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NOTE

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to: Delegations

Subject: Plenary Session of the European Parliament, Strasbourg, 14 February 2012

Joint debate on Fisheries - Oral questions to the Council and the Commission

The Chair gave the floor to the authors of the oral questions:

- Mr the Cope Gallagher (ALDE, IE) expressed the European Parliament's frustration with the Council's delay in adopting its first reading on the proposed multi-annual plan for the western stock of Atlantic horse mackerel. He recognised the recent progress made by the Council Presidency and hoped that negotiations would take place to reach a satisfactory conclusion which may not necessarily create a precedent for the future of other management plans. He also took the view that, in the future, measures such as the approval of gill nets allowing small vessels to benefit from increased haddock quotas should be taken at local level and not under the co-decision procedure.
- Mr Mato Adrover (EPP, ES) deplored intentional obstacles from the Commission and the Council preventing the European Parliament from exercising its new powers in fisheries policy under the Lisbon Treaty. He criticised the fact that the Commission and the Council continued to use Article 43(3) TFEU for the adoption of technical measures in this area, meaning that the European Parliament was sidelined in the decision-making process.

- Ms Patrao Neves (EPP, PT) asked the Commission to recognise the multi-dimensional nature of fisheries as well as its contribution to the Europe 2020 strategy.
- Ms Rodust (S&D, DE) strongly criticised the fact that the Council had not moved on the horse mackerel multi-annual plan.
- Mr Grobarczyk (ECR, PL) asked the Commission to focus the CFP (common fisheries policy) on small-scale and regional fishing.
- Mr Ferreira (GUE/NGL, PT) said that small-scale and traditional fisheries were not sufficiently taken into account in the CFP reform, in contrast to the big market operators.

On behalf of the Council, Mr. Wammen stated that the Council agreed that long-term management plans were one of the key elements of the CFP reform. He informed MEPs that the Permanent Representatives Committee reached agreement last November on a way forward on the proposed multi-annual plan for the stock of western horse mackerel and that the Council will be in a position to examine in full Parliament's position at first reading. With regard to the TAC and quotas proposals for 2012, he explained the reasons why the Council agreed with the legal analysis of the Commission that both proposals fell within the scope of Article 43(3) TFEU and that therefore all measures contained therein could be validly adopted by the Council alone.

On behalf of the Commission, Ms Damanaki urged the Council to take a decision on the horse mackerel multi-annual plan given the importance of this plan for the sustainability of stocks. On Article 43(3) TFEU, she disagreed that the Commission was preventing the European Parliament from exercising its powers and considered that the Commission had interpreted this article in line with the Treaty. Finally, she said that Commission reform proposals paid specific attention to measures in favour of small-scale fisheries.

For the political groups, the following speakers took the floor:

- Mr Milana (S&D, IT) considered that the Commission and the Council went beyond Article 43(3) TFEU and said that the CFP needed a different approach integrating its social, economic and cultural aspects.

- Mr Davies (ALDE, UK) said that the debate on the legal basis was important since it was setting a precedent for the future and he hoped negotiations between the Council and the Parliament on the horse mackerel multi-annual plan would start soon, adding that long-term management plans were key for healthy fish stocks.
- Ms Lövin (Greens/ALE, SE) stressed that fisheries were a common good fulfilling important functions for society and the environment.
- Mr Stevenson (ECR, UK) was looking for the Danish Presidency to solve the issue of the horse mackerel multi-annual plan.
- Mr Bufton (EFD, UK) mentioned the recent European Court of Auditors report stating that measures taken to date to reduce fishing overcapacity had been unsuccessful. Mr Bufton therefore considered that fisheries policy should be taken out of the Commission's control.
- Ms Dodds (NI, IE) said that long-term management plans were the way forward.

During the discussion:

Some MEPs (Ms Bilbao Barandica (ALDE), Mr Hudghton (Greens/ALE) Mr Nicholson (ECR)) considered that the Commission and Council had a restrictive approach concerning the EP's role and the application of the Lisbon Treaty in the CFP. Some (Mr Kelly (EPP), Mr Nicholson (ECR), Mr Hudghton (Greens/ALE)) favoured regionalisation and decentralisation of fisheries policy. Mr Kuhn (EPP) and Mr Kelly (EPP) called for the elimination of unwanted catches and discards.

Several MEPs (Mr Higgins (EPP), Mr Sanchez Presedo (S&D), Ms Prendergast (S&D), Ms Rosbach (ECR), Ms Miranda (Verts/ALE)) asked the Commission to recognise the CFP cross-cutting dimension and were also worried about the social and economic impact of CFP reform, especially for small-scale fisheries.

Mr van Nistelrooj (EPP, NL) asked whether the Commission could find a solution to compensate the losses of Spanish and Dutch fishermen further to the rejection of the extension of the EU-Morocco fisheries agreement.

On behalf of the Commission, Ms Damanaki concluded that keeping the CFP status quo was not an option for the sustainability of the stocks and for jobs, and that the Commission-proposed CFP reform supported the need for a multi-sectoral approach. She agreed that regionalisation would be of great importance, for example for a decision on gill nets in the case of increased haddock quotas. She said that the Commission welcomed the Court of auditors report. On the EU-Morocco fisheries agreement, she mentioned the Commission decision to refer to the previous Protocol.

On behalf of the Council, Mr Wammen concluded by hoping that a Council decision on the multi-annual plan on horse mackerel would be taken shortly as well as constructive cooperation with the European Parliament. He added that multi-annual plans were a CFP pillar and that the European Parliament and the Council had to adopt the goals of these plans together. He also stressed that the appropriate Treaty articles had been used for TAC and quotas and that future the CFP should be in line with the correct Treaty articles. Finally, he was in favour of regionalisation in some areas.

On 16 February, the European Parliament should adopt a Resolution on the multi-annual plan for western stock of Atlantic horse mackerel.