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For a new governance of the Oceans – The problem of the North Atlantic

Motion for a resolution

tabled by Ms Maria Manuela de MELO and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

The idea that the oceans should be approached in a multidisciplinary and integrated manner is becoming widely recognised all over the world, both due to the dimension and diversity of the resources and marine environment, as well as the need for its management to involve political decision makers, companies, scientists, non-governmental organisations, fishermen, the inhabitants of coastal areas and citizens in general.

In parallel, the available information indicates an acceleration of the negative impact on oceans, caused, directly or indirectly, by exploitation and the development models that characterise our industrial societies. Fishing is excessive and indiscriminate; the pollution of waters and concentration of people and activities in coastal regions greatly affects the quality of life of the populations, and place at risk the sustainability of the exploitation of marine resources, including those directly linked to food and the survival of humanity.

Nowadays, it is evident that the oceans are not infinite or inexhaustible, and that humans have the capacity to interfere in biochemical processes that are essential to maintain human society. It is also clear that climatic change is conditioned by the interaction between the atmosphere and the oceans, contributing to a rise in the level of waters, which is already visible in many regions, and to the damage caused to marine ecosystems.

New perspectives and responsibilities are opening associated with the multiple use of marine areas and their increasing integration in economic and social development processes: transport and trade, fisheries and aquaculture, exploitation of fossil and mineral resources, energy use, scientific and technological research, defence of sub-aquatic resources, tourism and leisure. In this perspective, Europe is becoming increasingly aware of the significance and importance of management aimed at the sustainable development of the oceans, in conformity with the Lisbon Strategy. The European Commission contributed towards this, through its initiative of submitting to public debate, the “Green Book – For a future marine policy of the Union: a European vision for our seas and oceans” and, recently, the “Blue Book”. Both processes designed to lead to an integrated European marine policy based on mutual interests and enlarged international collaboration, taking into account solidarity with developing countries.

The last ten years, after EXPO’ 98 held in Lisbon (the theme of which was “The ocean – A heritage for the future”), has witnessed increasing attention to issues concerning oceans at world level, with Europe playing an active role. Notable steps have been taken, aimed at more effective governance of the affairs of the oceans, based on an interdisciplinary and inter-sectorial approach, which requires adjustments to the institutional framework, directed towards ensuring the objectives of a sustained development of the oceans. The involvement and participation of all stakeholders and citizens in general should facilitate dialogue and action between states, public administration, the private sector and civil society, and lead to better integration of the oceans in development processes that take into account the interests of future generations.



The Council of Europe, through the principles it defends and countries represented in it, has played an important role in the defence of the oceans and has presented solutions for its various problems. Nowadays, the Council of Europe, especially through the Parliamentary Assembly, has all the reasons and conditions to make its members aware of the urgent need for international co-operation and an integrated approach to the problems threatening the oceans.

The North Atlantic is a highly representative component of the state of affairs of the oceans at a global level due to its geostrategic position, size and historical importance, degree of use and exploitation of resources.

In this context, it is necessary to increase the efforts by the European Commission for an integrated marine policy beyond the frontiers of the European Union, and to urgently involve members of parliaments in the process, both through legislative action and initiatives to make citizens aware of the idea that the oceans are vital to the future of humanity.

Giving continuity to the conclusions of the Seminar on the Environmental and Scientific Issues of the North Atlantic: a European Perspective, held in the Azores on 18 October 2007, the Assembly should prepare a report including recommendations especially aimed at:

1. awareness-raising amongst citizens, promoting their participation in the responsible and democratic governance of the oceans;
2. the definition and implementation of the institutional requirements for an integrated marine policy, with an inter-sectorial and interdisciplinary character;
3. the implementation of effective and accessible data and information mechanisms, of relevance to a European marine policy, focused on the optimisation of existing data networks and on a supplementary network of information on marine affairs, based on the reinforcement and sharing of existing systems.

Signed (see overleaf)

Signed¹:

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1. ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
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