More environmentally-friendly fishing methods

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Seán Ó **NEACHTAIN** (UEN, IE) on more environmentally-friendly fishing methods. It reminded the Commission that it should take a more wide-ranging view of measures to protect the marine environment and rebuild depleted stocks, in particular by considering coastal and offshore pollution, industrial and agricultural effluents, deep-sea dredging and maritime transport, so as to complement current management methods. Technical measures should be based on scientific fishing research.

Parliament stated that, while ecological considerations are of major concern, future fisheries management policies must not be used to further penalise economically and socially vital fishing operations. It was essential to achieve a balance between socio-economic exigencies and environmental sustainability, while underlining the need to activate a mechanism for subsidising or compensating fishermen who are affected by the negative effects of environmentally-friendly fishing. Parliament called for the adoption of technical methods to improve selectivity and, therefore, the possibility of catching fish at the right size, in order to maintain high productivity. Only by ensuring that fish spawn and develop for a minimum specific period can the satisfactory reproduction of fish be made possible.

Any significantly negative impact of fishing on marine biodiversity must be limited through the establishment of marine reserves, real-time area closures and other appropriate and balanced management measures. Parliament expressed particular concern over the issue of ghost fishing and urged the Commission to take action to combat the issue, including close monitoring of the effectiveness of any provisions that are adopted at EU level.

It went on to highlight the need to reduce discards, which produce detrimental biological effects as well as having negative economic impacts, through the adoption of closed seasons, prohibited zones and mesh size regulations. Parliament asked the Commission to bring forward proposals for pilot projects aimed at reducing discards, and suggested that the option of discard bans accompanied by appropriate incentives for fishermen be considered.

Parliament urged the Commission to promote actively the adoption of an FAO International Plan of Action on by-catch reduction. The Commission must avoid conflicting objectives and superfluous regulations and avail itself of this opportunity to simplify the overall regulatory system. It should consider the application of environmentally-friendly fishing technical measures as a complement to existing effort limitations in relation to stock recovery plans. In this context, it was absolutely essential to develop and implement the satellite technology needed to detect the presence of unauthorised fishing vessels in closed areas and in Marine Protected Areas, in order to guarantee effective protection of fish, their critical habitat and other biodiversity.