Implementation of the EU action plan against illegal, undeclared and unregulated fishing

2006/2225(INI) - 25/01/2007

The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Marie-Hélène AUBERT (Greens/EFA, FR) on the implementation of the EU action plan against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. The report welcomed the inclusion in the Commission's work programme for 2007 of a package on IUU fishing, including a communication on this subject and a proposal for a regulation on stepping up the fight against IUU activities. It also called on the Commission and the Member States to redouble their efforts to implement the 15 actions included in the EU action plan on IUU fishing as agreed in 2002, and outlined a series of recommendations for action to be taken. In particular, it said that the Commission should include the following measures in its proposed regulation:

- a Community register of vessels engaging in IUU fishing should be set up, which would include vessels on regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs) blacklists. This would facilitate the swift exchange of information among the Member States and make it possible to monitor vessels taking account of possible re-flagging;

- common minimum penalties for serious infringements should be applicable in all Member States and should be sufficiently dissuasive;

- all blacklists of fishing vessels and fish transport vessels, including their owners or operators, adopted by RFMOs should be published and incorporated directly into Community law. Non-EU vessels on those lists should be prohibited from entry into EU ports for any purpose, except in cases of 'force majeure' or for humanitarian reasons. All EU-flagged vessels should be prohibited from providing support (fuel, supplies, transhipment, etc.) to those vessels while at sea;

- the legal origin of fish should be demonstrated before it is allowed to be offloaded in EU ports or imported into the EU.

The committee also welcomed the establishment of the new Fisheries Control Agency (in Vigo , Spain) and urged the Commission to consider the idea of setting up an EU coastguard. Moreover, it said that the Commission should ensure that any persons guilty of IUU fishing do not receive any type of aid or subsidy from Community funds for any branch of their activities. The Member States should take similar action with regard to their respective national aid.

The report also pointed out that "the importance of the EU in the world, in its various roles as a major fishing power and as the world's largest market for fish, obliges it to be at the forefront of the fight against IUU fishing". MEPs said that the EU can only act credibly on the world scene if it has already taken effective action to halt its own involvement in IUU fishing, both in EU waters and by EU vessels or interests outside the EU. They urged the Commission to help developing countries, especially those with which it has fishing agreements, to comply fully with the commitments of the international plan of action designed to prevent illegal fishing, helping to strengthen the scant means available to them by including specific actions in the new partnership agreements.

Amongst other recommendations, MEPs called on the Commission to present its proposal on eco-labelling by June 2007, reiterating their belief that the improvements in the traceability of fish "from the net to the plate" that would be required by eco-labelling schemes would be of considerable help in identifying IUU fish and keeping it off the EU market. Lastly, the Commission and the Member States were urged to

expand the Community information campaign so as to improve public awareness of the extent and serious nature of IUU fishing.