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THE COUNCIL

Brussels, 5 July 1996

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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

of: Working Party on External Fisheries Policy

dated: 1 July 1996

N° prev. doc.: 8366/96 PECHE 240 NIS 82

Subject: Russia - Information from the Commission on consultations about existing Fisheries Agreements with Sweden and Finland

1. The Commission representative reported that while Russia had finally accepted Community competence to manage the previous bilateral fisheries agreements which Russia had with both Finland and Sweden, it was no longer willing to pursue these agreements; the Russian State Commission for Fisheries had expressed no interest in an exchange of quotas with Finland and Sweden in the second half of 1996. No reserve quotas at the end of the year have been envisaged. Russia's thinking appeared to be that the scope of these bilateral agreements had been too restricted and a global agreement with the European Union should be pursued.

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2. The Commission delegation in Moscow had been informed that the Russian authorities had been finding the procedural demands made by the Union since the accession of Finland and Sweden rather exacting; eg. licence applications now had to be sent to Brussels instead of Helsinki and Stockholm.
3. The Commission's position was that negotiations could not begin on a global EU agreement until the original agreements with Finland and Sweden had been honoured. It further envisaged sending a Verbal Note on this issue to the Russian Ministry for Foreign Affairs.
4. Both the Finnish and Swedish delegations regretted this reaction from the Russian side and fully endorsed the Commission's position.
5. The Swedish delegation pointed out that Sweden and Russia had had an exchange of quotas in 1995 and expressed surprise at the present lack of interest on Russia's part; the level of utilisation of quotas in recent times would suggest that, on the contrary, Russia should be very interested in such an exchange for a number of species. It considered that the real problem might lie with difficulties on their side in fulfilling the licensing requirements and that this should be investigated.
6. The Finnish delegation pointed out that the present agreement contained new elements which perhaps Russia had not clearly identified. These elements might require further clarification for Russia.

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7. The Commission representative noted these delegations' comments. On the question of the administrative burden involved in licence applications the Commission, in the draft of its Verbal Note, had invited Russian representatives to Brussels to acquaint themselves with the technical details of the system, at the Community's expense.
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