



Resolution 1283 (2002)¹

Preservation and management of fish stocks

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Fish resources are dwindling, and stocks of a growing number of species are reaching alarming levels. There is an urgent need for drastic steps to restrict catches and to reduce the fishing effort, so as to safeguard resources, enable stocks to be replenished and guarantee the future of the fisheries sector.
2. To this end, everything possible must be done to bring an end to both overfishing and overcapacity in the fishing industry. Catches need to be reduced, fishing zones or periods limited, technical rules relating to fishing vessels and methods tightened up, by-catches and discards avoided, aquaculture developed, checks and penalties increased and fishermen encouraged to undergo training or to retrain.
3. Socio-economic, technological and institutional changes are bringing greater competition, at a risk of aggravating overfishing. In analyses of the situation, account needs to be taken of the concept of sustainable development, both in the environmental sphere and in relation to social and economic issues. When consideration is given to the future of the fisheries sector, allowance must be made for the biological dimension (regulation of an excessive fishing effort), institutional issues (definition of access and fishing rights) and economic matters (fleet specialisation and liberalisation of trade).
4. Certain important facts must not be overlooked. Two thirds of the world's population live within 60 km of a coast; 80% of marine biological resources are concentrated on the continental shelf; the jobs and incomes of 30 million people depend on fishing; fish represents 17% of human consumption of proteins, while both world population and food needs are increasing, and the potential for exploitation of fish stocks has now been reached (at 80 million tonnes per year).
5. The Assembly draws attention to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, to date ratified by thirty Council of Europe member states, under which the "protection and preservation of the marine environment" and the "conservation of living resources" are obligations, as well as to the related Agreement Relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks.
6. The competent international organisations have made it known that they favour improved management and better supervision of fisheries, with the OECD working on sustainable and responsible fisheries, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) producing a Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and related international plans of action, as well as the Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas, the European Union's Common Fisheries Policy, and so on.
7. The Assembly welcomes the progress represented by the introduction of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), but notes that this has not enabled some significant problems to be solved, such as the preservation and optimum management of resources. It also endorses the analyses and proposals contained in the Green Paper on the future of the Common Fisheries Policy and intended to lead to CFP reform after wide-ranging consultations.
8. The Assembly itself has already indicated its views on these issues in its Resolutions 1091 (1996) on fisheries management policies, 1170 (1998) on sustainable exploitation of living marine resources, and 1208 (1999) on challenges, advantages and development of extensive aquaculture.

1. Assembly debate on 25 April 2002 (15th Sitting) (see [Doc. 9383](#), report of the Committee on the Environment and Agriculture, rapporteur: Mr Agius). Text adopted by the Assembly on 25 April 2002 (15th Sitting).



9. The Assembly supports the conclusions of the FAO Conference on Responsible Fisheries in the Marine Ecosystem (Reykjavik, 1-4 October 2001). It acknowledges, inter alia, the interaction between marine ecosystems and fishing, which necessitates an integrated approach with a view to sustainable management of resources. It also recognises the need to take a precautionary approach to the conservation, management and exploitation of living aquatic resources.

10. The Assembly therefore invites member states to:

sign and/or ratify the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982) and the Agreement Relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (1995);

apply the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (FAO, 1995) and the related international plans of action, and accede to the Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas (FAO, 1993);

implement the Final Declaration of the FAO Conference on Responsible Fisheries in the Marine Ecosystem (Reykjavik, 1-4 October 2001), and, in particular, take decisions intended to encourage responsible fisheries and the sustainable use of marine ecosystems;

develop international co-operation between states and with regional fisheries organisations, with a view to improving fisheries management and preserving resources and the marine environment;

minimise by-catches and discards and take measures to ensure that these are landed and counted, in order to use these resources and to produce more accurate data on actual fishing effort;

produce scientific studies and statistics concerning, in particular, the seas or species in danger, so that data are available which enable appropriate and effective management policies to be adopted;

draw up indicators relating to the sustainable development of fisheries which reflect all ecological processes, the limits of the ecosystem, the resources and activities of the fisheries sector, etc., based on objectives to be achieved (reference points-objectives) or on the thresholds not to be exceeded (reference points-limits);

establish new fisheries growth and development models corresponding to the concepts of sustainable development, responsible fishing and the precautionary approach;

impose strict limits on, or even suspend, catches of overfished species, and prohibit catches of juvenile fish, in order to replenish stocks and maintain activity in the long term;

reduce fleets and limit vessels' fishing zones, periods or time, so as to help to reduce fishing effort;

tighten up the technical standards applying to vessels (restriction of power, tonnage and size) and promote more selective fishing methods and fishing equipment;

develop aquaculture to supplement the exploitation of natural resources and respond to the increase in demand;

increase the number of inspections and surveillance resources as well as the level of penalties, so as to increase their deterrent effect, and make fishermen and their professional organisations act more responsibly;

prohibit the practise of transferring fishing activities or fleets to third countries for the purpose of evading national or European international regulations;

regulate access and fishing rights and negotiate fishing agreements on the basis of the principles of responsibility and of the sustainability of the fishing grounds concerned, taking account more of the state of stocks than of market criteria;

develop training and retraining for fishermen, inter alia, making use of their skills for the collection of statistical data or for the supervision of fishing;

increase assistance for the laying up of fishing vessels and for fishermen's retirement, until a balance is achieved between fishing effort and available stocks;

improve international co-operation, especially so as to penalise illegal fishing and unlawful fishing practices, including the use of flags of convenience, inter alia by applying the International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (FAO, 2001);

strengthen the role of regional fishery organisations and adopt a regional approach to fisheries management;

make the measures taken to preserve fish stocks and to protect marine ecosystems compatible with territorial, economic or social policies affecting the fisheries sector;

involve fishermen's professional organisations and the industrial and research sectors in the preparation of fisheries policy measures.

11. The Assembly invites the European Commission to:

incorporate the proposals contained in paragraph 10 in new Community regulations and in the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) reforms, as well as in the relevant financial instruments, including the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG);

strengthen the social, economic and environmental dimensions of the CFP so as to achieve sustainable development of ecosystems, of fish stocks and of the fisheries sector;

pay attention to the principles of food safety and consumer information in respect of fisheries products, by laying down standards and quality controls and by guaranteeing all useful information about the origin of the fish and the fishing or packaging methods used;

base the new CFP on the principles laid down in the Green Paper on the future of the Common Fisheries Policy, especially by incorporating in it environmental, food, territorial, economic and social considerations and increasing its capacities for supervision and punishment, without neglecting the international dimension;

give particular attention to the situation of the Mediterranean Sea, including it more in the CFP, strengthen the role of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, and promote scientific studies of the state of stocks.

12. It supports the European Commission's proposal that drift nets be internationally prohibited where highly migratory species are concerned.

13. The Assembly invites the FAO to continue its work on implementing the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and, in particular, to adopt its draft international plan of action on improving information on the status and trends of capture fisheries.