Thematic strategy on the marine environment

2006/2174(INI) - 23/10/2006

The Council held a policy debate on the thematic strategy and proposal for a Framework Directive for the protection and conservation of the marine environment.

The debate focused essentially on the following issues:

- in general, the Council considered that the marine strategy, together with the proposal for a Directive, provides adequate tools to meet the marine environment related objectives set out in the 6th Environmental Action Programme while setting up the environmental pillar of a future EU Maritime Policy;

- in their majority, delegations agreed that the Directive should include an explicit definition of the concept of "good environmental status" (GES) and indicated some of the main elements they considered should be included in such a definition to make it operational. Delegations were of the view that some flexibility with regard to the timetable might be required, depending on how GES would be defined as well as on specific regional and sub-regional circumstances;

- the need to ensure coherence between the different levels of regulation was stressed. The work done and obligations under international agreements, such as the Regional Seas Conventions, must be taken into account to avoid overlaps and duplication of work. The strategy and proposed Directive must be coherent with other EC legislation and policies, such as the Water Framework Directive, the Habitats and Birds Directives and the Common Fisheries Policy;

- lastly, it was recognised that the specific situation of landlocked countries will have to be addressed when implementing the Directive, although these countries do have a contribution to make to its objectives.