Protection of marine environment: sustainable use of the seas, conservation of ecosystems

2003/2065(INI) - 19/06/2003 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European parliament adopted its own-initiative report drafted by Laura GONZALEZ ALVAREZ (GUE/NGL, Spain) on protection of the marine environment. (Please see the summary of 30/04/03.) Parliament concurred with the Commission's analysis that overfishing is a common problem worldwide, resulting in depleted fish stocks, threats to species such as other fish, sharks, birds, marine mammals and turtles, damage to the marine habitat and threats to jobs linked to fishing. Whilst overfishing is but one of the serious threats that harm the marine environment, it is one of the most important to deal with rapidly if fish stocks are to recover and provide hope for coastal communities. Fish from around the world is available in the Community, either caught by EU-flagged vessels or obtained on the international market. This gives the Community a significant responsibility for the impact of fishing. The Council and the Commission must take the necessary action to conserve fish stocks both on the high seas and in the waters of third countries. Parliament felt that in order to improve the knowledge base to which the Communication refers in relation to surveys, science, monitoring and decision-making and so as to reach the ambitious targets set out in the strategy, more technical, financial and human resources need to be made available. The control measures of the marine conventions aimed at protecting the marine environment are difficult to enforce. The Commission is asked to put more emphasis on implementation, reporting and uniform enforcement of current regulations, and to seek the earliest possible review of the old conventions, under which the sea is "everybody's right but nobody's responsibility". With regard to the measures proposed by the commission, Parliament expressed its concern that Action 2 appears to limit the Commission to the Natura 2000 network as the only tool to protect biodiversity. It felt that the protection and conservation aspect of this Communication should be put beyond the limits of the Natura 2000 network. Finally, Parliament made several recommendations on the measures proposed by the Commission, with particular reference to hazardous substances and chronic oil pollution.