls for aid to the regions to be withdrawn if the projects implemented do not meet the required environmental criteria or have a directly harmful impact on biological diversity, and urges the Commission to take account of the strategy for biological diversity in the forthcoming regulation concerning the EU Structural Funds for the period 2000-2006. It calls on the

EIB to improve its environment work. Improvements are also called for with regard to transport, particularly with regard to implementing networks. The construction of new infrastructure in protected areas should not lead to a reduction of biodiversity, or projects not respecting this rule should not receive Community financial support. Parliament calls for revision of the TEN guidelines in the light of their impact on biodiversity, by July 1999. It also calls for more awareness in private and public tourism installations in order to promote sustainable tourism. In particular it suggests international guidelines for sustainable tourism and the concept of an ecolabel for sustainable tourism. Parliament criticises the fact that the Commission has not considered the effect of chemical products and industrial processes on biodiversity.