

Specific action for transfers of vessels to countries hit by the tsunami in 2004

2005/0005(CNS) - 10/02/2005 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to provide specific action for the transfer of Community small fishing vessels subject to permanent cessation of fishing activities to fishing communities located in those third countries affected by the Tsunami. It also establishes the legislative framework required for Member States to allow Community vessels receiving FIFG funds for permanent cessation to be transferred to third countries affected by the Tsunami, rather than being scrapped or reassigned for non-profitable purposes other than fishing.

PROPOSED ACT : Council Regulation.

CONTENT : on 26 December 2004, the tidal wave that occurred in the Indian Ocean (Tsunami) ravaged the coast and the industries located in a number of third countries and thousands of lives were lost. The environmental and economic effects of this Tsunami were devastating. Besides tourism, the fishing and the aquaculture sectors were the most affected. With regard to the fishing fleet, a large number of vessels were shipwrecked off the coast or destroyed in the fishing ports of these countries. Moreover, the Tsunami damaged their port facilities, shipyards, the processing industry and almost all their aquaculture sites.

In line with a relevant resolution of the European Parliament on 11/01/2005, the Commission agreed to a package of measures aimed at providing aid for rehabilitation and restructuring to rebuild the fishing industry in the most affected countries by the Tsunami. The present proposal is part of this package. An existing provision of the Regulation governing the financial instrument for fisheries

(2792/1999) makes it possible to allocate public funds with FIFG co-financing for the implementation of permanent cessation of fishing activities of Community fishing vessels by scrapping vessels.

Given the number of vessels destroyed in the third countries affected by the Tsunami, it is proposed to allow the transfer of those Community vessels that correspond to the needs of these third countries.

With this aim, a specific action within the framework of the FIFG is set up by means of amending Regulation 2792/1999/EC.

This draft Council Regulation foresees a specific action for the transfer of Community small fishing vessels subject to permanent cessation of fishing activities to fishing communities located in those third countries affected by the Tsunami. It also establishes the legislative framework required for Member States to allow Community vessels receiving FIFG funds for permanent cessation to be transferred to third countries affected by the Tsunami, rather than being scrapped or reassigned for non-profitable purposes other than fishing. In order to ensure consistency with the general objectives of the common fisheries policy and promote sustainability of the fishing activities in the long term, for the implementation of this proposal, the Commission will set up an appropriate monitoring system with the participation of the Member States concerned. Representatives of the FAO and of specialised NGOs may also be invited to participate.

The following conditions will apply:

- The vessels concerned must be registered in the Community Register of fishing vessels, have an overall length of less than 12 meters and be between five and twenty years old.

- The permanent cessation of vessels fishing activities may be achieved by the permanent transfer of the vessel to the third countries affected by the Tsunami only until 30 June 2006.

Furthermore, the following three derogations to Council Regulation 2792/1999/EC will apply for the implementation of this draft Regulation:

- The minimum age of vessels eligible for transfer will be reduced to five years and this action may only be applied to vessels up to 20 years old.

- The premiums shall not be reduced by a part of the amount previously received in the case of renewal, equipment and modernisation aid foreseen.

- An additional premium may be granted to cover on the one hand the expenses incurred by public or private organisations for the transport of the vessels to the third countries and on the other hand to compensate vessels owners to make fully seaworthy and equipped the eligible vessels.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS : it should be noted that the proposal does not invoke any extra financial or budgetary implication on the Community budget since this action will be financed entirely from funds available to Member States for FIFG operational programming period 2000-2006.