

Convention on Fishing and Conservation of the Living Resources in the Baltic Sea and Belts: withdrawal by the European Community from the Gdansk Convention

2004/0197(CNS) - 31/08/2004 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to withdraw the European Community from the Convention on Fishing and Conservation of the Living Resources in the Baltic Sea and the Belts (The Gdansk Convention)

PROPOSED ACT : Council Decision.

CONTENT : the European Community became a member of the Convention on Fishing and Conservation of the Living Resources in the Baltic Sea and the Belts in 1983. The Convention establishes the "International Baltic Sea Fisheries Commission" (IBSFC), which comprises of six Contracting Parties, namely the European Community, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and the Russian Federation. The main activity of the IBSFC has been to fix and allocate annual fishing possibilities for cod, salmon, herring and sprat, as well as the establishment and adoption of technical conservation measures for these fisheries. It also plays a leading role in environmental projects such as Salmon conservation in Baltic rivers.

Since the enlargement of the EU in May 2004, however, four of the Contracting Parties have been obliged to withdraw from the Convention under terms drawn up by the Acts of Accession. A withdrawal of their membership will be notified to the Depositary Government in Gdansk and is to take effect on 31 December 2005. With only two Contracting Parties left the EU considers it time to wind up the Convention and seek an alternative route to manage EU/Russian fishery resources in and around the Baltic Sea. Given that only 5% of the waters covered by the Convention will fall under Russian jurisdiction, a continuation of the Convention would be both disproportionate and inefficient.

The Commission is of the opinion that a bi-lateral framework could offer greater opportunities including, inter alia, reciprocal access to fish, exchanges of quotas and the inclusion of technical measures. Moreover, a bi-lateral approach could integrate the existing bilateral agreements between the Russian Federation and Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden under a single bi-lateral framework.

Given such considerations the Commission requests the Council to adopt the proposed EU withdrawal from the Convention as soon as possible so that the Community can notify the Depositary of the Gdansk Convention of the withdrawal before 31 December 2004.