Agreement EC/Russia: cooperation in fisheries and the conservation of the living marine resources in the Baltic Sea

2006/0309(CNS) - 22/12/2006 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: the conclusion of a Co-operation Agreement between the Community and Russia on fisheries and the conservation of marine resources in the Baltic Sea.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Regulation.

BACKGROUND: the Commission is seeking approval for an Agreement between the European Community and the Russian Federation *on co-operation in fisheries and the conservation of living marine resources in the Baltic Sea*, which was initialled on 28 July 2006 by the Community and on 7 August 2006 by the Russian Federation.

The new framework Agreement is confined to the Baltic Sea; the Russian Federation, at this stage, preferring not to extend the geographical scope of the Agreement beyond the Baltic. Provisions are in place that would allow for a possible extension should this be desirable at some future date. Any extension of the Agreement's geographical scope would, however, require a new or amended mandate in order to negotiate fishing rights for Russian vessels in Community waters outside of the Baltic Sea. Since the Gdansk Convention will cease to apply as from 1 January 2007, this new Agreement will replace both it and the existing bilateral fisheries Agreements between the Member States and the Russian Federation.

CONTENT: the main objective of the new Agreement is:

- to ensure close co-operation between both Parties based on the principle of equitable and mutual benefit for the purpose conservation, sustainable exploitation and the management of all straddling, associated and dependent stocks in the Baltic Sea.

Provisions have been put in place for:

- joint management measures;
- licensing arrangements;
- compliance with conservation and management measures and other fisheries regulations;
- co-operation on control and enforcement measures;
- inspections;
- the arrest and detention of vessels; and
- scientific co-operation on anadromous and catadromous species.

To achieve these objectives, a Joint Baltic Sea Fisheries Committee will be established, which will meet once a year and which will act as an important forum for scientific advice on the status of fish stocks in the Baltic Seas as well as fisheries management.

The Agreement will not entail any changes to the current structure of the Community fleet in the Baltic Sea nor on the way shared stocks are managed. In addition, no changes are foreseen in the Community's contribution to the ICES for scientific advice – currently 90.04% of the annual amount. Unless notice of termination is given, the Agreement should last for an initial period of six years.