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Subject: NEAFC: Preparation of Working Group on mackerel and blue whiting
(Bergen, 25-27 March 1998)

Delegations will find attached the declassified version of the above document.

The text of this document is identical to the previous version.

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RESTREINT

PECHE 107

OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

of: Working Party on External Fisheries Policy

dated: 19 March 1998

Subject: NEAFC: Preparation of Working Group on mackerel and blue whiting (Bergen, 25-27 March 1998)

1. The Commission representative indicated that the main substantive points to be borne in mind regarding the next meeting of the Working Group on mackerel and blue whiting were:
 - it was the first meeting of a process which will probably take time; a reasonable timetable would be that regulation is approved in the Annual Meeting of 1999, to be applied by the year 2000;
 - the mackerel and the blue whiting were straddling the so called "Banana Hole" and there was increased fishing activity within this area (Russian, Estonian, Lithuanian and Bulgarian vessels had been sighted as being active there, and Ukrainian vessels would probably follow);
 - it would seem that blue whiting stocks were moving from United Kingdom waters towards international waters.

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These factors led to conclusion that the Community had an interest in regulating the mackerel and blue whiting fisheries within the international waters of the NEAFC Area.

1. As regards the strategy to be adopted at the meeting, the Commission representative noted that item 5.3 of the Draft Provisional Agenda would have to be clarified, so as to be sure that the by-catch problem (for which in-depth discussion was important) was properly addressed.
1. He mentioned the need to establish accurate data. The Commission services were compiling the catch statistics for all Member States, based on STATLANT data, and would circulate the results. He urged Member States to review them and contact the Commission services as soon as possible if there was any discrepancy between the figures provided by the Commission and their own figures.
1. At the request of the Portuguese delegation, the Commission representative confirmed that the southern component of the mackerel stock was not the subject of discussion at the Working Group.
1. The United Kingdom delegation felt that the Community's aims at the meeting should be regulation of the international fishery, containment of the Faroese fishery and ensuring that the European Community was the major stockholder for both stocks.
1. It further held the view that historical catch data could be the starting point of discussion, but also stock distribution (e.g. spawning stock areas, nursery areas, etc.) would have to be taken into account, as this criterion would favour the Community's interest.

1. The United Kingdom delegation added that it was important to keep the Faroe Islands on the European Community's side, even if some concessions had to be made, as it was important to maintain current agreements.

1. It further expressed its view that the blue whiting stock was not moving towards international waters, but there was a problem of misreporting.

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