



Recommendation 1558 (2002)¹

Fisheries in Europe's semi-land-locked seas

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly is concerned about the risk of destruction of the particularly fragile ecosystems of semi-land-locked seas – the Baltic Sea, the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea – and about the overexploitation of fish stocks and marine pollution which threaten living marine resources and therefore the whole fishing sector.

2. The Assembly refers to the following relevant legal instruments:

the Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping from Ships and Aircraft (Oslo Convention);

the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter (London Convention);

the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area (Helsinki Convention);

the Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution from Land-Based Sources (Paris Convention);

the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea;

the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (Washington Convention);

the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution (Barcelona Convention).

3. The European fishing fleet now comprises over 100 000 vessels. Over 200 000 individuals are directly employed in the fishing sector. Intensive fishing has led to overfishing and has drastically altered interrelations among the various species. Disputes over fishing quotas in the European Union are cautionary examples of foreseeable future clashes over the apportionment of ever-decreasing fish resources.

4. The fishing sector and the state of marine ecosystems are intimately linked. Excessive or inappropriate fishing can seriously impair such ecosystems and cause lasting damage to the biological balance. If the diversity of living marine species is to be preserved, therefore, much greater attention must be paid to the effects of fishing on marine animals and habitats.

5. In view of the increasing human settlement of coastal areas, the growth in industrial production and the ever greater pollution in catchment areas, extensive, sometimes irreversible, damage is inevitable unless immediate action is taken to provide international protection for the seas.

6. Against this background, the Assembly calls for increased co-operation, especially between political decision makers and economic operators, and corresponding co-ordination in this field with a view to providing long-term protection for both fish populations and the marine environment.

1. Assembly debate on 25 April 2002 (15th Sitting) (see [Doc. 9373](#), report of the Committee on the Environment and Agriculture, rapporteur: Mr Behrendt). Text adopted by the Assembly on 25 April 2002 (15th Sitting).



7. The Assembly therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers call on member states to:

take energetic action to ensure co-ordination of the various national research programmes with a view to harmonising the different international marine research methods, in order to guarantee comparability of data and compatibility of analytical methods;

ensure the drafting of regulations on time-limits and geographical boundaries for fishing activities in order to protect certain fish species (introduction of boxes or protected areas);

take measures to reduce by-catches and establish minimum sizes for specimens caught;

advocate the prohibition of fishing for the exclusive purpose of fish-meal or fish-oil processing;

adapt their fleet capacities to the available resources, thus helping restore fish stocks and facilitate renewed high-level exploitation;

promote the development of economic activities in regions and fields especially hard-hit by fishery problems, in particular through strategies to facilitate sustainable exploitation of living marine resources, with due regard to the special needs and interests of small-scale inshore fisheries and local communities;

intensify legal sanctions against individuals or companies damaging the marine environment through marine transport, disposal of harmful substances through the air or rivers and dumping of waste in the sea, in accordance with the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and establish owner liability;

give concrete expression to such measures by improving long-term protection of the marine environment and the conservation of marine species, for example by calculating TACs (Total Allowable Catches) and constantly adjusting these TACs to prevailing biological conditions;

take action to heighten consumer awareness of the risk of reduced availability of fish as a foodstuff, for example by ensuring that packaged products comprise information on the fishing zone of origin and fishing methods used;

implement the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries adopted by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in 1995, and particularly the precautionary principle for fisheries policy, the related international plans of action as well as the 1993 Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas;

establish strategies, adopt measures, collect data and develop techniques to help reduce by-catches and the discarding of fish. These aims should particularly be pursued in the framework of the relevant international, regional and sub-regional organisations, especially the European Union or the FAO, or multilateral conventions;

take energetic action to supervise the aforementioned measures, if appropriate by imposing moratoriums on the fishing of endangered and overexploited fish species.